



**Mentoring and resilience development of school principals in the Tinara  
Circuit of the Nelson Mandela Bay Metro**

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## DECLARATION

I declare that *Mentoring and resilience development of school principals in the Tinara Circuit of the Nelson Mandela Bay Metro* is my work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged using complete references.

I further declare that I have submitted the dissertation to originality software checking and that it falls within the current accepted requirements of originality.

I further declare that I have not previously submitted this work or part of it, for examination at UNISA or any other higher education institution.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Alle', written over a horizontal line.

12<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY 2023

**SIGNATURE**

**DATE**

## DEDICATION

I dedicate this work :

To my God, my ever-present help and provider of revelation to understand;

My late mother Lenah Kleinbooi for her constant drive and motivation to be the best you can be and for teaching me the values of hard work and the love for God.

My wife Mrs Delores Kleinbooi, for her prayers for sanity and protection, has been a constant in my journey through encouragement, motivation, and dedication to support and complete this dissertation.

My children, Nadine, Sharma, and Zachery for sacrificing quality family time and allowing me to pursue this dream. Sharma Kleinbooi thank you for the three years of waking up early with daddy and together we created a space of academic vision in the family.



12<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY 2023

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To my editor, thank you for your professional service and complete dedication to your craft.

## **ABSTRACT**

This study explores a professional development strategy to develop school principal resilience as a necessary leadership quality in the 21st-century educational environment. The sample will consist of five school principals in the Tinara Circuit who participated in a mentoring programme initiated by the Department of Basic Education. Participants will be selected based on how informative they are in the field of resilience and resilience leadership practices. The participants will include principals from the Tinara Circuit who have been in the office between three and five years since their appointment to the principalship. The aforementioned schools were part of the cohort that did not meet the 60% benchmark set by The Department of Basic Education for passing matric examinations. The selected schools have been the worst performers in the Tinara Circuit. This study aims to increase the depth of knowledge of how leadership practices foster resilience, how principals understand resilience, and what practices can be used to foster resilience. It is significant as no reported study has identified the relationships between principals' leadership practices and resilience, and whether resilient leadership practices can be developed or enhanced. This research study hopes to contribute to understanding and recognising school leadership challenges and, more importantly, strategies to manage them in the form of resiliency development. Secondly, an understanding of leadership practice within the same environment may serve as motivation to leaders in underperforming schools to replicate the leadership practices of these resilient school principals, which could be used to improve their outcomes in their schools, thereby contributing to the development and growth of their institutions. To date, no reported study has identified the relationships between principals' leadership practices and resilience, and whether resilient leadership practices can be developed or enhanced.

## ABSTRAK

Hierdie studie ondersoek 'n professionele ontwikkelingstrategie om skoolhoofveerkragtigheid as 'n noodsaaklike leierskapskwaliteit in die 21ste-eeuse opvoedkundige omgewing te ontwikkel. Die steekproef sal bestaan uit vyf skoolhoofde in die Tinara-kring wat deelgeneem het aan 'n mentorskapprogram wat deur die Departement van Basiese Onderwys geïnisieer is. Deelnemers sal gekies word op grond van hoe insiggewend hulle is op die gebied van veerkragtigheids- en veerkragtigheidsleierskapspraktyke. Die deelnemers sal skoolhoofde van die Tinara-kring insluit wat tussen drie en vyf jaar sedert hul aanstelling in die hoofskap in die kantoor is. Bogenoemde skole was deel van die groep wat wel nie voldoen het aan die 60%-maatstaf wat deur die departement van basiese onderwys gestel is vir die slaag van matriekeksamen nie. Die gekose skole was die swakste presteerders in die Tinara-kring. Hierdie studie het ten doel om die diepte van kennis te verhoog van hoe leierskapspraktyke veerkragtigheid bevorder, hoe skoolhoofde veerkragtigheid verstaan en watter praktyke gebruik kan word om veerkragtigheid te bevorder. Dit is betekenisvol aangesien geen gerapporteerde studie die verwantskappe tussen skoolhoofde se leierskapspraktyke en veerkragtigheid geïdentifiseer het nie, en of veerkragtige leierskapspraktyke ontwikkel of verbeter kan word. Hierdie navorsingstudie hoop om by te dra tot die begrip en erkenning van skoolleierskapuitdagings en, nog belangriker, strategieë om dit in die vorm van veerkragtigheidsontwikkeling te bestuur. Tweedens kan 'n begrip van leierskapspraktyk binne dieselfde omgewing as motivering vir leiers in onderpresterende skole dien om die leierskapspraktyke van hierdie veerkragtige skoolhoofde te herhaal, wat gebruik kan word om hul uitkomst in hul skole te verbeter en sodoende tot die ontwikkeling en groei van hul instellings by te dra. Tot op hede het geen gerapporteerde studie die verwantskappe tussen skoolhoofde se leierskapspraktyke en veerkragtigheid geïdentifiseer nie, en of veerkragtige leierskapspraktyke ontwikkel of verbeter kan word nie.

## UMXHOLO

Olu phononongo luphonononga isicwangciso sophuhliso lobuchwephesha ukuphuhlisa ukomelela kwenqununu yesikolo njengomgangatho wobunkokeli oyimfuneko kwimeko yemfundo yenkulungwane yama-21. Isampula iya kubandakanya iinqununu zezikolo ezintlanu kwiSekethe yaseTinara ezithathe inxaxheba kwiprogram yokucebisa eyaqalwa liSebe leMfundo esiSiseko. Abathathi-nxaxheba baya kukhethwa ngokusekelwe kwindlela abanolwazi ngayo kwintsimi yokuqina kunye nobunkokeli obuqinileyo. Abathathi-nxaxheba baya kubandakanya iinqununu zeSekethe yaseTinara ebezise-ofisini phakathi kweminyaka emithathu ukuya kwemihlanu ukususela ekuqeshweni kwazo kubunqununu. Ezi zikolo zikhankanywe apha ngasentla beziyinxalenye yeqela elingazange liwufezekise umyinge wama-60% omiselwe liSebe leMfundo esiSiseko lokuphumelela iimviwo zematriki. Izikolo ezikhethiweyo zibe zezona ziqhuba kakubi kwiSekethe yaseTinara. Olu phononongo lujolise ekwandiseni ubunzulu bolwazi malunga nendlela ubunkokeli obuqhuba ngayo ukukhuthaza ukomelela, indlela iinqununu eziqonda ngayo ukomelela, kwaye zeziphi izenzo ezinokusetyenziswa ukukhuthaza ukomelela. Kuyaphawuleka njengoko kungekho phando luchaziweyo luchonge ubudlelwane phakathi kweendlela zobunkokeli zeenqununu kunye nokomelela, nokuba ngaba izenzo zobunkokeli ezinokuqina zingaphuhliswa okanye ziphuculwe. Olu phononongo lophando lunethemba lokuba negalelo ekuqondeni nasekuqapheleni imingeni yobunkokeli ezikolweni kwaye, okona kubaluleke kakhulu, izicwangciso zokulawula ngendlela yophuhliso lokuqina. Okwesibini, ukuqonda inkqubo yobunkokeli kwindawo efanayo kunokukhuthaza iinkokeli kwizikolo ezingaqhubi kakuhle ukuba ziphindaphinde iindlela zobunkokeli zezi nqununu zezikolo ziyakwazi ukunyamezela, nezinokuthi zisetyenziswe ukuphucula iziphumo zazo kwizikolo zazo, ngaloo ndlela zibe negalelo kuphuhliso nokukhula. yamaziko abo. Ukuza kuthi ga ngoku, akukho sifundo sichaziweyo esichonge ubudlelwane phakathi kweendlela zobunkokeli zeenqununu kunye nokomelela, nokuba ngaba izenzo zobunkokeli ezinokuqina zingaphuhliswa okanye ziphuculwe.

## **Key Words**

Mentoring; mentorship; professional development; resilience; resilient leadership; coping strategies; self-efficacy; school leader/school principal; educational challenges; teaching and learning; adversity and risk factors.

### **1. Key concepts and definitions**

#### ***1. Educational leadership and management***

In the study, educational leadership and management were understood in a school context, referring to the daily responsibilities included in the functions of a school principal. The particular educational leaders and managers involved in the study were the school principals in the Tinara Circuit in the Nelson Mandela Bay education district.

#### ***2. Resilience***

Koen and Du Plessis (2011:8) describe resilience as “having achieved desirable results in the face of adversity”, although it could also be defined as attributes promoting the attainment of desirable qualities under adverse conditions. According to Domeck (2008:6), who concurs with the latter definition, resilience is the capacity to handle the difficulties and complexities of management, including the capacity to respond constructively to adversity. In the context of the study, resilience referred to the ability of school principals who were interviewed to deal with adversity and the challenges to which they were exposed in the workplace.

#### ***3. Leadership practices***

Leadership practices in the study referred to the actions or strategies of the school principals, which were carried out to manage and offer direction to their schools. Effective leadership practices refer to an ability to achieve outstanding performance and superior results through the actions of those they manage (Owen, Culbertson & Mink, 2011:3).

#### ***4. Professional development***

In the study, professional development referred to any programme, event or initiative that trained principals to advance their careers as school leaders/managers. In general, professional development could be planned or unplanned, an individual or group event and could either be a continuous process or a one-time initiative (Zepeda, Bengston & Parylo, 2012:137).



### **5. Leadership development**

The development of leadership involves improving the management ability of individuals who are expected to provide direction and control in a specific environment to render their organisations efficient and effective in achieving accepted, defined and tangible performance goals (Bjekić, Stojković, & Kuzmanović 2016:346). In the context of the study, leadership development was considered as the building of principals' skills for directing their schools towards optimal performance despite challenges.

### **6. Leadership**

Mestry (2017:1) describes leadership as having the capacity to engage people in problem-solving, recognising when a group requires support, and establishing strong ties within the community. This is a definition that underpinned the study because it indicated the actions a principal should take to manage his school. However, the term in general refers simply to the activity of managing a group of individuals or an organisation, which might not necessarily imply effectiveness.

### **7. Mentoring**

According to the study, mentoring was a process or relationship in which a seasoned counsellor or principal assisted school leaders in acquiring the knowledge and abilities necessary to carry out their management responsibilities successfully.

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

COR	Conservation of resources theory
DBE	Department of Basic Education
MIP	Matric Intervention Programme
PAM	Personnel Administration Measurement
RSA	Republic of South Africa
SASA	The South African Schools Act.
SBM	School-based management
SCT	Social capital theory
SGB	School governing body
SNT	Social network theory
SPP	School Progression Policy

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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

### 1.1 Introduction

The study explored a professional development strategy to develop school principal resilience as a necessary leadership quality in the demanding and complex 21st-century educational environment, particularly in the northern areas of Gqeberha. When South Africa transitioned to democracy in 1994, the educational system was overloaded with policies for educational change. In addition, key legislation was introduced in the form of the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996 (SASA) (Republic of South Africa, 1996), thereby paving the way for educational transformation in the new South African democratic dispensation (Botha, 2012:40). With the democratisation of education and the associated decentralisation of authority, schools in South Africa, including the Tinara Circuit in the Nelson Mandela Bay Metro, have increasingly been held accountable for their performance (Section 16 A: SASA).

Even though implementation of the new legislation is expected of school principals as part of their jobs, authors such as Elmore (2008:39) argue that there has not been an adequate investment and centralised control by educational authorities of leadership training and capacity building, which would provide the essential skills and knowledge to ensure the transformation of education. Furthermore, Elmore (2008:39) argues that following a professional development strategy would enable school principals to effectively implement the changes for which they are accountable. Bhengu and Myende (2016:1) support this argument and emphasise that the government needs to provide support to principals through training to ensure the implementation of the reformist legislation, as policy alone has not been able to improve the education system for those who were disadvantaged before democratisation.

The need to support school administrators, who are in charge of implementing change in the South African school context, and the increasingly complicated aspects of the 21st-century learning environment served as the initial impetus for this research. Secondly, the study aimed to address the lack of consistent and sustained institutional support provided to principals in fulfilling their responsibilities, and the irrelevance of the current development programmes in the context of the 21st-century demands for which they are not prepared

(Bush, Kiggundu & Moorosi, 2011:34). Thirdly, there are still no formal management and leadership qualifications necessary to be selected for the post of the school principal, except for a first degree in addition to a seven-year teaching career and a one-year teaching diploma, thereby leaving schools in the hands of possibly unqualified managers (Mathibe, 2007:529). This does not conflict with the criteria outlined in the Personnel Administration Measurement (PAM, 3.2.1.1 B.) document for appointment as a school principal (2016:45). Finally, there hasn't been much study done on resilience in the context of leadership and management in education (see Section 2.2.). Studies on resilience in South Africa's education sector include those by Christie and Potterton (1997) on resilient schools, Mampane and Boucher (2011) on the impact of township schools on student resilience, Makoe (2022) on resilient leadership in distance education, and Theron on a wide range of social work studies (2013-2020). However, the literature on resilience in leadership and management in the educational sector is silent.

The absence of capabilities necessary to meet the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup>-century educational environments, the need to restructure South African schools, and the need to be effective leaders are the present issues facing school principals. The study was underpinned by the supposition that principals may become depressed, overwhelmed and anxious, which would pose a serious threat to their well-being. Thus, rather than seeking to address the difficulties encountered by school leaders, the study aimed to improve their resilience through a mentoring process, enabling them to deal with these problems by turning each obstacle into a growth area.

Thus, the following questions arose as the basis of the study: What is resilience? How is it relevant and applicable to educational leadership and management practices? How can resilience be developed? What are the key tenets of resilient leadership practices? What allows resilient leaders to survive in the wake of persistent challenges, whilst others fail in similar circumstances?

## **1.2 Background to the study**

In South Africa, school principals are not required to take any kind of specialised leadership or management training before being appointed. Moreover, as Ndamani (2016:9) points out, principals of schools in South Africa are appointed based solely on the number of years they have been teaching, as this is believed to be a sufficient indication of leadership ability. Formal qualifications in leadership and management are seen as an advantage rather than

a prerequisite for being appointed, and the acquisition of these qualifications is rewarded by a once-off bonus, received by all educators upon improving their postgraduate qualifications (Sonnekus, 2014:28).

This dynamic is reflected in most schools in the Tinaru Circuit, where school principals take it upon themselves to obtain qualifications in leadership and management for personal growth. Allie (2014:3) claims that the consistency of a school's management and academic performance is compromised by putting unqualified candidates in roles requiring qualified staff. The risk of appointing school leaders who are not trained in management and leadership will be discussed in the following section.

### **1.2.1 *Unqualified managers and leaders in schools***

According to De Villiers (2022:206), the trend of appointing school principals without the necessary qualifications culminates in their underperformance in leadership and management positions. This view is echoed by Mestry (2017:259) who attributes school underperformance to the absence of leadership and management capacity and role-specific criteria for principals. Current literature has highlighted that inadequate leadership may be the reason for low performance by schools, including those in the Tinaru Circuit, which have the following characteristics (Pretorius, 2014:54): Poor results in the matric final examinations (below the 60% benchmark); poor discipline amongst the learners of these schools with frequent absenteeism; alcohol and drug abuse; gang fights; teenage pregnancies; a lack of parental involvement either in school governance, as required by the SASA, or in their children's education; and schools being situated in poor socio-economic areas plagued by high unemployment rates. Most of these schools are Matric Intervention Programme (MIP) schools, meaning that they form part of a group of schools for which the Department of Education (DBE) runs a programme to upscale their performance.

Underperforming schools are defined as those with a pass percentage for the National Senior Certificate exams less than 60% and that had decreased by more than 10% in a given year, according to the Department of Basic Education (DBE, 2009:01). Many MIP schools have been classified as underperforming schools in the Tinaru Circuit in the Nelson Mandela Bay Metro. The MIP is a national program that introduces additional learning methods and possibilities known as intervention opportunities to increase the number of candidates who complete Grade 12 in a year (ECDOE, 2000:1).

Learners in Grade 12 from identified struggling schools are sent to study camps over vacation as part of a campaign to help the pass rate increase. Extra classes during the week and Saturdays are often introduced in these schools. Additional after-school programmes are held at these schools and in the surrounding geographical area, where subject advisors also participate in the teaching process (Leepo, 2015:xxi).

According to the South African Education Laws Amendment Act 31 of 2007 (section 58b:14), an underperforming school is one where management has completely broken down and where student performance is below the level required by the National Curriculum Statement and is likely to stay below that level unless the head of the department uses their authority under the South African Schools Act (RSA, 2007). Furthermore, the South African Schools Act No. 84 of 1996 (RSA, 1996), section 58B (1), mandates that all underperforming schools create and implement improvement plans. According to section 58B (4) of the same legislation, the head of the department is required to make every effort to help a struggling school resolve the issue. The mentoring programme can be seen as part of the provincial intervention strategy aimed at building school management capacity to fulfil the above mandate required by law.

Another phenomenon that the researcher noticed during his interaction with the Tinara Circuit principals that participated in the study was that most of them lacked management and leadership training. They only had a first degree with a postgraduate certificate in education, with only one principal having an honours degree unrelated to management or leadership. In addition, none of the principals received any training before their appointment or participated in any formal induction programme, as it was not offered by the DBE. Thus, although effective support programmes would have helped them to meet expectations, overcome challenges and promote teaching and learning by being an excellent curriculum manager and leader, participants had to initiate various alternative coping strategies.

Participants in previous studies described principals' forums as professional communities that aided in coping with the challenges and stress they experienced and to allowed them to interact freely with other school leaders, discussing best practices that could be introduced in their schools. This initiative is aligned with research findings that acknowledge the value of establishing peer-to-peer educational support networks (Naicker & Mestry, 2015:8) . The abovementioned principal networks nurture novice principals and enable them to cope with the dilemmas and tensions of their new role. The benefit of professional learning

communities, according to Byars-Winston and Dahlberg (2019:86), is in their ability to generate an atmosphere that offers crucial support for people going through similar difficulties. In the process, they build critical skills such as self-efficacy and career satisfaction. Principals also listed various leadership responsibilities outside of the classroom that have helped them manage the demands of their position.

Zikhali and Perumal (2014:5715) raise an important issue when they probe whether teaching experience alone, that is without any formal training in leadership and management, provides a solid enough foundation for a person to be appointed to the position of principal. There is widespread agreement in the literature that one cannot necessarily equate years of teaching experience with the skills required to be a school leader or administrator (Jensen *et al.*, 2015:5). Amakyi and Ampah-Mensah (2013:156) maintain that teaching experience does not in any way allow an individual to develop the much-needed technological, analytical and human relations skills necessary to be a leader in schools in the twenty-first century.

Mathibe (2007:523) claims that it is the equivalent of entrusting school administration, management, leadership and governance to a technically unqualified person when teachers who lack management training are appointed to leadership positions. Mestry and Singh (2007:487) maintain that hiring managers who have not undergone the necessary training in leadership and management makes it much more difficult to administer and manage schools. Nsubuga (2009:215) notes that, unless principals equip themselves with expertise and abilities in school management and leadership, they will struggle to bring benefits to the school and boost its performance levels.

Bush and Heystek (2006:64) claim that the recruitment of unqualified head teachers to leadership positions is a formula for individual or school system failure. Spaul (2013:59) argues that poor academic performance at school can be a result of an absence of effective management and leadership skills. According to the studies mentioned above, effective leadership significantly enhances educational outcomes and school improvement. This shows that to improve student performance, effective teaching and learning must be directed by good leadership in schools.

Van Jaarsveld (2013:89) makes the case that the difficulties principals face in dealing with their increased workload and problematic staff members are due to the absence of preparation and development programmes for them. Bagi (2015:53) contends that a lack of

principal preparation prevents school administrators from handling the demands of the job, as well as the socialisation and adjustment processes, in an effective manner. South African matric results have been poor because of the absence of strong leadership and the lack of proper administrative preparation (Msila, 2012:47). This claim is backed by Mestry (2017:2), who insists that weak academic achievement at the school level might be symptomatic, amongst other factors, of a lack of effective school leadership and management. Mestry and Singh (2007:478) believe it will be challenging for principals to transform an ailing education system into a successful one in the absence of proper training and development. Furthermore, Mestry and Singh (2007:477) contend that it becomes crucial to arm principals with much-needed training to develop their learning skills, quality, and attitudes, especially when considering the challenges confronted with an evolving and dynamic educational culture.

The priority given to education In South Africa can be seen in the budget allocation that was increased to R386,4 billion for the 2019/2020 financial year compared to R246 billion for the 2018/2019 financial year. However, what is of importance to the study is that despite the aforementioned increase in budget allocations, schools in the Tinara Circuit in Nelson Mandela Bay Metro are characterised and plagued by the following: poorly developed and dilapidated infrastructure (Damons, 2021:38); an increase in violence in schools (Damons, 2021:10); a constant increase in drug and alcohol abuse in schools (Damons, 2021:12); continued underperformance of schools in the northern areas of Nelson Mandela Bay Metro in Grade 12 final examinations; and continued non-participation of parents in assisting children with their homework or through non-involvement in school governance (Veyi, 2022:48).

Fullan and Leithwood (2012:2) believe that in circumstances such as the aforesaid, there is a need for successful school administrators who can positively control and guide the school system, inspire and implement change, foster growth and progress, give learners hope, encourage them to strive. Moreover, for the educational system to aid in the development of a country's economy, school leaders need to be equipped to perform their roles successfully (Mukeredzi, Mthiyane & Bertram, 2015:1). As mentioned earlier, South African principals need to be trained to lead in the 21st century and to implement the educational reform in which the government has invested. A preliminary study of the Tinara Circuit involving various discussions and interviews with school principals supported the relevance and need for



research on their development and preparation. The main aim of the preliminary study was to identify novice principal challenges and make recommendations on how to develop coping strategies for such challenges. The researcher's personal experiences serving on the school's management team provided further inspiration for this study. The difficulties that confront school principals in the Tinaru Circuit will be discussed in the next section.

### **1.2.2 Challenges facing school principals**

The democratisation of education in South Africa since 1994 has resulted in a few unintended consequences that affected the performance of school principals in South African schools. Massive changes in the pursuit of democracy and fulfilment of the constitutional mandate signalled the introduction of fast-paced changes to the education sector. This will be discussed in the next section.

#### *1.2.2.1 Inadequate training/preparation/ongoing professional development*

The Tinaru Circuit school leaders were appointed to positions of leadership without proper training for the roles and responsibilities involved. According to the explanation in the previous section, this may be the cause of the schools in the Circuit's poor performance in the national matric examinations. Discussions with school principals revealed that their qualifications did not include any management training and that their leadership experience comprised only informal practical opportunities provided by previous principals. Furthermore, all principals indicated that help from the DBE had not been forthcoming, either before or after their appointment as principals. One principal said, "*The department itself has now not provided us with any training on governance and leadership regarding principalship or what we as heads should have done*" This view has been echoed by (Mestry & Du Plessis, 2022) when they state that the DBE has admitted the lack of a coordinated system of development for schools principals.

This view was also expressed by another principal who stated, "*nothing formal and no training or preparation for a headship, none of the courses I participated in, but of course, I had good guidance - the principal at a previous school who gave you the scope to manage some aspects of the school*". Therefore, one can then surmise, based on discussions with the principals, that most of the school leaders forming part of the preliminary study in the Tinaru Circuit in the Nelson Mandela Bay Metro area did not receive proper training in terms of management and leadership or receive help in fulfilling their roles as school principals.

Based on discussions with the Tinara Circuit principals and the author's individual experience as part of a school management and leadership team, it appears that the local educational authorities in the district office provide *ad hoc* and sporadic attempts at developing the abilities of school principals. This involved one- or two-day workshops and seminars of training and development focusing on administrative compliance instead of leadership and managerial development and preparation. Thus, the lack of sustainable leadership training, professional development and adequate induction programmes for school principals means that they must manage their schools in difficult times as best they can, although this may not be effective or alleviate their stress (Mestry, 2017:2).

Due to the complexity of their jobs, principals in the Tinara Circuit are likely to face the same difficulties as principals in other areas of South Africa and the rest of the world (Van Loggenberg-Venter, 2008:55). Many books, diaries, and daily newspaper articles or keynote discourses on the topic of school administration mention the difficulties that school principals face in the 21st century. According to Mhlanga (2019:19), the South African educational environment is a particularly complex one, due to educational policies aimed at democratising the South African educational sector, and this is exacerbated by the challenges facing education in the 21st century for which principals are not prepared.

Novice and experienced school principals in the Tinara Circuit of the Nelson Mandela Bay Metro face several challenges owing to both internal and external factors, leaving them feeling hopeless and frustrated, and ultimately affecting their health. A principal described his stress by remarking, "*Sir, these things happening in our schools and the inability of the DBE to provide real solutions to the problems is what causes us to lay awake at night, unable to sleep*". Another principal stated, "*But there were sometimes when I have to bite my teeth in the evenings, you don't sleep in the evening*". Another principal said, "*Oh Sir, the things at my school are stuff that keeps you awake late at night and you leave school sometimes way after normal school hours*".

#### 1.2.2.2 *Lack of learner discipline.*

Based on the researcher's encounters, one of the most challenging issues with which principals have to deal in the Tinara Circuit is the ill-discipline in their schools. According to Moyo, Khewu, and Bayaga (2014:4), behavioural dysfunctions such as drug misuse, violence, theft, rape, and murder are symptoms of learner-ill behaviour in schools. Most of the schools in the study are situated in poor areas serving unemployed parents, aggravating

the principals' daily task of upholding control in their classrooms. The unruly behaviour of some learners in the Tinara Circuit includes learner disobedience, a lack of respect for teachers and non-teaching staff, the sale and use of dagga and cigarettes, and persistent violations of school rules and regulations.

Gang violence, alcohol and drug abuse, teenage pregnancy and learner absenteeism with no reasonable explanation is common phenomena facing school principals. According to Moyo et al. (2014:4), "a lack of discipline might damage the atmosphere of teaching and learning," which in turn affects the school's overall progress. Ndamani (2016:12) highlights that performance is a measure of a principal's success as a leader because he or she is accountable for what transpires in the school. Therefore, principals, such as those in the Tinara Circuit, need to know how to manage and solve the problem of undisciplined learner behaviour. A disciplined environment ensures a culture of successful learning and teaching, which Ibukun, Oyewole and Abe (2011:248) identify as dependent on effective leadership. However, a disciplined environment is also dependent on a sustainable discipline system enforced through the collaboration of various stakeholders in education, including parents, educators, and school management (Masingi, 2017:35).

Maintaining a disciplined learning environment firstly requires a multidisciplinary approach, including guidance and counselling on undisciplined learner behaviour and its consequences to help stakeholders tackle challenges such as drug abuse and delinquency (Mlalazi, Rembe & Shumba, 2016:192). Secondly, ensuring that the curriculum includes the teaching of moral values will help learners to distinguish between right and wrong (Cappy, 2016:128). Thirdly, external professional support in the form of psychologists, educational counsellors and social workers should be increased to manage learner discipline and challenging circumstances (MacBeath et al 2007:52). Lastly, cooperating and collaborating with local law enforcement, such as the South African Police Service (SAPS), the municipal police and the Justice Department, contributes to addressing current learner behavioural issues and devising prevention strategies (Nthebe, 2006:58).

#### 1.2.2.3 *Voluminous administrative workload*

Discussions with the principals of the Tinara Circuit revealed that in addition to a lack of managerial training and undisciplined learners, principals are burdened with a huge administrative workload due to the implementation of school-based management (SBM) after 1994. Principals maintained that they had not only to deal with stakeholders but also with the

administrative requirements of the DBE, which accounted for a significant amount of their time. This confirms Mestry's (2017:257) assertion that a school principal's day is comprised of a variety of leadership and management tasks, including planning, disseminating information, managing relationships with parents and the wider community, handling unforeseen crises involving multiple learners and teachers, and handling unusual situations.

Principals' workloads can become unmanageable without effective time management, which can lead to poor job performance. Conversations with the Tinaru Circuit's school managers revealed that at times, they worked until after the school has been closed, or arrived at school at 7:00 am to perform administrative duties. In addition, part of their administrative duties involved financial management, which was challenging due to inadequate school budgets and their lack of financial skills.

#### *1.2.2.4 Lack of financial management skills and scarcity of finance*

A failure to manage their schools' financial affairs properly was identified as another challenge facing school principals in the Tinaru Circuit, which Ndamani (2016:67) maintains is common in most of the underachieving schools in South Africa. The principals in the Tinaru Circuit claimed that the financial management training offered by the district office of the DBE did not equip them sufficiently to run the financial affairs of their schools. Beeka (2008:37) and Myende, Samuel, and Pillay (2018:1) mention that a lack of financial management skills and training makes a principal's work challenging, especially in the case of novice principals.

The issue is made worse by schools' insufficient financial income and the DBE's strict guidelines and rules on how to use the money supplied to them. Most principals mentioned that they had implemented various fundraising efforts to supplement the school coffers against an unfavourable backdrop of a high unemployment level in the community and a lack of support from parents.

#### *1.2.2.5 Progressed learners*

Another challenge that principals in the Tinaru Circuit described was that of progressed learners. This is a Head Office policy that allows Grade 11 learners to progress to Grade 12 without meeting the minimum requirements for progression. The School Progression Policy (SPP) of the DBE (EC DOE, 2002:14) stipulates that a learner can only fail once per phase, such as the Further Education and Training (FET) Phase from Grade 10 to Grade 12. For example, if a learner fails Grade 10, repeats the year, progresses to Grade 11 and then fails

Grade 11, they are nevertheless progressed to Grade 12 to remain with children approximately their age. The SPP requires these principals to implement this policy and offers support to progressed learners. However, what is lacking in the policy is how, when and by whom this support should be provided. The policymakers want different schools to produce common workable solutions to enforce the policy's demands and support the learners in need (Munje & Maarman, 2016:194).

All parties involved in providing education at a school need investment in comprehensive training under this policy to comprehend the SSP and properly apply it. This could reduce principals' frustration levels, as they will be faced with fewer challenges and allow the learners to improve their lives.

#### *1.2.2.6 Lack of parent involvement*

Although discussion revealed that this was a challenge, a channel that many principals use to strengthen their school's bond with the community is parent involvement, including parent participation via school governing bodies, teacher-parent conferences, general parent evenings and portfolio evenings. Parents have been defined as key stakeholders in education by the SASA (RSA, 1996). The Act aims to reform the school environment by including parents in the school's business through governance. Parents took up the role of co-governors of the school thanks to this legislation. However, the preliminary study's school principals found that there is poor contact and weak relationships between parents and schools.

According to the SASA, parents should participate in school decision-making through the school governing body (SGB) (RSA, 1996). Additionally, the primary responsibility of parents is to take care of their children (RSA, 1996: 3.1). However, South African literature has identified a general lack of parental involvement in schools. The principals mentioned that it was common to have less than 100 parents attending important meetings called by the school. Bayat and Madyibi (2022:2) are of the view that the lack of participation of parents is amongst the many indicators of a school's poor performance when they state that poor attendance by parents at conferences requested by the school, weak matric performance, disinterest in doing their assignments and complete homework are challenges facing schools. Jansen and Blank (2014:152-153) believe that schools can function more effectively when parents and school teachers work together. Thus, the absence of much-needed parental support for school leadership can ultimately result in learner misbehaviour and inadequate

academic achievement. The lack of parental support for the school management team may give learners the impression that their parents disagree with the management team.

Parental non-involvement delays the implementation of solutions to learner disciplinary challenges and exacerbates challenges faced by principals. Based on personal experience, the researcher believes that parental input is essential to a school and an inexperienced principal's development. However, an in-depth discussion of parent non-involvement is not within the focus of this thesis. In the preliminary study, principals highlighted elements like the parents' academic level, their economic/financial status, their capacity to appreciate the importance of their position within the school, and their belief concerning who is responsible for disciplining learners, as obstacles to the engagement of parents in schools and the education of their children. Moreover, schools need to collaborate with other stakeholders to ensure that parents play their role in the affairs of the school through school governance and the academic affairs of their children by showing interest in their work.

#### *1.2.2.7 Dilapidated infrastructure*

Informal discussions with principals identified dilapidated infrastructure as a major challenge in schools. To build an atmosphere that is appropriate for teaching and learning, it is crucial to provide schools with the necessary infrastructure (Mouton, Louw & Strydom, 2013:40).

The principals expressed great concern about run-down or broken-down school facilities, caused by the stealing of light bulbs from classrooms, the breaking of windows and the general destruction of buildings. In addition, the theft of a copper water pipe rendered the provision of water to the school an issue of major concern. One principal stated that the problem was serious and that the acts of vandalism led to the demotivation of principals. Mhlanga (2019:36) points out that principals continue to struggle to provide high-quality instruction in the face of inadequate facilities. Related factors that affected the performance of the schools included the use of mobile classrooms or old, decaying buildings as classrooms, the absence of windows, doors, and chalkboards, and the lack of electricity and water supplies in some locations. However, principals are expected to handle the abovementioned challenges, despite lacking the training and professional development required to do so.

### ***1.2.3 The need for continued professional development of principals in the Tinara Circuit***

As mentioned in Section 1.2 above, all principals participating in the preliminary study (see Section 1.2.1: (6-7) had no formal qualifications in leadership and management before their appointment. Moreover, they had only informal practical leadership experience owing to opportunities provided by previous principals to act in leadership and management positions. However, one of the principals mentioned that they had gained leadership and management experience in structures and organisations outside the school.

The principals in the preliminary study were unanimous that professional development was needed, as their prior experience had not prepared them to handle the challenges they currently faced. Furthermore, the training and development the DBE offered were neither relevant nor sustained and focussed on compliance with procedures, for example, rather than strategies for coping with challenges. Heystek (2007:491-497) suggests that it is important to coordinate the growth of a person and the achievement of organisational goals. This implies that any training and development school principals receive should be relevant to their personal and professional development and help them to ensure that their schools improve their performance.

Given the lack of adequate preparation for school leadership at the moment, principals find it difficult to run schools in situations where there are numerous forms of deprivation. Bush, Kiggundu, and Moorosi (2011:31) evaluated the need for developing school leaders and conclude that effective leaders significantly contribute to school development and learning results. Naidoo (2019: 4) notes that talented managers can evaluate circumstances objectively and skilfully and search for ways to develop and improve their organisations. Furthermore, Mendels and Mitgang (2013: 22) contend that school leaders' accomplishments are related to the academic success of their school learners. Therefore, school districts ought to spend money on the leadership development of their school managers.

Increased capacity of the heads of schools can be built through support, training, and development programmes, which can assist principals to run and operate their schools effectively. This rings especially true in the case of South African principals, who have new roles and responsibilities requiring particular expertise due to the legislation introduced after the dawn of democracy (Naidoo, 2019:2). A frequent observation in the literature is that all

the highest-performing educational systems provide support to novice principals (Bush & Glover, 2016:9). Some overseas programmes are conducted over two years, providing mentoring, formal training workshops or networking opportunities with other newly-appointed principals. Novice principals are most in need of support, especially during the first two to three years in the role, as they begin the often-challenging transition from preparing to become a principal to formally filling that role and being responsible for a whole school community. Furthermore, providing opportunities to collaborate can lead to an improvement in bonds between school principals. For principals, this might result in possibilities for ongoing networking and cooperative activities.

Many novice principals with whom the researcher interacted during the preliminary study felt that they were lacking in ability, unprepared, isolated and without enough support to lead their schools effectively. In addition, in cases where the DBE did provide support, the gap between the type of training provided to their novice principals and what they needed to begin their administrative careers, indicated a need for investigation, thus forming the basis for the current study.

As indicated in Section 1.2.1. above, the principals in the Tinara Circuit did not have any formal training in school management and leadership, and the DBE leadership growth initiatives did not meet the needs of novice or established principals. To accomplish their duties in the contemporary environment, school principals need to have proper management training.

Effective support mechanisms can ensure that the beginner principal meets the expectations of the position, can overcome challenges, and improve teaching and learning by being effective as a manager and leader (Van Loggenberg-Venter, 2008:55). In addition, Van Jaarsveld (2013:59) recommends that training novice principals are a good way to prepare them for effective management in different areas of their school. School principals might strengthen the validity of this claim by enrolling in the Advance Diploma in Leadership and Management programme offered by several academic institutions in South Africa, to upgrade and improve their craft.

There is a school of thinking that blends the success of schools as institutions with the integrity and leadership of their school principals (Bush, 2009:375). The idea that the responsibilities of the principal have significantly changed over time is another common one



in the literature. According to Naidoo (2019:1), 21st-century principals have many roles, and their tasks are increasingly demanding, difficult, complex, overburdened, and ambiguous. The effects of increasing globalisation and fast growth in education, especially the democratisation of education provision in South Africa, have been seen as the cause of this phenomenon. One significant shift that characterised education in our country was the decentralisation of decision-making in schools. The constant demand for improved management and leadership of schools, coupled with intense accountability measures and demands for improved school performance, require constant investment in principal development (Van Jaarsveld *et al.*, 2015:95). Following the emergence of democracy, laws like the South African Schools Act of 1996 were passed (TSA, 1996), decision making in schools has been completely decentralised. Drastic changes that signalled the democratisation process in education included parent and community participation; school admission and language policies determined by individual schools; and greater financial decision-making power by local schools. In addition, South African principal preparation programmes have been labelled as contextually irrelevant as they were found to neither relate to nor address the needs of the participants (see Section 2.2).

It is unwise to leave principal development and training to a trial-and-error approach because, in the absence of contextualised training, this could further increase stress and impact school leaders' well-being (Mestry, 2017:1). The growth of school leaders needs to be deliberate (Bush, 2008:125). The principalship has been described as inherently challenging, stressful, and complex, and combined with decision-making in troubling times like the COVID-19 pandemic, can lead to an increase in the pressures and difficulties faced by school leaders in managing and governing their schools (Mestry, 2017:2).

This exposure to constant pressure can negatively affect the well-being and functioning of school principals. "Strange", "unpredictable", and "inherently stressful" were terms used to describe the current leadership atmosphere in schools. There is no straightforward model for management during times of crisis (Harris, 2020:2), and abrupt and persistent shifts in education policy and the onset of crises in the educational leadership and management space call for specific and adaptable coping strategies.

School principals in the Tinara Circuit and elsewhere have experienced various challenges in the schools they lead (see Section.1.2.2). Despite having to adapt to these demanding situations, school principals are still expected to excel in school leadership. And be aware of

the processes and departmental procedures to be implemented and practised (Stone-Johnson & Miles-Weiner, 2020: 5).

The researcher reasons that continued professional support and mentoring are important for school principals of all levels, given the aforementioned challenges they face. Education leaders need to be flexible on a broad scale, considering that the principal's position is crucial for improving educational attainment and quality (Shava, Heystek & Chasara, 2021:118). According to Tahir *et al.* (2016:422), any school should have a high-capacity principal who prioritises education and anticipates having a skilled workforce for economic development. The evolving nature of the principalship highlights a real cause for concern about stress and pressure and their negative effects on leader wellness.

Mentoring has consistently gained acceptance as an essential strategy in professional development. Its success is attributed to it being an essential part of an ongoing career growth initiative, rather than a once-off occurrence or add-on process (Maphoto, 2016:81). The evolving nature of the principalship and continuous legislative reforms suggest that principals require ongoing career growth programmes to support their attempts to enhance schooling and re-energise their contribution to building and maintaining healthy learning communities. The continuous nature of professional development finds application in the definition provided by the DBE, which defines professional development as activities that are undertaken individually or collectively throughout the educator's career to improve professional and personal knowledge, understanding, and skills (DBE, 2015).

Participation in professional development can aid in student learning to meet school goals, including changing school leaders' professional practices, ideas, and knowledge (Mestry, 2017:3). Similar views concerning professional development are shared by Cunha *et al.* (2020:2) who argue that professional development improves principal leadership practices and has a ripple effect on many aspects of school management.

The continuous training of school leaders can be viewed as a revitalisation of skills, akin to a refresher course. This results in the evolution of development programmes into support systems for principals wanting to stay relevant with the current dynamics in which schools find themselves, including policy implementation and the cultivation of healthy and improved school environments (Rowland, 2017:1).

Furthermore, rather than fixed styles of principal development, it is suggested that leaders use a range of practices and approaches that are sensitive to their context and focus on constant improvement within their school communities.

Many authors share similar views on the complex environment and challenges in which the principalship currently finds itself (see Section 3.3). There is also agreement that continued growth and improved performance of schools are not possible in the absence of sound and strong leadership. The literature demonstrates that principals now have more and more challenging tasks as a result of ongoing educational reforms, making it critical for principals to continue their professional development (Cunha *et al.*, 2020:4; Mestry, 2017:8). The aforementioned conversation further confirmed that using a universal sizing approach to leadership learning is a bad idea because school principals have different contexts and needs. The reviewed literature suggests that school principals require resilience to lead in times of crisis and environments filled with challenges (Cunha *et al.*, 2020:10).

#### **1.2.4 Schools performing against the odds**

##### *1.2.4.1 Resilient schools*

In the Tinara Circuit in the Nelson Mandela Bay Metro, there is a dynamic and visible trend of some schools performing well in the final exams of Grade 12 despite the negative obstacles listed above (see Section 1.2.2). Tudor (2018:11) describes these schools as "schools against odds" or resilient schools, that can achieve despite the challenges facing principals, including learner alcohol and drug abuse, financial constraints, and a shortage of teachers. Despite these negative factors, resilient schools managed to perform consistently well for three consecutive years.

The principals of these resilient schools prevented these challenges from inhibiting the learners' and schools' performance. They demonstrated different styles of leadership, including providing Post Level 1 teachers with the opportunity to lead planning meetings and conversations on school change. Observation of one of the Tinara Circuit high schools during the preliminary study revealed a collaboration between the school and families, as parent meetings were well-attended and discussions were held on the condition of the school. This indicated that the principal got along well with the teachers and the parents of the school children. The researcher, however, wanted to learn more about the phenomena, and posed

the following queries concerning resilient schools: Why are they doing well? Is it because of their resilience despite the circumstances? Why and how did they become resilient?

A research study conducted by Christie and Potterton (1997:33) was the first to investigate the idea of resilient schools in South Africa. They examined the factors concerning why some schools excelled when different schools – often in the same community and subjected to the same environmental challenges – did not. That some school leaders were able to cope with unforeseen challenges, resolve adversities and show effective leadership (Shahrazad *et al.*, 2012:64) encouraged the researcher to examine the connection between resilience and empowering leadership behaviours and understand how some school leaders can overcome adversity and transform it into an opportunity for growth and development.

According to Christie and Potterton (1997: 32), resilient schools are defined as schools plagued by negative environmental dynamics, but whose leadership has been able to send the school on a trajectory of growth and improvement. Khumalo (2015:30) describes resilient schools as "schools that in adverse or difficult circumstances continue to function successfully." These schools have also been referred to in the literature as achieving success "against the odds" (Berkovich & Grinshtain, 2022:111:). In the part that follows, the idea of resilient leadership in against-the-odds schools will be covered.

#### 1.2.4.2 *Resilient leadership*

Heystek (2015:2) describes resilient leaders as "people who are not cracking because of stress from the numerous challenges they face and who would rather seek solutions than make excuses for failure ". According to Patterson, Goens, and Reed (2009:10), when faced with adversity, only resilient leaders can recover, learn from their mistakes, and progress developmentally and leaders who lack resilience abilities could easily turn into ineffective leaders. How some school leaders overcome severe environmental challenges and still perform well becomes a critical point, not only from a leadership perspective but also from a moral and ethical viewpoint, to empower others with similar conditions in their schools (Kamper, 2008:1).

The idea of resilient schools, which was described earlier, played a significant role in this research investigation because understanding the leadership behaviours of these schools' principals can help other school leaders in underperforming environments develop their leadership skills. The analysis that was conducted on resilient schools and leadership

practices will be explained in the second chapter of this thesis. Understanding resilient principals and their leadership practices in the same geographical environment as other schools in the Tinara Circuit provided an understanding of the motivations for their enhanced performance.

The study unearthed examples of best practices, which policymakers, districts, school principals and teachers can use to improve underperforming schools in the Tinara Circuit and elsewhere. Investigating the presence of extraordinarily efficient schools is not just a matter of scientific interest, but also an essential foundation for a sensible public policy toward educational development, according to Klitgaard and Hall (1973:3–4). Given the need to provide sustainable leadership development and training programmes, developing school principal resilience through the process of mentoring was viewed in the study as a strategy to achieve this.

#### 1.2.4.3 Resilient leadership practices

The literature defines leadership resilience differently from the general understanding of the concept. According to Allison-Napolitano (2014:14), leadership resilience is the ability to bounce back and guide others as well as oneself into unfamiliar confusing circumstances. This differs from ordinary resilience, which is defined as the ability to recover and resume one's previous course. Whilst overcoming trauma or adversity has been characterised as an act of personal resilience, leadership resilience is transformational and is more often associated with moving past a single negative event or a string of negative experiences (Ijames, 2022:24).

Ledesma (2014:2) suggests that leader resilience is defined as the measure by which one develops from, or is transformed as a result of, or despite, the adversity, and that it is not enough to survive or recover from adversity. This argument is supported in the literature by Riquelme, Pons and Ramon (2022:7) who state that it is crucial to acknowledge that resilient behaviour indicates a process of personal growth, rather than a return to the level of well-being before an unpleasant event.

### **1.2.5 Mentoring and development of resilience in school principals**

Even though several approaches have been proposed in South African literature for the leadership development of school leaders, mentoring was investigated in the study as the best option for fostering resilience. Mentoring is described as a process whereby learning takes place from an experienced person who has done the same work previously and imparts information and capacities to a young person who lacks experience (Bjekić, Stojković & Kuzmanović, 2016:346). Pankake and Beaty (2005:33) recognised relationships with mentors or other people in their individual and professional lives as a crucial tactic to overcome hardship and build resilience.

The researcher also noticed this phenomenon while speaking with the Tinara Circuit's principals. They explained their experiences of a more knowledgeable person who allowed them to grow by allowing them to lead, even if this was done informally. They described this support as faithful, caring and understanding. The development of strong relationships, therefore, was identified as an important source of strength and motivation for new principals in the absence of support from educational authorities in their leadership development journey.

Mentorship is defined by Mthiyane (2019:6) as a partnership in which a person with more experience and knowledge helps to mentor an inexperienced person to ensure his/her personal development in an individualised and personalised space. Mentoring has long been considered to play an integral part in the training and development of school leaders. Mentoring as a professional development strategy has been described as the cornerstone of an effective educational system (Mashaya, 2022:2386). To explicitly grow and develop school leaders with mentoring as a strategy for professional growth, the South African government's educational leaders in collaboration with regional institutions established and produced the Advance Diploma (School Leadership and Management).

The mentoring relationship has been described as an efficient and cost-effective way to prepare future leaders by developing their skills. Moreover, it can be used to help employees develop their careers, simplify increased responsibilities, build trust, learn and grow within an organisation (Napolitano, 2015:3). The motivation for school leaders to pursue mentorship is founded on the idea that being supported, new school leaders can gain confidence and develop their strategies for enhancing student performance (Msila, 2012:47). In South Africa, it is especially important to utilise mentorship, as the appointment of principals takes place

without their having received leadership and management training, with teaching experience as the only job requirement.

Consequently, the development of a resource pool of required leadership skills is established by someone who is familiar with the experiences of a novice principal, and who can provide a great deal of support on how to face obstacles and create creative solutions. For Vikaraman, Mansor and Hamzah (2017:157), tutoring and mentoring have become progressively critical methods of job-embedded leadership development in numerous nations throughout the world.

Several principals in the Tinara Circuit who participated in the study were already part of a district-supported mentoring programme, which included the study to determine whether it was successful.

### **1.3 Problem statement**

The problem that the study set out to investigate and solve was that of school principals operating in disadvantaged areas amidst severe challenges, which influence the effectiveness of schools, needing guidance to develop resilient leadership as part of the professional development strategies of the Department of Education. An initial review of the literature on various trends and theories for the development of resilience in leaders, although mentorship appeared to offer a solution to the problem, especially in the case of novice and experienced school principals. Consequently, the researcher looked into how school leaders perceived the professional development initiatives that were available to them in the Tinara Circuit of the Nelson Mandela Bay Metro District of Education, who experienced a challenging educational environment, to determine how resilience development through mentorship could upscale their leadership.

### **1.4 Research questions, aim and objectives**

#### *1.4.1 Research questions*

Based on the preliminary study which identified the challenges and circumstances with which experienced and novice school leaders in the Tinara Circuit of the Nelson Mandela Bay Metro District of education have to cope to ensure educational effectiveness, the following research questions were identified:

1. What is resilience in educational leadership, and why should it be an essential focus of the professional growth initiatives of school principals operating in disadvantaged areas amidst severe challenges, which influence the effectiveness of schools? What are the trends and theories in this regard?
2. What role can mentorship fulfill in the resilience development of novice and experienced school principals to ensure educational effectiveness against all odds?
3. What are the insights of experienced and novice school principals of secondary schools of the Tinaru Circuit of the Nelson Mandela Bay Metro District of Education concerning professional development, resilience in leadership and resilience development?
4. What recommendations can be made for resilience development as a professional development strategy in upscaling school leadership despite the challenges that modern-day school principals in the Tinaru Circuit experience?

#### 1.4.2 Research aim

Considering the statement of the problem and the aforementioned research questions, the study aimed to investigate the possibility of a leadership development programme that would build the resilience capacity of school principals using mentoring as a strategy.

#### 1.4.3 Research objectives

To realise the abovementioned aim and in light of the research questions, the following objectives were formulated:

1. To understand what resilience is and its importance in educational management and leadership
2. To investigate and understand the role that mentoring can play in the development of resilience in school principals
3. To consider school administrators' perceptions of the value of professional development and resilience
4. To make recommendations for developing resilience as part of the professional development of school principals

### **1.5 Theoretical framework**

The research literature on mentoring has been influenced by diverse theoretical paradigms, with no single paradigm integrating all aspects. In other respects, a particular mentoring theory is chosen in a study after taking into account its goals and objectives, and the study's



use of the theoretical framework is primarily motivated by practical factors. Regarding the present study, the resilience development of school leaders and theories of mentoring are combined in a theoretical framework, which to the researcher's knowledge has not been done before (see Section 1.2.1). Moreover, the study was grounded in three essential theories: social capital theory (SCT), social network theory (SNT) and the conservation of resources theory (COR). These three theories culminated in a framework for understanding the advantages of a mentor training programme for building leadership resilience.

The essential theoretical foundations of the SCT were developed by Bourdieu and Coleman (Romanowski, 2022:3). Since social capital is defined by its function, the theory of social capital compels an analysis of how mentors and mentees in mentoring relationships acquire knowledge and resources (Byars-Winston & Dahlberg, 2019:48). Even though a large portion of SCT argues that those outside of significant networks are not able to obtain knowledge that is crucial for success, it nonetheless provides a framework that capitalizes on advantages and experiences rather than deficiencies (Byars-Winston & Dahlberg, 2019:47). According to Byars-Winston and Dahlberg (2019:47), the main elements of social capital are: trustworthiness, expectations, and obligations; streams of information, or people to whom one can turn for information; norms and effective sanctions; and funds of knowledge, or the resources and experiences a person brings to a relationship.

Firstly, the SCT allowed consideration of the question: What skills, knowledge, attitudes, and values are necessary for mentee school principals to apply successful leadership practices to their challenging educational environments? The tenets of the SCT allowed for the understanding of the important resources that can be gained from the mentor-mentee relationship in the study. The mentees gained valuable resources from this relationship in the form of emotional development, greater self-confidence, an increase in self-efficacy beliefs, and increases and gains in leadership practices. These resources allowed principals to persevere in leading their schools under difficult circumstances.

Successful principal mentors understandingly need to have walked the path of principalship and be experienced enough to understand their challenges and experiences. Additionally, the SCT's guiding principles stress the value of the connection between the mentor and mentee for the growth of social capital and offer a structure that builds on resources and experiences that benefit both parties through cooperation and collaboration (Byars-Winston & Dahlberg, 2019:48).

The SCT also begs consideration of how the social network in the mentee-mentor relationship creates information and knowledge and makes the contribution of experiences from both parties valuable. This can inform the development of tailor-made mentoring programmes, as suggested in the recommendation section of the study (See Section 6.4). The SCT suggests that the mentor can learn new viewpoints and techniques from their interaction with a mentee. The study of the utilisation of information and resources by mentors and mentees within mentoring relationships is thus prompted by social capital theory (Romanowski, 2022:3).

Taliaferro and Flood (2014:220) suggest the following strategies for principals to develop their social capital: establishing interpersonal connections, joining network groups with strong connections to gain advantages, establishing new mentorship connections, and recognising and utilising existing connections. The literature has established the impact of social capital on learner achievement (Rogošic, & Baranovic, 2016:87).

The application of the second theoretical framework stems from SNT. This theory was chosen because of the researcher's opinions concerning the interconnectedness of human beings, and perceptions of the mentor-mentee relationship. The core tenets of this theory revolve around how social interactions spread information, direct media or personal influence, and promote behavioural or attitude change (Byars-Winston & Dahlberg, 2019:48).

The foundations of this theory are that resources, information and support can be exchanged in social relations, and provide a lens with which to analyse networking activities or professional interactions in various contexts, such as in a mentoring programme (Waes *et al.*, 2018:38). Furthermore, the resources gained in a relationship can be used to motivate and influence dynamics in other social environments. Thus, the experiences gained by the school principals can and should be beneficial to the educational environment they will return to. According to this theory, the mentee and mentor will adopt and develop a relationship depending on how they are linked, to what extent they are connected, and for what goal. This justifies the importance of this research project, as the value of developing school principal resilience extends beyond the mentoring programme itself.

The SNT emphasizes the significance of the bond between the mentor and the mentee, arguing that this connection must be significant and ongoing for mentoring to be beneficial and successful (Byars-Winston & Dahlberg, 2019:49). The SNT claims that mentoring can help mentees grow their self-efficacy perceptions, academic achievement, and sense of self-

worth. (Wilson, 2022:79). The mentee's experience in the mentoring programme thus becomes a lifelong resource from which they can draw any time such resources are required.

The last theoretical framework that found relevance in the study was the COR theory, which explains the connection between exposure to continued challenges and their effect on school principals' well-being. The literature surrounding COR theory indicates that the number of resources at an individual's disposal influences how effective he/she is at reducing stress and functioning at an optimal level in their day-to-day job.

This theory's fundamental tenet is that people must invest resources to earn additional resources, recoup losses, and protect against resource loss (Hobfoll et al., 2018:104). The acquisition of resources such as skills derived from mentorship not only helps to cope with immediate stress but also develops within them a sense of capability to meet stressful challenges, thus improving their self-efficacy belief. Furthermore, this enhances dedication, reignites passion and re-energises principals to fulfil their managerial and leadership responsibilities at their schools.

These resources help people achieve their needs, comply with employment standards, and advance their growth and development, acting as both internal and external motivators (Suan & Nasurdin, 2013:320). These resources are therefore likely to aid in the development of resilient behaviours, the capacity for resilience to be sustained in the face of difficulties and to become even more resilient. This theory would enable the researcher to comprehend the principals' increased enthusiasm and drive for creating a mentorship programme.

Another key principle of the COR theory posits that resources lost by a principal because of their constant exposure to challenges have a more devastating effect than resources gained. Hence, continued exposure to environmental challenges can have a devastating influence, not only on the performance of schools due to poor leadership but also on the mental health and other aspects of the lives of school leaders (Hobfoll *et al.*, 2018:105). The principal's emotions, practices, pressures from the job, and judgments from running the school may affect other areas of his or her existence, such as their obligations as a colleague, parent, or partner.

To help school leaders recover from the effects of these continued challenges, the mentoring relationship can be a relational, functional, recreational activity to refill energy reserves and restore self-efficacy beliefs. In this sense, the COR theory asserts that principals who can

recover resources lost via psychological growth outperform others in their leadership roles, reporting higher levels of job satisfaction and improved student achievement despite setbacks (Hansen, Buitendach & Kanengoni, 2015:2). This principle illuminates the dangers of appointing principals to positions that have not been trained in management and leadership before their appointment as school principals.

## **1.6 Overview of the research design and methodology**

A thorough explanation of the research design and methodology utilised in the study will be covered in Chapter 4. This section, however, gives an overview of the design and methodological choices that were made to address the research questions and objectives.

### **1.6.1 Research design**

A phenomenological research design was followed in the study to investigate the phenomenon of resilience, its influence on leadership practices in tough times and whether resilient leadership practices can be developed. According to Finlay (2008:8), the phenomenological inquiry "involves both extensive descriptions of the life world or lived experience." Thus, the researcher identifies the phenomenon, collects information in the form of perceptions of individuals and interprets them in terms of themes, thereby establishing an awareness of the nature of the encounter between individuals and the phenomenon.

The study's phenomenological design was chosen because it specified a research methodology that would help comprehend the distinctive experiences of school leaders who persevere despite persistent difficulties and evaluate whether their methods might be replicated and improved upon by others. The design offered a space where participants were encouraged to share their experiences from their points of view and allowed for an analysis of those encounters (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010:141).

#### **1.6.1.1 Research paradigm**

According to Scotland (2012:9), researchers need to determine and take a position on the nature of phenomena and how they operate. Thus, a research design needs to be underpinned by a paradigm or philosophical assumption. Researchers, according to Creswell et al. (2007:238), should focus their conclusions on philosophical considerations about the reality of things (ontology), the reasons why they understand what they do (epistemology),

the veracity of their beliefs (axiology), the efficacy of their study (methodology), and the writing style.

a) Ontological position: Constructivism

Constructivism proposes that people construct knowledge instead of passively gathering information. The principals involved in the study were given the freedom to express themselves, in their voice and words, thereby revealing the meaning they had constructed of their experiences (Anstee, 2019:46). This paradigm is typical of the postmodern tradition, which contends that people experience numerous realities in their lives and that these realities have an impact on how people interpret the environment in which they live (Van Vuuren, 2014:54). This is because there may be numerous conflicting but equally valid accounts of the world, where each participant constructs their meaning rather than simply discovering it (Gray, 2014:20).

b) Epistemological position: Interpretivism

As part of this research, each participant narrated an interpretation of resilience and resilient leadership practices based on his/her experience. Thus, the researcher adopted the paradigm of interpretivism owing to the philosophical position of the phenomenon being subjectively and linguistically interpreted (Schwandt, 2007:314-317). Therefore, interpretivism entails gaining an understanding of reality through the understanding and points of view of research participants based on their interpretations of their own lived experiences.

The study was founded on the epistemological premise that "knowing social reality demands understanding how practices and meanings are shaped and steered by both language behaviours and tacit standards set by people working towards a shared purpose" as argued by Andrade (2009:44). The study thus attempted to understand participants' practices through their interpretation of their actions taken to ensure learner performance and cope within a school environment plagued with challenges.

### **1.6.2 Research methodology**

In line with the phenomenological research design and the paradigms of constructivism and interpretivism explained above, to address the research questions and achieve the study objectives, a qualitative research design was used in the study. Gay, Mills and Airasian

(2014:16) clarify that the focal point of a qualitative research methodology is to provide an interpretation of a social environment or event from the participants' viewpoint. As a result, it made it possible for the researcher to comprehend how the principals view resilience and resilient leadership techniques.

A qualitative methodology allows for an increased understanding of participants' experiences as perceived and expressed (Vosloo, 2014:328). Quantitative approaches, which collect numerical data that is statistically analysed, do not make it possible or are not as effective at providing an in-depth explanation of a phenomenon as qualitative methods, which allow the investigator to gather rich material in the form of words (Higenyi, 2017:74).

In summary, the study applied a qualitative methodology based on the following:

- By obtaining verbal data on the perceptions of the participants, the study examined the idea of resilience in the context of school leadership.
- The study was able to acquire a thorough understanding of leadership strategies that encourage resilience by gathering and analysing verbally rich data.
- The verbal data on the participants' perceptions were collected in their natural settings through the application of qualitative research techniques like interviews.

#### *1.6.2.1 Data collection method*

The study's school principal participants were interviewed in semi-structured interviews to gather in-depth information to answer the study's research questions and objectives. Interviews were conducted with principals of underperforming schools. Only underperforming school leaders were chosen as they did not meet the 60 % threshold pass mark for schools in grade 12 final examinations and were part of the mentoring programme initiated by the DBE. Their inclusion served the objective of creating a development program and making recommendations based on the study to help underperforming school leaders improve their leadership and management techniques.

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007:221) claim that in semi-structured interviews, an interview schedule is used, but it should rather be a guide, and the interview should follow the train of thought of the interviewee rather than a strict order of questions.

The semi-structured interviews were conducted in person. The research questions served as the basis for the interview questions and dealt with mentoring, leadership, professional

development, resilience and the possible connection between these concepts. Several additional predetermined questions stemming from the research questions were included in the interview schedule to clarify uncertainties. Open-ended questions were asked so that participants could speak their minds freely. The interviews were audio-recorded using a tape recorder with the respondents' consent to enable efficient data gathering. In addition, the researcher made observational notes documenting the non-verbal language of interviewees during the proceedings.

#### 1.6.2.2 *Sampling*

In the study, participants were chosen using a selective sample technique based on the researcher's perspective of how insightful their responses to the interview questions would be. Ritchie, Lewis, Nicholls and Ormston (2014:117) maintain that information-rich participants will offer useful embodiments of the phenomena of interest and thus sampling in qualitative research should be based on participants "explaining the phenomenon, not [the need for] an empirical generalisation" which is the case in quantitative research. Schwandt (2007:269) argues that participants should be chosen not for their representativeness of the target population, as in quantitative research, but for their relevance to the research questions, theoretical context and interpretation required by a qualitative study. Mertens (2005:12) notes that researchers working according to an interpretive paradigm often use purposive sampling.

Owing to their "suitability to serve research purposes", the schools were, thus, purposefully and non-randomly selected for the study (Rule & John, 2011:64). The participants included principals from the Tinara Circuit who had been employed as principals for three to five years. Selected schools had to fulfil the basic criteria of being underperforming schools in the same circuit. In addition, principals of these schools should not have had pre-appointment leadership and management training.

#### 1.6.2.3 *Data analysis*

Nieuwenhuis (2007:99-100) views qualitative data analysis as a continuous and iterative process interconnecting data collection, storage, assessment and reporting, instead of a successive process. This view of data analysis served as a working guideline for the study. Data analysis was conducted by applying Tesch's method, as described by Creswell (2009:186) and discussed in Chapter 4 of this study (see Section 4.3.3). This included subject

classification, the use of class coding, and the introduction of themes. Before analysis, tape-recorded interviews with principals in the Tinarra Circuit were translated and transcribed verbatim.

### **1.7 Significance of the research**

The significance of the study is that it affirmed that school principals require targeted training and development to have a better chance of professional success (Wiehahn, 2016:112). Moreover, the increased attention paid to and the greater intensity and complexity of the role of a school principal contributed to the recognition and understanding of not only school leadership challenges but also the strategies used by resilient leaders to manage them. Therefore, the study provided a degree of "insight into how effective leaders use both positive and negative circumstances as learning opportunities and methods to overcome adversity" (Pankake & Beaty, 2005:175). The knowledge of resilient leadership practices gained may serve as motivation to leaders of underperforming schools to reproduce these practices to improve the outcomes of their schools.

New initiatives, including principal preparation and development programmes to build leadership capacity to function effectively in 21st schooling environments, are needed in South Africa (Naicker, 2014:3). The study outlines a new initiative whereby school leadership and the context/culture in which it is exercised are bound in a "dynamic and iterative" relationship (Hallinger, 2016:7). This relationship could be successful if principals were not only resilient in the face of a challenging school environment but also open to its being an opportunity for growth. This initiative would be implemented as a mentorship programme and could assist new and current principals in understanding the complexities and challenges associated with their roles and how they could practice resilient leadership practices to cope with them.

The study was a significant one, as few studies have focused on the development of leadership resilience practices that could assist principals in surviving turbulent environments and adjusting to their role as school leaders (see Section 1.1 and .2.2). Castro, Kelly and Shih, (2010:622) argue that resilience enhancement is necessary for both new leaders and those who become vulnerable to conditions, conflicts, and problems affecting them.

According to Morales (2010:165), understanding the driving force behind resilience in principals would give us insight into how schools facing challenges perform unexpectedly



well, thereby discovering how leaders could be taught resilience to ensure the improved performance of their schools. Understanding, isolating and documenting proven methods used by effective school leaders confronted with ongoing environmental difficulties might persuade school authorities to commit to continual improvement by focusing on school leadership development.

Gillet, O'Donoghue and Clarke (2016:592) suggest that when effective leadership styles are recognised in complex and diverse contexts, other leaders can be supported in responding effectively to their school challenges by adopting the same methods. To the author's knowledge, to date, no reported study has identified the relationship between principals' leadership practices and resilience, or whether resilient leadership practices can be developed and enhanced specifically in the educational sector (see Section 1.1 and 2.2). The study, therefore, contributed to filling the gap in the literature.

### **1.8 Ethical considerations**

The researcher adhered to the necessary ethical principles in conducting the study. Permission was obtained from the Eastern Cape Department of Education (ECDOE) to conduct the research and voluntary informed consent was obtained from the school principals who took part in the study (see Appendix B). Furthermore, the researcher gained permission from the schools' governing bodies. As the study was carried out in an educational setting, ethical approval had to be obtained from the Ethics Committee of the Department of Education at the University of South Africa (see Appendix A).

Other ethical considerations considered during the research included confidentiality, anonymity, non-maleficence and beneficence. According to Badampudi, Fotrousi Cartaxo, and Usman (2022:3), anonymity entails avoiding gathering information that can be used to identify or track an individual or organisation, while confidentiality refers to keeping information secret from all parties outside of the core research team. Non-maleficence is defined as the researcher's obligation not to harm others or act in a way that causes harm Haahr, Norlyk, and Hall (2014:10). The researcher was open about the research procedure and was upfront with participants about the study's objectives and motivations to ensure objectivity in the investigation.

Beneficence refers to the researcher's behaviour that could benefit participants. The researcher promised to uphold ethical standards by respecting and not violating the rights of

the participants. He, therefore, informed participants of the potential benefits of the study to them as well as the educational authorities. In addition, the researcher adhered to the foundations of beneficence by respecting the independence of the participants.

## **1.9 Trustworthiness of the research**

To assure the reliability of the data through triangulation, semi-structured interviews were used as a method of data collection. The idea of triangulation, according to Willis, Jost, and Nilakanta (2007:219), "is to locate numerous sources of confirmation before the researcher [can] draw conclusions" based on the study's findings. In the study, methodological triangulation was ensured by using semi-structured interviews and member checking. The literature was utilised as an additional information source. Member checking, whereby participants checked that the transcriptions of the data they had provided were accurate, also contributed to triangulation.

The study also adhered to Guba and Lincoln's (2005:24) guidelines for credibility in the naturalist context of qualitative research, which they define as "credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability" (see Section 4.4).

## **1.10 Limitations and delimitations of the research**

### ***1.10.1 Limitations***

Limitations are the dynamics of a study that cannot be controlled by the researcher. Marshall and Rossman (2011:76) note that the shortcomings of a study might be that a researcher cannot make definitive assumptions about the generalisability or conclusiveness of what he/she has discovered. This may be the case with the current qualitative study which may not be repeatable, as another researcher may not be able to use the same participants and using other participants may produce different findings. A broader discussion of the limitations of the study will be undertaken in Chapter 4.

### ***1.10.2 Delimitations***

Delimitations are the features that outline a study's parameters and define its scope. These, to a certain extent, are within the researcher's control. The current study was purposively conducted in only one setting with a few participants whose experiences were investigated. In addition, the following should be noted:

- Only principals who had thrived or failed in challenging conditions participated in the study.
- Semi-structured interviews were the main data collection method, and to a lesser extent, member checking was used for further insight.
- The study investigated a specific group and a specific professional development programme for school principals.

### **1.12 Structure of the thesis**

There are six chapters in this thesis. By defining the research study's significance, relevance, and scope in the first chapter, the stage was set for the investigation. It discussed the context of the issue, the importance of the research, the research problem, and its goals.

The second chapter will provide a thorough analysis of the literature on resilience, resilient leadership, and how these concepts are used (or not) in the field of education. The definition of resilience will be discussed and a critical examination of research on resilience and resilient leadership practices will be undertaken, particularly concerning the well-being of school principals and its relevance to teachers. Thus, Chapter 2 will address the first research objective, which was to understand resilience and its importance in educational management and leadership

The third chapter will present an overview of the literature regarding mentoring and its value in the development of resilience in schools. Chapter 3 will therefore address the second research objective, which was to investigate and understand the role that mentoring can play in the development of resilience in school principals.

The fourth chapter will explain the research design and methodology, indicating the role of phenomenology, constructivism, interpretivism and qualitative approaches in the study. The processes for sampling, gathering data, and analysing that data will be thoroughly described. Additionally, the trustworthiness, ethicality, limitations and delimitations of the research will be addressed.

The fifth chapter will present, interpret and discuss the findings of the analysis of the data gathered from the school principals in a framework of themes. Chapter 5 will thus address the third research objective, which was to consider school administrators' perceptions of the value of professional development and resilience.

The final chapter will summarise the findings and conclusions. The limitations of the study will be discussed in detail and the relevance of the research and its contribution to the literature highlighted. Moreover, Chapter 6 will address the fourth research objective, which was to make recommendations for developing resilience as part of the ongoing professional development of school principals.

### **1.13 Summary and conclusion**

The thesis and the study were introduced in this chapter. The study's background, problem statement, research questions, aim and objectives, research design and methodology, limitations and delimitations, reliability, ethical considerations, significance, and key concepts used throughout the thesis were among the important aspects of the study that were explained.

As key players in the efficient operation of their schools and agents of change in the implementation of government policy, the study concentrated on mentoring in the professional development of school principals. The success of any policy depends on whether the policy is understood and whether its implementers have been equipped to carry out their mandate. Principals have described the existing preparation programme as inadequate to prepare them to implement the policies formulated for 21<sup>st</sup>-century South African schools, which requires principals who are properly equipped to deal with such challenges.

The study ultimately aimed to formulate submissions in light of the research outcomes for the development of school principal resilience using mentoring as a professional development strategy.

In the next chapter, the definition, origin, presence and value of resilience in the context of educational management and leadership will be discussed.

## CHAPTER 2

### RESILIENCE IN EDUCATION: A PANACEA FOR TURBULENCE IN 21<sup>ST</sup>-CENTURY SCHOOL PRINCIPAL LEADERSHIP?

#### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter will address the first research question: What is resilience in educational leadership, and why should it be an essential focus of the professional growth initiatives of school principals operating in disadvantaged areas amidst severe challenges, which influence the effectiveness of schools? What are the trends and theories in this regard?

The importance of resilience development in educational leaders has been highlighted by the current complexities brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic, creating an unprecedented shift in education. The educational landscape in South Africa and elsewhere in the world has abruptly changed, as leader decision-making has been influenced by emergency policy interventions intricately linked with other sectors of government. The mental, psychological, and emotional shift brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic was extremely challenging for school principals, teachers, and other school stakeholders. This situation was uncertain and volatile, regularly creating new opportunities and challenges, with decision-making based on constantly evolving scientific knowledge (Burns, 2020:2).

To lead and govern schools, principals were suddenly faced with difficult problems that needed quick, creative answers. In a setting where cooperation and collaboration, especially with parents, become essential to adjusting to the new uncertainty and complexity, education became secondary to the priority of ensuring the safety of teachers and students. Principals were confronted with significant leadership issues, such as how to maintain successful joint decision-making based on new facts, evolving patterns, varying scientific knowledge, and considerable uncertainty (Ramalingam, Wild & Ferrari, 2020:2). Amongst the most difficult decisions that school principals must take are the effective prevention of risks for students, support staff, and stakeholders of the school, the type of leader needed in these times is creative, innovative, and inspiring (Van Breda, 2021:83).

In this protracted crisis with severe consequences and complexities, it was important for principals to exercise effective leadership and management in schools, requiring physical, psychological, and emotional resilience (Van Slyke, Brunell, & Simons:2020:1). D'Auria and

De Smet (2020:2) conclude that what leaders needed during the crisis was not a predefined action strategy, but habits and actions that will keep them from overreacting and being influenced by uncontrollable events, thus enabling them to look forward. Similarly, Ramalingam, Wild and Ferrari (2020:1) conclude that this challenging environment required adaptive leadership skills, flexibility and accountability in learning collaborative decision-making mechanisms, and trust with community groups and peers. People look to their leaders during uncertain times for guidance on what to do, what to anticipate, and where to go. Leaders that are trustworthy, courageous, and not afraid to make difficult choices are needed in these trying times.

The present crisis in education is greatly exacerbated by pre-pandemic challenges and complexities. The position of the principalship in South Africa was, to a large extent, preceded by the implementation of major democratic legislation reforms in South Africa after 1994. Included in the education reform legislation were the following requirements: increased levels of accountability and responsibility for school and learner improvement; the implementation of centralised national learning standards; the decentralisation of school management; and the participation of parents and other interested parties in the school's decision-making processes.

However, these legislative changes together with the irrelevance of current principal training programmes and the exposure of school principals to constant challenges may have serious effects on the emotional and psychological well-being of school principals (Kirori & Dickinson, 2020:1). This view is supported by Van Slyke, Brunelle and Simons (2020:2) who argue that leaders will fail to retain their fortitude through a protracted crisis that affects their institutions, societies, families, and themselves.

Performance-based accountability mechanisms have profoundly affected the expectations imposed on school administrators. Principals working to meet these expectations were left little space for leadership as there was no scope to show professional discretion or flexibility in their everyday work (Thessin & Seashore Louis, 2020:40). This view was echoed by Pollock, Wang and Hausman in earlier work on how the position and responsibilities of the school principal have shifted (2014:3). Pollock *et al.* (2014) concluded that school leaders require a sufficient capacity to recover from exposure to persistent challenges, limited and irrelevant support from the department of education, disruptions, and difficulties, as well as to contend with less than satisfactory work environments. The use of appropriate methods to

address obstacles despite the difficulty of one's position is often referred to as resilience. Ledesma (2014:6) emphasises the difficulties and complexity of the job of a school principal and says that resilience is a crucial skill for school leaders because it helps them stay the course, adapt, and succeed.

However, amid chaos, fear, uncertainty, and often insufficient resources in many South African schools, it is expected that principals still be at the forefront of maintaining order and leadership. In this time of uncertainty, persistent contextual challenges, and economic gloom as a consequence of COVID-19, resilient education leaders have become imperative to sustain cohesion and meet departmental objectives. Wescott (2018:39) opined that resilience will occur when school principals use their protective factors to successfully overcome the risks and challenges to which they have been exposed. However, Kuntz, Näswall & Malinen (2016:457) warn that limiting resilience as a response to stress-induced instances will only weaken it as a concept and its ability to be developed and implemented in both a stable and a crisis setting.

Amongst the core questions to be addressed in this literature review is whether resilience will allow school principals to work effectively and productively in the face of ongoing challenges. Continuing professional development has been identified as a requirement, and resilience as a professional development tool can play a significant role in encouraging school leaders to support departmental strategies, curriculum objectives, and accountability mechanisms. Resilient leadership and management will allow principals to create stability in their schools, therefore developing a space that is appropriate for both teaching and learning that can lead to school improvement and better learner performance.

Disruption, uncertainty, and constant change are an inevitability when employed in the position of a school principal. Principals, therefore, need to be ready to lead and manage situations, as well as be prepared for the fluid nature of school environments. In a study by Offutt (2011:10), it was found that principals whose leadership skills included resilience were able to withstand negative criticism, setbacks at work, disgruntled teachers, uncooperative parents, and community environments that are dangerous to children.

This literature review aims to describe resilience studies and their relationship to school principal leadership and how resilience can affect and improve the governance and managerial styles of the principals exposed to ongoing challenges. Moreover, it will

concentrate on the elements of resilience that are essential to school leaders, allowing them to address relentless challenges, ever-changing demands, and a dynamic mix of relationships with various stakeholders within the legislative framework of the new democratic dispensation.

The research was undertaken to promote the preparation and growth of the resilient potential of new and seasoned school principals. Studying resilience and creating connections with the leadership potential of school principals could lay the groundwork for the future development of principals to help them address the various difficulties with which they are faced and strengthen the standard of education of children in the Nelson Mandela Bay Metropolitan Area.

## **2.2 Demands of the principalship and need for the development of resilience**

Strengthening the resilience of school principals might allow them to deal with obstacles and uncertainties and effectively lead in an ever-changing world. Therefore, the rationale for the development of resilience in school principals has gained increasing attention among educational researchers in recent years (Simon & Gibson, 2019:1).

There are multiple reasons, why resilience is needed in South African school leaders today, including the constant challenges to which principals are exposed (see Section 1.2.2). The challenging nature of principalship has been aggravated by the unintended consequences of the reform legislation introduced by the first democratic government in 1994. These include increased accountability demands, increased workload and having to engage in multiple professional relationships, which might affect the emotional well-being of principals. Mestry (2017:258) contends that the implementation of reform and policy for educational change has placed school principals in a complex and difficult context. Principals face new challenges, more difficult choices, and more complex roles than ever before. Apart from these complexities, Pasmore *et al.* (2020:4) find the growth of resilience will enable leaders to overcome tension, difficulties, and setbacks, which are seen as part of living, thereby leading to deeper self-knowledge, increased openness and compassion, greater tolerance and new life insights. Day (2014:641) promotes the need for leadership flexibility as an imperative attribute due to the diversity, intensity, and difficulty of environments populated by principals.

Despite the positive aims of the reform legislation, the significant policy change in the South African education sector discussed earlier was not accompanied by the required



strengthening of school principals' ability to sustain and implement these policies (Bhengu & Myende, 2016:2). Moreover, Cornelissen (2016:30) argues that a mismatch was generated between the political demands of the position of the school principal and the necessary skills required to enforce policies, which resulted in a decline in the safety and well-being of school principals.

The current state of the South African educational sector still does not require school principals to possess any training in leadership and management (Romanowski, 2022:410). However, the department of education has made a reasonable effort to formalise and professionalise the appointment of school principals in South Africa through the conception of the Advance Diploma (School Leadership and Management), which was implemented and presented after consultation with regional universities and various other stakeholders (RSA, 2018:2). This poses a major problem, as unqualified leaders and administrators are called upon to reform the entire education system and embrace a democratic ethos in their schools without any appropriate experience or qualifications. In addition, Mathibe (2007:523) argues that the appointment of teachers to the position of school head despite lacking leadership and management skills is comparable to placing 'technically unqualified' people in positions of great responsibility. The recruitment of school principals without the requisite qualifications or experience in leadership and management has been argued to be directly responsible for the failure and underperformance of learners in matric exams in South African schools (Mestry 2017:259).

South African school settings such as the Tinaru Circuit are marked by several difficulties, as illustrated in Chapter 1 (see Section 1.2.2) of this research. Such difficulties and obstacles affect principals' sense of self-efficacy and the capacity to manage schools efficiently (Delpont, 2020:3). Delpont (2020:3) further contends that the inability to solve these difficulties successfully may result in feelings of powerlessness on the part of the principal, particularly when difficulty is encountered in obtaining the support and cooperation of key school stakeholders. Constant exposure to difficult conditions without the requisite coping capacity can lead to detrimental effects on the mental and psychological well-being of school principals (Louw, Bayat & Eigelaar-Meets, 2011:79). According to Kuntz (2015:3), leaders who are constantly faced with difficulties may suffer from exhaustion and job burnout.

An important justification for the resilience training of school principals is that principal preparation, training and development initiatives in schools in South Africa have been

described as contextually irrelevant and inadequate in preparing school principals to deal with the challenges in their environments (Ngcobo, 2012:425). It is only through pre-appointment quality training and continued professional advancement that school principals would be aided in solving the complexities and challenges in schools today (Martin, 2017:8). Relevant professional development, as indicated by Shantal, Halttunen, and Pekka (2015: 29), is crucial to allow principals to keep up with the contemporary dynamics of school environments and to be self-assured when confronting future difficulties.

The final factor highlighting the importance of the growth of resilience in school principals stems from principals having to come back from challenging situations just to go back to work and face ongoing stressful and continuously demanding days. Thus, school leaders need to lead positively in the way they want their school to adapt to change and challenges. According to Zeisner (2016:16), school principals need resilience to allow them to demonstrate a positive way of interacting with other school stakeholders, including teachers, learners, and leaders of school governing bodies. Research by Franken (2019:98), found that a leader with a supportive influence in coping with a challenging situation was more resilient and received greater respect and admiration which can lead to resilience in other employees as well. This process is termed “follower resilience” in the literature and finds relevance when a principal wants to effect any change or implement government policy effectively. By leading by example, the principal makes sure to take advantage of every opportunity to demonstrate to staff members, students, parents, and the community their deep commitment to the school's beliefs, aspirations, and goals. The more school principals are viewed as capable, the more others become more open and driven to follow them. Much of a school principal's leadership performance is related to how they lead the school. Martin, Liao and Campbell (2013:1377) conclude that a leader's effectiveness is improved when employees feel happy with their leader.

Outlining the above factors indicates the complex and challenging environment in which principals have to lead and manage in South Africa today. Such aspects harm the well-being of the principals, as suggested by the participants of the preliminary study who suggested that these problems were what kept them awake at night. The lack of a viable long-term training and development plan for school principals in South Africa other than the Advanced Certificate of Education (ACE) plan, and replaced by the AdvDip (SLM) exacerbates the situation. The ACE programme has been criticised as being inadequate and contextually

unrelated to the needs of participating school principals (Bush, Kiggundu & Moorosi, 2011:31). Efforts to remedy the current situation have been made in terms of reconstructing the training and development of school leaders in the form of the AdvDip (SLM) - an NQF Level 7.

Without adequate training, principals' preparation for their role is left to a trial-and-error method at best. In some cases, ad-hoc one- or two-day workshops are offered by district offices for skills development following their appointment as principals. Comments made by principals in the preliminary study indicated signs of frustration, being left with severe challenges, and being unable to cope with the demands for improved performance and entrenched accountability measures with which they are faced.

Day (2014:639) argues that sustainability, an increase in accountability, and demands for school improvement, without considering the school principals' capacity and willingness to change, miss the point completely. One of the key objectives of this research is to develop the resilience capacity of school principals as a professional development strategy in the hopes of providing them with much-needed psychological capital to weather the stormy seas in which they find themselves. The researcher supports the school of thought advocating the crucial role that a school principal plays in the leadership and management of a school.

The researcher believes that there is a strong enough rationale based on the information above and hence an urgent need for school principals to strengthen their capacity and develop collective strategies for building personal resilience, building resilient schools, and better the achievement rates of their schools, especially within the Tinara Circuit in the Nelson Mandela Bay Metropolitan Area. This capacity-building can, in turn, assist them in coping with and managing their stressful work environment.

A variety of research on resilience in South Africa has been undertaken in the social sciences, social work, and medical fields, but none has dealt with the growth and development of school principal resilience (see Section 1.1). Furthermore, resilience in the context of educational leadership has not been fully defined in the literature and has been described as a relative, evolving and dynamic social construct (Olmo-Extremera *et al.*, 2022:2). Therefore, the study aimed to fill the gap in the literature on the development of leadership resilience of principals of schools in South Africa.

## **2.3 Historical context and developing a definition of resilience**

### **2.3.1 Developing a definition of resilience in educational leadership**

Educational leadership and management resilience have not distinctively evolved from their initial origins in the fields of psychology and psychiatry, which linked resilience to the positive growth of individuals considered at risk due to adverse circumstances (Mansfield *et al.*, 2012:358). Moreover, according to Mansfield *et al.* (2012:358), these unfavourable circumstances in educational leadership include professional job issues such as increased workloads, being unprepared, lacking assistance, and lacking resources.

It is thus the field of psychological studies that has boosted the visibility of the resilience construct and moved it into the spotlight of current research. The study relied on international studies to highlight the significance of resilient leadership as a contributor to educational improvement, particularly in schools facing adversity, as this emerging area is still understudied in research specifically related to the South African educational system (Chapman *et al.*, 2020:60).

The concept of resilience in educational leadership or implementation thereof in terms of school leaders has not been completely formulated or established in the literature as set out by Wescott (2018:30). As a result, much of the latest literature on leadership resilience is both borrowed and very recent. An in-depth analysis of the vastness of the field and the historical development of resilience is beyond the scope of this research.

Before defining resilience as applied to educational leadership, it is important to acknowledge the fluid nature of the definition; the commonalities that need to be present for resilience to exist; whether resilience is a trait or a process; whether resilience can be developed and increased; and which important elements encourage the growth of resilience in school principals. The bulk of the South African research into resilience stems from social and health sciences and follows the international trend of the definition of resilience varying depending on the field of study (Tau, 2015:24). According to Van Breda (2018:2), the concept of resilience is viewed differently by different authors.

Resilient educational leadership is described by Ozmusul (2017:19) as a school leader's capacity to address both internal and external challenges that the school may face by creating various effective solutions, given the fact that many non-ideal circumstances affect the

institution. The conceptualisation of resilience does not dispute reality and the limits set by reality but instead encourages the use of resilience ability to concentrate on seeking solutions to problems at hand (Hadden, 2019:4).

Henderson and Milstein (2003:7), provide an operational explanation of resilience in education as "the capacity to bounce back, regenerate, efficiently respond despite circumstances of adversity, and develop emotional, learning, and professional skills while being subject to extreme stress/challenges or merely to the tension innate in today's educational environment." This is the characterisation that was selected as most relevant in this research study

Educational leadership and management resilience may refer to the willingness of school principals in the Tinara Circuit to endure, resolve and conquer the difficulties they face in the daily managing of their schools, and to expand and improve in the process, even in the absence of consistent capacity building assistance from the Department of Education and a lack of previous leadership experience. This conceptualisation of resilience according to Hodliffe (2014:7) is described as transformational, enabling positive growth to be stimulated and leaders to reach a new level of being contrasting the way they were in the face of challenging circumstances or crises. Leader resilience is demonstrated when other leaders under similar circumstances, often in the same geographical area as the Tinara district, not only recover but also grow stronger when confronted with adversity.

In the following section, whether resilience is a trait or a process will be explored.

### **2.3.2 Resilience – a trait or process?**

Apart from the differences in the definition of resilience, another major discrepancy in the literature is the definition of resilience in terms of traits or processes. Throughout the literature, disagreement over the definition of resilience can be attributed to divergent views on resilience as a trait or a process (Marinova, 2017:28). Resilience developed as an attribute as a result of something inside individuals helping them to overcome the unfavourable odds of their environment (Van Breda, 2018:8). However, the shortcomings with this definition of resilience in literature is that no meaning is given to the presence or effect of the environment on the person. This conceptualisation disregards how circumstance affects a person's capacity for resilience as well as their ability to respond with resilience at the moment (Baker, Baker & Burrell, 2021:3). According to Baker et al. context-specific assessments of a person's

capacity to overcome obstacles and recover from failure play a significant role in the context of giving the training to enhance resilience (2021:3). The quality of relationships and adaptive mean-making have been identified in the literature as some of the greatest enablers of resilience (Van Breda, 2021:83). Adaptive mean-making is defined by Van Breda (2021:83) as the capacity to make sense of adversity in ways that enable one to move forward, through or around our difficulties.

Through conceptualising resilience as a personality trait, there is a risk of underestimating internal and external contributing factors (Ungar, 2011:2). In a leadership and management context, with resilience conceived as a trait, the school principal would direct the school towards a sustainable performance supported only by their own human potential or personality traits. Consequently, those who support trait resilience define resilience as a personality trait that aids in coping with adversity and achieving successful adaptation (Hu, Zhang & Wang, 2015:18).

As resilience research has advanced, less emphasis has been placed on the idea of resilience as a static concept and more emphasis has been placed on the varied and multifaceted factors that contribute to resilience (Fletcher & Sarkar, 2013:15). According to the process-based perspective on resilience, engagement between adversity, the person, the outcome, and the environment is a phenomenon that contributes to resilience (Pangallo et al., 2015:1). This idea also exemplifies the fundamental similarity of the definition of resilience, which is that it necessitates risk or adversity and a later successful outcome. For resilience to manifest, negative life circumstances or stressors to which the individual responds and adapts favourably, need to be present (Theron, 2012:334), thus facilitating an interactive process whereby environment and relationships cooperate with the individual to produce situations of resilience (Pangallo *et al.*, 2015:1).

Resilience conceptualises the positive transition or regeneration of the school principal after being subjected to risk, hardship, and day-to-day difficulties at the workplace. This understanding of resilience recognises that the individual does not exist in a vacuum, but rather is impacted by and, in some ways, influences the environment in which they are situated. The current study drew heavily on this theory of resilience because of its central tenant that resilience can be developed and enhanced, which will be discussed in the ensuing section.

## **2.4 Enhancement, growth and development of resilience**

Marinova (2017:32) poses the following question on resilience research: "If resilience is not a set attribute of magic that requires exceptional qualities, can we then build resilience through training?" This question found relevance in the current research, as one of the objectives was the exploration of building resilience capital and capacity of school principals. This section will discuss the evidence, empirical and otherwise, that one can develop and learn to be resilient.

A significant and increasing body of literature has analysed and proposed many benefits of improving resilience in persons and their working environments. Barton *et al.* (2020:1) claim that resilience is an attitude to leadership and management that allows people to perform well under difficult circumstances. According to Mansfield *et al.* (2016:83), understanding the resilience process can encourage a feeling of urgency in trying times and motivate leaders to take action rather than focus on their limitations. Besides, Simmons (2011:32) suggests that recognising causes that improve and increase the resilience of individuals has the benefit of adding to the understanding and appreciation of the problem. This can contribute to the enhancement of leadership and, in turn, its sustained efficiency and effectiveness. Understanding the important role resilience plays in the lives of overworked school principals is justified if it can be developed in others.

Mendy, Stewart and Van Akin (2020:30) claim that resilience, or the capacity to stay solid in the middle of uncertainty and transition, is a strength that can be developed and strengthened. The findings of various studies supported the idea that resilience may be developed through deliberate growth and learning (Djalante, Shaw & De Wit, 2020:2). Studies by Masten and Reed (2005:85) concluded that resilience could be developed through strategies based on asset-, risk-, and process-focused solutions that are relevant and unique to the workplace.

There is plenty of proof to back up the assertion that people can become resilient through training and development (Gaussoin-Radcliffe, 2021:31). Past studies (Carluccio & Ní Bhreasail, 2019:20; Sarkar & Fletcher, 2016:9) have provided proof that resilience can be improved by providing tailored resources to help people deal with difficult situations, ranging from common issues such as complaints to significant life-changing events. Similarly, Stephens (2013:126) claims that resilience may be grown or improved at any point in a person's life. This varies greatly from previous conceptions of resilience as a psychological

characteristic that individuals are born with. Further examples in research by Wei and Taormina (2014:35) and Kim and Windsor (2015:22) support the notion that resilience can be trained and developed in people. Marinova's (2017:27) research indicates that resilience can be improved by preparation and that there is a strong reason to assume that at least certain resilience abilities can be learned and developed over the lifespan of a human. Thorne (2015:3) also describes resilience as a teachable capability.

The idea that resilience can be taught has become important for educational leadership. One of the most crucial elements in supporting healthy adaptation after exposure to traumatic events and persistent problems is resilience, according to research conducted by (Mealer et al 2014:98). Thwaite (2022:205) argues that resilience is a developmental process and learning how to enhance resilience amid challenges and disruptions will help organisations deal with the challenges they face. However, Wuest and Subramaniam (2021:9) caution that in the search to develop resilience capability, individuals need to pay attention to the nuances of their interactions, listen to their feelings, and be able to learn from failure and performance.

Davis and Mumby (2021:3) support the notion that resilience is a beneficial leadership ability, particularly in the face of heightened pressures, uncertainty and continuity in leadership, such as that of the COVID-19 pandemic. Research in other areas has demonstrated that factors promoting individual resilience include the establishment of supportive social networks, the fostering of physical well-being, and the enhancement of successful coping skills (Draper-Lowe, 2016:2).

Evidence is abundant in the literature that supports the notion of resilience as a developable capability. Exploring what supports resilience and develops resilient leadership practices and well-being in school principals may help us to better understand the environments and strategies that promote resilience in others. Gu and Day (2007:1305) describe resilience as "relative, evolutionary and complex, presenting itself as a result of a social interplay in a given context".

Exploring the conditions that support school principals in remaining motivated and resilient in their roles over time, despite experiencing challenges, is also important, given that these qualities support well-being. Principal well-being is linked with ongoing student success, achievement, and overall school growth (Gu & Day, 2013:33). Finally, building resilience can



be seen as building capability and creating resources for continuing development and change.

## **2.5 Integrating and linking resilience with leadership in education**

Resilience may play a key role in sustaining school principals in the volatile world in which they work, as effective school leadership is essential for continuing school success. The structure of the school principal's job has undergone a significant transformation since 1994, including seven new roles that have been added to their current responsibilities in South African schools, according to section A4, 1.2.1. of the Personnel Administration Measures (PAM) of the Department of Basic Education (DBE, 2016).

Resilience in educational settings signifies the productive use of energy to accomplish school goals in the face of unfavourable circumstances, including developing relations with other stakeholders of the school, developing support networks, and aligning the school's development with its vision (Hadden, 2019:96). A principal's effectiveness is thus determined by their ability to foresee as well as respond to the many challenges to which they are exposed.

Research by Leupold, Lopina and Skloot (2020:57) postulated a correlation between leadership and resilience. This interaction manifests itself in a successful leader's ability to respond to complex human actions and systems when managing challenging circumstances. Leupold *et al.*, (2020:57) suggest that building resilience potential is a critical component of successful leadership. Similarly, a study conducted by Shahrazad *et al.*, (2012:64) found that there are major associations between leadership and resilience, namely, the more leadership skills the person has, the more resilient the person's ability to resolve challenges. A study by Al-Omari (2017:160) found that resilient principals managed change successfully, improved their school performance and, in the process, became effective leaders.

Resilience in leadership is reiterated by Becker and quoted by Coutu (2002:3) as "more than education, more than experience, more than training, a person's level of resilience will determine who succeeds and who fails". Sanaghan (2016:9) affirms this viewpoint and states that it is one's capacity for resilience that will allow one to lead in challenging and uncertain situations. Jackson and Daly (2011:22) further affirm this opinion by arguing that to foster and grow existing and future leaders, it is necessary to enable them to recognise the importance of improving their resilience. Kim, Hanna and Dotres (2019:18) agree that resilience is a core

component of successful leadership, especially when it is expected that principals pay attention to detail and be proactive, focused, and able to communicate emotionally with different stakeholders.

In their study, Maulding *et al.* (2012:26) establish a strong link between resilience and leadership. For Coutu (2002:55), the connection between leadership and resilience finds significance in that it helps individuals and businesses to “confront reality with staunchness, make sense of adversity instead of crying out in desperation, and improvise strategies out of nowhere”. Research by Nguyen *et al.* (2016:14) identified a positive correlation between leadership and resilience, where it was discovered that improving resilience capability is a critical component of successful leadership.

Ledesma (2014:5) notes that the survival of school leaders and their ability to adapt and succeed depends on their career resilience. Day (2014:641) supports resilience as an intrinsic quality measured by the "variety, strength, and sophistication of the environments populated by the principals". Reid (2008:1) shares this idea by stating that leaders need to be flexible and adaptive in a world of rapid and disruptive change. The need to be resilient is no longer only for the principal, as resilient school leaders also serve as sources of motivation and inspiration for followers. A resilient principal encourages a resilient staff and a resilient school (Fay *et al.*, 2020:4). Dealing successfully with setbacks and, therefore, demonstrating their confidence levels and capability in dealing with daily challenges likely results in followers holding principals in high regard (Peterson *et al.*, 2008:6).

The above highlights the ability of a constructive relationship forming between resilience and leadership. Resilience thus becomes a crucial attribute in leading and managing in times of challenge, complexity, and change. It is also argued that a non-resilient school principal will have a tough time remaining in the challenging position that the principalship currently demands. In this regard, Stewart & Yuen (2011:199) conclude in their analysis that a lack or absence of resilience in leadership may lead to multiple adverse outcomes, such as failure to cope with obstacles, mental illness, or adverse outcomes in life.

Resilient school leaders respond differently to challenges, can acknowledge their disappointments and learn from them, cope better with differences with supporters by viewing these as possible points of change, and build plans for increased success based on previous years' outcomes. Leaders with resilience capacity lead underperforming township schools

fraught with challenging conditions to systematically improve their overall performance (Dlamini, 2017:5).

Knowing the connection between resilience and leadership helps in understanding why certain school principals remain resilient and versatile in times of transition and challenges. The importance of understanding the link between resilience in educational leadership has been demonstrated above and evidence has highlighted the link between resilience and leadership.

## **2.6 School principal resilient leadership practices and abilities**

The definition of resilient leadership envisaged in this research study includes the ability to think critically, take decisive action and continue working despite difficulties while producing progress and favourable conditions. Franken (2019:2) is of the view that resilient leadership means that a principal can handle the demanding, complicated, and frequently contradicting realities of their working settings. The school leader's level of resilience serves as a physical and emotional barrier to their general well-being and ability to persevere in their profession (Dykstra-Lathrop, 2022:8). Resilience in the principal's leadership is demonstrated by how well he or she handles challenges involving routine school operations and at the same time keeps the school's vision in mind (Lien, Khan & Eid, 2022:13).

Various distinct types of resilient leadership behaviour can be found in the literature relating to educational management, of which only a few will be mentioned below. Increasing the ability of the school environment to be adaptable is a key component of resilient leadership. This makes it possible for the school to carry out both ordinary and innovative work with sufficient room and resources to deal with unfavourable circumstances (Pfaff, 2022:13).

Crucial in the display of this type of behaviour is the collectiveness and cooperative nature that characterises leaders' behaviour within the school environment and willingness to connect with individuals or groups outside of the school environment to seek help. (Offutt, 2011:96). Offutt (2011:44) maintains that instead of being defensive and resistive to change, developing resilience becomes more proactive in their engagement therewith. Furthermore, resilient leaders create an environment in which the psychological safety of participants is ensured throughout interactions and are unafraid to work with the school's stakeholders to find solutions to problems (Kim, Hanna & Dotres, 2019:19). This team approach, according

to (Stoverink *et al.*, 2020:405), allows leaders and their teams better able to minimise, manage and be restored after a crisis or challenging period at school.

Lazaridou and Beka (2014:4-5) argue that a resilient leader is identified or characterised by the following: they anticipate and prepare for eventualities of negative challenges; they remain focused and are seldom distracted; they are willing to talk about their fears and shortcomings; they place a high premium on self-care; they are open to new ideas; and they are willing to accept decisions. Strong and high degrees of emotional intelligence, self-efficacy, and self-expectation are qualities of resilient leadership (Al-Omari, 2017:153). The extraordinary characteristics of resilient leaders signal their immense value in times of unexpected crisis, constant challenge and the importance of continuous improvement.

## **2.7 Resilience as a professional development strategy**

Wasden (2014:67) concludes that educational leaders who respect and understand the impact of resilience more clearly will acknowledge certain setbacks but acknowledge the importance of forward momentum. The analyst also posits that stability in education is a vital component of effective change management. Stagnation in learning is one of the threats to the "resilient leader," according to Allison (2011:80), who examined resilience and its connection to educational management. Leadership resilience is in danger once a desire to stop learning emerges. According to Allison (2011:81), it is challenging to develop resilience in school administrators if any of the following risk factors exist:

- A lack of willingness on the part of the school principal to learn or to pursue knowledge regarding new leadership strategies
- Shifting the blame for things going wrong at school to anything but a personal and moral responsibility
- Paying insufficient heed to strong signs that things are not going well or being in a state of denial
- Engaging in several simultaneous projects without knowing that the human resources are resultantly being exhausted
- Failing to recognise any success accomplished by the school or any of its stakeholders.

Offutt (2011:53) defines resilience as the capacity to overcome challenges and meet adversity and indicates that resilience represents the most essential prerequisite skill of a

school principal. Resilience is of such value to school principals that it encourages them to strengthen their leadership, which may lead to increased student performance and promote progress. Research conducted by Offutt (2011:60) also concluded that resilient people tended to accomplish their goals without sacrificing work quality, all while maintaining both physical and emotional health.

Resilience is an important fundamental attribute that can help school leaders in their effort to sustain a positive working partnership, at a time when the demands and expectations of stakeholders are complex and daunting (Folan 2019:102). In a 2011 research report by Kinman and Grant, resilience was shown to aid leaders in mediating tension, improving their capacity to preserve their well-being and leading effectively (2011: 261). Al-Omari (2017:151) believes that resilience allows school principals to respond creatively, quickly and flexibly to changing circumstances outside of the school that influence its operation and improve learner performance.

Al-Omari (2017:151) maintains that resilience capacitates school principals to provide substantial discipline and control in a changing world, and when this change is handled successfully, school performance can improve and principals can, in the process, become more effective leaders. Resilience, according to an article by Deloitte (2020:8), allows school leaders to shift from a “today” mindset to a “tomorrow” mindset when confronting critical issues. Henry Kissinger (2020) wrote in the Wall Street Journal (3rd April 2020) that the challenge for leaders is to manage crises while simultaneously building the future. This claim is echoed by Allen (2019:1) who suggests that endurance helps school administrators to resolve obstacles and difficulties.

When faced with challenges that may otherwise result in emotional withdrawal, feelings of melancholy or anxiousness, unpleasant physical ailments, or poor performance, resilient leaders have been observed to react positively and adapt constructively (Arias:2017:50). Arias (2017:50) suggests that highly resilient individuals are not adversely impacted by challenges that can cause stress and trauma; however, their relational disposition lends itself to a more meaningful sense of reality or life intent.

Arceo-Dumlao (2016: 6) believes that resilience is important to a school principal when developing collective strategies to improve school performance, even in times of constant challenge. Resilient principals appear to better deal with adversity by choosing not to focus

on their challenging circumstances and instead remain optimistic and do whatever is necessary to improve their circumstances for the better (Johnson, 2018:35). There is thus an abundance of evidence proving that resilience allows school principals to develop and maintain healthy interpersonal relationships and enhances an ability of a leader to skillfully manage challenging environments while keeping their wellbeing in mind.

There is further evidence that resilient school principals can withstand the pressures of a changing policy environment, increased accountability demands, and exposure to constant challenges (Steward, 2014:53). These resilient school leaders, according to Patterson, Goens and Reed (2009:57), not only cope best with challenges but also progress past the adaptation and rehabilitation process into growth and development. These leaders have the capacity and mindset to learn from challenging experiences.

According to research, resilience improves school leaders' personal coping skills, well-being, and positive experiences (Forrest-Bank et al., 2014:11). It has been demonstrated that resilience positively correlates with the capacity to develop in work environments, leading to more opportunities for personal development, higher levels of relational efficacy, and stronger social bonds (Reivich et al., 2013:211). From a leadership viewpoint, a leader's resilience has been favourably correlated with his or her capacity to achieve successful organisational results in circumstances of constant change (Folan, 2019:114). A resilient leader is thus in an excellent position to bring about resilience within their school.

The literature review revealed the power of resilience in transforming school environments. However, any effort to develop resilience in a school principal will be fruitless if this principal has no desire to grow personally, shifts the blame for challenges to anything but themselves, and is not aware of the dynamics in their school environment. Resilient school leaders can shift from a “today” to a “tomorrow” mindset.

## **2.8 Methods and models of resilience development in school principals**

Few approaches and explanations for the development of leader resilience have been identified in the literature. A literature review by Pankake and Beaty (2005:33) indicated that resilience development in practice is best promoted by developing and sustaining partnerships with peers and others in the work and personal lives of principals. In a study of law enforcement personnel, Arnetz *et al.* (2009:3) used ten small group sessions lasting two hours each week, comprising of education and calming visualisation exercises, resulting in a

slightly less depressed mood, reduced heart rate activity, and improved police morale and resilience. Allison (2012:82) suggests using leadership coaching as a means of fostering resiliency and providing insightful responses to enable leaders to properly comprehend their environment.

In a study conducted by Wescott (2019:108), it was concluded that mentorship, guidance to facilitate self-understanding and modelling behaviour used by effective leaders were helpful to foster the development of resilience in school leaders. Hadden (2019:55) utilised semi-structured interviews and an online survey to conclude that resilience aided leaders in times of adverse conditions. Mindfulness training and positive effect programmes, together with resilience development programmes, were identified by Pillay (2020:8) as effective approaches for helping leaders build resilience.

The current study investigated the use of a mentoring programme to determine its potential contribution to the development of school leader resilience, as mentoring support has been hypothesised to increase resilience (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004:683). According to Farmer (2010:3), an effective social network, such as a mentoring programme that fosters reflection and discussion, serves as a secure coping mechanism and fosters resilience.

## **2.9 Elements and attributes that foster resilience in school principals**

Resilience in this research is identified as a developable attribute that can be enacted by the school leaders in a sustained capacity in their daily lives. Resilience and its development form part of a dynamic process of ongoing engagement between school principals and their contexts that is full of everyday challenges. The system of resilience development in the school context is influenced by person-to-person interaction (teachers, learners, community members of the SGB), dynamics surrounding the school (unemployment and accompanying social ills), relationship and accountability demands from the education authorities, and the material resources available to the school (Cooke *et al.*, 2016:1242).

The dynamism of the resilience concept gives rise to the question of how the development of resilience in school principals not only produces an effective and efficient school environment but also imposes a responsibility on the department of education to promote the development of this psychological resource.

The idea that there are special skills that might be cultivated to "allow principals to benefit from change and flourish in unfamiliar and challenging circumstances" informs the notion that resilience is a capacity to grow and develop (Hodliffe, 2014:6). This conceptual model allows the use of resilience as a routine ability to be used in both challenging and productive circumstances (Kuntz, Näswall & Malinen, 2016:457). Resilience in the current study was understood, therefore, as a capacity to function in both crisis circumstances and conditions of lesser hardship, such as the everyday life of a school principal. This promotes professional advancement and development, as resilience may enable people to concentrate on a challenge or an obstacle and subsequently grow (Kuntz et al., 2016:457). Consequently, the ability to develop resilience entails and results in a continuous process of learning that can affect and shape the professional training of school principals (Franken, 2019:13).

The creation of leadership resilience in the study focuses on a developmental paradigm involving the provision of "purpose-oriented cognitive and constructive education" involving the teaching of particular skills, as advocated by Grafton, Gillespie and Henderson (2010:703). Various factors and qualities have been established in the literature that is conducive to the growth of resilience among school leaders. Ledesma (2014: 4-5) defined a group of internal and environmental factors that are conducive to enabling resilience in a research article on the models of resilience. These external and internal factors will be the subject of discussion in the next section.

## **2.10 Factors that foster the development of resilience**

### **2.10.1 Internal/Intrinsic factors**

Intrinsic or internal factors are categorised as any internal items that form part of a person's inner being. On the other hand, extrinsic or external factors are categorised as any items that help one to be resilient via external resources. Vanhove *et al.* (2016:218) argue for the inclusion of both internal and external protective factors in the development of resilience. Both cognitive and non-cognitive characteristics that increase a person's capacity to deal with pressures in daily life and strengthen resilience in the face of adversity are considered protective factors in this study (Moore & Woodcock, 2017:689).

In researching processes that clarify the building of resilience, several authors (Manomenidis, Panagopoulou & Montgomery, 2019:175) have advocated for the role of internal capital in the resilience development process. For Bernard (2019:44), internal or innate protective



factors include any of the following: a sense of confidence, respect for oneself, optimistic feelings and feelings of hope, cognitive resilience, self-efficacy, coping abilities, emotional maturity, relational control, altruistic beliefs such as integrity, a sense of psychological protection, and morality. Self-efficacy is frequently seen by researchers as a component that influences the different stages of resilience development (Papaioannou, Papavassiliou-Alexiou & Moutiaga, 2022:167). Self-efficacy, which derives from the belief that one can cope with change, is the cornerstone of resilience. Resilient people's self-efficacy is influenced by their capabilities (Djourova et al 2020:256).

Amongst the most important findings in the literature is that people with higher degrees of motivation and hope have the following in common: they expect positive outcomes in challenging situations; they believe that they can attain their goals and vision, and they are more likely to undergo growth in response to challenges and difficulties (Ungar *et al.*, 2021:7). In addition, a strong emotional attitude can be an effective coping tool when confronting challenges. Pillay (2020:8) suggests that mindfulness preparation and its positive effects are essential to improving the resilience of leaders.

Many other authors affirm how critical it is to know oneself deeply and are aware of oneself, as individuals with a high degree of mindfulness are less likely to be vulnerable to everyday problems (Rees *et al.*, 2016:7). Mindfulness is identified by researchers as certainty in one's capacity to cope effectively with environmental pressures. Rees *et al.* (2016:7) observe that helping to improve confidence in an internal control locus and improve the ability of a person to be self-efficient can motivate them to be healthier and learn more practical coping skills.

### **2.10.2 External/Extrinsic factors**

In early studies of environmental effects on resilience, it was recognised that resilience may be influenced by external factors such as family and culture (Thomas & Revell, 2016:458). It was the sphere of positive psychology that modified the shape of the resilience scholarship, by emphasising the position of protective environmental variables that affect resilience and its growth. Noltemeyer and Bush (2013:478) mention that protective resources include individual, family, school, community, and/or cultural resources. Kinman and Grant (2011:361) firmly support the notion that leader resilience growth is better encouraged in an atmosphere where there is a framework that provides them with a stable foundation, appreciates their contributions, provides them with sufficient opportunities, gives them priority to learning and, above all, promotes their well-being.

External protective factors are located within the social atmosphere of principals and their families and friends, and within educational institutions, workplaces and societies and associations in which they reside (Masten *et al.*, 2009:144). The external protective factors described in the literature that foster resilience include the moral integrity of the work environment, physical and psychological health, as well as support from the education authorities in the context of ongoing growth. This conception of resilience, as a growing collection of behaviours formed by the environment, suggests that participants and environments in the workplace can encourage or impede resilience (Stokes *et al.*, 2018: 1310).

Support from the district office in the Tinara Circuit is thus crucial for resilience development in its school principals. Steward (2014:66-67) presents the following as suggestions for districts to help school principals: increase the status and significance of emotional intelligence; prioritise resilience in leadership learning programmes; design a comprehensive strategy for well-being development; coach principals as needed, and be aware of the consequences of repeated and sudden policy changes.

Another external protective factor in the development of resilience is network-leveraging behaviour, a term coined by Franken (2019:19) . This behaviour involves collaboration and the sharing of knowledge and information amongst leaders. Mitchell, O'Leary and Gerard (2015:686) suggest that such activities promote access to and sharing of information that improves one's capacity to cope competently with problems and emergencies and, in turn, can enable other adaptive behaviours such as problem-solving and feedback-seeking.

Ledesma (2014:3) sees partnerships as a main external predictor of resilience and notes that the strongest people who have dealt with tough circumstances are those who have maintained a close friendship of confidence with others through difficult periods. This suggests the potential value in the establishment of principals' forums or associations in a given geographical area such as the Tinara Circuit, where principals can gather and exchange ideas on best practices with the objective of collaboration and cooperation. Researchers view the development of reciprocal relationships with peers as an effective strategy for resilience development.

Learning is another external protective factor of significance. What comes to mind at this point is the use of a Community of Practice (COP) as a strategy that can provide a sense of

belonging for school principals within a community based on shared and common goals. This COP creates a social learning system with an emphasis on cooperation and collaboration where best practices are shared among principals. Immense value and learning are embedded in POC according to Romanowski (2022:416). Benefits include developing trusting relationships with fellow principals; discussion of challenges in a supportive environment; reducing feelings of isolation and developing social capital relationships in the process. A recommendation concerning the COP has been made (see Section 6.4.2.4). Kuntz *et al.* (2017:236) believe that learning encourages creativity in healthy environments and helps to improve the skills required to resolve and learn from crises. Typical coaching activities that promote the production of resilience involve activities such as feedback and preparation, by fostering feedback culture, facilitating performance assessment, emphasising the realistic importance of mistakes, and formally identifying attempts to improve team learning and teamwork (Kuntz *et al.*, 2017:236).

### **2.11 Leadership practices in against-the-odds schools in South Africa**

Schools in South Africa performing below a 60 % pass rate in the final matric examination are classified as underperforming. Possible reasons for the performance of these schools have been outlined in Chapter 1 and previous sections in this literature review. In the Tinarua circuit, however, schools were identified that were able to supply their learners with the best possible education despite facing considerable constraints (Zuze & Juan, 2018:1). These schools were located in urban areas, where the socioeconomic condition of learners had a major effect on their success (Hoadley & Galant, 2015:31). These schools have been termed “resilient”, “against the odds” or ‘unusually effective’ schools (Heystek, 2015:1). Against-the-odds schools within the scope of this study are identified as schools that have been exposed to the same negative environmental dynamics (see Section 1.2.2) and are located in the same geographical area, however, tend to show a continuous positive change in student achievement and school growth, measured by the annual matric pass rate.

An extensive amount of research links continued success in these schools to high-quality and successful leadership practices. Replicating similar methods in other schools can be made easier by looking at the leadership strategies used by school leaders whose schools are succeeding academically despite difficult conditions. Principals that lead in comparable situations require a foundation on which to emulate leadership strategies that can encourage academic success despite the existence of challenging conditions in their schools. Describing

the leadership practices in these schools adds value to what is known about principal resilience. The factors mentioned below are, however, not an exhaustive list.

### **2.11.1 Leadership in teams**

Louw, Bayat, and Meets (2011:16) claim that against-the-odds schools have excellent leadership, which is demonstrated by a successful principal and a productive working relationship between the principal and the School Management Team (SMT), which leads to effective teacher- and curriculum management. Zuze and Juan (2018:1) argue for differing school leadership and management (SLM) approaches in areas where leaders are exposed to challenging conditions. This teamwork principle is supported by the aforementioned authors (2018:4), who cite research that has proved the positive influence of leadership on student performance and organisational improvement when it is carried out by multiple agents, including management, teachers, learners, and parents, as prescribed by the SASA (RSA, 1996) ). A leader in against-the-odds schools is one who "encourages more than empowers; connects more than regulates; [and] exhibits more than chooses," according to Naicker, Grant, and Pillay (2016:5). Significant leadership activities in these schools include developing a sense of confidence, setting concrete targets, reflecting on success, and setting high standards, which may transform the fortunes of many underperforming schools (Garland, 2018:74). Typical leader practices in these schools include clear daily procedures, particularly concerning curriculum management and learner progression monitoring. Furthermore, two major insights have affected leadership around the globe in the last few decades:

(1) Since the function of a school principal differs greatly from that of a teacher, it necessitates specialised training.

(2) Quality leadership and quality school performance are interrelated (Bush, Bell & Middlewood, 2010:4).

### **2.11.2 Hands-on approach to leading**

A second important principle apparent in against-the-odds schools is that their principals demonstrate a hands-on management style. This style of leading from the front has been identified as a crucial feature of a successful principal (Louw *et al.*, 2011: 17). According to Chikoko, Naicker and Mthiyane (2015:14), the involvement, zeal and behaviour of a principal are valuable assets to the school which are noticeable and recognised, both in the school

and in local neighbourhoods. Louw *et al.* (2011:18) suggest that these principals are very well-informed and are active in the most important facets of various events, services, and projects of their schools.

### **2.11.3 Parent support and involvement**

Louw *et al.* (2011:17) are of the view that the principals of against-the-odds schools are known not only in the school itself, but also in the community, and parents therefore eagerly give support to the school when required. This relationship-building and involvement of the parents are motivated perhaps by their understanding of the prevailing environmental dynamics such as gang violence and drugs. Delport (2019:19) believes that effective schools understand the need for a close collaborative partnership with the community, as vital trust ties central to the growth of stable and productive schools can be created. Community participation, according to Maringe, Masinire and Nkambule (2015: 368), is based on a sense of interest and commitment to enhance the quality of life of learners and collaborate with schools to improve learning conditions. There should also be a desire on the part of the school to collaborate with the local community in initiatives based on the needs and circumstances of that community.

Parental involvement supports an open-door policy where parents assist both inside the classroom and on excursions, and staff regularly update parents on learners' progress (Alston, 2018:29). Alston further postulates that a school should see itself as publicly accountable to the local community for the service it renders to its pupils, thereby creating a space for deep synergy of cooperation and collaboration between the school and the home (Alston, 2018:29). According to Allie (2014:10), parental involvement indicates increased attendance at school, fewer disciplinary difficulties, stronger leadership skills, academic success, teamwork at school and home, improved morale amongst the staff, and more productive use of resources.

### **2.11.4 Creating the right environment for school improvement**

A strong body of evidence indicates that a healthy, secure, and orderly school environment is a significant contributor to academic achievement, especially in deprived schools (Davids, 2015:20). Dlamini (2017:26) postulates that this stable and healthy community is distinguished by no reports of crime, no or low drug abuse, no unkept property, and no inadequate electricity and water pipes. According to Allie (2014:26), the ideal learning

environment promotes students' overall development and is devoid of aggressiveness, physical or sexual assault, verbal bullying, or racial intolerance. For against-the-odds school principals, it is crucial to have an institutional climate and habits that support learning and teaching.

A space that is centered on teaching and learning needs to be safe. It is, therefore, commonplace to find well-organised teaching and learning programmes in against-the-odds schools. According to Davids (2015:21), school principals in these schools are concerned with safety both inside and outside the school, and a measure of safety is guaranteed by ensuring that these schools are fenced off properly with controlled access at the gate.

Delpont (2021:13) highlights the need for a healthy and supportive school community because, according to the researcher, if educators and learners feel happy, they have the best opportunity to teach and learn. Creating a healthy and welcoming atmosphere involves the noticeable presence of principals, particularly at the time of arrival and dismissal of staff and learners, when they can welcome pupils, parents, and other community members (Maponya, 2015:31). Amongst the key standards for principalship in South Africa are the provision of guidance and leadership in all areas of the school, building and maintaining the conditions in which an environment conducive for quality teaching and learning take place, and encouragement of the highest possible level of learning (DBE, 2015:10-11). The Wallace Foundation (2013:8) claims that good school principals "build an education-friendly environment so that protection, a cooperative spirit and other pillars of productive engagement prevail".

Against-the-odds schools are characterised by a collaborative spirit, including the teaching staff, learners, and management in a learner-centred space (Makoelle, 2011:57). According to Hoadley and Galant (2015:31), the internal administration of instruction and learning may offer the greatest potential for schools in South Africa to succeed against the odds. Principals ensure that student success is tracked carefully, constructively, and independently, in direct contact with the school's educators, with prompt input (Delpont, 2020:21).

## **2.12 Current trends**

The current opinions on resilience in the literature are that it is not only an individual's duty but a shared social obligation (McAllister & Brien 2020:13). Support from education authorities in the form of investment of time and money in the resilience development of

schools principals may greatly benefit the system of improvement and development in schools and communities alike. In a report by Deloitte (2020:5), authors reported that the greatest challenge in a time of turbulence is not the turbulence itself, but trying to navigate the turbulence with yesterday's mindset. The current crisis in education resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic is an illustration of the critical need to prepare school principals beyond compliance, crises and the handling thereof. Thus, resilience building refers not only to the requirement that principals deal with more and more extremely challenging circumstances but also a framework for the growth of continuity in school leadership and the improvement of entire schools.

The concept of resilience in the present study reflects the more contemporary understanding of resilience as a transformational mechanism as advocated by Lengnick-Hall, (2011: 244), in which individuals not only cope with transition and challenges effectively but also gain experience and adapt appropriately to succeed in the new world. This perspective is echoed by Hodliffe (2014: 6). This is a movement beyond recovering from a crisis, toward thriving in all aspects of school leadership. This conceptual framework of resilience has changed from being a predictable characteristic to a dynamic mechanism marked by continuous transition, development, and growth (Nguyen *et al.*, 2016:14).

The phrases adaptable and innate resilience have recently been used concerning the development of resilience in organisations (Nikalant et al 2016:44). These are thought of as the foundation of a resilient environment. The value of resilience in the face of adversity is acknowledged by adaptable resilience (Nikalant et al., 2016:44). Inherent resilience, on the other hand, is described as the ability of the school to work well even in the absence of any adverse events (Nikalant et al., 2016:44). This differs from the initial conception of resilience as an "either-or" attribute, thus echoing the recent call in the research to move from a conventional responsiveness approach to adversity to one that stresses ongoing capacity building and sustainability (Kuntz *et al.*, 2016:458).

In brief, the current viewpoint on individual resilience stresses its developmental and growth-oriented essence and emphasises the role of institutions, such as the District Office of the Education Department, in fostering the development of primary resilience, with the advantage of simultaneously helping numerous stakeholders.

### **2.13 Summary and conclusions**

The overall goal of this literature review was twofold: to review the meaning and application of resilience in educational leadership and management (see Section 2.3), and to investigate the necessity for school leaders to be capacitated with resilience in 21<sup>st</sup>-century school environments (see Section 2.5).

The duties and role of the school principal have increased during the last few decades, more so in South Africa with the arrival of democracy and the democratisation of the education system. Therefore, the literature review demonstrated some unintended consequences of the reform initiatives (see Section 2.2). These factors affected the well-being and spirit of school principals, a situation that is ill-afforded. The crucial role played by a school principal in the productive and successful running of the school was demonstrated succinctly (see Section 2.1). However, little consideration has been paid to how principals can build skills to fulfil current demands, and how few learning resources have been made available (see Section 2.1).

This literature review presented the idea of resilience as the most valuable tool for school principals to implement and respond successfully to change and challenges within schools (see Section 2.8). This study identified resilience as a process of interaction between the school principal and their environment that can be developed and learned, with the benefit of motivating principals to cope with the problems they face but also improving their capacity to deal with future obstacles (see Section 2.5). Factors have been identified to foster the development of resilience and contribute to the growth of leader resilience (see Section 2.8).

This literature review demonstrated the job of a school leader is dynamic and demanding by definition and that the job of the school principal requires them to be more resilient in leading and managing their schools more efficiently and effectively in this age of continual change, challenges, and uncertainty (see Section 2.5). Furthermore, this literature review dictates that the growth in resilience for school principals is more favourable when supported by education authorities, as the capacity of resilience enables school principals to thrive in challenging conditions (see Section 2.10.2). Resilience can aid school principals in improving poor performance and simultaneously serve as an empowerment tool.

There is an abundance of literature examining the value of resilience and the extension of its significance to areas other than education. Nevertheless, there is still a gap in resilience



research, its value in school leadership and how it can serve as a coping mechanism for school principals in times of persistent multiple challenges, particularly in the South African school climate. This chapter addressed the key concepts underpinning the functional resilience paradigm for leadership capacity building, why resilience is a necessary trait in today's school setting, and the common characteristics of the principal in against-the-odds schools. The chapter made the case that resilient principals who successfully manage change and complexity enhance learner achievement and develop into more capable leaders.

Resilient school principals, according to the literature review, not only exhibit personal attributes that enable them to thrive but also serve as role models for other school stakeholders in several different ways. In addition, if difficulties encountered by principals are persistent, a resilient capacity allows principals to exercise creative and successful leadership in the context of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The current trends in resilience literature command a shared and collective responsibility between individual school principals and employers in the District Office of the Department of Education to initiate novel methods of principal development (see Section 2.6.). For principals to discover solutions to ongoing difficulties and complexities, resilience research authors advise a change from the conventional adversity-responsiveness model to one that focuses on continual capacity building and sustainability (see Section 2.6).

The review of the literature increased the researcher's comprehension of the resilience process and how it can be a valuable resource for school principals in an age of ever-present change in the educational policy environment. Moreover, it provided a background for answering the following research question:

What is resilience in educational leadership, and why should it be an essential focus of the growth initiatives of school principals operating in disadvantaged areas amidst severe challenges which influence the effectiveness of schools? What are the trends and theories in this regard?

There is a plethora of research demonstrating the successful application of resilience in other fields such as police training, social work, business, and medical-related fields. However, studies examining potential vocational training programmes, such as mentoring for educational leaders to develop their resilience capacity, are notably absent (see Section 1.1). The study was designed to reduce the current gap in knowledge on this subject. Based on

this qualitative phenomenological research study, key interview results can assist decision-makers in the creation of leadership preparation systems that can aid prospective principals in overcoming difficult situations while developing into effective school leaders.

This literature review provided a strong foundation for the growth and preparation of school principals in resilience training, regardless of their duration in office. With resilience as a tool for professional advancement, principals will be best positioned to lead staff, students, and communities, and recognise and enforce policy reforms implemented by education authorities.

This literature review created the background for the research study and its aim to enhance awareness of the role of resilience in handling school leadership problems. It is the professional opinion of the researcher that this chapter and the literature review effectively and sufficiently addressed the study's second goal. To further substantiate the importance of resilience training for school principals and its relevance to principal leadership, the following chapter will offer a comprehensive evaluation of the studies on mentoring as the strategy to address the second research question:

What role can mentorship play in the resilience development of novice and experienced school principals to ensure educational effectiveness against all odds?

## CHAPTER 3

### MENTORING AS A PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY TO BUILD SCHOOL PRINCIPAL RESILIENCE

#### 3.1 Introduction

The context of the study, the research topic, the goals and objectives, the research methodology and design, and the chapter structure were all included in Chapter 1. (see Section 1.4-1.6.2). The first research question and the second study objective were covered in Chapter 2. This chapter, which like Chapter 2 is based on an extensive literature review, explores mentoring as a strategy to develop school principals' professional capacity for resilience, thereby addressing the third research question and objective, which was to investigate and understand the potential contribution of mentorship to the development of school principal resilience capacity.

The chapter will include essential concepts such as mentoring and discuss the importance of mentoring for school leaders, the significance of professional development for school leaders, the different mentoring functions of the mentor and the benefits of mentoring as a strategy for professional development and building school leader resilience.

What follows is a discussion providing insight into the literature on mentorship in educational management and leadership, and its role in developing the resilience of school principals. The first complexity to be addressed is the difficulty that exists concerning a universally accepted definition of mentoring in the literature.

#### 3.2 A contextualised definition of mentoring

“Good mentors support and address worries and concerns while ensuring a secure environment to create fresh ideas and take risks; mentors can understand and resolve setbacks. They affirm the importance of resilience” (Humphrey, 2010:117).

There isn't a single, universally agreed description of a mentor, the mentoring process, or what a school principal mentoring process comprises, according to a careful analysis of the mentoring literature (Thambekwayo, 2016:53). While definitions vary widely according to context, commonalities exist regarding mentoring methods. Specifically, mentoring is seen to include two individuals (one experienced and the other less experienced), a partnership

(whether official or not), and an exchange of knowledge, technical skills, or behaviour, with the goal of advancement and improvement of the mentee (Bilesanmi, 2011:98). Mentoring is thus defined and conceptualised differently depending on the person, environment, and field of study.

A noticeable trend in South African literature is to define mentoring in terms of a hierarchical structure (Hugo, 2018:46). In this hierarchical mentoring system, mentor-mentee interactions vary, depending on age, influence, and expertise. This model supports the American model of mentoring, in which the mentoring relationship involves an older, more experienced individual advising and leading a younger, less experienced individual (Nel & Luneta, 2017:2). This dynamic is also reflected in the definition of mentoring advocated by the Department of Basic Education (DBE) (2008:22).

Current concepts of mentoring in the literature reflect a reciprocal approach, where both participants in the mentorship relationship can enjoy the development of the partnership. Fletcher and Ragins (2007:374), amongst the foremost researchers on mentoring, describe interpersonal mentoring as “an interconnected and transformative development partnership that facilitates reciprocal growth, learning, and development”. Dobrow *et al.* (2012:215) note that when both participants in the mentoring partnership mutually benefit one another, have a consensus on positions and shortcomings in the relationship, are aware of their influence on one another and are conscious of each other's intentions, opportunities arise to promote reciprocated development, learning, and improvement, and this can lead to increased fulfilment. Thus, mentoring can be seen as a “two-way pathway” that “provides a professional direction of progression and development for the enhancement of skills in each of its respectful deficient areas” (Akhalq, Chishti & Iqbal, 2016:435). These mentoring facets seek to “redefine the power disparity, structure, formality, objectivity, directionality, and confined emphasis” of the traditional, dominant paradigm (Gammel & Rutstein-Riley, 2016:29).

Instead, new research suggests that a less bureaucratic and more collaborative approach, where mentors and mentees share responsibilities, support, and expertise, makes mentoring more successful for all parties involved (Zambrana *et al.*, 2015:62).

Mentors can broaden their understanding of various needs when defining mentoring from a collaborative viewpoint that promotes shared support rather than a one-way view that might stymie the specific efforts of mentees (Gosh *et al.*, 2020:3). The model of mentoring described

above is based on the model favoured in European countries, which focuses on a holistic mentoring approach (Heymans, 2015:29).

In the scope of the study, mentoring was therefore described as creating a mutual partnership between school principals and mentors for predetermined personal and professional growth relevant to the development and capacity building of principals' resilience. The fundamental goal of mentorship in the study can therefore be viewed as increasing principals' resilience capacity via the transmission of skills, knowledge, and psychosocial support relating to their professional development.

The mentoring relationship in the study involved a developmental process of professionals with experience in school management. The relationship between mentor and mentee in the study, therefore, bordered on the concept of peer mentoring in that the difference in experience and achievement levels are less evident. However, peer mentors tend to show more significant experience and achievement than their peers (Dos Reis & Yu, 2018:235). Furthermore, in the current study, mentoring referred to allowing an expert a chance to counsel and foster a leader's progress over a predetermined time frame.

This growth process in the mentoring partnership, according to Thambekwayo (2012:14-15), involves five aspects. Firstly, the mentor is knowledgeable about topics related to the academic interests of the mentee. Secondly, there is a process of joint development. The third aspect involves the mentor allowing the mentee to build their competence. Fourthly, the mentor allows the mentee to acquire personal experiences to help drive their progress. Lastly, the main focus of the relationship is professional growth.

This implies a paradigm shift away from the traditional top-down structure of mentoring, where the mentor alone controls the outcome and dynamics of the learning process. For any significant and long-lasting learning to arise from a professional development relationship such as mentorship, a definition that favours the creation of a collegial relationship between mentor and mentee as partners must be adopted. In the literature review, mentoring was identified as a strategy to positively influence a school leader's ability to lead the instructional programme of their schools (Rowland, 2017:4).

Focusing on the above, the view of the current study was that a need exists to incorporate more effective and direct consequence leadership development strategies, such as mentoring, to strengthen programme management and build resilience as a sustainable

capacity for school principals. Studies in South Africa have reported measures currently practised by district offices, such as one-day seminars and workshops, have not been readily available (Mestry, 2017:270). Davis and Darling-Hammond (2012:36) argue that ongoing and repeated professional development is more effective than single workshops. Furthermore, most researchers conducting mentoring studies report that, for mentoring associations to be effective, the length of the mentoring relationship and the number of sessions are crucial elements (Hayes & Mahfouz 2020:738). Gimbel and Kefor (2018:28) recommend allotting sufficient contact hours to concentrate on leadership development and advised allowing mentors and mentees sufficient time to learn and grow together. The time spent in a mentoring relationship allows for the sharing of mentor experiences and the transfer of skills and qualities that enhanced their growth as leaders (Burwell,2017:108).

The mentor provides psychosocial mentoring to strengthen the mentee's central sense of integrity, personality, and success in their professional role to improve their resilience (Kammeyer-Mueller & Judge, 2008:270). Sebastian and Mathew (2019:259) note that psychosocial roles and support are based on confidence, affection, and interpersonal relationships, and require activities that promote the reputation, self-esteem, self-efficiency, and professional and individual development of the mentee.

The current study was also underscored by the research conducted by Heymans (2015: ii), which suggested that a mentor is someone directing a mentee in their search for methods to overcome challenges, improve self-assurance, and create a comprehensive directory of leadership qualities. In earlier research, Daresh (2004:497), identifies mentoring as an essential approach to learning new information, attitudes, and abilities required to achieve professional success, personal fulfilment and growth.

After highlighting the absence of consensus on a common definition of mentoring, the literature review presented a working definition to serve as the study's direction. However, it was found that recent definitions display some commonality that the mentoring relationship benefits both the mentor and the protégé, which is a significant change from the usual hierarchical structure of the mentoring relationship. Within this developmental relationship the content, process, and procedure are determined by both mentor and mentee alike, and the difference in experience level between the two is less evident.

Analysis of the literature established that the foundation of development should extend beyond stop-gap measures of one-day workshops and seminars, as these have been seen as ineffective and insufficient. Successful schools must have effective leadership. Now that the groundwork for a fruitful mentoring relationship has been laid, it is time to discuss the value of mentoring for school leaders' professional development.

### **3.3 The importance of mentoring for school leaders**

Davey, Jackson and Henshall (2020:994) recommend that the competent help, encouragement, and advice given by a positive mentoring process be established as one of the most effective ways to defend against work-related challenges and job pressure. In addition, mentoring interactions can be critical to one's professional growth, and there is substantial proof that good mentoring affects professional outcomes, such as growth in leadership qualities, career advancement, a better workplace and transformation and adjustment when change takes place (Joo, Yu & Atwater, 2018:310). Mentoring has been described as a collaborative professional network that facilitates reflection and dialogue, acts as a proactive coping mechanism, and develops resilience (Farmer, 2010:3). In addition, Masten (2015:370) defines mentoring as a crucial coping strategy for resilience and the desire to continue in life. Leadership training is fundamentally a collaborative operation, and mentoring has been proposed as an essential and more practical contemporary approach to other conventional school environments (Davey *et al.*, 2020:993).

Previous studies have demonstrated that social support in the form of mentoring improves mentees' wellness and serves as a buffer against workplace stress (Bagi, 2015:135). In a recent report, Davey *et al.* (2020:992) hypothesised that successful mentoring can contribute to networking opportunities, professional growth opportunities, improved confidence and problem-solving skills, and greater resilience, wellness, and mindfulness. Its primary goal is to encourage mutual learning and professional socialisation, both of which have excellent potential for idea transfer (Bush *et al.*, 2011:36). In terms of professional development, mentoring is a useful strategy (Nel & Luneta, 2017:3). It is thus claimed that only principals who are prepared to address a dynamic, constantly evolving climate will be able to enact changes that will contribute to sustainable progress in student performance and an overall improvement in education.

Mentoring is known to be a learning tool connected with personal, relational, and psychological benefits (Du Preez, Steenkamp & Baard, 2013:1228). Msila (2015:2) suggests

that mentees who have been successfully mentored will cultivate, empower, and equip others with technical skills to maintain successful schools. There is a clear positive association between informal mentoring and coaching and efficacy and effectiveness (Grissom & Harrington, 2010:585). It has also been suggested that mentoring can develop the capacity of school principals to effectively introduce policy improvements in schools (Msila, 2010:182). Mentoring is recommended because as a capacity development of a school leader, it can have far-reaching beneficial results, including teacher morale and learning progress. Irby (2020:99) suggests that the purpose of developing school leaders is built upon the premise that those that have been participants of a mentoring programme have developed greater awareness, trust, integrity, and capabilities to lead schools effectively.

It is the purpose of this research to build and equip principals for the complex and changing environment in which they operate. As a result, this research is grounded in mentoring as the best solution for shortcomings in school leadership and developing resilience with which to solve them. The sheer magnitude of the difficulties faced by school administrators in the Tinara Circuit schools in the 21st century necessitates a fast response to address the same. According to the literature review, developing effective school leaders is essential and can only be accomplished with the support of a carefully planned programme that includes mentorship.

The requirement for empowerment to manage schools effectively has made the mentorship of school heads important, at a time when policymakers place a premium on high-quality leadership in schools and continuous school improvement. The literature review further suggested mentoring to be the ideal strategy to develop school principals, as it is more cost-effective and practical than other development measures. Mentoring has been utilised successfully in many educational institutions as an effective way to defend against work-related challenges and job pressure resulting in improved accomplishments and has been described as a proactive coping mechanism to develop resilience. These critical reasons emphasise that mentorship should be thought of as a potentially feasible choice for development interventions in the personal and professional development of school principal resilience.



### **3.4 Benefits of mentoring for developing resilience**

The literature suggests that mentoring can positively affect well-being, including resilience and career advancement benefits. In their review of mentees and mentors, Hellsten *et al.*, (2017:314) emphasise that both emotional support and professional learning are significant benefits stemming from working together as mentors and mentees. Sardar and Galdames (2017:46) report that school leaders felt encouraged by mentoring and counselling and saw an increase in their success and levels of resilience. Hugo (2018:48) recognises mentoring as a strategy for achieving substantial leadership growth.

In a study conducted by Kutsyuruba, Godden and Bosica (2019: 299), the authors reported that those managers who didn't take part in a mentoring programme had a weaker sense of well-being than those who did. In resilience literature, Masten (2015:228) describes mentoring as a critical protective force for resilience and the desire to succeed in life. Mentors and mentees are both seen as essential elements of job resilience (De Bruyn & Mestry, 2020:7). Efficient mentoring partnerships can foster, nurture and encourage well-being (Hollweck, 2019:328).

Humphrey (2010:17), believes that experienced mentors make it possible for the mentees to deal with issues and concerns whilst allowing for the generation of different strategies and greater risk-taking in a secure space. They postulate that mentoring helps a mentee to interpret and cope with mistakes while promoting resilience. Research conducted by Ongek (2016:335) showed that mentoring strengthened the professional standards of principals as leaders and expanded their knowledge base by sharing. Kao *et al.*, (2014:192) argue that resilience makes it possible for a person to work beyond the standard despite challenging circumstances.

Kao *et al.* (2014:199) also propose that the association between mentorship roles and resilience is fair, considering the potential of mentoring to generate elevated levels of work-related expertise, cognitive reinforcement, and behavioural examples. France, Booyesen and Baron (2018:526) suggest that mentoring can be a way of influencing the awareness, abilities, behaviours, and actions of mentees in the process of being more flexible and resilient. To help a mentee deal with their environmental issues, mentoring is a source of direct relational support that can be utilised.

Cherkowski and Walker (2019:354) argue that supportive peer interaction leads to better collaboration and communication, greater creativity, resilience, and a deep dedication to adaptive capability and change in the workplace in the face of challenges and failure. Huffman (2017:64) found that mentoring has numerous advantages. Firstly, it aids principals in more effective decision-making. Secondly, it aids in establishing confident relationships. Thirdly, it imparts social support. New leadership competencies can be learnt, and emotional and psychological capital can be gained.

The link between mentorship and resilience is not well-documented in the literature and how school leaders might benefit from this in the workplace. The review discovered that mentees steadily gained self-assurance and autonomy as the mentoring relationship progressed. According to the review, a mentoring relationship is a place where mentees can grow confident in their ability to overcome challenges and accomplish their objectives. The review portrayed the mentoring relationship as a setting where mentees develop confidence in their capacity to meet obstacles and achieve their goals.

Mentoring has been found to serve as a mechanism for better coping with challenges and hence development. This depth of role that mentors fill, justifies the need for a structured mentoring programme with specific goals and outcomes that can grow the capacity of school administrators to better lead and manage organisations in times of crisis. Definitive benefits of mentoring were found to include increased mentee effectiveness, mental wellness, work efficiency, and productivity. A significant correlation exists between mentoring and the growth of a school principal's resilience. Even though a mentor's particular duties may vary, there are generally two ways they can operate in the educational field. This will be discussed in the next section.

### **3.5 Models and types of formal and informal mentoring**

There are ample South African studies demonstrating the effectiveness of mentoring in developing leader competence and management skills. Acquisition of these skills contributes positively to school performance (Heymans, 2015:34).

Msila and Mtshali (2011:9) suggest that previous models of mentoring had the advantages of offering space for daily meetings, sharing of thoughts and strategies on positive leadership and strategic practices, and allowing for reflection on existing processes and practices including training and observation as well as enhancement tactics.

According to Gimbel and Kefor (2018:23), developing a school principal's capacity is one of the key elements of school reform initiatives and is essential to preparing principals for leadership challenges. Principals in the preliminary study reported that they were left alone after their appointment and received little or no support. They also mentioned the support received from a principals' forum started by peers in their area. Unlike their emerging counterparts, education systems in first-world countries understood the value of mentoring and accepted it to effect improved school governance (Ongek, 2016:332).

The need for mentoring in this research was identified by the exploration of the leadership needs of school principals in the Tinara Circuit, including the management of parental non-involvement and the pressure of leading underperforming schools. This research aims to envisage a relationship based on the formation of a partnership in which learning and professional development of resilience capacity building are at the core. Smith (2007:280) suggests that the relationship between a mentor and mentee can foster the development of new abilities and methods for becoming a professional. As described by Khan and Khan (2014:926), continuous professional development (CPD) refers to maintaining one's current knowledge, skills, and qualities while expanding one's horizons to work effectively. In this light, this research envisaged mentoring as ongoing and refresher training for school principals.

There are two models of mentoring in the South African education system. First, in 2007, the National Department of Education, in cooperation with universities, began formal mentoring (Thambekwayo, 2016: 37). Heymans (2015:31) defines formal mentoring as a formal and organised method of mentoring in which the mentee chooses to participate in a confidential and personal relationship aimed at maintaining professional advancement, progression, and differing extents of professional guidance. Fletcher (2012:24) indicates that mentoring can rejuvenate and improve practice, improve confidence and the capacity to act, as well as engage in meaningful human relationships. The standards for South African principalship place great emphasis on human resources as a key function to be fulfilled by a school principal (DOE, 2015:18). Several academics suggest that managing school human resources is crucial for improving students' overall academic achievement (Omebe, 2014:1).

The skills and abilities of the individuals who make up an organisation are seen as a vital asset for the effective achievement of any organisational goals (Nwosu & Matashu, 2022:21). The development and training of school principals in human resources should therefore

receive more attention, as they are ultimately in charge of creating a positive environment for education and learning (Mhlanga, 2019:151). As mentoring has been widely accepted across careers as a powerful learning method, this research aimed to focus on mentoring and its usefulness in building school leader resilience.

According to Kao *et al.* (2014:192), a mentoring relationship supplies personal, intellectual, and emotional resources that positively impact individual resilience based on the values of the philosophy of the conservation of resources (COR). The COR theory, proposed by Hobfoll (2018:104), postulates that human beings constantly seek to gain, preserve, foster, and secure particular objects that they centrally esteem. Tension is noted to arise in the following instances: (a) when essential or critical assets are at risk of being depleted; (b) if the core or primary resources are exhausted, or (c) if critical or vital resources cannot be retrieved after considerable effort.

Hobfoll (2018:104) claims that individuals use primary resources to adjust to pressure and create a pool of sustaining resources for periods of potential need. These resources include fitness, resilience, relatives, confidence, and a sense of mission and significance in life. This research showed that mentoring can supply the basis for developing resilience capacity. Following basic principles of the COR philosophy, this research suggested that the appropriate help offered by the mentoring of a principal better suited them to overcome the stress-inducing environments in which they continue to find themselves, especially in the Tinara Circuit.

The second category of mentoring is casual or unofficial mentoring. Informal mentoring is a mentorship arrangement in which both participants agree that the mentee will put his/their trust in the mentor to advise or guide them. It is well described in the literature that the value of mentoring is dependent upon a relationship of trust (Riley, 2019:209; Lee, Sunerman & Hastings, 2020: 46). The mentoring process is mostly self-initiated, self-designed, and self-managed (Heymans, 2015:31). Heymans (2015:31) postulates that there are no prescriptive goals and objectives from the education department and that the mentor only offers the mentee the chance to take on leadership responsibilities.

The process also remains impossible to measure. Swanepoel (2012:8) postulates that a mentor gives encouragement, direction, and input to the mentee as a result of their experience. This method of mentoring according to Roets, Janse van Rensburg and Lubbe

(2019:2240) is, for the most part, voluntary, with the person making the selection of a mentee or a mentor on their own. These informal forms of mentoring relationships are believed to be a crucial development technique for the growth of individuals within institutions. Crawford (2005:35) contends that unofficial mentoring occurs in a relationship between two individuals that results in one obtaining experience, information, expertise, fellowship, and encouragement from the other. Jugmohan and Muzvidziwa (2017:6) claim that the focus is on the provision of experience and information and that the mentor is the most essential participant at this stage.

According to the literature, informal mentoring techniques can be just as beneficial for school leaders' professional and personal development as formal mentoring. Informal or psychosocial mentoring offers heartfelt support to strengthen mentees' convictions and assurances to progress their careers (Walters, 2019:26). In an informal mentoring relationship, both the mentor and the mentee drive the friendship forward. In contrast, formal mentoring relationships are managed by a third party to achieve an organisation's goals. The DBE is the organisation in charge of managing official mentoring ties concerning this study. The focus, commitment, scope, and nature of the interactions are the key distinctions between formal and informal mentoring.

### **3.6 Mentoring as professional development**

Current literature advocates for the continuous development of school principals due to constant demands for improved school performance, changes in leadership styles, and greater accountability placed on school leaders (Heymans, 2015: 1). This altered role of the principal demanding cooperation and implementation of new policy directives requires an ability and attitude to assist with implementation (Heystek, Niemann, Van Rooyen, Mosoge and Bipath 2009:180). Mentoring acts as a catalyst to close gaps left by earlier approaches and to assist educational leaders in becoming ready for new challenges. Any professional who wants to stay current with innovations and changes in their industry and improve their abilities must pursue professional leader growth.

An international study on work experiences and management development carried out in the United States in the 1980s affirmed the importance of mentoring in the development of future leaders. It discovered that managers learned primarily from challenges they encountered on the job and from influential people there, such as people in authority, advisors, and those serving as examples to follow (McCauley & Brutus, 1998:4). Mukeredzi et al (2015:1) define

professional development (PD) as all people formally recognised as having the expertise, abilities, beliefs, behaviours, and competencies to be engaged in a given project. Professional improvement activities are described as any methods taken to advise or improve the overall performance of a school principal (Zepeda, Parylo & Bengtson, 2014:296).

The central objective of mentoring is to develop self-directed learners who may benefit from a collaborative learning environment (Bell & Goldsmith, 2013:7). A successful professional development plan centring on mentoring as a core strategy is dependent on many factors. Firstly, professional development must involve a conscious approach to self-development that can include mentoring and various other opportunities for empowerment (Mathibe, 2007:523). The consensus is that this self-development process needs to be continuous and ongoing. Koh *et al.* (2011:615) think that for educational leaders to complete jobs successfully, continuous training is crucial.

This view on self-development is supported by (Mampane, 2017: 144) who advances the argument that self-development should take place on a regular and ongoing basis to meet the fluid and evolving nature and demands of the educational space. Fullan (2007:36) opines that even a learning process that exceeds the rigorous standards of vocational training would be inadequate if not planned to include mentees in continuing, substantive learning in the context of actual research.

Mentoring leadership development must therefore involve permanent investment in both skills development and motivation of leadership to be successful (Campbell *et al.*, 2012:618). This approach is supported by Hastings and Kane (2018:9), who suggest that leadership growth mentoring is a continuous, face-to-face, interactive role modelling and introspective method, intended to build knowledge and individual confidence for professional growth and progression. Jyoti and Sharma (2015:4) report that engaging in ongoing personal and professional growth strategies during their careers helps mentees to develop effective coping strategies.

The second important feature of professional learning identified in the literature is that it is a deliberate process. Participation in leadership development programmes ought to be motivated by commitment rather than compliance. In the past, educational mentoring relationships have not always been specifically designed to fulfill the needs of each mentee (Elliott, 2020:107). Thambekwayo (2016:67) argues that school leadership development

should start and conclude with specific methods and goals t, as unqualified classroom teachers should not become school leaders by chance. In addition, Grant (2014:263) states that the practice of purposefully working towards defined targets will promote well-being, create self-efficiency, help cultivate solution-focused thought, build resilience and self-regulation for the leader, cultivate greater self-efficiency, prepare for the transition, boost job satisfaction, and increase the ability to cope with work-related stress.

Thirdly, some authors attribute the success of professional development to its contextual relevance based on the needs of the people participating in the development process. Weinstein, Azar and Flessa (2018:230) argue that the design of training and capacity-building programmes should be focused on an understanding of the priorities of school administrators for change and preferred learning methods. The success of such projects is through preparation and the promotion of unique opportunities for skills development. Heymans (2015: 40) suggests that mentoring as career advancement is better modelled as part of building the capacity of the school administrator, including within their job environment and relating to their daily management. The literature indicates that school principals improve effectively when they are subjected to real-life circumstances that involve the implementation of expertise, information, and problem-solving techniques (Thambekwayo, 2016:93).

Several writers suggest that the success of professional development depends on consultation between the mentor and the mentee, where both construct the curriculum and the learning process (Cunha, *et al.*, 2020:2; Byars-Winston & Dahlberg, 2019:179; Heiney-Smith & Denton, 2015:16). Furthermore, Heiney-Smith and Denton (2015:1) argue that the construction of the curriculum needs to consider the mentee's awareness and expertise. According to Swanepoel (2012:32), any growth plan to build productive leaders must be clear about the standard of leadership they are intending to build. Secondly, Swanepoel (2012:32) indicates a need for a specific approach to establish and develop certain qualities. Awareness of methods to maintain the success of leaders over time and context, and specific areas of need of participants at specified moments, is an important factor.

Mentoring is a relatively recent practice and has become among the leading strategies for strengthening the leadership and managerial potential of school principals, both locally and on a global scale (Ayodeji & Adebayo, 2015:18). This opinion is supported by Smith (2016:43) who believes that mentoring is a tool and medium for realising the values and goals of professional learning. The DoE (2008:21) notes that mentoring can be used as an in-service

career growth support mechanism. Johnson (2019:8) indicates that mentoring is an essential component of professional learning and that mentoring growth initiatives should be structured to promote the development and sustainability of skills. Mentoring is a crucial strategy in developing the growth of the school principal. The question should thus be asked whether the one- or two-day workshops and seminars currently in use by districts to capacitate school principals are sufficient in meeting this need.

Because of its job-embedded nature, mentoring establishes a genuine link with the learning process between mentor and mentee due to active participation and collaboration (Chappuis, Chappuis & Stiggins 2009:57). Thus, mentoring should overcome the disparity between the theory and application at the core of the critique of past professional learning systems. Mentoring also allows for real, in-depth, meaningful encounters between mentee and mentor (Clayton, Sanzo & Myran, 2013:78). In doing so, the mentoring process provides prospects for enhancing the efficiency of education leadership learning initiatives, as the correlation between teaching and teaching philosophy and realistic practice based on school expertise arises (Clayton *et al.*, 2013:91).

Mentoring creates a connection between leadership and professional learning. It seeks to transform attitudes and values to lead to the institutionalisation of these improvements (Robertson, 2005:58). This indicates that sustainable career growth of school leaders further leads to an "example culture" that can motivate other role-players in the school environment. Msila (2012:47) suggests that the capacitation of school managers has a knock-on effect on the engagement of fellow teachers in their school, which can lead to improved school performance. Makafane (2022:9) sees leadership development as a mechanism in which one person may motivate others to grow as a group, as an operation, and as a partnership for the good of the school.

Robertson (2005:66) suggests that the reciprocal essence of professional learning between mentor and mentee builds competent leaders by allowing them to focus objectively on their leadership activities. Consequently, the primary trend is that professional development and job progressions are the perceived and established outcomes of a mentoring relationship. According to Lester *et al.*, (2011:414), mentoring logically leads to the development of good leadership, particularly in the case of targeted mentoring, which later converts into improved leader performance.



Asala (2014, cited in Heymans, 2015:41), confirms that school leaders who are mindful of their career growth understand that professional authenticity is directly related to self-efficacy, enhanced morale, and a feeling of worth and value in oneself. The author believes that these leaders are familiar with their emotional intelligence and perform efficiently and successfully across the broad scope of the working environment. Hence, it becomes vital that the planning phase of leadership development programmes consider principals will implement the knowledge obtained from the mentoring process in their schools (Van der Westhuizen, Mosoge & Van Vuuren, 2007:717). This consideration may encourage a positive perception of growth, in which the individual and the environment in which they operate are socially constitutive, informal elements of one another (Mabey & Finch-Lees, 2008:234-235).

The literature identifies consensus on the need for the professional development of school principals to be ongoing, continuous, and deliberate to be successful (Heymans, 2015:44). The literature also establishes a counterargument to the stop-gap measures of one-day workshops and seminars currently offered to the principals. Moreover, a requirement was identified in the literature that professional development programme content must be relevant and context-specific to the needs of participants (Heymans, 2015:15).

The literature also establishes mentoring as a reciprocal and collaborative learning process between the mentor and the mentee, also establishing the link between mentoring and professional learning (Heymans, 2015:28). A general agreement in the literature dictates the use of real-life examples in the learning process between mentor and mentee, as this enables the mentoring process to overcome the disparity between theory and application that has plagued professional development programmes for years (Heymans:35). The Advanced Certificate: Education (School Management and Leadership) introduced in 2006 to assist principals to cope with challenges they experienced does not address the complexities in South African schools nor does it contribute to the development of effective leadership, with its focus on management, laws and administration Ngcobo (2012: 417; 426). However, reasonable efforts in the form of the Advance Diploma (SLM) have been made to transform the training and development of school principals (see Section 2.2: 38).

In the study, the principles of leader development and leadership development were understood as two sides of the same coin. The growth element of both terms applies to building the leadership and management ability of individuals located in a specific

environment to render themselves and their organisations more productive and successful in achieving decided, defined, and observable performance objectives.

The literature agreed that the success of leadership growth programmes is demonstrated by the successful application of skills and knowledge, resulting in positive work outcomes (Heymans,2015:34). Therefore, the study focused on improving and strengthening core leadership practices that would overcome real-life challenges. Aspects essential to the development of leadership include enhancing technical understanding, expertise and skills. Therefore, strong leadership will have a direct impact on a school's success. In other words, excellent leadership results in creating an excellent environment for teaching and learning.

### **3.7 The relevance of professional development and mentoring**

Various justifications for leader development have been identified in the literature, as the importance of well-developed principals has become increasingly apparent. Leader development and preparation enhance leadership practices and therefore significantly affect educators' working conditions, morale, engagement, teaching ability and pupil performance (Cunha, *et al.*, 2020:1). In addition, authors argue that educational growth rarely occurs when school leaders lack professionally developed skills, which can be a viable alternative for developing classroom pedagogy (Heymans, 2015:40). The worldwide consensus is that mentoring is a valuable leadership development tool, and many countries have resultant policy directives.

Various authors question the relevance of current principal development programmes, based on their initial preparation for an era of industrial development no longer exists. The need for relevant principal development is more significant than ever (Mestry & Du Plessis, 2022:26). Professional learning is thus essential to addressing today's educational expectations and obstacles. Another justification for development is that the dynamics within the field of education have changed, requiring principals to stay informed about how the wider educational environment and their role in it change over time to keep their professional perspective as relevant and effective as possible (Hussein, 2015:90). Furthermore, Hussein (2015:90) argues that delving into contemporary theory can widen perspectives beyond the immediate environment, thereby obtaining insights and improved job performance.

The COVID-19 pandemic significantly expanded principals' responsibilities and the importance with which professional development would have helped them to cope. Bush

(2011:258) maintains that enhancing school principals' expertise and skills through ongoing professional growth is a critical step in improving school quality, instructional efficiency, and student learning success. There is also the assumption in the literature that principals who upgrade their skills through participation in professional development can better manage any crisis they may face (Grissom & Condon, 2021:315). Principals must also keep up with innovations by learning new skills to manage the current changes in education as expectations for managing curriculum and leadership change constantly (Thambekwayo, 2016:42).

Principals should aim to improve their leadership capabilities continuously and foster an eagerness to be at their personal best to enhance capacity within the workplace (Day, 2001:58). In addition, Callan (2006:16) maintains that mentoring is an accepted method associated with the personal growth of job-embedded practitioners. Having a principal who is trained, informed, and prepared influences the quality of leaders' decisions during a crisis response and this affects the long-term recovery of the organisation (Kennedy-Paine, Reeves & Brock, 2013:40). The literature also emphasises the significance of continuing principals' professional development given the difficulties associated with the continually evolving educational environment of the 21st century (Naicker, 2014:426).

### **3.8 Mentoring functions**

A mentor has to assume several responsibilities that help a mentee learn and grow. Since they are experts, because of their experiences, mentors are in a unique position to evaluate how new principals' demands and responsibilities are growing, as well as how frustrating it is to have to produce more with less (Swaminatha & Reed, 2020:231). When developing a model for the mentoring process for this research, it was found that mentoring models in South Africa are mostly based on a European model that favours personal and professional objectives as drivers. It was also established that mentoring can be a powerful stimulus to individual growth and development. According to Heymans (2015:30), the mentoring relationship's supporting roles are influenced by the mentee's needs, the mentee's career level, and the mentee's context and setting.

The literature supports this point of view that describes the fluid nature of mentoring, enabling the development of critical leadership skills (Stead, 2005:181). The purpose of this research was to develop the resilience capital of school principals through mentoring as a strategy.

Heymans (2015:30) views mentoring as a creative way to learn, in which learning can help the mentee grow personally and professionally and become self-sufficient.

In addition to fostering the mentee's career growth, mentoring also helps the mentee's work habits and attitudes (Ragins & Kram, 2007:501). Each of these functions includes specific mentor jobs, tasks, and responsibilities with the primary focus of supporting the personal and professional growth of the mentee within the organisation. These mentoring functions are also called mentoring effects by Taylor and Black (2018:298), and it has been recommended that mentors generate four effects. Three of these effects will be discussed below as they are most relevant and applicable to this research study. The fourth function has been labelled academic subject knowledge support.

### **3.8.1 Role modelling**

The application of role modelling as mentoring function is used as a stand-alone entity, although in the literature it has been used as an element of psychosocial mentoring. Role modelling has been postulated in multiple research studies as a third sort of support distinct from psychosocial function. It involves two sub-functions: career behaviours to imitate and work ethics and values (Dobrow et al., 2012:231). A literary definition of mentors as role models describes them as people who influence the accomplishments, aspirations, and goals of other people by serving as good behavioural models and case references (Garcia et al., 2019:40).

The practice of role modeling includes mentors communicating with their mentees about their encounters, practices, successes, and setbacks (Gunn, Lee & Steed, 2017:17), allowing them to learn from mentors' experiences and setbacks. Role modeling, according to Kram (2008, cited in Mitchell, 2015:4), occurs "whenever the mentee becomes aware of those parts of his or her present ideal self in the mentor and strives to replicate those attributes." Weinberg (2019:436) argues that role modelling requires training from someone who exhibits inspirational, positive qualities, attitudes, and expertise, and what a mentee may find to constitute exceptional learning is related to his or her specific needs and personality.

The two main categories of role modelling have been well described in previous research. Firstly, neophyte modelling is a traditional mentoring system that is most effective for people starting a new job or a substantially changed role (Weinberg, 2019:439). School principals with established professional identities have different needs as dictated by the stage of their

careers. According to Weinberg (2019:439), principals require role modelling from mentors with whom they associate both basic and advanced qualities.

This process allows for self-discovery and the rejuvenation of mentee self-confidence. During the role modelling process, the mentor shares best practices and skills with the mentee to improve professional learning, insight, and confidence in leadership and management (Smith, 2016:35). According to Thambekwayo (2012:41), the mentee must pay close attention to the mentor for role modeling to be effective, remember the behaviour that was observed, replicate the behaviour demonstrated by the mentor and be willing to demonstrate what they have learned in the process. Thus, to fulfill the job of role modeling, a mentor provides personal, uplifting reflections on their successes and mistakes while also sharing real-life experiences.

### **3.8.2 Provision of career support**

When a mentor fosters professional progress through coaching, giving invaluable information, and using their position of influence within the organization, they are fulfilling their role as a mentor in career development (Nyanjom, 2009:37). To improve the mentee's career growth, the mentor engages in behaviours such as "sponsorship, coaching, protection, exposure and visibility, and demanding job tasks" (Banerjee-Batist, Reio & Rocco, 2019:115). This function is to enable tailored support to mentees and to enable them to grow their capabilities by taking into account the particular needs, skills, and ambitions of each mentee (Chun, Sosik & Nam, 2012:1075). Kao (2012:7) reports that career development mentoring can provide job-related information or assignments to enhance mentee insight and expertise on how to complete work tasks effectively.

According to Weinberg and Lanka (2011:1531), the career support role is carried out by providing exposure, visibility, training, and security and by prescribing complex tasks to the mentee. Career-related mentoring fosters career growth, which may lead a mentee to become more effectively committed to her or his job (Payne & Huffman, 2005:160). Thus, the mentor offers a continuous support network that assists the mentee to engage confidently and provides support when the mentee appears to lack the capacity to implement acceptable responses in situations that can allow the mentee to grow (Vanderbilt, 2010:10).

According to Allen *et al.*, Eby, (2004:128), career-related mentoring supports the supply of challenging tasks, which can indirectly contribute to career development, increasing mentee

work performance. Ragins and Kram (2007:74) argue that employee mentoring roles provide mentees with tools and support to improve their professional skills. However, while the provision of career-related advice may benefit mentees, relationships characterised by a lack of reciprocity may prevent mentors from gaining necessary knowledge or formation from mentees and potentially hinder their development (Ragins & Kram, 2007:6). This type of function has been said to offer more advice than mentoring, and it should be seen as such (Riley, 2019:217).

According to Riley (2019:217), career-related support that interviewees regarded highly did not necessarily constitute mentoring, as it lacked the relational investment and reciprocity typical of mentoring relationships. It instead should be interpreted as advising. But in this capacity, the mentor engages with the mentee to develop their perspectives on management and leadership, as well as to support and guide their decisions about management style.

### **3.8.3 Psychosocial support**

According to Nair, Prasad, and Nair (2021:6), leaders who have significant psychosocial capital, also known as authentic leaders, may assist followers to develop active coping mechanisms and optimistic outlooks, which can help mitigate scepticism and pressure. Additionally, the authors contend that relational transparency, integrity, and justice are among the social values that leaders should exhibit. These, along with other psychological assets like self-efficacy, resilience, hope, and confidence, may help one feel better overall. Thus, leader well-being leads to organisational well-being. The importance of school leaders being well both emotionally and psychologically is thus emphasised.

There is a consensus in the literature that one of the conventional functions of mentoring is to provide psychosocial support in balancing professional and personal demands (Whitfield & Edwards, 2011:430). In a developmental relationship, as previously mentioned, mentors should recognise that mentees already have some prior knowledge and skill but that some areas still need improvement. As a result, a mentor encourages personal development by offering support and direction (Elliott, 2020:4).

Mentors must be very self-aware, strive to promote their mentees' emotional well-being, be inviting and versatile, respond proactively to difficult workplace settings, and display emotional intelligence to accomplish this goal (Nair et al., 2021:11). Therefore, these would be the ideal attributes for developing school principal resilience. To achieve this would require

that both mentor and mentee do more than information-sharing or socialising and seek appropriate value, meaning, hope, optimism, caring and compassion in the relationship (Heffron, 2020:30).

The effectiveness of psychosocial support is influenced by the essence of the mentoring connection, which is built on trust and closeness and has benefits that extend beyond the mentee's work life (Riley, 2019:209). Effective leader development depends on this relationship, particularly as it is influenced by the mentor's emotional intelligence and emotional resonance with the mentee (Lee, Sunerman & Hastings, 2020: 46).

The psychosocial function of mentoring is crucial in achieving a mentee's personal developmental needs. Deng et al., (2022:02) assert that psychosocial mentoring is developmentally related and can improve aspects of self-worth, connectedness, identity, and attitudes toward school and work. From this, a developmental relationship can flow, growing the crucial resilience need of school principals. It is argued that this developmental relationship can target the achievement of short-term term goals such as prescribed skills and long-term development plans in social, emotional, and academic skills, respectively, which can result in the growth of resilience (Lee *et al.*, 2020:45).

A study conducted by Bradley (2018:35) found that people participating in leadership development programmes developed stronger resilience, reduced depression, increased leadership self-efficacy, and enhanced solution-focused thinking. The availability of psychosocial support reduced some symptoms of stress and rendered participants more resilient (Sánchez-Aragón et al., 2021:10).

By achieving these developmental objectives, a mentee can deal with crises and short-term setbacks (Whitfield & Edwards, 2011:430) and can be seen as part of long-term success. Kao *et al.*, (2014:191) believe that psychosocial mentoring leads to resilience in a mentee. They contend that an individual's sense of optimism, identification, and professional competence improves in tandem with psychosocial mentoring. Furthermore, according to Whitfield and Edwards (2011:430), achieving the goals of psychosocial mentoring helps the mentee remain resilient in the presence of crises and learn from failure as a necessary step on the road to success. This notion is supported by Zhuang, Wu, and Wen (2013:37), who claim that psychosocial mentoring gives mentees the mental tools necessary to control internal psychological states and cope with work challenges. This notion is supported by

Zhuang, Wu, and Wen (2013:37), who claim that psychosocial mentoring gives mentees the mental tools necessary to control internal psychological states and cope with work challenges. This function, according to Duncan and Stock (2010:297), emerges after the mentor and mentee have established an interpersonal bond. According to Kram (1985:32), the psychosocial function relates to those aspects of personal contact that strengthen the sense of integrity, personality, and effectiveness of the participant in a work context.

According to Kram (1985:32), the psychosocial function of a mentor can include any of the following types of support: the mentor as an advisor leading by example; expressing absolute constructive appreciation for an individual by unconditional recognition and confirmation; urging a mentee to express their concerns and uncertainties without doubt; and to advise by communicating unofficially by being a friend. Mentors fulfil psychosocial mentoring roles as they educate, consciously listen to, and promote growth within the mentee. Chun, Sosik and Yun (2012:1075) suggest that psychosocial mentorship as a role promotes the creation of an inspirational activity that includes formulating a persuasive vision and expressing reasonable expectations through a projection of faith in other shareholders of a school.

Shollen *et al.* (2014:1268) believe that the psychosocial guidance of a mentor, which can include relations, mutual approval, affirmation, guidance, and role modelling is essential to develop self-efficiency, consciousness, and overall growth of the mentee. In addition, Day and Allen (2004:86) suggest that this form of mentoring is beneficial in enhancing the resilience potential of workers during difficult times. This is further endorsed by Arora and Rangnekar (2015:17) who suggest that psychosocial guidance for mentees can motivate them to be resilient in any circumstance. Arora and Rangnekar (2015:17) claim that such roles facilitate mentee career development with the assistance of moral advice and encouragement from the mentor.

Simon, Perry and Roff (2008:10) maintain that the psychosocial mentoring function operates on a psychological level between mentor and mentee, and reflects a broader and more severe component of mentorship. This creates the possibility of a mentoring relationship foundation of trust, where the mentee is at ease taking chances and trying out new behaviours. Psychosocial mentoring aims for mentee growth by reflecting on the personal dimensions of the interaction with the mentor. Shollen *et al.*, (2014:1268) conclude that mentors carry out the psychosocial mentoring role by attending to the issues and concerns



of mentees, creating opportunities for the success of mentees, and developing a sense of their mentees as individuals and practitioners.

Psychosocial counselling contributes to an improvement in the self-image, self-confidence and success of a mentee, and can include sessions exploring fears, professional and personal problems, guidance, and the degree of connection between the participants in the mentorship relationship (Van Jaarsveld, 2013:78). Psychosocial assistance is a balance between technical and personal needs (Whitfield & Edwards, 2011:430). Furthermore, Whitfield & Edwards (2011:430) characterise the psychosocial role as individually focused and often relying on factors, such as affection, strength, shared values, leadership, modelling, and appreciation.

Psychosocial mentoring can thus serve as a potential method to improve the career stability of workers in coping with emotional responses prevailing in the workplace at times of adversity and turmoil (Arora & Rangnekar, 2015:19). To put it another way, psychosocial mentorship supports in the growth of resilience. In addition, the intent of psychosocial roles such as role modelling and therapy strengthens the mentee's awareness of competence and role efficacy (Parvizi, Ireland & Fowler, 2020:131).

### **3.9 Summary and conclusion**

The purpose of this chapter was to review mentoring and its role in the development of school principal resilience. Based on its findings thus far, mentoring was used in this research as a potential professional development strategy to develop and build the resilience capacity of school principals as a means to sustain them in times of change and persistent challenging conditions in their schools. The justification for the continuous professional development of school principals includes remaining relevant to current advances in the educational environment.

The literature indicated in this chapter establishes the complex and challenging role of a school principal with which mentoring can help him/her cope. Thus, mentoring is a tool to help leaders develop and incorporate new knowledge, improve mindfulness and build their resilience (see Section 3.1). Leadership development initiatives are based on the premise that leadership is not stagnant but continuously evolving, expanding and developing (see Section 3.6). This dispels the myth that leaders are born (see Section 2.4).

For mentoring to serve as a practical professional development approach, the literature study established the following:

- Mentoring is acknowledged as just one of several methods for helping school leaders build their leadership skills.
- For a mentoring programme to be effective and successful, support from different stakeholders, particularly the district office of the provincial DOE, is essential (see Section 2.1).
- Engagement in career learning must be intentional and consistent over a specified period (see Section 3.2).
- The mentoring partnership should concentrate on the mentee's needs and should be relevant to the work environment of principals to enhance their leadership practices in times of challenges and change (see Section 3.6).

A mentoring programme that is results-orientated and tailored to the needs of school principals based on their specific past and present challenges is ideal for building their capacity. Furthermore, the authors argue that mentoring offers advantages unique to other forms of professional development (see Section 3.6). Mentoring may increase self-awareness in leaders, helping them manage interpersonal issues. It can also introduce school leaders to a professional community of head teachers, enabling them to gain confidence in their new position and grow into their professional identity.

This chapter dealt with the second research objective, which was to examine and comprehend the contribution mentorship can play in helping educational leaders develop resilience. The third objective of the study, which was to consider school principals' perceptions of the value of professional development and resilience will be covered in Chapter 5, which explains the empirical research undertaken on the perceptions of principals of their participation in a mentoring programme. However, in the meantime, in Chapter 4, the research design and methods used to complete the empirical research will be explained in detail in the following chapter.

## CHAPTER 4

### RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

#### 4.1 Introduction

As stated in Chapter 1, the study aimed to investigate the possibility of a leadership development programme that would build the resilience capacity of school principals using mentoring as a strategy. Four objectives were formulated to achieve that aim, the first of which was addressed in Chapter 2 and the second in Chapter 3. This chapter explains the research design and methodology followed to achieve the third objective, which involved an empirical study of the views of school leaders on the value of professional development and resilience. The chapter explains the phenomenological, qualitative research design, the paradigm that underpinned it and then the research methodology in terms of sampling and data collection/analysis. The trustworthiness of the research and ethical considerations are also covered in this chapter.

#### 4.2 Research design

A phenomenological, qualitative research design was followed in the empirical study. The following sections explain phenomenology and qualitative research in detail

##### 4.2.1 *Phenomenological design*

A phenomenological design was appropriate for the study, which sought to discover what discover the perceptions, thereby revealing their experiences of the phenomenon of leadership resilience development, especially through mentoring. A phenomenological design indicates gathering qualitative data containing participants' words, inductive reasoning and the interaction of the researcher with participants (Suter, 2012:366).

Creswell and Poth (2018:75) describe phenomenology as the study of phenomena and their meaning, which in the study would mean interpreting the participants' experiences expressed through verbal data. Phenomenology is described by Blumberg, Cooper and Schindler (2014:492) as a qualitative analytical method that places a focus on comprehending reported experiences. Phenomenological research, according to Mayoh and Onwuegbuzie (2015:97), is ideal for examining affective, emotional, and frequently strong human experiences. Therefore, in the study, the researcher listened to and interpreted the principals' stories.

A phenomenology research design determines the exploration of human life, the world as it is experienced in day-to-day interactions and circumstances from the participants' perspective, often best undertaken via semi-structured interviews (Maree, 2016:77). According to Van Manen (2017:776), phenomenology aims to produce insightful and meaningful outcomes explaining individuals' experiences instead of merely accessing their knowledge.

According to Bell (2018:55), a key aspect of phenomenological research is the richness of in-depth reports of the phenomenon being studied that are interpreted objectively by the researcher. Therefore, in the study, the researcher directly restated experiences relayed by school principals and did not allow his views to affect the reporting of their words. Thus, Montague (2019:16), citing Husserl states that a phenomenological research design aims "to capture the experience or essence, without the researcher trying to interpret, explain, or theorise what is taking place". According to Gray (2017:44), the researcher must intentionally put aside any assumptions they may have regarding the phenomenon being studied.

#### *4.2.1.1 Motivation for using a phenomenological research design*

To fill the gap in the literature on how school principals experience leadership resilience development initiatives, especially through mentoring, the researcher used a phenomenological research design to gather their perceptions of this phenomenon, as they were well-positioned to voice their experiences. Moreover, the perceptions of school principals of the phenomenon under study were an unexplored research area. Nhlumayo (2020:114) defines a phenomenological research design as providing an emic perspective in an investigation, which uncovers the meaning participants attach to their experiences. Moreover, a phenomenological research design ensured that the school principals' narratives would reveal their needs (Suter, 2012:366).

#### **4.2.2 Qualitative research design**

A qualitative research design was adopted for the study because verbal data reflecting the school principals' perceptions was needed to gain an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon under study. Moreover, this design was preferable to a quantitative research design, which would require quantifiable (numerical) data to be gathered (Abuhamda, Bsharat & Ismail, 2021:75). A qualitative research design, according to Yilmaz (2013:312), denotes an inductive, interpretive, and naturalistic approach to the study of individuals, cases,

phenomena, social occasions, and practices in their natural settings to uncover and define the interpretations that people attach to their experiences of the world. Additionally, a qualitative approach to research is suitable for examining the perspectives of the regional population that is directly experiencing a phenomenon (Chivanga & Monyai, 2021:13). Hence, to answer research questions and accomplish research goals, one must scientifically examine subjective experiences (Abidoeye, 2021:21).

The use of description is a key element of qualitative research because it ensures an understanding of both individual experiences and collective ideas, opinions, thoughts, and perceptions of groups of individuals who share a given context. This understanding informs future practice (Haradhan, 2018:10). Therefore, data collected through the study might be used to improve school principals' resilience development practices and thus prepare them for 21st-century schools (see Section 3.3).

### **4.2.3 Research paradigm**

Research designs are underpinned by paradigms or philosophies, which determine the research ontology, epistemology and methodology (see Section. 1.6.1).

#### **4.2.3.1 Interpretive paradigm**

Because the participants conveyed their subjective experiences in settings that were naturally occurring, the research design of this research was based on interpretivism (Harsono, 2016:54-55). Therefore, deep meanings were uncovered and interpreted through dialogue with the participants' multiple perspectives during one-on-one interviews. According to interpretivism, the researcher understood the meaning of reality from the participants' subjective viewpoints through a relationship with them instead of measuring it quantitatively. In other words, qualitative data were collected through interviews as opposed to questionnaire surveys, for example, which would gather quantitative data (Harsono, 2016:54-55).

#### **4.2.3.2 Ontological position**

The ontological position of the researcher, which was his relationship with the reality of the study in the study, was that of an objective observer attempting to understand the participants' experiences through their subjective perceptions of social reality. Thus, the reality was created in their minds (idealist ontological position), as opposed to existing independently in

the world as objective reality (realist ontological position) or as inert, senseless matter (materialist ontological position) (Okeke & Van Wyk, 2015:60; Scotland, 2012:9; De Vos *et al.*, 2011:8; Bryman, 2012:35-36; Al-Saadi, 2014:6).

#### **4.2.3.3**      *Epistemological position*

In the study, the researcher's epistemological position, which is his/her standpoint on what is knowledge (Bryman, 2012:27), was constructive empiricism. This philosophy accepts that research findings resulting from studying a phenomenon can be considered empirically adequate as opposed to true. In other words, the subjective knowledge gleaned from the current empirical research would be subjectively true from the participants' perspective of their subjective reality (Al-Saadi, 2014:4; Bryman, 2012:27). The researcher becomes closely connected to the study participants to gather subjective evidence from each participant's perspective during the study.

### **4.3**      **Research methodology**

The phenomenological, qualitative research design followed in the study indicated the qualitative research methodology comprising the research methods explained in the following sections.

#### **4.3.1**      ***Sampling and sample***

The researcher chose the purposive sampling technique to select the participants as this allowed the researcher to select the participants based on their potential to shed more light on the study in question. According to Maree, Creswell, Ebersöhn, Eloff, Ferreira, Ivankova, Jansen, Nieuwenhuis, Pietersen, and Clark (2016:198), it is a qualitative sampling approach that reflects a variety of non-probability sampling strategies or participants' capacity and willingness to engage in the study. Moreover, as the participants were familiar with the phenomenon under investigation, they were expected to be able to articulate their perceptions in-depth. Teba-Teba (2016:60) notes that researchers working according to an interpretive paradigm are often best served by using purposeful sampling. Its flexibility allows the researcher to select the study participants in a way that is at his or her discretion (Maree & Pietersen, 2016:197).

The researcher purposively chose participants whom he thought would provide rich information, as they had participated in a mentoring programme as part of the Department's

intervention. The type of purposeful sampling method the researcher used was determined by the study's goal. When the study subject under inquiry is pertinent to the traits of the group of interest such that it could be thoroughly explored, a homogenous sample is chosen (Maree, 2016:198). In this study, the researcher used a homogenous purposive sampling strategy, which tries to produce a sample whose constituents have similar features, such as their participation in a mentoring programme arranged by the DBE. All participants were part of an underperforming cohort, all have been in the office of the school principal fairly recently and all were part of a mentoring programme.

The final participants in the study were those chosen based on the fact that they have been participating in a mentoring programme. This was done because the BDE wanted to assist schools that did not attain the benchmark of 60 % as set by the Minister of Basic Education.

#### **4.3.2 Data collection**

Semi-structured interviews were utilised for collecting data on the school principals' perceptions. The researcher used a senior student in social science research, that is completing a master's degree in social work, to assist in collecting the data. A complete briefing session discussing various aspects of the research was held with the student. Nevertheless, utilising several data collection techniques strengthens triangulation and increases the trustworthiness of the data (MacMillan & Schumacher, 2010:379). Therefore, during the interview, observation was used to collect data whereby the researcher made notes on participants' non-verbal language, such as tone of voice and body language. Triangulation was further ensured by making use of member checking whereby participants were consulted after the data analysis to gather additional information.

##### *4.3.2.1 Semi-structured interviews*

The third research question and third study objective were addressed through the use of semi-structured interviews. Therefore, the school principals were asked questions during the interviews to elicit their perceptions of the value of professional development and resilience. Coleman (2012:252) believes that the semi-structured interview method of collecting data is best used when researching using the interpretive paradigm and centres on answering predetermined questions, although the researcher can probe participants' answers for more information. Thus, participants were allowed to elaborate on their answers and explain the reasons for them.

Key informant interviews are extensive discussions with individuals who are prepared to discuss their views with the researcher and have expertise in a certain field, hold a particular position, or possess special communication skills (Givon & Court, 2010:283). To learn more about how the mentorship program affected the five school principals' leadership and management skills after they had previously taken part in a mentoring initiative funded by the educational authorities, the researcher performed face-to-face interviews with each of them.

The researcher aimed to establish an environment that improved complete disclosure by allowing participants to inquire about the interviews and get the questions answered before the actual interview by getting in touch with them ahead of time to set up interview dates, times, and locations. The researcher made sure that principals felt secure enough to respond honestly to inquiries in a non-threatening, laid-back, open, and trustworthy manner to encourage them to use lived experiences and narrate examples. Additionally, to foster a favourable environment, interviews were held in locations that were convenient for the participants, which in every case were the principals' offices.

The interviews were audio-recorded to ensure correct and readily available first-hand accounts of the participants' experiences. All voice-recorded interviews were immediately transcribed verbatim. The researcher was able to save time and repeat recorded interviews for verification by recording the participants' responses. To facilitate the data processing procedure, the data were transcribed.

#### *4.3.2.2 Data collection instrument*

The approach followed to gather data during interviews was an interview schedule with a specific set of open-ended questions (see Appendix C). This interview schedule was simply utilised as a reference to keep the interviews on track and ensure that the participants responded to the same initial questions, although more ad-hoc, in-depth questions were asked thereafter. Moreover, the interview guide ensured that all pertinent research-related areas were considered.

#### **4.3.3 Thematic data analysis**

The qualitative method of thematic data analysis was used in the study. According to Lochmiller (2021:2029), thematic analysis is a rigorous, robust and straight-forward way of engaging with qualitative data. Thematic analysis is a practical approach to determining the



views, opinions, knowledge and experiences of individuals (Baten & Amadi, 2020:30). Baten and Amadi (2020:30) postulate that this analysis technique has flexibility in interpreting data, even with large data sets, and can efficiently sort them into broad themes. Researchers use thematic analysis to gain insight and knowledge from gathered data, and it is defined as identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns or themes within data (Braun & Clarke, 2019:589). Thematic analysis is a method for analysing textual data and elucidating themes through a methodical coding process, meaning analysis and the production of a description of social reality through theme construction, according to Vaismoradi *et al.*, (2016:100).

Based on Tesch's methodology, Braun and Clarke (2019:594) defined the following six steps for thematic data analysis:

- Phase 1: Getting acquainted with the data
- Phase 2: Developing the first codes
- Phase 3: Trying to find themes
- Phase 4: Reviewing of themes
- Phase 5: Identifying and labelling themes
- Phase 6: Concluding the thematic analysis and producing the explanation

In the first step, the researcher became familiar with the data by reading and reviewing verbatim transcriptions and field notes, listening to tape recordings and writing down crucial ideas. During the second step, the researcher coded the data to simplify finding correlations between the data. During step three, the researcher searched for patterns to uncover themes in the chosen data sets. The researcher reviewed the themes after first identifying them to make sure they fit the codes. The researcher will ensure accurate and thorough reporting of the findings in the fifth phase by defining and naming each theme. A thorough analysis of each theme will be provided during this stage, identifying the story that each theme told and taking into account how each theme fits into the larger story about the full data set in connection to the research questions.

Verbatim transcription along with nonverbal behaviour signals is required to prove the study's dependability, dependability, and trustworthiness (Stuckey, 2014:7). The basis for the analysis in this study will be based on deep interaction with the data from reading, writing, re-reading, and re-writing (Neubauer, Witkop, & Varpio, 2019:95). McMullin, (2023:144) caution that there is no one "optimal" or "most accurate" transcribing method; rather, a researcher

should take into account the specific theoretical context and research questions of the study to decide where on the continuum between full verbatim and intelligent verbatim is most suited for the study.

The information will be presented as summaries and narratives with examples and verbatim quotes that will reflect the opinions and experiences of the participants. Since it allowed the researcher to respond to the "what," "which," and "how" research questions, thematic data analysis was selected as the preferred method in this research study (see Section 1.4.1.). Hence the researcher will attach some transcripts of the interviews (see Appendix F:206-227). In this study, the researcher will code and extract portions of the interview responses. The data's coded portions will be sorted to create categories, which will then be brought together to create themes and sub-themes.

The findings will be presented in a way that is organised around the themes, and the researcher will support the findings using relevant quotes that will speak to the research questions. Furthermore, the researcher marked all sections of the data analysis with a specific section heading that exclusively deals with a certain aspect of the research. This will make it easier to find and edit specific information.

In using thematic analyse literature distinguish between either an inductive thematic analysis and a theoretical thematic analysis (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017:3355). This analysis will be an inductive one. Moreover, a researcher using an inductive or "data-driven" approach might want to create codes that are entirely reflective of the data's content, devoid of any preconceived theory or conceptual framework (Byrne, 2021:1396). In light of this, the researcher will code every piece of data that is related to or illustrated an intriguing aspect of the research questions. As stated above the researcher will attach copies of the interview transcripts (see Appendix F).

Communication between the transcribed data and the data analysis, findings and the presentation of results will be meticulously followed. A clear distinction in the interview transcripts is made between the researcher and the participants. Responses of the participants have been expressed in *Italics* and the researcher's speech is different colour coded from that of the participants. Italicizing text and indenting quotations were two common methods that were considered to be conventional and well-recognised by researchers (Corden & Sainsbury, 2006,20). It is therefore perfectly acceptable to transform the verbatim

transcript information into a readable communication in any study where meaning, rather than speech pattern, is your goal (Thorne, 2020:6). This will be the very essence of the analysis where the meaning of the participant experiences will be analysed.

Furthermore, each participant principal has been assigned a code and will be labelled as such in Chapter 5. The researcher concluded that it was a suitable method of indicating speaker markers and boundaries. Furthermore, there isn't one transcription format that fits all qualitative data gathering methods, settings, or theoretical frameworks, but suggests a few practical guidelines to keep in mind when creating transcripts. To better provide the reader with a consistently produced and comparable textual record, the researcher will guarantee that all transcripts are created according to the standard procedure described above. There is evidence to substantiate that the use of numbering or a transcript reference system when transcribing is an arbitrary practice and is dependent on the researcher's choice, research questions, pragmatic considerations, and the overall goals of the research (Psathas & Anderson, 1990:96; Reckel, 2016:81). Furthermore, one of the most contentious issues in the field of qualitative research is whether it is compulsory to use line numbering when transcribing data interview. Regardless of whether or not line numbers are included, it is important to provide accurate references and citations to ensure that the transcription is both trustworthy and usable.

#### **4.4 Trustworthiness**

In qualitative research, trustworthiness is based on the researcher's exact results, the respondents, and the study's readers (Anney, 2014:273). Loh (2013:4) also asserts that "the search for quality is vital for the research to be welcomed into the pantheon of information and to be received as appropriate for application in diverse methods and ways." In other words, the degree to which the conclusions are extremely accurate and a true depiction of people's actual experiences is what is meant by "trustworthiness."

By employing and fully detailing the most suitable research design and methodology to respond to the research questions and meet the study's objectives, trustworthiness was secured. In addition, Bless, Higson-Smith, and Sithole (2013:236) suggest four guidelines for determining the trustworthiness of qualitative investigations, which are covered in the following paragraphs. After the sections on the criteria, it is discussed how triangulation of the data collection methods added to trustworthiness.

#### **4.4.1 Credibility**

Credibility indicated the truthfulness and accuracy of a study's findings (Hamilton, Hutchinson & Pinnegar, 2020:304). The researcher asked participants to confirm the data obtained during the interviews to strengthen the credibility of the study's findings. After the transcription of the interviews, the researcher emailed the transcripts to the participant principals to determine whether the transcription constitutes the words of the participants. Credibility was further enhanced by providing copies of the thematic data analysis findings to the participants for review before writing these. Thus, member-checking determined whether participants felt descriptions or themes expressed in the preliminary report were accurate renditions of each principal's perceptions (Surian, 2015:87). By giving participants the chance to affirm or dispute the accuracy and interpretations of the data, member-checking gives the researcher a tool to verify the accurate portrayal of participant voices and strengthens the validity of the qualitative study.

#### **4.4.2 Dependability**

The reliability of the study results is known as dependability, which would mean that another researcher could follow the same process in another context (Nowell *et al.*, 2017:3). Dependability is ensured by a systematic documentation of the research process (Ponelis, 2015:538). By maintaining all of the documentation and information related to the empirical investigation and review of relevant literature, the researcher was able to construct an audit trail. In addition, the thesis provides a detailed account of the study, thereby accounting for all decisions made.

#### **4.4.3 Confirmability**

Confirmability is indeed the extent to which the findings may be supported or confirmed by further sources (Slayter, 2020:5). For readers to verify that conclusions resulting from the data analysis were based on the respondents' perceptions instead of the researcher's prejudice and subjectivity, it is crucial to include examples of the participants' words with the explanation of each theme and subtheme of the findings (Ponelis, 2015:38). To guarantee that his presumptions and prejudice were removed from the study, the researcher also validated the information gathered and the analysis results with the participants.

#### **4.4.4 Transferability**

The final criterion for trustworthiness is the transferability of the research. The potential of qualitative research findings to be generalised or the capacity of the research design and technique to be applied to different contexts or settings is referred to as transferability (Maxwell, 2020:25). Transferability in this study will be achieved by providing an in-depth and rich description of the data, thorough research findings, and participant selection. In this study, rich, detailed descriptions will be used to describe the content, participants, and activities of interest relating to their experiences in a mentoring programme (Burke-Johnson & Christensen, 2016:655).

Though transferability implies that the results can be generalised, this is not the primary goal of qualitative research (Schurink, Fouche', & De Vos, 2011:420). Nieuwenhuis (2016b:124) makes the case that readers, not researchers, should be responsible for determining if the results can be applied to their context. To ensure that other researchers could transfer the research design and methodology, the researcher gave a detailed explanation thereof in this thesis. Furthermore, the researcher will compile thick accounts of the participant's experiences, which are included in Chapter 5 of this research report. The narratives are quite in-depth, allowing readers to judge for themselves whether the study and findings are transferable. Because the researcher will provide the readers with a thorough account of the phenomenon under inquiry, the findings of this study may apply to other schools only if their backgrounds and environments are similar to this in the study.

#### **4.4.5 Triangulation**

In research, triangulation refers to the use of various datasets, methodologies, theories, and/or investigators to answer a topic (Donkoh & Mensah, 2023:7). It's a research technique that can help you improve the credibility and validity of your conclusions while minimizing the impact of any study biases (Donkoh & Mensah, 2023:7). Various research triangulation techniques exist. The four primary types of triangulation are as follows (Tzagkarakis & Kritas, 2022:1): Data triangulation: Making use of information from various places, times, and individuals (Valencia, 2022:37); Theory triangulation: Using many theoretical views in your study (Donkoh & Mensah, 2023:8); Investigator triangulation: Including multiple researchers in data collection or analysis (Haydn, 2019:36); and Methodological triangulation: Using different methodologies to approach the same topic (Donkoh & Mensah, 2023:7).

Triangulation in this study was achieved using the following methods. Theory triangulation where the researcher applied three different theories instead of using a single theory that can

result in bias (see Section 1.5). Secondly, the researcher used a senior student in social science research, that is completing a master's degree in social work, to assist in collecting the data. A complete briefing session discussing various aspects of the research was held with the student (see Section 4.3.2). Valencia (2022:38-39) pointed out three conditions that must be satisfied when applying researcher triangulation. For a team to say they are employing researcher triangulation, each researcher should play a prominent role in the study, the researchers should have different experiences and the disciplinary bias of researchers should be evident. Furthermore, the researcher used observation during the collection of the data whereby notes on participants' non-verbal language, such as tone of voice and body language were made.

## **4.5 Ethical considerations**

Miller *et al.*, (2016:14) define research ethics as the accountability of researchers throughout the research process based on adherence to ethical principles. Consequently, the researcher requested and received a certificate of ethical clearance from the University of South Africa (UNISA, Ethics reference number 2021/05/12/35701714/09/AM) (see Appendix A). Moreover, permission to conduct this research was sought and obtained from the Eastern Cape Department of Education (see Appendix B).

### **4.5.1 Informed consent**

Before the interviews, the researcher gave participants complete written and verbal disclosure about the study and their part in it to adhere to ethical standards. To enable each participant to make an informed choice regarding participation or not, the researcher set up initial sessions with them all on-site. Participants were also told that they could choose not to participate without any negative repercussions (see Appendix D).

Before taking part in the study, participants were expected to sign informed consent forms. Furthermore, the cover letter and consent form outlined the voluntary nature of the study and that the participants could withdraw at any time without being penalised in any way. In addition, the researcher sought verbal consent from interviewees to audio-record each interview.

### **4.5.2 Confidentiality**

Ethical principles require a researcher to respect the participants' need for confidentiality (Abbott & McKinney, 2013:54–60). Respondents must be able to trust that their answers will

be kept private to ensure that they respond honestly and completely during the interview. Participants were also told that the researcher would keep their identities a secret and that the information gathered would only be utilised for research purposes. Even though participants will be assured that they have access to the research data to maintain transparency, the data will also be kept on a computer that required a login code to access it, compact discs (CDs), and universal serial bus (USB) drives. Furthermore, hard copies of information will be kept secure in a cupboard at either the researcher's private residence or office for a maximum of five years, after which time all data will be disposed of.

### **4.5.3 Anonymity**

To reassure the participants that their identity would remain unknown, the researcher informed the school principals that the final thesis, publications and presentations based on the research would not identify them or their schools and would not connect them in any way to the information provided. In addition, the participants were reassured that they and their schools would be referred to by unidentifiable codes or pseudonyms in the data collection, the analysis, the dissertation and future articles and presentations.

## **4.6 Summary and Conclusion**

This chapter delineated how the study was conducted, illustrating the research design and methodology selected to answer the research questions and achieve the research objections. The phenomenological, qualitative research design was explained in detail as was the interpretivism paradigm underpinning the study and the researcher's ontological and epistemological positions. In addition, the chapter explained the sampling method used, the sample selected, the procedures for gathering data and the measuring instrument, which was the interview guide. The chapter discussed the data's thematic analysis and described the process to ensure that the results were reliable as well as the ethical standards that the study followed. The results of the data analysis will be presented, interpreted, and discussed in the following chapter.

## CHAPTER 5

### PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS OF THE DATA ANALYSIS

*The need for preparation and professional support, such as mentoring and peer networks, is increasingly being identified as playing an important part in the development of effective school leaders (Sutcher, Podolsky & Espinoza, 2017:9).*

#### 5.1 Introduction

The results of the analysis of the qualitative data collected during semi-structured interviews are presented and discussed in the current chapter. Making sense of research participants' perspectives by classifying them into appropriate themes, groups, and subjects is the process of qualitative data analysis (Cohen *et al.*, 2007:461). Additionally, according to Leedy and Ormrod (2010:135), qualitative researchers create interpretive narratives from their data to represent the complexity of the phenomenon under study from the perspectives of those who have first-hand experience with it.

During the interviews conducted to gather data, participants were free to express themselves, even though the conversation was controlled by an interview schedule. The researcher probed the participants to clarify their statements and to redirect the conversation to the focus of the study. The researcher transcribed the participants' words verbatim, and no alterations were made to correct the language in quotations. Thus, the principals' insightful reflections provided rich data, which, after analysis, would provide direction to future leadership practices during an era of serious educational challenges.

The primary topics discussed during the interviews included:

- The principals' definition of a mentor and a mentoring programme
- Reasons principals were part of the mentoring programme
- The perceptions of principals of what it means to be resilient
- The characteristics of a resilient principal
- The development of resilience
- Instances that required principals to be resilient
- The crucial role of professional development
- Mentoring as an approach to professional development
- The mentoring curriculum



- The principals' expectations of a mentoring programme
- The leadership lessons gained through the mentoring programme

## **5.2. Findings of the data analysis**

This section explains the findings of thematic analysis of the data gathered during the interviews to discover the perceptions of experienced and novice school principals of secondary schools of the Tinara Circuit of the Nelson Mandela Bay Metro district of education concerning professional development, resilience in leadership, and resilience development. The results, which were derived from an examination of the participant's verbatim transcripts, are shown below as themes. In addition, the themes are combined with the results of the school principals' identification of the key competencies necessary for resilience. The themes that emerged from the analysis include the following: perceptions of a mentor; motivation for participating in the mentoring programme; perceptions of a resilient school principal; resilient leadership characteristics; development of resilient leadership; Instances requiring principals to be resilient; the importance of professional development for school principals; mentoring as a professional development strategy; mentoring curriculum; expectations of a mentoring programme; leadership lessons gained through the mentoring programme. This will be discussed in the ensuing section.

### **5.2.1 Theme 1: Perceptions of a Mentor**

Mentoring was viewed and understood by principals in the mentoring programme as support and assistance with the contextual challenges they were going through. The following are among the descriptions used by the mentees in this regard:

*He came to help us with the lack of 6 subject teachers. (Principal THP).*

*Many schools at that particular time went through a difficult time in terms of performance because of the whole top structure of the schools leaving the profession. (Principal CHK)*

*I had no other resources to go to. So, the department took its wise advice to get somebody in to assist me and truly appreciated that one. (Principal BPK).*

Most principals mistook mentors for problem-solvers rather than resources. This view of mentors by the participants contained elements of a unidirectional relationship, where the mentor alone brings knowledge and experience with no possible contribution from the mentee

(see Section 3.2). This is at odds with current trends in mentoring research that command a shared and collective responsibility between individual school principals, mentors and employers in the District Office of the Department of Education to replace outdated methods of principal development (see Section 2.12).

All participants defined the concept of a mentor differently, although their meanings shared a common thread. In general, mentors were described by principals as individuals with prior experience in their roles. The concept of a mentor and what a mentoring programme comprises, according to the participants, are summed up in the following paragraphs:

*A retired experienced school principal assisted me (Principal BPK).*

*A mentor according to me is someone that has experience. Someone that walked the path previously. Someone that overcame obstacles and challenges and manage to obtain reasonable success in their role as a school principal or the field that they are currently operating in. (Principal CHK).*

*A mentor is thus a guide in assisting principals with issues about curriculum as well as challenges with human resources within a school. (Principal CHL).*

*It is someone that is experienced and can take a new leader or principal by hand and walk with him/her towards the goals of the organisation. (Principal QHP).*

*To me, my mentor has been successful in what they have been doing. And to me that someone, gives the guidelines to get to the level where they've got to. Even to a better height or higher level than what they have achieved. (Principal THP).*

The participants attached certain requirements and characteristics to a mentor in their definitions. The participants perceived a mentor as someone with experience who, in this instance, was provided as part of a Department of Education's initiative and thus could help them with the challenges they were experiencing. Therefore, despite the lack of a universal definition of a mentor in the literature, the participants defined the concept as an experienced person who formed a relationship with a mentee to foster their development (see Section 3.2).

Furthermore, they interpreted a mentor as someone who had previously performed a similar function to them and could therefore assist them with similar problems. In addition, a mentor

was identified as an individual who has demonstrated success as a leader and is qualified to guide and assist others on a similar path. The above views expressed by the principals were like those expressed in the literature regarding what a mentor represents and what characteristics they should display (see Section 3.2).

A mentee should have confidence in the mentor's capacity to offer crucial psychosocial assistance, which may enhance their managerial and leadership abilities (see Section 3.8.3). It is further agreed upon in the literature that the value of a mentoring programme is dependent on a relationship of trust between mentor and mentee (see Section 3.5). From their descriptions, participants appeared to understand the concept of mentorship as an emotional engagement of caring and nurturing with someone who is guiding them in an established relationship of trust.

At the beginning of the programme, however, many mentees were sceptical as to the reasons for the mentor's initial presence. Several of the mentees mentioned that they had distrusted the mentoring process during its early stages and were therefore not ready to accept what the mentor had to offer to them. For example, Principal BHP said as follows:

*I must say it wasn't easy for me neh, I had a little resistance towards it in the beginning because this person was here now in your face working with me everywhere I go, so yes it was difficult for me.* Principal CHL also did not feel ready to benefit from the Department's intervention: *"When the department knows what the school principals need they will not just impose somebody on you who might not have had similar experiences as you"*. Moreover, Principal CHK maintained, *"But I must say that in the beginning, I was quite hesitant because I was thinking the mentor is as a person now that's gonna watch and monitor your all the time. Watch what doing and how you are doing things"*. Principal THP also perceived a mentor as a threat: *"But now some looked at it as a way to undermine them, maybe this man who comes here is gonna tell me what to do, it became another mess"*.

A possible explanation for these perceptions was that the purpose of the mentoring intervention had not been explained to the mentees by the DoE. There was no official communication or consultation between the Department and school principals, and feelings of distrust may have therefore derailed the mentoring process (see Section 5.2.9.2).

Mentorship has been defined in this section by the participants according to the challenges and needs they were experiencing since the implementation of the programme. Most participants articulated the need for a mentor to be an experienced school leader. The

participants also believed that in the formation of a mentoring relationship, mentors were the only ones who could provide significant information. The participants' opinions of mentoring, however, did not correspond with the study literature's explanation of the nature of the mentor-mentee relationship, which focused on relational growth and development.

Mentors bring a unique skill set of professional and interpersonal experience to a mentorship relationship. They can uniquely contribute by teaching mentees how to grow skills, become an expert in educational leadership and increase their effectiveness in the field. It is thus logical that a mentor is a successful and experienced school administrator to contribute to the development of a mentee's character and abilities in a professional and personal capacity. A mentor with similar past experiences can provide an understanding of their particular situation and facilitate the development of a meaningful relationship. The focus of the next paragraph will be reasons for participation in mentoring.

## **5.2.2 Theme 2: Motivation for participating in the mentoring programme**

### *5.2.2.1 Newly appointed principals*

Principal BPK expressed appreciation that the DoE had appointed a mentor to guide them as a newly appointed principal and stated, “*So, it was wise on the on the side of the department to appoint people to assist principals in the new role and I truly appreciate that role*”. The following remarks also outline the participants' beliefs of a mentor as an appropriate intervention for a newly appointed principal:

*The initial idea of the mentoring programme was to guide and assist young and newly appointed principals. (Principal CHK).*

*The mentoring programme is very good. It is especially helpful since some get appointed to the principals' post straight from post level one with no managerial experience. Mentoring would then bridge the gap between being a post-level 1 & post-level 4 dynamics. (Principal CHL).*

*So, principals are appointed in the positions or land in the position, and they were unsure of what to do because they are just left in the position. It was only the induction to the principalship but that was not enough. So, we are having the people that are there for us during certain times of the week and it was helpful. (Principal QHP).*

*The Department of Education looked at the township school, they looked at their results, and to me, it seems they fear that those schools were not achieving the best results. These schools could be given someone with expertise. (Principal THP).*

#### 5.2.2.2 Underperforming schools

Principal BPK mentioned that their school was underperforming and therefore the Department had likely appointed a mentor to help the principal to rectify this situation: “*The mentors were chosen at that moment when this school was underperforming. And I believe that the department appointed them as mentors to support the school leaders.*” The following statements indicate similar perceptions by other principals:

*The Department of Education looked at the township school, they looked at their results, and to me, it seems they fear that those schools were not achieving the best results. These schools could be given someone with expertise. (Principal THP).*

*Resilient school principals are especially needed in what we term underperforming schools. (Principal CHK).*

The two primary motivations for involvement in the mentorship programme were clarified by the participants (see Section 1.3). The first was that they were newly appointed principals, and the second was that they formed part of an underperforming cohort, as defined by the 60% pass rate requirement for matric examinations, as set by the National Department of Education. School principals were selected to participate in the programme by their District Education Offices. Based on the aforementioned, it was postulated that while assessing eligibility for the programme, the demands of the regional or the provincial education authorities may have taken precedence over those of the school leaders in terms of development initiatives.

According to the literature study, involvement by mentors and mentees in mentoring programmes should be not obligatory, and if it is not regarded as a choice, participant resistance is a possibility and would reduce the mentoring programme's effectiveness (see Section 3.5). The purpose of the mentoring programme took on a different meaning for different stakeholders. The literature review argues that educational mentoring relationships weren't always adapted to meet the needs of each mentee (see Section 3.6). This was affirmed by the objective of the mentoring programme not being made clear to the mentees

by the DoE. Furthermore, a contradiction arose between the needs of the mentees and the purpose of the DoE for the introduction of the mentoring programme.

As a result, a mentoring programme initiative must take the mentee's surroundings and interests into consideration. To avoid frustration and uncertainty over participation in mentoring programmes, it may be necessary to prioritise the needs of the mentees and the mentors' skills and experience to receive optimum value. This suggests an interrelatedness of participant involvement, programme satisfaction, and perceived value. Voluntary participation has also been found to be important to establish connection and rapport from the onset of a mentoring relationship and can also facilitate improved communication between mentor and mentee.

The above statements indicate that principals ascribed a functionalist role to a mentor, which is an individual with experience that can assist a mentee in coping with challenges. They interpreted the mentoring process as involving the mentor transferring knowledge to the mentee in a unilateral direction, not allowing the mentee's experiences to become part of the process. This typifies a dependency model of mentoring rather than one that develops the mentee's resilience and skills.

A more relational view of mentoring may be more useful for principals, as this would allow their voices to be heard in a growth-enhancing relationship (see Section 3.6). Training principals to comply with administrative measures, as required by the DoE, should just be the beginning and not the end of preparation for leading and managing schools during times of fast change (see Section 3.8.3). The 21st century must develop resilient leaders who can manage challenges and engage all school stakeholders in continuous quality improvement for the benefit of their neighbourhoods, and be able to utilise these skills in future.

It is possible to create a mentorship programme that is value-laden when participation is voluntary and unrelated to performance management. Instead of the mentor only describing past experiences that may be contextually irrelevant, it becomes crucial to establish communication between mentor and mentee. This mentoring approach fosters an atmosphere in which mentees are encouraged to generate their answers or solutions.

### **5.2.3 Theme 3: Perceptions of a resilient school principal**

The COVID-19 epidemic quickly changed education and leadership, calling for those in positions of leadership to lead adaptably and to foster personal resilience (see Section 2.1). A consensus exists within the literature that a resilient leader will develop the qualities of stability, resourcefulness and adaptability. A resilient leader is not only needed during a pandemic but also in schools faced with many other challenges (see Sections 1.2. to 1.2.7). Mentoring has been suggested as a method by which resilience may be built in school principals (see Section 3.2).

The ability of a school leader to provide resilient educational leadership allows them to address both internal and external challenges that the school may face by creating various effective solutions (see Section 2.5). The literature also asserts that school leadership is challenging and that it requires boldness, resilience, expertise, and competencies to properly adjust to challenges (see Section 2.1).

Participants were asked to share how they interpret resilient school leadership. Some people defined resilience as determination amid challenges. For example, Principal BPK stated, *“For me, resilience means you can withstand attacks on your character and your abilities don't crumble under all the challenges and things going on around you”*. Principal CHK also perceived resilient school leadership as determination to carry on:

*So, resilience for me is to get up again and settle whatever comes your way, and not give up. You just have to find new ways, plans and strategies of solving things and doing things for the challenges that you are faced with every single day.*

Principals CHL and QHP expressed the following:

*Schools specifically have challenges, including human resources, lack of parent support, lack of resources, and challenges from the Department of Education, and the mentoring programme builds the resilience of the school principals in a sense that they handle challenges much better with the support of the mentoring programme, instead of running away from the daily challenges. (Principal CHL).*

*In the field of education, things are constantly changing, especially when there are policies that need to be implemented. With all these changes and demands principals need to be resilient. Uh, face challenges and face obstacles and just move on and don't quit. (Principal QHP).*

Principal THP's perception of resilience provided an insightful definition of resilient leadership:

*To me, resilience is being able to take the knocks. To have the strength to deal with all the challenges and move on despite everything that's going on around you. And. Not allow anything to put you down. You do that continuously. And you don't fall back. To me resilience. It's like sustainability. (Principal THP).*

For someone to be resilient, the individual must have been exposed to adversity or a challenging event (see Section 2.3.2). The resilient leader displays the capacity to utilise resources to incessantly adjust and thrive in the presence of challenging conditions (see Section 2.10.1). Resilient leader displays behaviour that not only allows them to confront current trials, but that will grow in the process of dealing and coping with these challenges, moving forward to a different and improved state (see Section 2.3.2).

The most frequent interpretation of resilience amongst principals was persistence despite setbacks, which was consistent with those in the literature (see Section 2.3.1). Either through passion or commitment to their profession, participants were highly motivated to continue despite the challenges they faced. The motivation was emphasised as a resolute everyday tenacity and commitment to teaching, learning, and leading (see Section 2.9.1.1). The ability to navigate any challenging situation and advance their well-being, not only for themselves but also for the learners who fuel their passion for leadership, can be developed by these principals if they learn how to support and understand themselves. Examples of these resilient leadership characteristics displayed by participants are discussed below.

#### **5.2.4 Theme 4: Resilient leadership characteristics**

Participants were asked to describe one critical incident they believed required them to be resilient. These included difficult relationships with staff and other stakeholders of their schools; having to solve the issue of a shortage of six subject teachers at a school; communication challenges; challenges relating to human resources; and a lack of administrative skills. Principal BPH described an extremely difficult case requiring resilience on their part, where an educator was involved in a matter involving the labour department and an educational development officer (EDO). Principal CHK noted that most educators challenged the authority of the school principal, despite them having previously also been members of the teaching staff of the school. This created infighting and instability in the school for several years, which was a challenging period for the principal.



Principal QHP stated that they needed resilience to deal with a serious incident with a group of parents of the school because learners were absent from extra classes they were required to attend. Letters had been sent to the parents of the learners concerned, and this had led to parents coming to the school to protest and later going to the district offices with the matter. Principal THP described challenges that required resilience including a lack of human resources at the school and the constant fighting among teachers with the Department of Education.

In providing their perceptions and a definition of resilience, emerging characteristics of resilience as articulated and experienced by the principals will be discussed below.

The first identified characteristic was underachievement. All participants mentioned that they had to persist despite challenges and setbacks. One participant remarked: *“Resilience is to take the knocks neh and have the strengths to deal with all the challenges and problems”* (CHK). A second participant stated, *“You cannot just come in and expect that everything will run smoothly from the start. So, you are gonna encounter problems, but it is almost as if you... uhmm... you know you can’t back down from the first obstacle you find”*. Another participant recounted, *“So, my understanding of this resilience is to withstand these attacks almost on your character, on your ability to make sure that you do not crumble on all these things”* (Principal BPK).

The second characteristic of resilience displayed by the principals was categorised as personal. This was conveyed by the participants as the confidence they displayed when returning to the same stressful environment to continue their passion. One principal noted that *“you do that continuously and you don’t fall back, resilience is sustainability “*. Another participant said, *“ Because it is not just about you, you must know that you are leading a school community and there are gonna be obstacles, there are gonna be challenges and you not always gonna be successful in all aspects of it”* (THP).

Another participant mentioned the following:

*I do believe it is of utmost importance for a principal to be resilient and to face these things and be an example to the teachers, educators, learners and parents to preserve and continue in what they are busy doing but I cannot deny it broke me...Joh...it broke my whole character down it really got into my whole psyche, that I am not the right person for this position* (BHP)

A third resilient characteristic of the participants identified during the interviews was classified as skills gained. One participant said the following:

*How to handle a good filing system, how to remember due dates, how to make sure things don't overwhelm you, like teachers who have been absent and how to keep their records, he was an overall good administrator and he taught me a lot (Principal CHL).*

Another principal made the following comment:

*One important aspect that the mentor taught me is to invest more in your staff and spend more one on one sessions with them. I also learned that I need to know them better and know more about their personal circumstances (Principal CHK).*

A third participant described the skills aspect as follows:

*The fact that when we worked together and could reflect on the previous day's activities meant a lot to me as I believe I could only improve on the mistakes I made the previous day resulting in me being a better leader (Principal BPH).*

The final characteristic relates to participant self-efficacy beliefs. One principal said the following::

*I enjoyed that part of him, and as a result, even if other aspects did not work out there was any due date that I was missing because of the mentor, it was our morning routine to start our day off by checking our daily calendar (Principal THP).*

Another display of self-efficacy was described as follows:

*In developing relationships with them you become aware that many of the issues that existed were perhaps brought on by a lack of communication and miscommunication. I also understood that people look at the same situation and each can have a different interpretation thereof (Principal CHK).*

One participant reported, *"My leadership style has definitely changed as I become a stronger person than I was a few years back filled with new knowledge that I did not have before"* (Principal QPH).

The role and importance of resilience in the leadership of the participants were highlighted in the above descriptions. Resilience helped principals to better cope with challenges than

before their interaction with the mentor. Resilient leadership behaviour helped them to overcome personal and contextual challenges and obstacles. The resilient behaviour allowed them not only to cope with obstacles but also to implement improved leadership practices. This shows consensus with the literature describing the characteristics of resilient leaders. Participants displayed a stronger belief in their ability in their approach to previous challenges and the new strategies they intended to utilise in their leadership (see Sections 2.5 and 2.6). This belief in themselves allowed the principals to handle challenges in an improved way.

### **5.2.5 Theme 5: Development of resilient leadership**

Learning how to strengthen resilience amid difficulties and disruptions may help school leaders handle the difficulties they encounter and become more resilient to adversity. Resilience has been regarded as a developmental process (see Section 2.4). Current literature states that any person can develop resilience at any stage of their life cycle. Resilient behaviour is experienced as part of one's life journey, and overcoming tension, difficulties, and setbacks is part of living life, adding deeper self-knowledge, increased openness and compassion, greater tolerance, and new insights (see Section 2.2).

The literature confirms the valuable contribution of mentoring to the development of resilience (see Section 2.7). Some of the advantages of strengthening resilience that has been proven include reducing vulnerability to adversity, boosting personal well-being, and improving care outcomes (see Section 2.4). Some of the advantages of strengthening resilience that has been proven include reducing vulnerability to adversity, boosting personal well-being, and improving care outcomes (see Section 2.4).

Resilient conduct signals a process of personal growth rather than a return to the same state of well-being as before the adverse occurrence. Resilience leads to a metamorphosis of the individual (see Section 1.2.4). Although one participant believed that the mentoring programme brought more misery than solutions, the rest maintained that their relationship with their mentor helped in developing resilience.

Several studies have highlighted the advantages of mentoring for resilient leadership. The mentoring relationship has been noted to be important for the development of leaders' resilience, as it enables them to face future challenges after successfully overcoming challenges to which they have been exposed (see Section 2.2). Therefore, the development of mentee resilience depends heavily on the relationship with the mentor. Participants indicated that their self-perceived degree of resilience had grown because of the mentors.

Principal BHP believed that growing resilience through mentoring “*allowed for gaining a better perspective on how to look at things and it builds your character to embrace challenges you are going through every day and still doesn’t quit*”. Principal CHL added that he learnt to “*handle challenges much better with the support of the mentoring programme, instead of running away from the daily challenges*”.

Principal QHP suggested that mentoring built resilience to help with the challenges of school policymaking: “*She especially helped a lot with drawing up of policies*”. Principal CHK mentioned that mentoring helped principals build resilience to interpersonal challenges by helping them to “*integrate in terms of how to handle the human resources of the school and communicate with different stakeholders and dealing with your colleagues at school*”.

Although resilience in educational leadership has not been fully explored in the research, by capturing the perceptions of the participating school principals, this study found that principals had experienced resilience as being able to continue to cope with their work and not allowing challenges to prevent them from performing their duty.

The examples of resilience provided by the participating principals included the ability to deal with challenging situations, rebound from negative effects, stay positive and get on with their job. The phrases “*not giving up*”, “*not running away*” and “*getting on with the job*” were used by all participants in expressing their understanding of resilience, and it was identified that the building of this could be helped through mentoring.

The potential to transform challenging schools depends on management teams' capacity to foster an active leadership that dynamises, supports, and creates alternative problem-solving strategies in a way that enriches school culture. Resilience can aid this process. Leadership success is therefore directly attributed to a principal's capacity to practice resilient leadership. The mentees in this study attributed their resilience directly to their relationship with their mentors.

### **5.2.6 Theme 6: Instances requiring principals to be resilient**

In defining resilience above (see Section 5.2.3), the phenomenon of resilience was thought to exist after an individual had to overcome adversity. Accordingly, individuals were therefore not deemed sufficiently robust if they had never experienced risk or a threat that could thwart their development. Only after facing and overcoming such a threat did the concept of resilience find relevance.

Participants were asked to describe one critical incident in their journey as leaders of their schools that required a display of resilient leadership behaviour. Principal BHP relayed that an incident involving a colleague that was once a teacher of the principal required resilient and mature behaviour. The incident resulted in a prolonged labour relations matter involving the educator, principal, unions and human resources department of the DOE District Office. The matter was eventually reverted to the school principal for resolution. The principal concluded by saying the following:

*So yes I do believe it is of utmost importance for a principal to be resilient and to face these things and really be an example to the educators, learners and parents to preserve and continue in what they are busy doing but I cannot deny it broke me ...Joh...it broke my whole character down it really got into my whole psyche, that I am not the right person for this position (Principal BHP).*

Principal CHK reported that their challenge requiring resilient leadership was that their colleagues were unable to accept them in their role as principal. *“This created a lot of instability for the school for several years. Furthermore, this resulted in difficulties in dealing with and interacting with colleagues on a personal and professional level”.*

Another principal (QHP) experienced a challenging leadership crisis involving parents: *There was this one teacher who arranged some extra classes for the grade 12 learners on a Saturday. When most of the children did not pitch for these classes, the teacher decided to punish them. This did not go down well with the parents and this resulted in some serious protests at my school. However, the DoE officials came in, the community came in and the situation was eventually resolved.*

A situation at school that was very challenging and required resilient behaviour for Principal THP was the lack of sufficient teachers for six critical subjects:

*For mathematics there was no teacher, for physical science, there was no teacher, for geography, there was no teacher, for isiXhosa there was no teacher, and for accounting, there was no teacher and the department still expect the school to perform well in the grade 12 exams. How can you be expected to perform at your best as a principal with the odds stacked against you, sir how.*

Principal CHL experienced two critical challenges in their school:

*I had the challenge of lacking human resources and challenges with a certain section of the staff. I really had to thread this one very carefully Sir. You had a battle with the staff and you battled with the department for teachers to be appointed. It was a very difficult time for me. It tested you as a person and as a principal.*

### **5.2.7 Theme 7: Importance of professional development for school principals**

It has been identified in the literature that professional development is a method to further develop resilience (see Section 3.7). Professional development is viewed as a way in which to develop coping mechanisms against constant challenges (see Section 1.5). Current professional development measures have been found to not adequately equip school principals for the fast-changing demands of the 21st century (see Section 1.5). Evidence suggests that principals require ongoing, job-integrated professional development assistance, such as mentoring, as they deal with different challenges during their careers (see Section 3.7).

Multiple justifications for professional development in school principals exist in the literature. Leader development and preparation enhance leadership practices and therefore significantly affect educators' working conditions, morale, engagement, and teaching ability, and implicitly impact pupil performance (see Section 3.7). Despite their limited leadership training, the principals in the study recognised the significance of professional development. Some principals had exercised leadership skills in other spheres, such as managing a sports club, being the pastor of a large church, being a life science examiner for Grade 12 final examinations and being a head of department or vice-principal before becoming principal. However, it was identified that principals needed training in their current position, especially when changes to the educational environment were made. The following responses represent participants' views on professional development. Principal BPK said the following:

*Every year since I've been in the position as school principal there are new things and new responsibilities that are being added to the job of the school principal, and if you don't get support or any development like in formal training from the department, you will always get sent back with your reports by the EDO. And it's breaking you down in the sense that, you start asking what I missed, why did I miss this and so on, and it takes time to just regain your confidence and to not feel like a failure, just to redo the reports again.*

Principal CHK indicated the need for constant updating of skills to meet the requirement of his leadership role:

*For me, lifelong learning is particularly important. You know you can come into the principal's job with a Doctorate or Master's or an Honours degree, but those things are never enough for what is required of that job. You have to engage in continuous learning. Because things change all the time and there are a lot of new things that we need to learn constantly. Whether it is technology, whether it is academic, yeah there it is infrastructure development or whether it is financed, these things are changing all the time.*

Principal CHL referred to the COVID-19 pandemic, which highlighted the need for principals to be trained to cope with a crisis:

*Today is COVID and I have been a principal before COVID, and things today are different. So, principals need to be capacitated on how to run schools during unexpected challenges like for instance the COVID situation today. Everything about education changed during COVID and we principals were never trained how to handle a situation like this."*

Principal QHP was adamant about the need for professional development for school principals:

*Yes, of course school principals need professional development because things change all the time. They need refreshing courses to be refreshed on certain things. We need to move with the demands of the time. It is especially needed in the areas of finance.*

Principal THP emphasised the need for the development of skills, such as problem-solving, relationship-building and interpersonal communication:

*Yes, I believe so. Because for me it doesn't stop it only has superior results. It doesn't stop at having an enjoyable experience. I think these skills need to be developed. They need certain training. Like in human relations. They need to be guided. Because someone can achieve impressive results, But they don't know how to interact with people. They need to know. They need to be guided on how they are going to deal with problems that they encounter in the school."*

Continuous professional development, according to the principals, would prepare them for their leadership role and would be beneficial to the learners and the school, despite some of the participants having many years of experience in teaching. The empirical research revealed several need areas mentioned by the principals. In light of this, it should come as no surprise that a professional development programme would strategically match the needs of principals and have a positive impact on how well they manage their schools. The principles recognised the following needs, which can be summed up as follows: It comprises requirements relevant to a given job or environment, such as learning information technology skills, managing change professionally, solving problems, forming relationships, and communicating with others. This is in the context of continuing policy changes and constant calls for increased performance. PD would promote sustainability and professional longevity and allow participants to respond to the demands of their school environment.

Moreover, they pointed out that training, support and development in their leadership would ensure that they remained relevant. Furthermore, professional development would promote trust in the principals by actively preserving and developing their competencies in addition to legalising professional skills for career advancement. This in turn could positively increase their workplace well-being and contribute to the socio-emotive development of school principals. This view finds agreement with the literature that indicates the value of professional development in allowing principals to update themselves with recent knowledge and skills, especially regarding new development and requirements in school leadership (see Section 3.7).

A national leadership development framework underpinned by educational theory needs to be developed for school principals. This should be legislated and applied by the Department of Education in response to their specific needs. Currently, the Department does not follow a framework when providing support to those principals judged as requiring support because of their underperforming schools. A professional development plan would make it possible to develop a training program that is theoretically and conceptually tuned to the needs of the individual and the system, practically orientated, customised for different career phases, group supported inside or outside of the school, topic sensitive, a collaborative project, and dedicated to analysing effects on leaders as well as on school practices to which their learning applies. This would be a drastic departure from the conventional method of professional development in the South African education fraternity.



Educational leaders oversee directing the national curriculum framework's ongoing improvement as part of the basic education system. As a result, the principals responsible for the ordinary administration of the educational system are required to make time for personal and professional growth to be effective leaders and administrators in the rapidly changing global environment. Consequently, educational leaders must engage in ongoing professional development to update their knowledge, skills, and abilities. It is thus recommended that programmes be created to coordinate and address the needs of both the principals and the system.

### **5.2.8 Theme 8: Mentoring as a professional development strategy**

The use of mentoring strategies for promoting principal development is supported by numerous studies, as effective leaders are regarded as synonymous with good school performance (see Section 3.2). There is a school of thought that argues that there are very few recorded instances of challenging schools being turned around without the participation of outstanding leaders, which highlights the importance of school leadership to academic performance (see Section 3.1). Principals require continuing professional development programmes to support their efforts to improve education and to re-energise their commitment to creating and maintaining conducive learning environments, in line with the shifting nature of the principalship and ongoing legislative reform demands(see Section 3.2).

Mentoring has been associated in the literature with developing skills in the following areas: developing a vision and strategy for school improvement; information sharing, empowerment and developing solutions to challenges; dealing with negative and challenging human resources skills and assisting with the review of professional practices (see Section 3.6). The crucial role of the principal in managing and leading their schools is paramount, hence the capacity building of school principals is a natural consequence in an ever-changing educational space.

In the study, mentorship greatly improved principals' abilities to interact with teachers regarding instructional practice and provided them with the tools required to exhibit instructional leadership traits. The school district administration is looking into making the switch from compliance to continual, in-job training as a strategy for professional development, with the mentoring programme principals in this study participating as an example.

During the interviews, principals stated that theory-based programmes were insufficient to support them in running their schools. Most participants reported that while they were knowledgeable about the theoretical side of leadership and management, they lacked the practical aspect. Principals requested additional courses that focused on problem-solving concerning some of the more complex difficulties they were facing while running their schools. Responses from some of the participants include the following:

*The programme looks good. This is what I know should be happening in a school. Now what are we going to do to make sure this happens; this is all theory. Let's get to the practicality of this. If you can make these things happen, really the school will get good results. (Principal PHP). "*

*Lifelong learning is very, very important... uhmm...you can come into a principal's post having your Master's or your Doctorate or Honours or whatever. But that degree will never be sufficient for what is required for that job. (Principal CHK)*

*I know all the theories so many styles are there it is that democratic here, autocratic there and all of that. To practically do that or to experience it in an institution is sometimes totally different and that is why one of those mentors is really necessary (Principal BHP).*

As discussed in the section on Theme 1, participants perceived mentoring as an experienced colleague sharing knowledge, skills and experience with someone with less experience. This view is supported in the literature (see Section 3.2) and is in line with the Department of Education's perception of mentoring as the development of specific competencies (see Section 3.2). To ensure professional development, mentors must also offer guidance and information to enhance principals' leadership practices through debates and problem-solving.

The participants were asked if, based on their experience, there was any value in mentoring as a professional development strategy. The participants' responses revealed that it was mostly perceived as valuable. Principal BP found that the practical and direct guidance received made mentoring a valuable professional development strategy: "*Well yeah, you have the privilege of being practically guided in your leadership and management style, you had the immediate feedback*". This participant added that the university course they had completed had provided a good theoretical base to understand their new role as a principal and to learn from a mentor with considerable professional experience who was able to listen to them.

Principal CHK described benefitting from specific leadership skills learnt from the mentor:

*What I found helpful in the mentoring programme was to help me integrate in terms of how to handle the human resources of the school. And how to communicate with different stakeholders and deal with your colleagues at school.*

Furthermore, this participant valued the mentor's patience in listening to their ideas, strategies and reflections, which also showed the principal how to become more patient and considerate of other people's issues and opinions. Principal CHL found mentoring a valuable professional development strategy because, despite his years of teaching experience, he needed help in learning what made a successful principal who ensures the effective functioning of a school. Principal QHP expressed his/her whole-hearted support of the value of mentoring as a professional development strategy:

*Mentoring is a very good strategy to develop school principals ... a developmental forum that needs to be there when school principals need it and this lady mentor just at the right time shed light on certain things that I had difficulty with.*

Principal THP emphasised that the value of mentoring depended on the attitude of the mentee:

*And I think it was a good programme, but it depends on who the candidate is. I know some of these people did not even want to be the school principal. To me, this was a good programme. However, it could only work if the person was willing to accept the assistance and work with the mentors and move forward.*

The above quotations indicated the view that mentoring offered preparation for the participants' leadership roles. As the mentoring was prescribed by the DoE, mentors may have been seen as part of a structured, formal programme to build principal leadership and capacity. Nevertheless, most participants found this programme helpful in various ways, suggesting that professional development was needed to develop effective educational leadership (see Section 3.6). The participants not only learnt such as interpersonal and problem-solving abilities but also active listening, all of which were modelled by the mentor. It is suggested that having actively involved mentors shows principals how to relate to their staff, as having someone off of whom to bounce ideas about any job-related matter and being able to talk to someone about a problem is important.

It is accepted in the literature that school principals benefit from mentoring if both parties have similar educational philosophies and experiences (see Section 3.4). Mentoring can thus provide school principals opportunities to contribute to a practice's coherence, promoting systemic change and improved student performance. The participants were also probed to discuss the ideal preferred curriculum in a mentoring programme should they be tasked to develop such a curriculum. Their responses will be discussed as the following theme.

### **5.2.9 Theme 9: Mentoring curriculum**

When specific characteristics and programme elements are in place, mentoring can be highly effective. In addition, when principals share the same educational philosophies and experiences as their mentors, leadership development and ability to implement shared leadership and innovation are enhanced (see Section 3.2). Providing principals with the information and abilities required to foster an environment conducive to the teaching and learning require effective professional development mentoring curricula.

Participants were asked what aspects of the mentoring programme that they had attended they would change, and what they would have included in a mentoring programme curriculum. The suggestions concerned time allocation for the programme; consultation between the DoE, principal and mentor; mentor training and experience; and what the ideal mentorship programme would include. However, the professional development currently in place for principals contrasts with what is known about how adults learn best and fall short of offering genuine and meaningful job-embedded learning and assistance. Five components were identified from thematic analysis to ensure an effective learning experience for both mentee and mentor in a professional mentoring relationship.

#### **5.2.9.1 Time allocation for the programme**

Most authors of mentoring studies reported that, for mentoring relationships to be effective, both the length of the mentoring relationship and the time spent in mentoring sessions are critical (see Section 3.2). Participants noted that for a programme to be effective, it should be of long enough duration (see Section 3.2). Many participants echoed this sentiment concerning the length of time in a mentoring programme and stated that this duration was important if any type of useful connection between the mentor and the mentee was to be developed. Most participants expressed disbelief and concern at the short length and sudden discontinuation of the mentoring programme.

Principal CHL said that the mentoring ended before they knew what had happened: *“But the mentoring programme came to an abrupt end without us knowing what the plan and purpose of the programme were”*. Principal QHP also could not understand why it had ended as it was still needed: *“I don't know why the Department of Education discontinued the mentoring programme because I believe it's a developmental forum that needs to be there when school principals need it”*.

The literature maintains that effective professional development programme length should be expanded, as this allows for reflection and relationship development resulting in a deep and lasting influence on the principal. There is evidence that suggests that effective learning and implementation of new skills is more effective when mentees spend approximately three years in a mentoring programme (see Section 3.2). According to the participants in this study, the length of the mentorship programme was recommended to be greater than a year for any significant learning to occur. This conclusion was supported by the literature (see Section 3.4). Moreover, within this developmental relationship the content, process, and procedure should be determined by both mentor and mentee alike, and the difference in experience level between the two was also less evident. An analysis of the literature established that the foundation of development should extend beyond stop-gap measures of one-day workshops and seminars these have been identified as ineffective.

#### 5.2.9.2 *Lack of consultation*

Mentors must be aware of the unique setting in which their mentees operate and take care not to apply tactics and strategies that have been successful in the past to present situations. Instead, co-inquiry should be used to support the principal by identifying and resolving any problems they may be facing (see Section 3.6). Consultation before the implementation of the mentoring programme may lay the foundation for the establishment of a common vision, goals and objectives of the mentoring programme as well as expectations from both mentee and mentor.

This can lead to better acceptance of the advice and experiences the mentor has to offer and minimise objection to the intrusion of the mentor. The principals maintained that there had been a lack of consultation between the DoE, school principals and mentors, which would have ensured that everyone understood the process and objectives. The following statements refer to the lack of discussion about the mentoring programme before its initiation:

*You know the department just sent these mentors here to the schools. Without bringing the mentor and the principal together. I think before a mentor is sent to his school; the principal should be engaged by the Department of Education. (Principal THP)*

*So, principals are appointed to the positions or land in the position and they don't know what to do. You are just left in the position. (Principal QHP)*

*There should also be clear objectives from the Department of Education communicated to school principals of what they want principals to achieve with the mentoring programme. If that is clear from the start then one can say this was achieved and what still needs to be done. When the department knows what the school principals need they will not just impose somebody on you who might not have had similar experiences as you.” (Principal CHL)*

*It should have been a considered approach, you know, and it kind of shocked you, to the reality of the position. (Principal BHP).*

The participants' remarks suggested that the lack of consultation may have resulted in an atmosphere of distrust between the mentee and mentor from the start. In addition, if the discussion had occurred before the commencement of the mentorship programme the lack of knowledge of the purpose, goals, and procedures of the programme as stated above might have been avoided. This may have ensured its effectiveness and successful outcomes.

#### *5.2.9.3 Mentor training and experience*

It is understood in the literature that school principals benefit from mentoring if they have a similar educational philosophy and experiences as their mentors (see Section 5.2.8). The principals in this study indicated that mentors needed to be experienced principals and trained to mentor before being appointed to provide context-specific and relevant help. An experienced mentor coming from the same environment as the mentee was able to provide context-specific experiences, skills and impartation of leadership and management practices that could grow and develop the mentee at a more rapid pace (see Section 3.8.1). This perception is supported by the literature that states that mentors need professional development and training to learn to support and develop novice principals (see Section 3.3). Moreover, the literature maintains that a mentor must be competent, experienced, encouraging, trustworthy, adaptable, approachable, and reputable (see Section 3.2).

However, Principal CHK described a mentor whom he deemed neither trained nor suitable for the position:

*The Department brought in somebody that has been out of the job or out of the post for two or three years I would say that that person sits with outdated knowledge. This means that you are ahead of that person in terms of current requirements and current strategies needed in the job. It's not effective in terms of technology and helping with managing a curriculum. (Principal CHK).*

Principal QHP mentioned a mentor who was not an educational expert but had worked at Transnet (a private sector company):

*Even if the lady that came to the school as a mentor wasn't from the education sector but coming from the private sector, she had no experience in the field of Education. I think she had experience with Transnet. (Principal QHP).*

Principal THP referred to a mentor who only had experience as a primary school principal and had been appointed to mentor a high school principal. In addition, he had not received mentoring training:

*Now you tell me this gentleman had been a school principal in a primary school. And then make him a mentor in high school. This is not going to work for me because the challenges between high school and primary school are completely different. But the problem with this mentoring programme was that the replacement takes any retired school principal. And makes him a mentor without any training. (Principal THP).*

The main concern of participants was the mentor's experience, as expressed in the following statements:

*Someone who leads by example. It is someone that has led before. And they've done their best in whatever they have been Leading. in education. In a school, it is someone that obtained the best results. And how he has been a principal. And how do we guide the teachers? And make the best of it. To me, that is a mentor. (Principal THP).*

*It is someone that is experienced and can take a new leader or principal by hand and walk with him/her towards the goals of the organisation. (Principal QHP).*

*A mentor according to me is someone that has experience. Someone that walked the path previously. Some overcame obstacles and challenges. That someone did a*

*reasonably successful in their role as School principal or the field that you are currently operating in. (Principal CHK).*

The consequences of untrained mentors are well documented in the literature. Studies in mentoring research have revealed that experienced and knowledgeable facilitators/ mentors are needed for effective programme delivery (see Section 3.3). More emphasis should be placed on developing mentor networks that could foster the development of mentees and giving mentors training that is both specific and situational to improve the quality and impact of mentoring. The mentor programme could provide beneficial services at a relatively low cost to the government with huge benefits to the education system.

#### *5.2.9.4 Contents of an ideal mentoring programme*

According to the literature, a mentoring programme should provide leadership development to enable principals to fulfil their roles despite challenges. Similarities and differences from this definition were identified within participants' perceptions. Principal THP identified the need for a programme to focus on "how to increase the school principal's capacity" *and how to do a needs analysis as two important aspects that must be included in such a programme*". Principal THP elaborated that capacity building should focus on the management of human resources: "*Because the starting point is the human resources, let's develop the human resources and the capacity of the school principals with getting them, teachers*".

Principal QPH maintained that policymaking, communication and motivation skills, financial skills and networking should be included in the curriculum:

*Firstly, it will be policies, unpacking of the policies, and making policies working documents on a day-to-day basis and its application ... communication and motivation skills for principals... I would also as alluded to earlier. Uh, involved training in finances ... Of cause, if it was not a mentor, it must be a principals forum where school principals can speak their hearts out and get advice from people that have undergone these similar situations, because, uh, parents are sometimes treating us, principals.*

Principal CHL indicated the need for principals to manage decision-making in schools:

*A mentoring programme must be able to build the capacity of school principals to improve decision-making about relevant issues affecting the school. The mentoring programme must also be able to grow the planning skills of the principals and most importantly how to handle human resources at your school. Lastly and very importantly*



*it should build and grow the networking skills of the school principal. This would mean mentors must capacitate school principals on how to connect and develop connections that could be beneficial to the school.*

Principal CHK emphasised human resources, administrative competence and emotional intelligence:

*“When you speak, I would most definitely include dealing with human resources, human relations could deal with so many diverse types of people. I would also emphasise the administrative side of being a school principal and assist in how to administratively be a good school principal. Also, include the importance of being emotionally intelligent or something of emotional intelligence in the mentoring programme.*

Principal BPH indicated that they would include leadership styles:

*I would now certainly expose them as part of the mentoring programme to different forms of leadership styles, you know you get various leadership styles, for me, your particular leadership style is a test of your character as a leader. You know you get some more experience principles that tell you straight listen don't take nonsense from anybody.*

Principal BPH added the management of reports and financial skills to his/her perceived ideal mentoring curriculum:

*A second aspect that I would most definitely include in a mentoring programme is the whole issue of reporting, writing, and compiling reports. If I were the coordinator of the mentoring programme, I would most certainly include an aspect of finances in the curriculum. You see most of these principals, including myself. I have to learn. From trial by error. Normally with Comes a lot of mistakes. It was at an extremely late stage in the principalship that we received some training.*

Mentoring programmes need to aid principals in navigating their responsibilities and the complexities of their role successfully in the context of the needs of their schools. The participants highlighted these needs, such as human resources, financial performance, policymaking, administration and networking.

Human resources management was listed by at least two participants. Including this in the mentoring curriculum would assist principals in interacting with all levels of school

stakeholders on an individual and professional level. This area of the curriculum could include manners in which to handle difficult employees. Research on effective leadership consistently indicates that leadership should not be confined to one individual but should be shared throughout the school amongst teaching and non-teaching staff alike (see Section 2.11). This involves effective human resources management, a skill in which a principal needs to be proficient.

Participants suggested training in finance be included in the mentoring programme, as school districts through the SASA hold school principals accountable for managing the financial resources of their schools. Although most principals in South Africa lack financial management skills, the literature ranks this competency as one of the most important functions of a school principal and a lack thereof makes functioning as a principal extremely difficult (see Section 1.2.2.4).

Participants highlighted a cluster of policy development, administrative, report-writing and presentation skills that they wished to be addressed in a mentoring programme. The development of skills in these usually time-consuming tasks would free time for other aspects of instructional leadership and reduce stress. Moreover, competency in these areas would ensure the effective running of day-to-day activities.

The participants discussed the value of networking skills forming part of the mentoring curriculum. Networking can build principals' feelings of self-efficacy and confidence, and help them to learn from the best practices of their peers to improve their leadership (see Section 3.3). In addition, networking leads to the formation of professional learning communities, which become a resource for ongoing learning. An improved networking capacity leads to the building of support systems, which may provide principals with a sense of belonging as instructional leaders (see Section 3.3).

#### **5.2.10 Theme 10: Expectations of a mentoring programme**

Participants' expectations of a mentoring programme should be set by both mentor and mentee at the outset. If the expectations of the mentor and mentee do not align, the process of mentorship might be derailed. Participants indicated that they had formed expectations before the initiation of the mentoring. Principal THP said that they expected the mentor to solve their problems: *"Yes, I had some expectations at the beginning of the programme. I expected that someone that is going to solve my problems now"*. Principal THP then listed their problems as follows: *"1) I don't have subject teachers; 2) I have some teachers who are*

*doing their own thing. And they don't like to follow the rules, and 3) the teachers are so demoralised.*

Principal BHP reported that they expected the mentor to listen rather than tell them what they should have done and should do in future. In addition, Principal BHP expected the mentor to come to the school and accompany them to a meeting, thereby indicating his support:

*I had expectations. At first, feeling a little intimidated. I was expecting more observer status of the principals at the beginning rather than being engaged in the daily operations of the school. When you are being told in your face that listen, this is how you should have done it, and this is how you do things ... I was expecting that the mentor was going to assist me in the meeting with the teacher and stood up for me and tell them teachers need to respect the principal. So that expectation that somebody is gonna help me seems to be the wrong idea that I had for the role of the mentor and what was going to happen here. (Principal BHP).*

Principal CHK commented that they had expected that they were going to be monitored and evaluated by the mentor, which occurred to a degree:

*Yes, at the beginning of the programme, there were expectations. But I must say that at the beginning I was quite hesitant cause I was thinking that there is a person now that's gonna watch and monitor me all the time. They gonna watch what doing and how you are doing things". So yes, my expectations were partially met.*

Principal CHL conveyed his/her expectation that the mentoring programme would be longer than it was:

*I believe that one cannot change schools or institutions within one year. From the start, there must be a sustainable plan for a minimum say three years if one wants to achieve real change and sustainable improvement. Whatever the plan the department had with the mentoring programme could not have been achieved within the space of that one year.*

Principal QPH expected the mentor to have been a principal in a disadvantaged school similar to theirs, which was not the case:

*Yes, expectations were partly met and partly not. Yes, I said she was from the business sector. So, I wasn't mentored by somebody that was previously a school principal. But she did her best. Of course, it would help if the mentor came from the same environment. So, somebody that has been a school principal in a disadvantaged community would be more valuable than somebody coming from a different environment.*

The participants indicated a disjunction between their expectations and the job description of the mentors. While it would have been ideal to set expectations before the commencement of the programme, no opportunity was presented to the participants for this and thus the opportunity to bolster the efficacy of the programme was lost. A reason for this failure to allow the mentees to discuss what they expected was that there was no consultative process between the programme's stakeholders.

According to mentees, they believed they were enrolled in the mentorship program because their schools were underperforming, and their Grade 12 learners were performing poorly on the final matric exams. This suggests that they had expected to be taught specific strategies to address this problem. However, no clarity in this regard was provided by the Department. A mentorship program will fail and lead to ineffective skill development if there is a mismatch between the requirements of the Department, the mentors' available competencies, and the needs of school administrators.

Mentee expectations need to be accounted for in any mentoring initiative and should be negotiated at the outset of a mentor-mentee relationship. The existing programme's failure to clarify and communicate its goals and take note of mentees' expectations may have generated the distrust and frustration some mentees felt at the beginning of the programme. Individuals in charge of a mentoring programme should be more consultative in developing mentoring materials and mentor training and clearly articulate the mentoring programme's goals, which should align with principals' expectations.

#### **5.2.11 Theme 11: Leadership lessons gained through the mentoring programme**

The participants explained that they had learnt administrative and human resources management skills through the mentoring programme.

#### 5.2.11.1 Administrative skills

According to Principal THP, their most valuable leadership lesson involved the administrative skills in which the mentor was proficient:

*He was a very good administrator, and he was teaching me valuable skills in administration. How to maintain your files. How to set up a roster for things to be done at the beginning of the day. How to make sure things don't overwhelm you. How to keep a record of teacher absenteeism.*

This sentiment was shared by Principal CHL, who said, “*Yes indeed, the mentoring helped in how to develop plans for the school and organising skills. I can now develop clear and understandable plans for my school thanks to the help of the mentor*”. Thus, the participants saw themselves as better skilled in administrative tasks than they had been before the programme, which would improve their future leadership.

The ability to understand the impact of a mentoring programme and the value added by the mentor adds value to mentee leadership. Thus, understanding and acknowledging the learning of administrative skills contributed to the programme's success, especially in the case of the participant who had learnt from a proficient mentor and was able to mirror that mentor in the demonstration of best leadership practices. The argument that leadership learning ought to be founded on an ontological procedure and focused on instructional leadership as formed through interactions during the construction of social perceptions is supported by current literature (see Section 3.6).

#### 5.2.11.2 Improved human resources management skills

Principal QPH remarked that he/she had learnt to manage his/her staff and learners as a result of the mentoring programme: “*I felt more empowered, and I was more knowledgeable in certain aspects. Because of this mentoring programme. I was able to deal better with learners and teachers at the school*”. In addition, Principal CHK explained how she/he learnt to manage his/her staff through personal interaction and by being a compassionate leader:

*I find myself to be a very straightforward and intolerant person. And not getting to know your staff very well did not help. I learned from the mentor to have more one-on-one sessions. With your staff members getting to know them better. You know your teachers and you can be more considerate towards them and it's making your task as*

*principal quite easy otherwise people will see you as cold and uncooperative and an autocratic leader.*

Principal BPH revealed that he/she had learnt to manage their staff by being assertive, consistent and consultative:

*The mentoring taught me that when you embark on the implementation of a certain plan be assertive. Write it down and stick to it. Don't back down, of course, you have to sit down, and you look at the pros and cons and then suddenly somebody just comes and says no, no that plan is not going to work yet. So yes, uh. the mentoring made me a stronger leader insert many, many other leadership aspects that weren't there before.*

The functions of human resource management and development (HRM&D) are determined by legislation, and a principal is legally responsible for their implementation. According to the Policy on the South African Standard for Principalship (RSA, 1996b), managing the human resources of a school is one of a principal's primary responsibilities. The study's principals reported that mentoring had improved their interpersonal skills, which in turn helped them manage human resources more effectively. The participants indicated that this was one of the most valuable skills acquired through the mentoring relationship. Thus, human resources training was crucial for the development and equipping of principals with the abilities to carry out successful leadership roles and foster a positive learning environment in classrooms (see Section 3.5).

### **5.3 Summary and Conclusion**

This chapter presented the findings of the analysis of the data gathered from school principals through interviews to answer the research questions. The themes of the findings were as follows:

- Theme 1 indicated the perceptions of the school principals of a mentor, which they perceived as an experienced principal who could guide them.
- Theme 2 outlined the participants' motivation for participating in the programme, which was mostly due to the Department of Education stipulating that they take part because of their roles as new principals or owing to their underperforming schools.
- Theme 3 indicated the participants' perceptions of a resilient leader, which they described as someone who persisted in their role despite challenges.

- Theme 4 discussed the participants' perceptions of the development of resilient leadership, which they said was due to the relationship with their mentor who had helped them to face and deal with challenges by, for example, providing them with a fresh perspective.
- Theme 5 involved the participants' perceptions of the crucial role of continuous professional development for school principals, which they identified as necessary for them to remain up-to-date, improve their skills and deal with crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Theme 6 explored the participants' perceptions of mentoring as part of professional development, which they identified as valuable because it provided practical guidelines and enabled them to improve their leadership skills. It was however identified that the process should be collaborative in solving the principals' school-related problems.
- Theme 7 highlighted the participants' perceptions of the mentoring curriculum, which they noted as being too short, had not allowed for consultation and, in some cases, had not ensured that the mentor was appropriately trained or experienced. In addition, participants shared their recommendations for an ideal mentoring programme, including amongst others, human resource management, policy development and implementation, communication skills, and training in financial management.
- Theme 8 discussed the participants' expectations of the mentoring programme, which were not fully realised. Moreover, the objectives of the mentoring programme were unclear, as they had not been adequately communicated to mentees. Officials in charge of the development of programmes should be consultative when developing mentoring materials and mentor training, thereby ensuring that objectives are negotiated and clear.
- Theme 9 explored leadership lessons that participants had gained through the mentoring programme, which included improved administrative and human resources management skills.

The following chapter presents summaries of the research objectives, chapters of the dissertation and findings. In addition, it provides recommendations, the contributions of the study and the study's limitations.

## CHAPTER 6

### INVESTIGATION AND FINDINGS OVERVIEW AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 6.1 Introduction

This chapter goes into great detail about the findings from the study on how school administrators strengthen their resilience and their mentorship experiences. The findings will also be compared to the literature review from Chapters 2 and 3 before being applied to the research questions described in Chapter 1 of this dissertation.

To prove that the study's objectives were met and the research questions were satisfactorily addressed, this chapter specifically summarises the study. Furthermore, this chapter provides a summary of the key conclusions from the literature review and empirical research. The research provides recommendations regarding an ideal mentoring programme that could enhance resilience training for school principals, as derived from the study undertaken and described in Chapter 4. Finally, this chapter offers suggestions for additional study.

#### 6.2 An overview of the Investigation

The 21<sup>st</sup>-century school environment globally as well as in South Africa particularly has been described as complex and challenging (see Section 1.1). In South African schools, principals are not legislatively required to have formal qualifications in school management and leadership to be appointed as school principals (see Section 1.1). Nevertheless, there have been initiatives by South African education authorities in the form of draft policies to formulate the South African Standards for Principalship (SASP) and reconstructing the development programme for school leaders in the form of the AdvDip (SLM) to which school leaders need to participate in (see Section 2.2 ). The literature has described the appointment of school managers who are technically unqualified to manage the massive task of leading schools (see Section 1.1). Democratic reforms in South Africa implemented after 1994 led to unintended consequences, including an increase in the administrative load of school principals, different stakeholders generating competing demands, and persistent challenges that principals experience. Despite this, principals are expected to ensure educational effectiveness (See Section 1.2.2.7-1.2.3). Furthermore, the post-appointment institutional support currently provided to school principals has been frequently described as contextually



irrelevant and of no use in assisting principals with leading and managing their school environments (see Section 2.2).

The continued exposure to environmental challenges can have a devastating influence, not only on the performance of schools based on poor performance by leadership but also affect the mental health and other aspects of the school leaders' life (see Section 1.2.3 & 2.1). Participants in the study were part of a mentoring programme initiated by the Department of Education to assist underperforming schools and novice principals in navigating the improvement of their schools' performances and adjusting to the demands of 21<sup>st</sup>-century school environments. Principal preparation and development programmes to build leadership capacity to function effectively in modern-day school environments is necessary for South Africa.

This study outlined a new initiative whereby school leadership and the context or culture in which it is exercised were bound in a dynamic and iterative relationship, which could predict success if principals were not only resilient to a challenging school environment but also open to its being an opportunity for growth. This initiative can assist new and current principals in understanding the complexities and challenges associated with their roles and how they can benefit from resilient leadership practices to cope with these challenges. Given the problem statement described above, the study aimed to investigate the possibility of a leadership development initiative using mentoring as a strategy that could build the resilience capacity of school principals.

School improvement and enhancement of learner performance depend on the quality of good leadership; hence, continuous professional development of school principals is especially important (see Section 1.2.1). The continuing changes in the educational sphere coupled with the change in the role of the principalship demand professional development, even if merely for principals to remain relevant in the dynamics of the fluid education system (see Section 3.7). The experiences of the participating school principals were examined in this study in a mentoring programme initiated by the Department of Education, to understand the importance of resilience in 21<sup>st</sup>-century schools and the role mentoring can play to achieve this objective.

## **6.3 Research findings**

### **6.3.1 Literature review findings**

Analysis of the literature found that the foundations of principalship have changed and the school environment as a whole has become highly complex (see Section 3.1). Ongoing principal professional development cannot be left to chance and should be deliberately pursued to buffer against the complexity of the principalship and challenges to which school principals are exposed (see Section 3.1). This is based on the demands placed upon school leaders for constantly improved school performance, changes in leadership styles, greater accountability placed upon them and the evolving nature of the principalship (see Section 3.6.). Evaluation of the literature demonstrated that without appropriate contextually relevant training to fulfil the role, principals fail to deal with the resulting pressures, impacting their well-being and mental health (see Section 3.1). Continuous professional development of school principals thus capacitates them to remain relevant to current advances in the educational atmosphere (see Section 3.9).

According to the literature, school principals improve effectively when they are subjected to real-life circumstances that involve the implementation of expertise, information, and problem-solving techniques as they relate to their daily management functions as principals (see Section 3.6). A challenge of mentoring identified in the literature was the non-agreement on a singular definition of mentoring or mentors. A trend in South African literature was to define mentoring in terms of a hierarchical structure. The typical mentoring relationship entails an older, more seasoned individual advising and providing guidance to a younger, less experienced one (see Section 3.2). Instead, new research suggests that a less bureaucratic and more collaborative method, where mentors and mentees share responsibilities, support, and expertise, makes mentoring more successful for all parties involved (see Section 3.2).

The literature also revealed that mentoring has long been considered an essential contemporary approach to professional development, although other methods of professional development do exist. Justification for this is based on the fact that mentoring is somewhat more practical than any other conventional classroom environment within the current model of school leader professional development, as it emphasises training by doing (see Section 3.3). Because of its job-embedded nature, mentoring establishes a genuine link between

mentor and mentee due to active participation and collaboration, as the mentoring process occurs within the mentee's workplace (see Section 3.6).

Three crucial mentoring roles connected to the professional advancement of school leaders were highlighted by the literature research. Firstly, a role modelling function exists where mentors openly communicate with their mentees about their experiences, decisions, successes, and setbacks allowing them to learn from these experiences and setbacks (see Section 3.8.1). Role modelling was found to require mentee training from someone who exhibited inspirational, positive qualities, attitudes, and expertise. Exceptional learning took place during role modelling when the mentee recognised aspects of their ideal self in the mentor and emulated them (see Section 3.8.1). What a mentee perceived as exceptional learning would be related to their specific needs and personality. The literature revealed that the success of role modelling has been demonstrated in the following instances: the mentee must remember the behaviour that was observed; the mentee must be able to replicate the behaviour demonstrated by the mentor and lastly, the mentee must be willing to demonstrate what they have learned in the process (see Section 3.8.1).

A second mentoring function identified in the literature as key to mentee development relates to the provision of career support by the mentor. Their role is to provide tailored support to mentees and enable them to grow their capabilities by taking into account their particular needs, skills, and ambitions, and provide job-related information or assignments to enhance mentee insight and expertise on how to complete work tasks effectively (see Section 3.8.2).

The final function of the mentoring experience involves the provision of psychosocial support. The literature revealed that for the mentor to fulfil this function effectively, the following qualities needed to be demonstrated: abundant self-awareness, seeking to support the emotional well-being of mentees, open- and broad-mindedness, proactively responding to challenging work situations and emotional intelligence (see Section 3.8.3). The analysis of the literature showed that the intensity of this function is contingent upon the condition of the interpersonal connection between mentor and mentee based on trust and intimacy, as benefits can accrue beyond professional life to also influence personal life.

Several advantages and benefits of mentoring as a professional development strategy were identified. According to research, social support in the form of mentoring improves recipients' healthcare and wellness and acts as a buffer against challenging work environments (see

Section 3.3). The literature revealed that both emotional support and professional learning are significant benefits stemming from working together as mentors and mentees (see Section 3.4). In addition, the literature found that mentors enable mentees to deal with challenges and concerns while also enabling the development of alternative strategies and higher risk-taking in a safe environment. Finally, it was revealed that supportive peer interaction through mentoring leads to better collaboration and communication, greater creativity, resilience, and deeper dedication to adaptive capability and change in the workplace in the face of challenges and failure (see Section 3.4).

There is a paucity of research regarding the connection between mentoring and resilience in school leaders, however, It was established that mentorship might be extremely important in ensuring the well-being of school principals. A unitary definition of resilience, even in the field of educational leadership, is still elusive. However, in the attempt to develop a definition, resilience requires adversity or risk and a subsequent positive result has been identified as a common overarching meaning. Hence, for resilience to manifest, negative life circumstances or stressors to which the individual responds and adapts favourably, need to be present (see Section 2.3.2). As mentoring relationships proceeded, mentees were reported to have gradually gained self-assurance and autonomy (see Section 3.4). According to the literature, the mentoring relationship fosters an atmosphere in which the mentees develop confidence in their capacity to meet challenges and achieve their goals.

The current complex dynamics prevailing in schools require a breed of leaders that are creative, innovative and inspiring with physical, psychological, and emotional resilience (see Section 2.1). The literature concluded that resilient leaders in education have become imperative to sustain cohesion in schools and meet departmental objectives (see Section 2.1). The diversity, intensity, and difficulty of 21<sup>st</sup>-century educational environments require leadership flexibility, which has become an imperative attribute (see Section 2.2).

The literature review revealed the major motivations for principals to be resilient in school environments (See Section 2.2). Firstly, policy change in the South African education sector was not accompanied by the required strengthening of school principals' ability to sustain and implement these education development policies. Secondly, principals are not required to have formal qualifications in leadership and management, and appointment to the principalship is based on teaching experience alone. This has been identified as a serious challenge for these principals. Thirdly, the emotional and psychological health of school

principals may suffer from prolonged exposure to challenging situations without the necessary coping skills. Fourthly, it was found that South Africa's current professional development initiatives were non-supportive and irrelevant to the needs of school principals. Lastly, the literature revealed that in the absence of targeted training, principals require coping mechanisms that allow them to better manage the same stressful conditions. The literature demonstrated that the aforementioned factors negatively impacted principals' well-being, supporting the importance of the development of their resilience.

Resilience was found to be a developable capacity (see Section 2.4). The idea that resilience can be taught has become important in educational leadership. It is acknowledged as one of the key elements in supporting successful adaptation after being exposed to traumatic experiences and persistent difficulties. A direct link was identified between resilience and educational leadership (see Section 2.5). In educational contexts, resilience is the ability to effectively channel one's efforts toward achieving educational objectives in the face of difficult situations. This includes building relationships with other school stakeholders, creating support networks, and aligning school development with the school's vision (see Section 2.5).

### **6.3.2 Empirical investigation findings**

The study's findings revealed the positive effect of mentoring on school principals' resilience and their resultant ability to manage schools more effectively, especially in implementing mandated school policies. This was found to agree with existing literature (see Section 3.7). The study found that mentoring through activities such as modelling day-to-day responsibilities empowered principals. It was identified that resilience had to be developed and was a process contingent upon strong interpersonal relationships between mentor and mentee (see Section 5.2.4). Mentoring as a professional development tool aided school leaders in developing their administrative capabilities, fiscal management skills and management practices.

Mentoring improved principals' relationships with their coworkers to the point of being sympathetic to the school-related concerns and opinions of the teachers in their schools (see Section 5.2.9). All principals expressed concerns about difficult relationships with colleagues and communication challenges (see Section 5.2.3). However, participants noted that the mentoring programme helped them to focus on their passion for ensuring learner success despite demanding colleagues and problems with communication (see Section 6.2). This

demonstrates an increase in optimism and confidence in their abilities to confront and resolve difficulties in their schools.

This research reveals that a mentorship programme's effectiveness was contingent on several criteria. Firstly, mentors should be experienced school administrators who have already experienced the challenges facing principals to understand current principals' experiences (see Section 5.2.7.3). Mentees should learn from both the mentors' achievements and disappointments.

To ensure that leaders can lead their schools in the present, often challenging environment, mentors should be trained in providing contextually appropriate expertise. In addition, the findings indicated the need to train prospective mentors to better equip them for the process and clearly define their roles.

Thirdly, the mentoring programme should last longer than a year to allow for reflection and assessment of programme efficacy and improvement (see Section 5.2.7.1). Studies have indicated success in the use of three-year programmes. A long-term mentor may provide useful insights into enhancing mentee self-awareness as mentees would not only learn to better perform at their jobs but also shape their career paths to improve leadership practices (see Section 5.2.7.1). A stable relationship over a prolonged period can instill greater confidence to help principals to deal more effectively with their challenges.

Fourthly, before the outset of the mentoring programme, all stakeholders from all sectors, including the mentor and district authorities, should meet to discuss the aims, objectives, benefits and expected outcomes of the programme (see Section 5.2.7.2). This transparency may increase mentee connectedness to the programme at its inception to avoid the development of negative sentiments toward a mentoring programme and hostility towards the mentor (see Section 5.2.7.2). This process can facilitate a developmental mentorship relationship where the role and input of the mentee are equally important for the development of effective learning (see Section 3.8.3).

This study found a correlation between mentorship and increased resilience among school leaders. Connecting to individuals with similar experiences allowed them to relieve stress, improve confidence levels and develop resilience. The principals were aware of the opportunity to grow in resilience following an adverse period in their lives (see Section 5.2.3). The participants' view of resilience was based on two ideas: the experience of challenges

and the subsequent capability to overcome them. This is consistent with the research supporting the view of certain commonalities when defining resilience (see Section 2.3.1). This perspective is supported by research in an attempt to generate a unified definition of resilience (see Section 2.3.2).

The empirical study also found that mentees grew significantly as a result of the mentoring programme. Firstly, greater self-efficacy was displayed by the mentees as they returned to their challenging work environments following the abrupt conclusion of the mentoring programme. This displayed the core characteristic of resilience, which is being able to return and not give up despite hardship (see Section 2.3.1). Despite their schools' conditions, they continued their work to be better leaders and used their circumstances to progress. Being resilient allowed school leaders not only to survive but also to learn and develop from adversity. This indicated that principals were willing to take on new challenges and in the process display their resilience.

The principals' resilience enabled them to manage their struggles, survive and succeed. The obstacles described by the principals as part of their role emphasised the necessity to be resilient, not only to cope successfully with challenges but also to develop from them (see Section 1.4). Sleepless nights and stress were highlighted by participants as the primary repercussions of a lack of capacity to deal with challenges (see Section 1.4). Resilience can, thus, make principals' roles less demanding while also preparing them for future difficulties they may encounter.

The study found that mentoring led to positive changes in mentees, such as increased confidence in themselves, which helped mentees to discuss ideas confidently in meetings or stand up for themselves in demanding situations (see Section 5.2.9.2). Self-confidence and a sense of self-efficacy can benefit mental health. Participants reported a poor state of mental health, owing in particular to restless nights of worrying that they were adequately qualified to fulfill the demands of their position (see Section 2.2). The role of self-efficacy in the development of resilience has been described and can lead to the protection of the well-being of the principal (see Section 3.8.3). Furthermore, both the SNT and the SCT argue that mentees can develop greater self-efficacy depending on the nature of their mentor-mentee relationship (see Section 1.10).

Greater self-awareness aided participants in realising the need to increase contact with other stakeholders and respect their views on issues impacting the school. Being exposed to new ways of thinking through mentoring, such as strategic thinking and management, helped the principals to deal with tough staff members, for example (see Section 5.2.9.2).

The resilient principals in the study who had to manage change and complications continued to improve as leaders. The findings suggested that resilience empowered principals to be innovative leaders, adaptively coping with contemporary challenges and policies enacted by educational authorities (see Section 5.2.9.1). Resilient leadership characteristics displayed by the study's participants are outlined below.

The study demonstrated that mentoring had a major impact on the growth of leader resilience in school principals. The ability to set new goals was identified to be characteristic of resilience, creating consensus with the current literature. (see Sections 2.6 and 5.2.3.). Many participants expressed a desire to persist despite the challenges they were facing, and a need for this quality to be professionally developed. Furthermore, participants indicated that quitting was not an option, and new ways of dealing with challenges had to be developed instead (see Section 5.2.3). These behaviours indicated a mindset of commitment to fostering positive student outcomes despite obstacles that may limit their leadership capacity.

Resilience can be termed as the ability to identify when one needs more assistance and to take action to make sure that support is provided for one's continued professional survival. The participants recognised the need for them to be professionally developed to make sense of the extreme changes that characterised the principalship after 1994. They became more accepting of the idea of a mentor to guide them rather than replace them. Principals recognised that they were able to soften their approach towards other staff members to aid in school management. This characteristic has been previously identified in the literature as a character trait of a resilient leader (see Section 2.6). Cooperation and collaboration are crucial traits of resilient leadership.

The successful management of crises at their schools was characteristic of resilient leadership (see Section 2.6). Participants reported an ongoing battle with human resources in the execution of their daily tasks. However, the mentoring programme altered their approach and a desire for collective synergy emerged (see Section 5.2.8). This reflected a



shared leadership model that touts empowerment and facilitation with knowledge gained through the mentoring programme.

The study's findings alongside current trends in resilience research and development indicate a shared and collective responsibility on the part of school principals, employers in District Offices of the Department of Education and other school stakeholders for replacing outdated methods of principal professional development. Previous methods included the passive listening to lectures, while more recent research calls for a shift away from the traditional adversity-responsive approach to principal training, providing training only when needed, and toward an approach that emphasises ongoing, sustained capacity building to empower school leaders to be resilient to and grow from persistent challenges and complexities. This requires a novel approach to the current mentoring programme. It was identified that a good mentor-mentee relationship can only be developed over time with clear, consistent communication and prearranged regular contact, hence consultation was deemed to be important amongst all stakeholders (see Section 5.2.7.2) In addition, open, cooperative relationships with mutually beneficial personal and professional objectives and mutually agreed-upon standards regarding the actions, steps, and level of dedication needed from both mentees and mentors are required.

Most school leadership programmes are likely to be out of touch with current challenges facing school leaders. Self-care and thoughtfulness should become topics of focus for all school leaders (see Section 2.1.2). There is a movement for the development of soft skills, such as emotional intelligence, creativity, flexibility and time management. Hard skills, such as technical, finance and business skills, might be quickly taught to principal leaders through the "show-and-learn" technique; however, soft skills require time and participation from both mentor and mentee.

Despite the need for resilience development and the unambiguous evidence of the benefits thereof, an overemphasis on resilience may place the onus for change and mitigating adversity upon the individual, with inadequate attention paid to the organisational weaknesses which necessitated resilience in the first place. Collaboration and cooperation between all stakeholders of the school are therefore vital.

## **6.4 Recommendations**

### **6.4.1 Recommendations for the mentoring of school principals**

The following recommendations are offered in favour of mentoring as a component of school principals' professional development based on the research's findings.

#### **6.4.1.1 Recommendation for the appointment of qualified mentors**

The Department of Education should recruit individuals with leadership and management experience for the role of mentors. All the study participants expressed the requirement for mentors with prior successful experience in their position (see Section 5.2.9.3). They should have a history of continuous achievement in school performance and exceptional leadership competence, as judged by their Grade 12 learners' performance and the functionality of all school-related structures.

Currently, mentors are appointed based on some experience in leadership, although they are experts and may not have performed their roles successfully (see Section 1.7). Retired school principals are often appointed to these positions, and practising principals who consistently perform well despite facing the same environmental challenges as those whose schools underperform should rather be considered for engagement as mentors. Principals currently working in these environments could be more effective at transferring modern practices and educational policies to their protégé.

These mentors would be in a better position to assist mentee principals with appropriate leadership practices. The current practice of recruiting mentors gives inadequate thought to contextual-specific challenges. Because mentors left the field a long time ago it might be that they are not effective enough in advising principals on the current challenges that they are facing (see Section 5.2.9.3). Further motivation for the use of current successful practising principals stems from the fact that they might have the correct qualifications, be experienced in successful leadership practices and with initial training to be a mentor.

#### **6.4.1.2 Recommendation for the training of mentors**

Upon their appointment, mentors should participate in context-specific mentor training tailored to their role (see Section 5.2.9.3). The mentor training programme should ideally be designed in partnership with the Education Department and local reputable educational institutions. The training programme should build the mentor's knowledge of the current

curriculum, up-to-date management and leadership approaches, modern instructional practices, the latest assessment procedures, communication and active listening, requirements for trustworthiness, and strategies for forming cooperative and collaborative partnerships with stakeholders. In addition, the programme should include digital training and fusion with school administration. Relevant mentor training should also develop the mentor's interpersonal skills, which would contribute to the quality of the mentor-mentee relationship. According to the Department of Education, mentors are appointed based upon the assumption that they are ready, capable, confident and driven to assist principals to thrive, know their role and capitalise upon what they learn for advancement.

#### *6.4.1.3 Recommendation for consultation, communication and collaboration.*

The Department of Education should stipulate the aim, objectives and benefits of the mentoring programme to principals and mentors, and the articulation of the expectations and requirements for the programme and the participants would ensure its effectiveness (see Section 5.2.9.2). Each principal chosen for such a programme must understand the criteria that led to their selection. For them to build their expectations of the programme, mentees need to be properly informed on what the programme entails and what is expected of them both before and after the programme.

This would instil a mentoring mentality in the principals, thereby preparing them for full commitment to and participation in the mentoring programme and collaboration with the mentor (see Sections 5.2.1 and 5.2.8.). Furthermore, implementing a mentoring programme expected to function in isolation from all the aspects and dynamics of the principal's school would be a futile exercise. Mentoring must be integrated within a school development plan so that skills learnt by principals in the mentoring programme may be transferred to their schools and vice versa.

The mentor and mentee should set mentoring goals based on areas of growth identified for ensuring the better performance of the school. Furthermore, the mentee should communicate, consult and collaborate with their management team to reach a consensus in developing the school growth plan that will be used in the principal's mentoring plan to identify their growth goals and strategies to achieve them.

#### **6.4.1.4**      *Recommendation for the mentoring programme's time frame*

For significant learning to occur, it is recommended that the mentoring programme last at least three years. The school leaders who took part in the study expressed surprise and incredulity at the short length and abrupt conclusion of the mentoring programme in which they had participated, which, as indicated in the literature, likely prevented the building of healthy mentee-mentor relationships (see Section 5.2.9.1). Moreover, as the short programme had left no time for programme evaluation and determination of the success of the implementation of strategies learnt during the mentoring process, a mentoring process should be followed for a sufficiently long period. Mentoring needs to continue long enough for the formation of a strong mentor-mentee relationship and the determination of further growth needs of mentees.

As indicated above, most participants had strong views on the length of the mentoring programme. The literature has identified that both the times selected for mentoring sessions and the duration of mentoring relationships are critical when it comes to effective mentoring. There is also ample research indicating that both new and experienced principals require mentoring over at least two years for a programme to be successful (see Section 5.2.7.1). Even seasoned educational leaders may benefit from the long-term guidance of a mentor as they navigate the particularly difficult challenges that all principals encounter. Sufficient time to build a relationship between a mentor and mentee not only provides a leader with adequate perspective on their challenges but also trains them, in turn, to become a mentor, thereby growing a pool of mentors to advise future generations.

#### **6.4.2**      *Recommendations for future research on resilience*

##### **6.4.2.1**      *Recommendation 1*

The schools of the participants in the study were selected to be part of a Matric Intervention Programme (MIP) run by the Department of Education in the Nelson Mandela Bay Metropolitan District, which was directed at underperforming schools. However, other principals within the same circuit faced the same challenges and succeeded, despite their schools being deemed against-the-odds schools and hence excluded from this study (see Section 1.6.2). The study found the principals of successful schools to be resilient leaders and identified that their practices could be taught to others through a mentoring programme (see Section 2.10). However, future research could enhance the current study by conducting

a longitudinal study of resilient school leaders' experiences, leadership practices and life stories, to explore how they became resilient despite not participating in a formal mentorship programme.

#### 6.4.2.2 *Recommendation 2*

The democratisation of education in South Africa after 1994 had unforeseen consequences, including an increase in the workload of the principal and the ongoing redefinition of the curriculum in South African schools. This is coupled with immense challenges constantly faced by school principals (See Section 1.4). The implications for principals' mental health and well-being of these policy changes, as well as the role resilience can play as a coping method, could be explored in research on the mental health of school leaders and the impact of the considerable changes brought on by renewal (see Section 2.2).

#### 6.4.2.3 *Recommendation 3*

South African principals are not obliged to undergo any mandated management and leadership training to be selected for a principalship. However, this study and the literature review found that a mentorship programme aided principals in developing resilience (see Sections 3.4 and 5.2.4). Therefore, it is advised that school leaders' psychological capital be strengthened via purposeful resilience training. A study could investigate the design and application of such a programme in detail.

#### 6.4.2.4 *Recommendation 4*

A future study could investigate the value of a community of practice or learning networks (COP) and professional learning forums (PLC) as low-cost strategies for developing principals professionally. Coordinated, monitored and evaluated by the Department of Education District Office, these communities could be established amongst principals in the same circuit whereby the best practices and leadership styles of against-the-odds schools may be shared (see Section 1.3). In addition, these communities could adopt a cluster structure whereby principals were grouped into a learning community that met regularly to share insights, discuss challenges and provide mutual support.

The formation of these communities could be based on the answers to the following questions: *Will the group meet consistently to share information? Will the principals share lessons learned, that is, best practices? Are the principals able to solve a problem together?*

*Will learning be applied immediately to challenges at different schools? Will this lead to improved district and cluster cooperation?*

These communities and the outcomes of research on their effectiveness might lead to principals becoming active participants in their professional development and developing social capital. As the current study found that interaction with experienced, compassionate, and confident peers may be a source of resilience building for school leaders, so might a COP and a PLC develop their resilience.

#### *6.4.2.5 Recommendation 5*

Future research might examine the methods and programmes currently used to provide curriculum content for school leadership training, which are influenced strongly by Western theories that are non-specific and regulated methods that may not be feasible in a local school context owing to the multiplicity of its learners, the education they require and the type of management needed to ensure school performance. Future research could explore Afrocentric approaches to professional development that could be appropriate for South African school leadership in an era of rapid change.

Future research could explore the current Eurocentric paradigm for resilience training, which includes that of this study, which has its focus exclusively on school leader resilience in the hope that the information learned will spread to the other school stakeholders and lead to an improvement in the school. Thus, a future study could investigate the possibility that this approach to leader development for improving school performance puts too much pressure on principals and ultimately leads to poor mental health. This research could investigate the possibility of this paradigm including Afrocentric approaches to principal development that would include preparation for personal development, building relationships, inspiring a team, developing others, and showing empathy, which would contribute to the mental health of a principal.

Afrocentric leader development reflecting a collectivist attitude and community resilience should be researched. African ubuntu ideals, which emphasise social connections as the cornerstone of personal development, are in line with the relationship-focused nature of resilience. This is a significant departure from the individualism found in many Western professional development models and stresses an individual's relationships in a social and ecological setting.

An Afrocentric professional development model would go beyond self-directed learning to the generation and dissemination of socially-contextualised knowledge, thereby ensuring the social connectedness of a principal who would have meaningful relationships with school stakeholders involving emotional support, a feeling of identity, personal growth and the development of resilience.

#### 6.4.2.6 Recommendation 6

The current study found that the principals highlighted the significance of mentorship in the development of resilience (see Section 5.2.4). Recent studies on the devastation caused by COVID-19 emphasised that resilience is one of the top four factors influencing the success of a principal. A future study could gather the perspectives of mentors for future mentor recruitment efforts and provide valuable input on any improvements needed for a mentoring programme, especially in terms of evaluation procedures and goal attainment.

#### 6.4.2.7 Recommendation 7

It has been hypothesised that school principals do not implement the new skills and information they have gained in professional development programmes (see Section 3.6). A future study could be conducted on the perspectives of those who participated in these programmes to discover whether this is true and whether the implementation of this newly acquired knowledge led to their schools' success.

### 6.5 Contributions of the study

#### 6.5.1 Theoretical contribution

This study has contributed to a small but increasing body of knowledge on the role of mentoring in the development of resilience in educational management and leadership. Thus, it has addressed the disparity in the body of knowledge on the mentoring of school leaders for professional development, which has not focused on resilience-building as part of the process that already offers job-related information, psychological support and successful management and leadership practices.

The study has contributed to the field of educational leadership and management by focusing on mentoring for resilience, which has already been investigated in other fields, such as social work, nursing and medicine. Although recent research has been conducted on workplace

adversity in schools and teacher resilience (Oldjohn, 2019), the literature does not deal with the improvement of school principal resilience through mentoring.

The literature that is currently available on mentoring for resilience has come under fire for not giving enough focus to theory building and for only covering the practice of mentoring for resilience. However, the current study has contributed to the theory of the use of mentoring as a professional development method to strengthen and develop the resilience of school leaders who face continuing problems in their schools. The theoretical findings could be used by educational authorities to support the implementation of mentoring for resilience as part of professional development programmes.

This study has contributed to both theory and practice by linking mentoring to resilience in professional development, thereby indicating how school principals can lead effectively and ensure learner success in times of adversity in an age of constant change, in general, and the educational policy environment in particular. Moreover, the study has contributed to helping principals to ensure their psychological well-being and cope with challenges due to work overload that forces them to work beyond normal school hours, which might be exacerbated in an era of online communication and social responsibility requiring emotional investment.

The study has responded to the recent call for sustainable solutions to the problem of principal leadership by emphasising resilience as a lifelong process of developing the capacity not only to endure hardship but to learn and grow from it. The study explained that mentoring principals to develop their resilience would lead to increased self-efficacy, leadership practices, confidence and communication skills.

### **6.5.2 Methodological contribution**

In the study, the method of applying the social capital, social network and conservation of resources (COR) theories (see Section 1.5) to the field of professional development led to insights into the preparation of principals for their leadership role. The use of these theories framed the study of the professional development of school leaders positioned to navigate constant challenges and crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Moreover, to the researcher's knowledge, the methodology of combining the abovementioned theories with the mentoring process to establish whether it can be used to develop the resilience of school principals has previously been undertaken.



While school leaders faced numerous challenges in the run-up to the pandemic, the field of professional development saw leadership development as guiding academic success and administrative excellence rather than recognising the more relevant role of school principals as caretakers of their own and stakeholders' wellbeing (see Section 3.7). This has been the nature of school principal professional development since its inception. However, applying the above-mentioned theories might change this perspective.

Another methodological approach is the inductive methodology that was used to discover the participants' mentoring experiences using thematic data analysis and interviewing. Furthermore, in the study, the researcher tied together two bodies of literature on mentorship, on the one hand, and resilience, on the other, thereby introducing a conceptual framework for reconsidering the training and development of today's school leaders to address unexpected and threatening events.

The study made a methodological contribution by complying with the notion that the research framework and questions should be purposefully aligned to enable the researcher to address new topics and possibly pave the way for future advancements in this field of practice. Thus, within this novel theoretical framework mentioned, the literature and perceptions of school leaders were explored to provide answers to the research questions and understand the role of mentoring for resilience in professional development. By interpreting the themes identified in the data gathered from the school leaders, practical and theoretical answers were established. The active involvement of school heads in the study was also noticed as being an uncommon characteristic of earlier studies.

The research design and resultant methodology matched the research aim, objectives and questions, enabling the development of fresh understandings in the mentoring field as a strategy for professional development and contributing to constructing a conceptual framework for mentoring to develop school leader resilience.

### **6.5.3 *Practical contribution***

The findings of the study have practical implications for those involved in school leader professional development.

### 6.5.3.1 School principals

Explaining the importance of resilience for school leaders would be the first practical step in developing a principal's ability to remain strong and focused in the face of challenges, demanding work, increased workloads, frequent and sudden policy changes, the need for commitment and many responsibilities. Furthermore, principals need to understand at the outset that mentoring for resilience is an opportunity to enhance work performance, improve physical and mental well-being and grow professionally, thereby leading to improved school performance.

The results might be used by school administrators to evaluate their leadership qualities and shortcomings and practice using the findings to improve their leadership performance, especially through effective communication strategies and collaboration or cooperation with school stakeholders. Furthermore, the research may be of practical value to school principals if they find that through the resilience built as a result of mentoring, they are better equipped to manage change and challenges, in particular, the demanding ideals they are supposed to realise contained the South African Standards for Principalship that continue to harm the health of school principals, both new and experienced.

### 6.5.3.2 *District offices of the Department of Education*

This research may be of practical use to school authorities, as it provided valuable insight into the effect of continual challenges on the well-being and mental health of school leaders. Moreover, if those in district offices in charge of current professional development and mentoring programmes take heed of the problems identified by the principals in the study, they may be encouraged to scaffold the presentation of future mentoring programmes toward the resilience-building mentoring of school principals as a professional development strategy. The study's conclusions may therefore eventually result in better leadership techniques, a better school, and better mental health for school leaders.

This research may be an eye-opener for education authorities to better understand that school principals need support and development in times of change and challenges for them to concentrate on their core business of providing an atmosphere that is favourable to learning and teaching. To assist the authorities, it is suggested that the existing mentoring programme should be restructured using structures such as a COP and a PLC to provide development, support and a communal source of knowledge, expertise, and experience to

school leaders in times of rapid change and persistent challenges with minimal financial implications to the Department of Education. However, the Department should continue to provide specific support programmes to ensure school leaders' mental health and meet their emotional needs to promote effective education and learning in their schools.

In line with the needs and demands of 21st-century educational environments, District Education officials should provide school principals in the absence of targeted training with the following: space for engagement between school principals with a focus on exchanging best practices and mental health issues; capacity building for school principals to address staff on the importance of well-being and mental health; and specific help in the form of academic, technological, operational, relationship-building and communication skills support.

The South African educational sector, to the researcher's knowledge, has no guidelines or practices that emphasise building resilience in school principals. Literature is scarce regarding the connection between resilience and mentoring in educational management, despite the abundance in other professions (see Section 1.1). Consequently, the study might influence educational practice by providing ideas to education policymakers represented by district offices to seek best practices from professionals in the fields of social work, medicine and the nursing profession, who are also vulnerable to trauma and challenges, and discover how they are supported through policy.

The research may also benefit practice by motivating a cross-departmental programme between the Departments of Health, Education and Social Development, which would strategically develop a preventative and proactive model for mentoring leaders to develop resilience that educational authorities could use when necessary.

#### *6.5.3.3 Service providers of professional development*

The empirical groundwork laid by the study, which investigated against-the-odds school principal practices together with the theoretical underpinnings and findings from the mentoring literature, can be used as material for future professional development curricula in developing school principal resilience. Thus universities, together with the DBE, need to take the unique experiences of school principals into account when developing and designing practical mentoring and professional development programmes.

This study allowed school principals to discuss what policymakers can do to improve and support their day-to-day leadership and management practices. This may bring an end to the era of training and developing principals with knowledge not relevant to their contextual realities. Furthermore, the unitary focus on improved management practices alone also is recommended to be changed, as it becomes more crucial for school leaders to enhance their soft skills.

The literature review and study revealed that untrained principals and a lack of management and leadership skills contribute directly to the poor performance of a school. Traditionally, mentoring has been linked to career advancement and in many instances to better social integration. Thus, the finding that mentoring for resilience as a deliberate, intentional strategy could be of practical use to the service providers of professional development.

## **6.6 Study limitations**

A small sample size of principals was used in the study to examine the potential role of mentorship in school leaders, which may have decreased the reliability of the results. However, five participants are considered an adequate sample size for qualitative research. Additional principals were initially earmarked for the mentoring programme; however, one unfortunately demised and the other retired.

The framework provided in this study applied only to these particular experiences and circumstances. It was intended for the study to be both exploratory and descriptive. As a result, there was no attempt to generalise or quantify the results beyond schools which didn't take part in the mentoring programme. The reader is left to judge if the study's conclusions apply to their circumstances. Cooperation in this study was optional however, this limitation had no impact on the study's findings because qualitative research can be conducted with any number of participants.

Another limitation is that the study was purposefully confined to school leaders chosen for their involvement in the mentorship programme. In addition, the selection of principals was dependent on their interest in taking part, regardless of the school they led. It is possible, therefore, that other participants from different schools may have produced different data.

The study might be regarded as limited because it did not set out to investigate educational leadership specifically and was not intended to research educational leadership as a

phenomenon. School leadership was researched as part of the phenomenon of mentorship for resilience as part of a principal development programme. Professional development can take place using many other strategies, but in this research, mentoring to develop resilience was selected to be investigated.

## **6.7 Conclusion**

Notwithstanding the abovementioned limitations, the results of this research led to the identification of mentoring for resilience as a professional developing strategy to aid school principals in effective leadership in constantly changing and challenging contexts. In addition, the study outcomes led to recommendations, contributed to educational theory, policy and practice and indicated areas for further investigation.

Mentoring may be the ideal leadership development strategy for growing the resilience of school principals. This proposition is explored in the study through a review of the literature and a research study. In particular, qualitative methodology allowed this empirical investigation to meet the research aim and objectives and answer the research questions.

The literature review and empirical investigation revealed that for mentoring as part of a school principal resilience programme to be successful, it has to involve regular and frequent consultation, last for approximately three years, have experienced and successful school principals as mentors, and have comprised contextually relevant training. Continuous and consistent mentoring sessions provided by individuals who empathise with their mentees are necessary for building school principal resilience in a constantly changing and challenging school environment in 21<sup>st</sup>-century South Africa.

New knowledge, improved leadership and management practices, greater self-efficacy and increased confidence levels in their leadership ability are some of the benefits that may be enjoyed by participants in an effective mentoring programme that focuses on school leader resilience and encourages mentees to view challenges as an opportunity for growth.

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Ethical Clearance Certificate



UNISA COLLEGE OF EDUCATION ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE

Date: 2021/05/12

Ref: **2021/05/12/35701714/09/AM**

Dear Mr DD Kleinbooi

Name: Mr DD Kleinbooi

Student No.: 35701714

**Decision:** Ethics Approval from  
2021/05/12 to 2026/05/12

**Researcher(s):** Name: Mr DD Kleinbooi  
E-mail address: kbmasterp@gmail.com  
Telephone: 0739516017

**Supervisor(s):** Name: Prof S.G. Pretorius  
E-mail address: pretosg@unisa.ac.za  
Telephone: 082 4445244

**Title of research:**

**Mentoring and resilience development of school principals in the Northern areas of Nelson Mandela Metro, Tinara Circuit**

**Qualification:** PhD Education Management

Thank you for the application for research ethics clearance by the UNISA College of Education Ethics Review Committee for the above mentioned research. Ethics approval is granted for the period 2021/05/12 to 2026/05/12.

*The **medium risk** application was reviewed by the Ethics Review Committee on 2021/05/12 in compliance with the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics and the Standard Operating Procedure on Research Ethics Risk Assessment.*

The proposed research may now commence with the provisions that:

1. The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to the relevant guidelines set out in the Unisa Covid-19 position statement on research ethics attached.
2. The researcher(s) will ensure that the research project adheres to the values and principles expressed in the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics.



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3. Any adverse circumstance arising in the undertaking of the research project that is relevant to the ethicality of the study should be communicated in writing to the UNISA College of Education Ethics Review Committee.
4. The researcher(s) will conduct the study according to the methods and procedures set out in the approved application.
5. Any changes that can affect the study-related risks for the research participants, particularly in terms of assurances made with regards to the protection of participants' privacy and the confidentiality of the data, should be reported to the Committee in writing.
6. The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to any applicable national legislation, professional codes of conduct, institutional guidelines and scientific standards relevant to the specific field of study. Adherence to the following South African legislation is important, if applicable: Protection of Personal Information Act, no 4 of 2013; Children's act no 38 of 2005 and the National Health Act, no 61 of 2003.
7. Only de-identified research data may be used for secondary research purposes in future on condition that the research objectives are similar to those of the original research. Secondary use of identifiable human research data requires additional ethics clearance.
8. No field work activities may continue after the expiry date **2026/05/12**. Submission of a completed research ethics progress report will constitute an application for renewal of Ethics Research Committee approval.

*Note:*

*The reference number **2021/05/12/35701714/09/AM** should be clearly indicated on all forms of communication with the intended research participants, as well as with the Committee.*

Kind regards,



**Prof AT Motlhabane**  
**CHAIRPERSON: CEDU RERC**  
motlhat@unisa.ac.za



**Prof PM Sebate**  
**EXECUTIVE DEAN**  
Sebatpm@unisa.ac.za



**Corporate Planning, Monitoring, Policy and Research Coordination**

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Zwelitsha, 5608, Private Bag X0032, Bhisho, 5605 REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA: Enquiries: **Ms F. Pakade** Tel: **040 608 4537/4353**. Fax: **040 608 4372**. Email: [fundiswa.pakade@ecdoe.gov.za](mailto:fundiswa.pakade@ecdoe.gov.za) Website: [www.ecdoe.gov.za](http://www.ecdoe.gov.za) Date: 29 October 2021

Mr Deon Kleinbooi

71 Aubrey Street  
Gelvan Park  
**Port Elizabeth**  
6020

Dear Mr Kleinbooi

**PERMISSION TO UNDERTAKE A DOCTORAL RESEARCH: MENTORING AND RESILIENCE DEVELOPMENT OF SCHOOL PRINCIPALS IN THE TINARA CIRCUIT OF THE NELSON MANDELA BAY METRO**

1. Your application to conduct the above-mentioned research involving five (5) high schools principals in the Tinarra Circuit (Nelson Mandela Bay district) under the jurisdiction of the Eastern Cape Department of Education (ECDOE) is hereby approved based on the following conditions:
  - a. there will be no financial implications for the Department;
  - b. institutions and respondents must not be identifiable in any way from the results of the investigation;
  - c. no minors will participate without consent from the parent/guardian;
  - d. it is not going to interrupt educators' time and tasks;
  - e. the research may not be conducted during official contact time;
  - f. no physical contact with educators and learners, only virtual means of communication should be used and that should be arranged and agreed upon in writing with the Principal and the affected teacher/s;
  - g. you present a copy of the written approval letter of the Eastern Cape Department of Education (ECDOE) to the Cluster and District Directors before any research is undertaken at any institutions within that particular district;
  - h. you will make all the arrangements concerning your research;



- i. should you wish to extend the period of research after approval has been granted, an application to do this must be directed to Chief Director: Corporate Strategy Management;
  - j. you present the Department with a copy of your final paper/report/dissertation/thesis free of charge in hard copy and electronic format. This must be accompanied by a separate synopsis (maximum 2 – 3 typed pages) of the most important findings and recommendations if it does not already contain a synopsis;
  - k. you present the findings to the Research Committee and/or Senior Management of the Department when and/or where necessary;
  - l. you are requested to provide the above to the Chief Director: Corporate Strategy Management upon completion of your research;
  - m. you comply with all the requirements as completed in the Terms and Conditions to conduct Research in the ECDoE document duly completed by you;
  - n. you comply with your ethical undertaking (commitment form);
  - o. You submit on a six-monthly basis, from the date of permission of the research, concise reports to the Chief Director: Corporate Strategy Management.
2. The Department reserves a right to withdraw the permission should there be non-compliance to the approval letter and contract signed in the Terms and Conditions to conduct Research in the ECDoE and/or legal requirements to do so.
  3. The Department will publish the completed Research on its website.
  4. The Department wishes you well in your undertaking. You can contact Mrs Fundiswa Pakade on the numbers indicated on the letterhead or email [fundiswa.pakade@ecdoe.gov.za](mailto:fundiswa.pakade@ecdoe.gov.za) should you need any assistance.

**T. MASOEU**  
**CHIEF DIRECTOR: CORPORATE STRATEGY MANAGEMENT**  
**FOR SUPERINTENDENT-GENERAL: EDUCATION**

1. What is your understanding of the term 'resilience' concerning being a school principal?
2. How would you describe a school principal being resilient? What is it about a school principal that indicates that he is emotionally resilient?
3. The research study identifies resilience as being a necessary capability to effectively function as a school principal. How necessary do you think emotional resilience is for leading and managing a school? Can you provide any examples from practice or when you think this might be the case?
4. When do you feel School principals might develop resilience to cope with the emotional demands of the job?
5. Do you think that resilience can be taught? Can you provide examples of how it might be taught?
6. You participated in a mentoring initiative conducted by the education department. Do you think participation in the mentoring programme assisted in developing resilience?
7. If you could, what aspects of the mentoring programme would you change if any?
8. Do you think that resilience can be assessed, and can you provide examples of how it might be assessed?
9. Can I ask you what factors might prevent or undermine the school principal's ability to be resilient?
10. Do You think that the demands of the principal's job have changed over the years?
11. Can you identify areas of practice that might have developed your resilience?
12. How are you going to know then that resilience has been learned? How do you know it's been learned?
13. What sort of practice opportunities and experiences will be most appropriate to evidence resilience as a capability?

## APPENDIX D

### INFORMED CONSENT FORM

I understand the summary of the study that was provided to me: **Mentoring and resilience development of school principals in the Tinara Circuit of the Nelson Mandela Bay Metro**. This has been relayed to me by the Student Mr D Kleinbooi, Unisa student no 35701714. From what I understand:

1. The study focuses on the **development of resilient leadership practices of school principals in challenging circumstances**.
2. My name or the name of my institution won't ever be mentioned in the study or the reporting of its results, and my identity will remain private at all times.
3. There will be no harm caused to me in the event of participation in this research study.
4. The study's objective is not to examine my response to a particular question or set of questions.
5. I have the option to refuse to respond to any inquiry during the interview.
6. I have the right to refuse any further participation in the study whenever I want.
7. When I'm interviewed, it will be audio recorded.
8. I will not gain anything from taking part in this study.
9. By signing this consent form, I agree to take part in the research.
10. The duration of the interview will be no longer than 60 minutes.
11. I can request a copy of the results of the study if I so desire. I'm entitled to ask for a copy of the study's findings if I want to.
12. If I have further questions about this project, about the results of this study, or if I have a research-related problem, I can contact Mr D. Kleinbooi, at 073 951 6017.
13. Alternatively, I can contact the researcher's supervisor, Prof SG Pretorius on 082 444 52 44 or e-mail [pretosg@unisa.ac.za](mailto:pretosg@unisa.ac.za)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**I appreciate your willingness to take part in this research.**



DR MAUREEN LILIAN KLOS  
PROFESSIONAL EDITOR  
BA; STD; BEd (*cum laude*); MEd (*cum laude*); DEd  
Registered with the SAPEG (reg. no. KLO004)  
maureenklos@gmail.com

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**EDITOR'S DECLARATION**

I, DR MAUREEN LILIAN KLOS,

Being the holder of the following qualifications:

BA; STD; BEd (*cum laude*); MEd (*cum laude*); DEd

Hereby certify that I am the English language editor of the following document:

**Mentoring and resilience development of school principals in the Tinara Circuit of  
the Nelson Mandela Bay Metro**

by

Deon Kleinbooi

Student Number: 35701714

I hereby certify that I have edited the language, formatting and referencing in the above-mentioned document in its entirety. However, I am not responsible for any changes or refusal to make changes when suggested.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'DK/oe', with a long horizontal stroke underneath.

6<sup>th</sup> December 2022



**PRINCIPAL BHP**

Thank you so much principal for availing yourself of this interview we appreciate it. according to our records, you were part of the mentoring program that the ECDE has launched for newly appointed principals.

**What is your opinion about a mentor and the mentoring program and why do you think the ECDE thought it was necessary for this mentoring program?**

*Thank you for asking the question and yes I was part of the mentoring program when my career as a principal started. I had a wonderful opportunity of one of the older retired principals assisting me through the process of getting comfortable in this chair(principal position) really just getting to know what to do.*

*Yes, It was a wonderful privilege when I was taken through all the administrative duties number 1 that is required from the principal. Because being the deputy principal you are not always exposed to what is really required in terms of driving the school as a principal cause you only assist him. Principals are sometimes selective in what they would divulge in terms of administration and also human resource management of the school. I do not even want to go into the curriculum side, cause as a principal I discovered that I was the driving force behind this curriculum program of the school. So yes the mentoring program assisted me to just fully understanding all the different aspects of the principalship. A major motivation I think behind the department's reasoning for appointing a mentor to this particular school was that I was appointed just after the previous principal passed away so one of the reasons was that why no one could take me through the process of what or where the school was and what was required, and I had no other resource to go to. So, the department took its wise advice to get somebody in to assist me and truly appreciated that one.*

*Secondly, at that point, we were an underperforming school and the reason or emphasis for an under-performing school was how the leadership of the school wanted to assist all leaders of the school to just understand the importance of their role in assisting the school to move from underperforming too performing school. In brief, I hope I have answered the question.*

**Yes, So what would you say what is a mentor the person that took you by the hand, what was this person's role?**

*For example, when he came in he was assisting me just his presence here, just the comfort he assisted me how to manage my time throughout my day. For example, what is it what*

*should do on a particular day before school even start? So, the mentor came in and took me through the process of what to do on a particular day as a principal.*

*Secondly. He just assisted me by just understanding that the role has changed from the accountability side, taking accountability. A huge difference which I truly appreciated is the difference between responsibility and accountability that the mentor explained to me. And I think the mentor assisted me in grasping all those little aspects, yes, one learns this in different courses and different diplomas and degrees. But to have a person here with you that sits and takes you through the day advising you saying..... principal here we could have done it differently so that advice that came from him I truly appreciated that. Just to empower me to get a little stronger in my role as a principal.*

**Principal, what is your understanding of resilience and is resilience an important aspect that a principal should have? Would it be ok if they do not have resilience?**

*Resilience is such an important aspect of being a principal, I can recall many situations, where one wanted to give up and say do I deserve this, do I need this in my life? and so, a mentor came and said to me listen here Meneer let us change one or two things on how you approach things and to build a character that is much more uhmm... more willy to embrace the challenges that we face every day. Cause I cannot deny when the expectations of the principal for example when I look at the principal that was here before me. He had time to read the Herald and complete crossword puzzles. And So you had this idea that when you come in you think aarg it won't be so much. But when you become the principal, you realize..... joh it is a different thing. And as I say you need resilience as I say you take this person you get too personally involved and you see yourself as a failure. I remember that 1<sup>st</sup> year for example Humm I put so much effort into our grade 12 that particular year. And when the results came joh... I was down to the ground because we were still underperforming. And it took the mentor or somebody to speak to us stand up to say stand up and fight against this thing that you are not good enough. So, my understanding of this resilience is to withstand these attacks almost on your character, on your ability to make sure that you do not crumble on all these things. So yes I do believe it is of utmost importance for a principal to be resilient and to face these things and really be an example to the teachers, educators,*

*learners and parents to preserve and continue in what they are busy doing but I cannot deny it broke me ..... Jon.... it broke my whole character down it really got into my whole psyche, that I am not the right person for this position.*

**Ok, thank you, principal. So, if a person doesn't have that resilience within their character; do you think they would be successful in leading the school?**

*Definitely, as I say if you are not Umm schooled or there is no sort of awareness being awakened within yourself that listen here..... this resilience that you need to withstand this attack again as I say on you and it will make you crumble. I know of many principals who got disheartened that got failures to their whole health being influenced because of this and you know one of the things as a principal I have learned is. Again as I want to emphasize you don't have to take, and that is what the mentors told us you don't have to take all of these things so personally that you are a failure as such and there is where resilience came into able to fight it off and to still come tomorrow with this vision that you have and not thrown off what you want or this goal, this vision you have for the school you have and be thrown off from what you want. Not being resilient to face it, again and again, will break you down as a leader and maybe all these things have been institutionalized before your time. So, to break them down you need to be resilient and persevere and come back again. This is my vision this is what I want it is a vital aspect of principalship*

**What is your view regarding the issue that school principals need Continuous professional development?**

*Joh..... I'm very, very serious when I say this, the dynamics of the principalship in my years I am sitting here every year there is something else that comes that is being added to the responsibility or shoulders of the principal. I cannot enough emphasize if I can just highlight one aspect. Just the management of the staff and the human resources you have just to manage that. If you don't have developed in that aspect for example.... Um, they take so much from the principal of the challenges they have and one would believe that they would not need Uhm that support from the principal in a sense. that they Cause they are educators they are adults they are developed and placed in their positions but that is, for example, an aspect that a principal need to be trained in. Needs to be developed because*

*remember as a deputy principal you didn't work with them one on one. But that is just one aspect then there is the reporting that needs to be done to the department .....Uhm.... and if you don't get development or courses that need to be done from the department's side You are always sent back by the EDO, the circuit managers you know you are not doing it properly you need and it is breaking down your whole character in a sense Hey what did I miss why did I miss this? Then you take a day or two to rebuild again because you feel like a failure by not doing all the reports as they should be done for example. So yes continues development professional development is needed. I don't even want to speak about the curriculum side of the school. Remember the current system that we had with Covid and the ATP's that changed Hmmm and the CES's wants you to know all of that. All of the 14 15 areas that you present at school from GET to FET to understand APTs to understand how SASAMS work to understand how the different administrative options of delivering the curriculum be implemented and what needs to be done. You need to be trained in these things you spend so many hours just to develop your confidence or manage or master these different aspects. So yes continuous development is definitely needed.*

**Ok, thank you for that sir. So, you know there are a lot of strategies that can be done to develop principals. Normally they send the principals to the universities and things like that, but do you think the mentoring strategy was an effective one in your answer why would you say it was or it wasn't?**

*The mentoring was definitely an effective strategy and the reason I am saying that is that you had the opportunity to be practically guided Uhm... and assisted in your leadership style in the management of the institution. So, you had that immediate feedback from somebody who is looking at it from the outside perspective and not so much involved. I appreciated that I could have that immediate feedback and assistance. So yes, that mentoring system worked for me. To attend the courses at universities yes we also need that Uhm... that gives you the theoretical side of it and Hmmm and it also empowers you to develop new different ways and styles and all that information helps in just making sure that you are learned, principal. I also just want to say when it comes to mentoring, at first neh it was not easy for me, there was a little bit of resistance to it. Obviously, this person was now here in my face uhm... walking with me wherever I go. And at first, It was difficult for me to have somebody following me my every aspect of the*

day. Laughing..... But after a while again as I say when I realized that it is just someone who wanted to add value To my institution and the chair as a principal. We build such a wonderful relationship and up till today, we can have that type of open conversation relationship, How is going are you still okay what can I do to assist? So again as I say that was a practical thing for me, and I get immediate feedback. It was a resource person that was here with me and I appreciated that. Remember the books are there but to go back and read them again takes time. But here you have somebody who will say no leave it I will go and read up on it and come back tomorrow and give you some feedback. So, I appreciated that side of the mentoring

**Okay Sir you can share one experience in your role as a school principal that Challenged your leadership and has required you to be resilient. To bounce back from whatever. You have shared now about the underperforming and the transition into a performing school and so forth. But is there maybe one aspect that you can share with us?**

Yes, I was appointed to the principalship.... uhmm fairly young I believe. I had a difficult position because many of these educators that are here taught me. After all, I attended school here. So, when I became principal many of these people were my teachers. You may realize that I spoke a lot about human management, and human resource management so that is where it comes from. Now one of the challenges that I experienced as a principal remember these people are getting old. They are in their 35<sup>th</sup> year of teaching and they are 2 years away from retiring and here comes this principal with this drive and he wants to continue and so I got a little bit of resistance in a sense that educators told me” Meneer I am finishing off uhmmm..... remember in our era, for example, we received laptops that came in and they need now to understand the teaching methods and style need to change. So, the principal was driving this and so I got some resistance so much so that I had to go as far as to start a disciplined process with one of my educators. And we had to go through the unions and eventually end up at the HR department where we had to sit with the EDOs and the representatives of the department in hearings and informal hearings. And you know that.....

uhmmm the build-up to that process was taking a lot of energy from me. In a sense that

*remembers these teachers were teaching now, I have to charge them for not complying or being this hardworking as driven as they can be motivated in their tasks as educators. So now I had to sit with this, and they were questioning me as a principal am I attacking now I am more than a product of them and now all of a sudden I am saying they are not good enough. How can it be that I am sitting here and so that again as I say an attack on one's leadership, am I doing the right thing? Shouldn't I have just ma let this thing ma go and brush it under the table and leave it that or should I continue? But I am glad that I continued because of that resilience almost I want to call it them telling me that I am taking revenge on what they have done to me that type of things they had in their minds I had steadfast to tell them you are here to do you work and you are here as educators making sure that we give the best education possible. And to continue that process and to come back to the school facing the staff again took quite some resilience to just face them and say I am here to do a certain work so yes that is just one aspect for example of where I had to bounce back coming from the department coming from the and I could hear in the ally's or see every time I approach a group of people speaking and all of a sudden there was just silence.*

**Thank you for sharing that experience with us principal so yes uhmm saying that and you are still here and still persevering that is saying a lot about the person you are. So, Sir, the department choose you to be part of that mentoring program. So here they come, and they say listen to the principal we want you to draw up a new mentoring program for maybe the new principals that have been appointed. What are the aspects that you would highlight in that program that you have compiled for them? What are the three important components that you would include in that program that you have experienced now in your time as a principal?**

*As I say the 1<sup>st</sup> one is to have somebody to take you through leadership styles because remember I know all the theories so many styles are there it is that democratic, autocratic there is all of that. To practically do that or to experience it in an the institution is sometimes totally different and that is why one of those mentors is to just look at yours remember leadership styles are a text in my experience to your specific character or your background. I know principals that just told me..... kyk hier so I do not take nonsense from anyone I just do this thing and never mind democratic, but my character is different from that of my background. So that mentor took me through a*

process of saying listen here I think you must be more uhmm harsher; more adamant so yes or here you should have asked them and not get angry; you shouldn't have decided for them that is one of the aspects that I should really form part of it. The second one..... uhmm that they would put into that mentoring program what they call reporting and I want to explain to you why I am saying reporting. You know being the principal asks or requires you to report on many aspects, you must report about the leave you have to report on your LTSM you have to do reporting on your staff's curriculum delivery; you have to do reporting on so many things. And as a newly appointed principal, you are not sometimes aware of what you suppose or mustn't do and that is why I appreciated the mentor asking do you have a plan in place for reporting on the educators and asking you to leave and come back to school, for example, what do you have in place there. Do you have a reporting system when it comes to Humm going back to your educators and telling them to listen here that you only have 2 days left on your cycle of leave? Those types of reporting and monitoring if I can call them reporting monitoring if I can put in the same. I would include that as well. And 3rdly one of the biggest aspects of this principalship is finances. "O liewe Vader" as a mentor if I can get somebody in to help and that was something that I had to learn by trial and error and I made huge mistakes... uhmm and it is only in the last few months I think here last year or so September last year and I was already in my 3<sup>rd</sup> year of being principal in the September holiday last year, the not last year 2019 we had a financial .....uhmm reporting training and how and that was now 3 years into my principalship I only got to be developed or some development. And now if somebody could have taken me from the start I am so glad that the department didn't come to me a year or two than you realize you made a mistake here and I made a mistake there. I signed off there where I shouldn't have signed off. Yes, those are the things that I feel are quite important in a mentoring programme I also want to include .... uhmm again as I say the curriculum ..... Joh delivery of the school. As the principal, you are held responsible to lead the curriculum and make sure everything is being done according to the book.

And you know if nobody is guiding you and taking you what you must look at and what lookout out for, little bit experience, you are missing a lot of things and people, educators get away with a lot cause they know the loopholes and because you are so

*divided but if you don't develop your team quite good Humm cause problems for you and the core business of the school is being neglected. Because you are focusing on a lot of other things so yes.*

**So at the beginning of this mentoring program, you said you felt a little bit intimidated and all those things, but did you have expectations and were those expectations met?**

*I had expectations again as I say at first feeling a bit intimidated because I was more expecting it to be observing maybe rather than being so harsh at the beginning Somma (laughing)..... One was told in your face there is where you are doing things you could have done better. It Sort off broke down that expectation because you were expecting a more lenient approach miskien (maybe) more considerate approach perhaps not so uhmm but that also shocked you. uhmm... to the reality of the position that you are in.*

*So, my 1<sup>st</sup> expectation was that now I have somebody that the staff will see assisting me and I felt a little bit stronger in my role as a principal. I would ask him as I say as a resource person, so I had a backup that was. But it did not work like that I had to fight my fights and I realize at first nope why are you here man, some days I just cut him off. Because you are not backing me up and I thought mos now you would in the staff room in the meeting you would..... Because he was sitting in the meetings, I was hoping her would come in and say" Nee Nee Julle moet die hoof respekteer" No he was just observing there sitting there. Afterwards telling me this and this and that. So, my 1<sup>st</sup> expectation of having somebody could take an I had a wrong idea of what will gonna happen here. But did the programme serve its purpose yes, because I believe I am much stronger as a principal now than I was 3 years ago. And I feel developed in many aspects due to the availability of a person that could walk with me during that year of the mentoring programme.*

**What aspects of the mentoring programme did you enjoy?**

*Again, I say every educator, especially my character, I appreciate it if somebody assists me in being a better person, a better leader, and building a stronger character in me. Yes, I enjoyed the mentoring programme, we build a long-lasting relationship that up till today I can pick up the phone and ask for advice. I truly believe that I have developed through that whole process into a much stronger person and principal. So yes I enjoyed the mentoring and the mentorship. The fact that when we worked together and could reflect on the previous day's activities meant a lot to me as I believe I could only improve on the mistakes I*



*made the previous day. The reflective sessions were both on the positive aspects of what I did right and aspects I could improve on. So, that was valuable to me. So, I thoroughly enjoyed the feedback also.*

**Did the mentoring programme improve any of your leadership practices or was it helpful in any way?**

*I.... again, as I have said I had this theoretical empowerment of the different leadership styles, coming to the principalship I know I could not be autocratic all the time, or I cannot be democratic also, but I'm gonna be wise enough to apply all these different things, but it didn't always work like that. Yes, it assisted me as it taught me to be more assertive and flexible, because of my church background, and the tasks and duties I fulfilled there, I sometimes tend to be too lenient in my leadership style. Saying yes too easily, and some of the staff members of my school took advantage of this. There were certain aspects that I could have asked a question about, but I sometimes just say yes. So all of sudden I was now aware of certain things. And why would I say assertive, because I would spend nites developing a certain strategy for my school and people would just come and say, no that will not work? And I become more accepting of the ideas of others who might have more experience than me. I have learned to be more assertive and when you have developed a plan you need to stand strong in the face of opposition because one will never be able to satisfy everybody all the time, My leadership style has changed as I become a stronger person than I was a few years back filled with new knowledge that I did not have before. The researcher concluded the interview by thanking the principal for participating in the interview.*

**Researcher:** Thank you so much for availing yourself to be interviewed for this research project.

**My first question will be what do you think is a mentor and the mentoring program and also why do you think the department has started this mentoring program?**

*Right, a mentor in my opinion a mentor is somebody that has the experience, that has walked the path that you are on as principal previously, has encountered both the obstacles and that has successes in the field that they have been operating in. So, in terms of being a principal, a mentor is a principal, a previous principal that has encountered all the pros and cons that the job entails. They are there to guide you and maybe you know...uhmm... you know to and to anticipate what might lie ahead for you. So, it's a coach, a mentor is a coach. What is important is that the mentor has the experience that mentor has had... uhmm... that has years of experience that can anticipate and guide you in terms of what their personal experience is in terms of being a principal.*

**So why do you think the department started that program mentoring program?**

*All right, initially, we were a lot of young principals, very young principals that were new in the profession. Many schools at that particular time went through a difficult time in terms of performance and because the whole top structure of the schools leaving the profession so a lot of changes took place. So many of the principals came from the HOD level. Some of them are not even deputies. Some of them only have a year of experience as a deputy and then bumped up to the principal's position. So, I think they saw a gap and they decided with all these young principals now at the schools that they need you to know some mentoring and guidance. Especially most of the schools their whole top structure, the deputy and the principal all retired at the same time. Which left adrift in that area.*

**Ok, so our 2<sup>nd</sup> question will be what is your understanding of resilience and being a resilient principal is that one of the important aspects that a principal must have?**

*Well in my opinion resilience, yes you have to be resilient uhmm and resolute in what you are doing. Especially in a school, they call an underperforming school.... Uhmm.... it is not something that you can change overnight. You cannot just come in and expect that*

*everything will run smoothly from the start. So, you are gonna encounter problems, but it is almost as if you... uhmm... you know you can't back down from the first obstacle you find. Because you are not just guiding or leading teachers you are leading-learners, and you are leading a community. So, when you take on responsibility as a principal resilience will have to be part of your character. Because it is not just about you, you must know that you are leading a school community and there are gonna be obstacles, there are gonna be challenges and you not always gonna be successful in all aspects of it. I also found that HUMM the department measures a school's performance only on the school's matric results, but you will find many principals, there are nine functionality, and a principal can maybe function very well in 7 of the nine categories except one category that the department regards as, as important. So, resilience for me is getting up again and tackling whatever comes your way. Not giving up You get up and find new means and ways of dealing with the challenges that you are facing daily.*

**So, ok principal, you have to say now resilience is very, very important so.. uhmm.. my next question will do you think professional development is needed continually. When you look at the changes that we went through the Covid -19, how the technology I think the curriculum also changed. So, do you think a principal needs to go for continuous training or is it just for the aspects that need guidance or what?**

*Lifelong learning is very, very important... uhmm.... you can come into a principal's post having your master's or your doctorate or Honours or whatever. But that post will never be sufficient for what is required for that job. You will have to be continuously learning, things change every time there are new things, whether it is technology or academically, whether it is infrastructure whether it is new financial practices, these things change all the time. So, on the job the experience, you came into the post with is never sufficient, and you will constantly and continuously learn as you go along. Doesn't matter if you were a principal for 5 or 10 years even if it is 10 or 15 years. You will have to continuously upgrade yourself. So Lifelong learning and I found out that upgrading your skills is very important. Continuously being out there being in the forefront and..... finding out new ways of dealing with issues, So Lifelong learning according to me is very, very important. The job requires that.*

**....Uhhh.... So, this mentoring programme that the department has decided to use is just one of the strategies that they use to develop principals on a professional level. So do you think it was effective?**

*I would say aspects of it were successful... uhhh... the mentor as a coach was good for me. You know you sit in this chair it is a very lonely chair and a lot is expected from you very few people understand, what you go through. So having someone you can chat with and bounce ideas off, was successful for me. But I also found that because the job changes continuously if they bring in somebody that has been out of the post for 2 or 3 years. That person's knowledge is outdated, you are ahead of that person. So, you find that in terms of that and the mentor has admitted that to me, you know, what you guys are doing I didn't do when I was a principal. So being 2 or 3 years out of the system and coming back as a mentor is maybe not as effective in terms of technology and the curriculum because these things change all the time. But what I found that was very effective in dealing with people, your interactions with stakeholders, and dealing with colleagues is the same in any profession whether you are in teaching or the private sector it is all the same. But it was also great to have someone to chat with, to bounce ideas off with and not have ties or like someone like the EDO someone that is your manager or something. It is someone different it is almost a neutral person. And that I found very good about the mentoring program that brought, brought positivity to me.*

**Can you maybe share one experience in your career as a school principal that was challenging your leadership?**

*I became the principal when I was about 47 years old, and many of the staff members were much older than me. Another thing is I was from the school, which means they watch me going through the ranks. I was here as a post-level one and I became a HOD at the school. I became the deputy principal and eventually, I was appointed principal of the school. What was most challenging was the fact that was dealing with these colleagues and getting them to accept authority, is, it comes with the post you know, that was a bit of a challenge for me, and it remained a challenge for quite some time. This created a little instability, uhhh, I don't wanna say instability, but it was a big negative for the school. Yes, so dealing with colleagues on a personal level was a better challenge for me. People outside of the school used to call my staff very difficult staff as well. And I don't think somebody from outside of the school was*

*going to be able to stabilize the situation as there was a lot of conflict in internal turmoil at the school.*

**If the department tasked you to design a mentoring programme, what aspects would you include in such a mentoring curriculum?**

*Most definitely human relations as a principal. This job, In this job. you deal with so many people. Most of the principals were very good teachers. We were masters in our subjects. And Academically, we were sound. Also, technology is not a problem for most of us. One of the aspects I find very challenging for a principal is dealing with people, especially staff members, stakeholders, learners and parents as well. So yes, your mother's relations are a big aspect for me. People talk about IQ and EQ. You need to have some sort of emotional intelligence as a school principal in dealing with people. Much of the focus for me will be on how to deal with people. How do you enter teachers? How do you enter learners? How do end your stakeholders, and how do they handle your relationship with the Department of Education? For me, that would be a strong focal point.*

*Another aspect that would be important is uhmm.... How do you assist new principals on the administrative side of things? What is important? What needs to be done? Then I would also include how you relate technological development to your job as a school principal. I think that would also be important. What I would also regard as important is to teach the principal about the importance of emotional intelligence when you occupied the office of the principal. I would also include in such a program, um, the importance of mentoring for the mental. Because people assume that they know everything. And then there is a disjunction between the needs of the mentor and the needs of the mentee. So yes, mentors also need to be mentored to understand what is important in the given school that they are going to. There is no one-size-fits-all uhmm curriculum and things need to be tailored to the needs of the school.*

**Did you have any expectations at the beginning of the mentoring programme and were these expectations met?**

*Look initially I wasn't keen on having a mentor in the beginning because I thought that it is going to be someone that gonna watch over you, check what you are doing and so on. To a certain extent, my expectations were met because of my mentor..... there were a couple of*

*skills she taught me that I found useful. Although the mentor has been out of the system for a few years and couldn't help me with all the things, there was something the mentor taught me that was useful.*

**Do you think the mentoring programme was useful and helpful to you?**

*I enjoyed it and found it to be very useful yes. I'm a very to-the-point no nonsense person. At certain stages, I might even be intolerant of other people's ideas and so on, and not get to know my staff very well. That's how I felt I was. One important aspect that the mentor taught me is to invest more in your staff and spend more one on one sessions with them. I also learned that I need to know them better and know more about their personal circumstances. And in developing relationships with them you become aware that many of the issues that existed were perhaps brought on by a lack of communication and miss communication. I also understood that people look at the same situation and each can have a different interpretation thereof. I am now more considerate and open to the ideas of my staff than I was before. It made the task of working with the staff much more pleasant and easier than before. I am also less autocratic than before and let them in on the decisions being made concerning the progress of the school and in the process allow them to participate in the management of the process.*

The researcher concluded the interview by thanking the participant for their willing participation in the interview.

The researchers started the interview. By giving assurance to the participant. The interview is anonymous. And guaranteed confidentiality. At no stage will the name of the principal be revealed. And that the researcher will make use of codes. And assign a code to each participant principal.

The researcher also assured the participant that all the questions will be asked. Will be connected to the experiences of the principal during the mentoring program and the participation of the principal in that program.

**The first question principal is what is your view of what is a mentor or what is a mentoring program?**

*Thank you, Sir. To me, a mentor is someone successful in whatever they have been doing. That someone is going to give you guidelines as to how to get to the level they have got to or how even to a better height than what they have achieved. It is someone who will lead by example, who has led and has done the best in whatever they have been leading and managing.*

*Like in education in a school, someone who got the best results, and how they have acted as principal and provided guidance to the teachers they have been serving and made the best of it, to me that is a mentor.*

**Why do you believe the department initiated this mentoring programme?**

*I believe the Department of Education looked at the township schools, and the failure rate, to me they might have felt that those schools that haven't been achieving the best results could be given someone with expertise, who has led, who has gone through the same route they are going through and made the best. To me someone that have achieved very good results, someone to mentor that school principal that has not produced good results. That was their motivation to try and boost the principals to get better results.*

**What is resilience, and how is it related to being a school principal or what is resilient school principal?**

*To me, resilience is to take the knocks and have the strengths to deal with all the challenges and problems in the school and move on despite everything, and not allow anything to put you down. You do that continuously and you don't fall back.*

*To me, resilience is like sustainability, to sustain a good school, and take it forward, rather than backward, that's what resilience means to me.*

*Researcher probing.....*

**Where does your view of resilience come from? (4.22)**

*My view is based on two things. I am a firm believer and my experiences in education have taught me that you need to work very hard and you must never stop doing that. Because the moment you stop, especially as a principal, everything falls away, as a principal you must stand firm and move forward and you can only do that when you ask help from God to give you the strength to do that.*

**Principal, how do you view mentoring as a professional development strategy? (6:12).**

*You know what Sir I think we learn from others all the time. And we never stop learning. And I think it was a very good programme, especially for the schools in the townships. You know where things happen. Where do things happen? Especially from 1994 when school principals were just appointed, especially because of political connections and affiliation. And some people were made principal that was not supposed to be appointed this principal because they were affiliated with this group and some to that group. And I think that's why we lost it. Because you were getting people that were appointed principals that were on post level one and did not even reach post level 3. That means you take a teacher from amongst other teachers in the stockroom, and you make that one teacher the principal without any training, without anything. It was then that things started to collapse. Because most schools could not get the results because the main at the top don't know what to do. I am sorry to say it. Because he was just chosen from amongst teachers within the staff room.*

*It was like this in the beginning when we were teachers we knew that when the department would appoint a person as a principal, is gonna appoint a person that has experience in the job. A man you could see that was accredited for the job, Who has a trail of good results, Who has a good sense in the class, Who has a trail of good behaviour, who has a trail of*



*bringing hard workers to the school, not just functioning because of affiliation, so when they took people from 1994. When this happens, it created a mess. Schools began to collapse. Children move from the Township schools to the City Schools because the school principals in the townships could not perform. They couldn't handle the teachers, because the one moment you were here with us, in the next moment you are the principal. You're not gonna tell us what to do, It just became a mess. Teachers and pupils have no respect. And the department had to do something, Hence, they brought this mentoring program. And I think it was a way to mean the cracks left by the system that was implemented in 1994. It was made difficult because you couldn't just take these people and say you are not the principal anymore. Now they are failing and therefore have readily been appointed school principals, There was no way they could remove them as it would create another Labor Relations matter.*

*So, To take people now with expertise to help them, I think it was a very good move. But now it depends on whom the candidate is that's gonna be submitted to be appointed as a mentor. Because some of them did not even want the school principal. But for me, it was a very good program. On the condition that the man at the top was going to accept the assistance and help from these mentors. But some of these school principals looked at these mentors as people that's gonna intimidate them and undermine them. And some of them look at the mentor as did these men that are gonna come here. It's gonna tell us what to do. But for the people who received it with an open and good heart, it was very supportive and a good program. Because it was there to assist them.*

**What is your view regarding the issue that school principals need Continuous professional development?**

*Yes, they do.*

**Why do you say so?**

*For me, The thing is, the school doesn't only stop with having good results. It doesn't stop word having experience in teaching. For me, certain skills and certain things need to be developed in people who are looked at as school principals. They need a certain form of training, like human relations. They need to be guided because someone can have very good results, but they cannot relate well with people whom they lead and manage, to know, and they need to be trained. How to deal with people who are difficult and are given challenges? Because in the field of education, there are so many problems. You get*

*problematic kids. You get problematic parents, and you get problematic teachers. Because you get in some schools the school principal is very powerful, but he has no backing. The teachers just move away from him. It's just like that. Now he doesn't have the skill to bring them back. So, we need them to be trained in especially human relations. So that he knows how to build a group and how to lead the group, and how to make everybody belong to the group. Because you cannot have others outside of the circle and the principal in the middle. All of them should be part of the group in all of them should be working together otherwise it won't work.*

*You know, Sir, human behaviour changes, things change all the time. Nothing stays the same and you need to trail along with the developments and whatever is happening. I think they always need to be given some training with following the changes that are taking place all around them. Because if you were a principal before the new syllabus and curriculum, you will never be able to guide the teachers as to what is currently supposed to be happening.*

*We belong to the old school when this new method of teaching had been introduced. When this new method of teaching.....new things were introduced like this thing of progression, we need to know these things, you need to be on board. Otherwise, how do you guide people when they don't know what they are doing in class?*

*As a principal when you look through your windows you should know what is happening there, you should have an idea. I remember another colleague of mine went to a class and this teacher was sitting down, she was busy with whatever she was doing, and you can't teach sitting down, the things that needed to be done meant you have to interact with the kids, you need to be able to know what was going on.*

*That is why you need to be developed as a school principal all the time so that you can know what was going on because you can't lead without knowing.*

**When the mentoring program was initiated, were the school principals ever consulted on this mentoring program?**

*That was another problem that prevailed at the time because the department just sends mentors, without bringing the mentors and the principals together, so that these two can discuss what is the way forward. Then you just find out someone is coming sitting next to you in the office, and you two should discuss the way forward. What is it that I want you to*

*help me with? That would be the question from the mentor. And then you will have to tell him. Then there was resistance from the teachers, we don't want this man here, we are not going to listen to him. It became a mess.*

*The way it was introduced was not desirable you know.. as a result, it got rejected because I believe the department should first have brought the principals and the mentors together so that they could find some common ground, and no one will feel that the other one came to take his position or whatever. It should have been done so that it could have been plain sailing. Teachers were also supposed to have been told and informed what the mentor is here for. Now that has been left to the principal that must tell them..... There is a mentor here, Mr so and so..... why is he here, The department said .... Did we want him here.... And now it become a problem.*

### **Did the mentoring programme help you to grow in resilience?**

*No..... I believe resilience was in me. The mentoring programme did not bring on resilience for me.*

*You know Sir I know it is a good programme, but you know what it did nothing for me... nothing, unfortunately. But when I look at this man coming to our school I could see that he was a very hardworking man and the way he spoke and the things he wanted us to do, he came from a good space. But unfortunately, everything that he brought with him, he had no way of, And I don't know how to say it, but everything he came with, there was no action, following this, it was all written on paper, but no action. And we discussed this was what we were going to do, and it's a good programme I told him this is what we are supposed to be doing, and this is what is not happening. How are we going to make sure that it is happening? Because now getting good results needs good teachers. This school have been like this because of many problems. The programme looks good. This is what I know should be happening in a school. Now what are we going to do to make sure this happens; this is all theory. Let's get to the practicality of this. If you can make these things happen, really the school will get good results. How are we going to do it? We don't have a math teacher, we don't have a physics teacher, we don't have an accounting teacher, we don't have a geography teacher and we don't have an IsiXhosa teacher, all of them there are no teachers. We ask parents for money. We get students from UPE to come and help these kids. The department is telling us they cannot get us these teachers because the number of teachers you have in school is more than the number that you are supposed to have, this*

*ratio of 1:35 you know. Now you come here and say this is what is supposed to happen, and I agree. Teachers must be in class on time. You should monitor this and that. Now let's start with the teachers. Where are we going to get them?*

**If you are tasked with constituting a mentoring programme by the Department of Education. What would you as a principal include in such a mentoring program?**

*I would first see that all schools have been equipped with the necessary human resources because a mentoring programme cannot work in the absence of properly trained teachers at a school.*

*I would also focus on the mentoring programme on how to empower teachers and other stakeholders of the school. I would make sure the skills needed at a school are addressed in the mentoring programme. Ongoing professional development would also be important for me.*

*I would also see that the different stakeholders of the school are acknowledged and part of the mentoring programme.*

**What part of the mentoring programme did you enjoy the most?**

*Initially, I enjoyed the idea that someone is coming to help me at school. But it became clear that this person was limited in the help that I expressed in the beginning. Because I believed that the mentor had discussed all the issues and challenges involving the school with the Department of Education. I think that before a mentor is sent to a school the principal of the school should be engaged, to understand why the school does not deliver results, and what are the challenges of the school. So that when the mentor comes he already is aware of what the problems of the school are and comes up with solutions.*

*Now the department sends people that do not know anything about the school, and they have to start from scratch, you have to tell them what happens at the school, and why is the school failing. When discussing the issues with the mentor he was surprised and he didn't have a clue as to what can be done. So the department needs to engage the principals so that they know exactly what the needs of the school are. They should also know that there are rebellious teachers at the school that makes running the school difficult for the principal and who don't want to follow the rule and the guidelines of the department. They need to come up with a programme to train teachers in what professionalism is so that people that act unprofessionally know that they will be dealt with.*

*All mentors will first be informed of the challenges at each school. And discussed with the mentor how will the problems and the challenges of the school be solved. Then the department needs to make sure that the school have the proper teachers.*

**Did you have any expectations before the mentors came to the school and were these expectations met by the mentor?**

*My expectations were .....joh here comes this man who is going to solve my problems, I don't have the teachers, and there are teachers at this school who don't cooperate and do as they are told. Because I'm a new principal and the previous principal is gone, they can not do what they are supposed to be doing. So here comes a man who is going to help me with these problems, and It's funny because I've been in management for years as I was a deputy principal for many years, and its funny how people sometimes because you are a principal now start to act funny towards you, but that's ok cause this mentor is going to help you with all of this problems and issues. Because the teachers here are also so demoralised because of the many subjects that are not being taught at the school. So I had my expectations here he comes...then we are going to do this together... That's why I say I was happy when the mentor came, and I thought it was a good thing the department is doing. But that day ..... because the mentor knew very little about what to do because I thought that he would come to the school full knowing that the school lacks many resources and teachers and have lots of challenges, he just said to me, okay madame..... and the department of education was fully aware of the school's problems, so I thought this man the department send was full of expertise.*

*Another issue I pick up was that the Department of Education picks any retired principal who they think was a good principal and makes him a mentor. And now tell me this man has been a principal in a primary school, and now they have him to mentor a principal of a high school. To me, a principal of a primary school should mentor a principal of a primary school because their problems would be at the same level you know and high school to high school, that's what I think should have happened. I think it's best if the Department of Education appoints mentors from the same geographical environment as the schools they are going to serve simply because that person will know the problems associated with the township school environment. Mentors from other schools and different areas might be very good but they will never understand the dynamics of the township school environment.*

*They need to understand children are staying on their own in shacks, and when you say you need a parent to come here the parent never comes... a principal coming from the same township environment will know how to deal with a situation like that. Because they will be able to relate. The mentor we got was a principal from a primary school, but he was a good principal from what I have heard. But primary school problems are very different from high school problems.*

*The kids are different, and it's so surprising that even the teachers are different. Primary school teachers are more loyal....I don't want to use that word..... they are more receptive to people in authority... they respect authority, and I'm not saying high school teachers are not.....but they are just different in how they receive authority and their resistance..... It's not the same as primary school teachers.*

*When you talk to high school teachers there the challenges are too big.... High school teachers are a challenge when it comes to accepting authority.... Especially when it comes to groupings because teachers form their groups with each other. A principal from a primary school environment will not be so effective when it comes to a high school environment*

**Is there any part of the mentoring programme that you did enjoy?**

*Yes sir there was something very helpful to me. The mentor was a very good administrator, and he taught me very good skills related to administration. Especially, how to handle a good filing system, how to remember due dates, how to make sure things don't overwhelm you, like absent teachers and how to keep their records, he was an overall good administrator, I enjoyed that part of him, as a result even if other aspects did not work out there any due date that I was missing because of the mentor, it was our morning routine to start our day off by checking our daily calendar.*

*Also like when you get circulars from the department you give them to the secretary to file so that she can also learn to do her job properly. You give the secretary all the reminders so that she can remind you. So, I enjoyed that part.*