

**THE DISTRIBUTED LEADERSHIP ROLE OF THE VICE-PRINCIPAL IN
SUPPORTING THE EVOLVING ROLE OF THE PRINCIPAL IN GAUTENG
SCHOOLS**

by

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DECLARATION

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THE DISTRIBUTED LEADERSHIP ROLE OF THE VICE-PRINCIPAL IN
SUPPORTING THE EVOLVING ROLE OF THE PRINCIPAL IN GAUTENG
SCHOOLS

I declare that the above dissertation 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 submitted the dissertation to originality checking software and that it falls within the accepted requirements for originality.

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

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ABSTRACT

The 21st century has brought about rapid changes in many fields, including education. The educational landscape is often complex and closely connected to societal demands, experiences, and influences. Global trends and educational reform driven by external and internal forces result in change for schools. Schools mirror society, and consequently, they must remain relevant in their offering of educational programmes and operational requirements. As schools shift and transform to meet the modern-day demands of the school community, the principal's role must evolve to accommodate the additional focus areas and demands of the job. To meet the demand of a 21st-Century school, the job description and school principal's expectations have altered over time. The principal's role has expanded and become multifaceted; therefore, principals have started to rely more heavily on their vice-principals to assist them with the leadership and running of the school. This research investigates the vice-principal's distributed leadership role in supporting the principal's evolving role in Gauteng schools. A qualitative research design embedded in the constructivist paradigm was chosen as a research method. Using semi-structured and in-depth interviews, the researcher tried to capture the essence of the job description and role of the principal and vice-principal while seeking to understand the principal's evolving role. The researcher used purposeful sampling to select participants with the most significant insight and experience in these two specific management roles. Trustworthiness was ensured in data collection and interpretation. The researcher transcribed the collected data, which was later analysed. Once examined, the data was interpreted and arranged under the research objectives. The data revealed that the principal's role is evolving, and they are leaning more heavily on vice-principals for support. Typical external and internal forces driving change within schools that have impacted the principal's evolving role were identified. Although the researcher discovered varied job descriptions for both leadership roles, a common focus area identified by the vice-principals interviewed was to support the principal's evolving role through a distributed leadership approach. The findings show that the principal and vice-principal's roles have been impacted by external and internal forces bringing change to schools. By following a distributed leadership framework, many schools have adapted to the new demands being placed on school management. While the

principal remains focused on the broader aspects of the school, the vice-principals have become more operational within their schools. Accountability levels and decision-making capacity have increased for vice-principals, increasing their responsibilities. It was further established that the two roles are closely interconnected and that strong levels of trust must be in place for the distributed leadership model to work. While principals remain involved with the instructional leadership and general governance of their schools, they have become more reliant on the distributed leadership framework to strengthen and deepen the skill set of their team so that there can be a shared sense of responsibility within school leadership.

KEY TERMS:

Principal, vice-principal, societal demands, global trends, external and internal forces, evolving role of the principal, varied job descriptions, distributed leadership, broader aspects of school, increased responsibilities for the vice-principal, interconnected roles, shared sense of responsibility

DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to:

- My husband, Jacques van Niekerk, whose faith in me, support and encouragement were instrumental in my ability to complete this study.
- To my parents, Brian and Yvonne Bucher, who have always believed in me.
- To my friend and colleague, Sandra Pyle, who motivated and inspired me.
- To my friend and colleague, Monique Rizzari, who never let me give up on my dream.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BLM: Black Lives Matter

DoBE: Department of Basic Education

ISASA: Independent Schools Association of South Africa

PSSP: Policy on the South African Standard for Principalship

RSA: Republic of South Africa

SMT: School Management Team

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ETHICAL CERTIFICATE



UNISA COLLEGE OF EDUCATION ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE

Date: 2020/10/14

Ref: **2020/10/14/8470995/02/AM**

Dear Mrs BK Van Niekerk

Name: Mrs BK Van Niekerk

Student No.:8470995

Decision: Ethics Approval from
2020/10/14 to 2023/10/14

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Title of research:

The distributed leadership role of the vice-principal in supporting the evolving role of the principal in Gauteng schools

Qualification: MEd 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 2020/10/14 to 2023/10/14.

The low risk application was reviewed by the Ethics Review Committee on 2020/10/14 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.



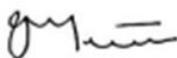
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3. Any adverse circumstance arising in the undertaking of the research project that is relevant to the ethicality of the study should be communicated in writing to the UNISA College of Education Ethics Review Committee.
4. The researcher(s) will conduct 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 **2023/10/14**. Submission of a completed research ethics progress report will constitute an application for renewal of Ethics Research Committee approval.

Note:

*The reference number **2020/10/14/8470995/02/AM** should be clearly indicated on all forms of communication with the intended research participants, as well as with the Committee.*

Kind regards,



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The distributed leadership role of the vice-principal in supporting the evolving role of the principal in Gauteng schools

CHAPTER 1

ORIENTATION TO THE STUDY

“Shared leadership fosters a multitude of interactions and relationships that build capacity for change” (Hipp & Huffman).

1.1 INTRODUCTION

In recent years, I have had the privilege of experiencing both the vice-principal and principal's roles. My experience highlighted the importance of the interdependency of these roles, which I found both exciting and critical to the school's success. During my years as vice-principal, I often found my job description challenging to define because there were so many facets to it. The vice-principal's role is a complex web of responsibilities, which has been overlooked through decades of research (Sun, 2011). The shift from vice-principal to principal provided me with a better understanding of the two roles and allowed me to appreciate the importance of the compelling synergy between these two critical leadership positions. Rintoul and Bishop (2019) explained that both portfolios engage in complex, purposeful work that requires excellent interpersonal strengths, strategic thinking, an inclusive leadership disposition and values, organisational change capacities, and the ability to make evidence-based decisions. Both are expected to work in complementary ways to advance students' academic and social learning, yet despite the need for leadership synergies, principals often 'lead' while vice-principals are left to 'manage'.

My years as vice-principal led to the realisation that the principal's evolving role affected the demands and expectations of the vice-principal. While specific tasks, such as school discipline and learner affairs, remain firm within the vice-principal's job description, the bulk of this role has changed over the years, and the roles or job

descriptions could vary significantly from school to school. Barnett, Shoho, and Oleszewski (2012, p.92) address the issues of the assistant principal's job by saying, "*the role of assistant principal must evolve from the traditional perspective of disciplinarian and manager to a perspective in which enhancing the instructional programme of a school is at the forefront*". Earlier research found that many vice-principals spend much of their time functioning as managers fulfilling tasks assigned to them by the principal (Swain, 2016). As the principal's role evolves and increases, the vice-principal's role and expectation of duties change.

Kellerman (2015) asserts that school leadership has become a high-wire act that only the most skilled can perform successfully. "*The school principal's day is usually filled with diverse activities of administration and management—scheduling, reporting, handling relations with parents and the broader community, dealing with unexpected multiple learner and teacher crises, and extraordinary situations*" (Tucker & Coddling, 2002; Early, 2013; Oumer, 2014; Bottery, 2016). The new demands placed on the principal affected the vice-principal's role, affirming its need to become an interchangeable role and dependent on the principal's vision and demands. Hallinger (2005) and Hoy and Hoy (2009) proclaim that many school principals experience great difficulty balancing their diverse administrative duties with their curriculum leadership functions. They question whether one person can do all the tasks of a principal and suggest distributive leadership, which entails shared responsibility of duties and decision-making and the need to empower subordinates to exercise leadership as a solution.

To accommodate the principal's changing role and focus, many schools shifted towards shared control and decision-making with the school management team (SMT), resulting in many principals adopting a distributed leadership approach. The distributed leadership theory extends power and responsibilities beyond the principal as the singular school leader and shares the daily schoolwork with vice-principals, teachers, and other staff members (Spillane, 2006).

Today's vice-principal is more than only a school manager. As accountability increased, vice-principals have retained their traditional managerial job roles and gained the additional role of instructional leader. As instructional leaders, vice-

principals should guide teachers in curriculum and instructional design. Many studies on the role and responsibilities of vice-principals reveal that many of their responsibilities were previously centred around managerial duties (Frazier, 2002). Often, vice-principals were associated with restricted sets of five administrative, managerial, and custodial responsibilities. Kwan and Walker (2012) studied vice-principals' actual versus ideal job responsibilities. They found that vice-principals spent more time in staff management and instructional leadership than what they initially thought would be the case before taking the role, indicating a shared responsibility of school management, as was my experience as vice-principal. According to Barnett et al. (2012), assistant principals must have a deep understanding of the curriculum and instruction in their school, supporting the notion of the vice-principal's role expanding to accommodate the principal's job demands.

In my experience as a vice-principal, I was called to be heavily involved with instructional leadership. I felt a noticeable shift in responsibility and accountability regarding my role in school leadership and the support of the principal. As the demands of the principal increased, I experienced a shift in my job description and decision-making power.

As society evolved, the principal's expectations and job description expanded. The school leader's role is changing even more rapidly than the schools themselves (Fullan, 2001; Bossi, 2007; Ediger, 2014). I have noted that principals have experienced a major shift in their job descriptions and demands over the past few years. *"Most principals say that their responsibilities today have changed compared to five years ago and that the job has increased in complexity"* (MetLife, 2013, p.23).

In the past, the principal's role could have been limited to instructional leadership, staff and learner relationships, and school maintenance, but, over time, this role expanded into aspects such as media and marketing coverage, policymaking, financial governance, stakeholder relationship building with both internal and external bodies, and assessment and decision-making around the relevant implementation of local and global educational trends.

The modern-day principal's job transformed into something almost unrecognisable to the principals of the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s. Marishane and Botha (2011, p.6) state

in this regard: *“Principals are school managers, leaders, administrators, governors, and teachers and are accountable to the different constituencies their roles represent. This makes school leadership a unique form of leadership with a unique identity”*. Alvoid and Black (2014, p.21) say in this regard: *“The concept of the principal as a building manager has given way to a model where the principal is an aspirational leader, a team builder, a coach, and an agent of visionary change”*. Sharing decision-making powers and distributing specific responsibilities to attain a common goal and purpose for the school increased the demands and expectations of the vice-principal’s role and resulted in many schools adopting a distributed leadership model. *“Demands put on the school for improvement today are too many for a single leader to meet”* (Marishane & Botha, 2011, p.46).

Through various interactions with vice-principals in the Gauteng area, I realised that job titles and descriptions vary significantly. Vice-principal titles include portfolios or areas, such as curriculum innovation (the development and implementation of a new curriculum), student affairs and public relations (relationship building with learners, parents, and the outside community), extra murals and discipline (extra-curricular programmes and discipline issues), pastoral care (focusing on the learner as a whole and the case management of social, emotional, or academic issues), and administration and policies (paperwork of a school, policies, and daily running of structures and procedures).

As interest in distributed leadership as an approach for improving school outcomes grows, principals are increasingly encouraged to distribute leadership responsibilities to other leaders in their buildings. Harris (2011, p.9) noted in this regard, *“Even though the evidence base about distributed leadership is still emerging, distributed leadership has already been adopted as part of educational reforms in a number of countries including the UK, the USA, Australia, parts of Europe and New Zealand”*.

Apart from different job titles and job descriptions, many schools also have a unique structure for their middle management. Certain schools have a single vice-principal dealing with various duties and functions, and other schools opt to have two or three vice-principals allocated with a specific portfolio or school focus. Furthermore, the vice-principal’s task, role, job description, and even the title is often subject to change when

introducing a new school principal. *“Principals create leadership positions that allow capable and willing teachers to work in a more focused leadership capacity”* (Loeser, 2008, p.3).

It, therefore, is often the practice of a new principal to restructure the SMT to best suit their leadership style or school focus. Marishane and Botha (2011) state in this regard,

By virtue of the authority vested in the school management position, the principal has to take decisions regarding what people should do, what actions should be carried out, what and how resources should be deployed and the conditions under which these activities should be performed.

By empowering the staff and SMT, the principal creates time and space to allow for their emerging role and demands and enhances school functionality using a distributed leadership framework and creating a collaborative leadership style based on trust and accountability. *“The recognition of the capabilities of other members of the school to participate implies that the leader trusts his or he followers and will consequently be comfortable to share power, responsibility and accountability”* (Botha & Triegaardt, 2014, p.311). The vice-principal should adapt to the distributed leadership framework established by the principal and establish a healthy and supportive relationship with the principal. Botha and Triegaardt describe this process as follows, *“School transformation in today’s educational system is dependent, in part, by how well teachers work together with their principals and colleagues”* (2014, p.311).

1.2 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Global trends and educational reform dictated that transformation within the leadership fields of our schools should become critical in addressing the increasing demands of school management and how we meet both the needs of the 21st-century learner and find balance by maintaining the ethos and traditions of past generations. Discussions around what constitutes an effective 21st-century principal are often based on the principal’s shift in responsibility and leadership focus. Clifford, Behrstock-Sherratt and Fetters (2010, p.1) describe the 21st-century principal as follows:

The 21st-century principal has vastly expanded spheres of influence compared with his or her early 20th-century counterpart. Principals now share their authority and take different leadership approaches, depending on their school and district context. Principals' work is more diverse and demanding than ever before.

Advanced curriculum development within technology, increasing complexity of education regarding legal issues, increased parental demands, competition in the marketplace, and financial constraints are some of the altering aspects of school improvement facing the 21st-century principal. These change areas demand a new approach to leadership from the school principal. As key players at this level, school principals are at the receiving end of various effects generated by educational reform and must adapt to the changing world of their unique business (Botha, 2014).

However, given the broad range of factors constituting working conditions that are challenging to measure and the complex interplay of school contexts, no standard definition or framework of the principal's working conditions has been agreed on (Fuller, Hollingworth & Young., 2015). As the school leader taking us into the 21st-century, the principal should aim to create a shared vision. The school principal is encouraged to be the big thinker, the visionary in a fast-developing and ever-changing world.

As a vision builder, the school principal assumes a futuristic leadership which involves taking the initiative in developing a dream about the school and sharing that dream with teachers so that what was initially a personal dream is reshaped and elevated to the status of a shared organisational vision. (Marishane & Botha, 2011, p.48).

By adopting a distributed leadership approach and entrusting specific responsibilities to the vice-principal, the principal can focus on staying abreast of educational reform and international trends to find the best educational practice for their school and, specifically, their learners. The principal's effectiveness and the school's consequent efficiency as an organisation depend on the principal's leadership approach (Botha, 2014).

Critical areas of school leadership, such as instructional leadership, involve implementing a successful and relevant curriculum programme. These programmes ensure that learners receive the highest level of quality teaching every day to meet the demands of the world they will face when they leave school. Such programmes could now fall to the vice-principal's leadership portfolio through the distributed leadership approach. To assist the principal, assistant principals must have a deep understanding of the curriculum and instruction in their school (Barnett et al., 2012).

As additional demands on school principals increase, more expectations are placed on vice-principals. Irvine (2022) attests that the vice-principal's position requires a skilful blend of practice and theory to maximise the role's impact on students and staff successfully. Foremost among the necessary skills is interpersonal relationships, as most of the vice-principal's activities involve interactions with students, staff, parents, support staff, and community members. Duties and tasks traditionally performed by the school principal, such as instructional leadership, are now forming part of the vice-principal's job description. *"Given that a school principal cannot be a master of everything that enters the school gate and the classroom door or the best designer of whatever goes out the same way into the public market, attention is now shifting towards sharing the burden of leadership"* (Marishane & Botha, 2011, p.68).

While educational reform demands that the principal become the outside face of the school, the vice-principal is left to engage within school boundaries and, therefore, becomes the internal face of the school. According to Marishane and Botha (2011), principals have the greatest capacity to network with the broader community and ensure that schools keep abreast of current initiatives and anticipate trends. This role, however, takes up more of the principals' time, and they are often away from school. The school principal's diary is also filled with meetings regarding whole-school development, such as marketing, finance, and policy development. With the principal's focus being shifted, there has been a natural alteration of expectations upon the vice-principal's duties. The effective principal knows that he cannot cope on his own. Mendels (2012, p.3) summarises this as follows:

Effective principals know they cannot go it alone. They are not the lonely-at-the-top hero-principal who has become a fixture of popular culture. Instead, they

make good use of all the skills and knowledge on the faculty and, among others, encouraging the many capable adults who make up a school community to step into leadership roles and responsibilities.

According to Marishane and Botha (2011, p.48), the school principal is encouraged to be the big thinker, the visionary in a fast-developing and ever-changing world. These authors continue in this regard:

As a vision builder, the school principal assumes a futuristic leadership which involves taking the initiative in developing a dream about the school and sharing that dream with teachers so that what was initially a personal dream is reshaped and elevated to the status of a shared organisational vision.

According to Starr (2009), the principal's role now equates to a chief executive officer of a corporate organisation responsible for strategic planning, budgets, managing industrial relations, procuring resources, and facilitating marketing and public relations. Distributed leadership is the expansion of leadership roles and shared responsibilities, leading to a greater demand for the vice-principal to be more active in the daily school management process and decision-making and could be seen in the growing responsibilities and varied job descriptions.

Schools constantly evolve, and as they do, the demands of the school principal are increasing. The school principal's role must align with the demands of the day. Botha (2004) asserts that the principal's role in the new educational dispensation represents a balance between instructional leadership and management. Leadership involves supervising the curriculum, improving the school's instructional programme, working with staff to identify the school's vision and mission, and building a close relationship with the community. Many perspectives on principal leadership assume that the principal should lead a school, but new conceptions of principal leadership recognise the importance of teachers and other staff in leading a school. According to The Wallace Foundation (2006, p.2), the school principal's role is moving away from "*superheroes or virtuoso soloists*" but toward an "*orchestra conductor*" who shares leadership and distributes it across the building. Hauseman and Pollock (2015) confirm the growing complexity of principals' work and suggest such causes as the current focus on school reform, including the effect of high-stake assessments and their

concomitant effect on principals' autonomy and leadership practices, the growing need to respond to issues of diversity and inclusion, the effect of technology on communication, and the changing realities of workplace labour relations.

1.3 PRELIMINARY LITERATURE REVIEW

Over the past 20 to 30 years, continuous and significant transformational trends in educational institutions globally occurred, such as decentralisation, representing a shift toward increased self-management and self-governance in schools (Botha 2012, 2014). Educational reform redefined the goals for how schools should prepare the 21st-century learner and a new focus on how schools are run. The new school structure created opportunities for principals and vice-principals to form a new partnership regarding the school's responsibility and management.

While it is challenging to pinpoint a definite job description for the vice-principal's role, discussions with vice-principals highlighted that a common thread for vice-principals is supporting the principal by accepting more responsibility. "*Principals can no longer be expected to lead and manage their schools on their own*" (Botha & Triegaardt, 2014, p.309). The vice-principal's role, complete with duties, responsibilities, and a set structure, has been inconsistent for many years, indicating that this leadership position is evolving and that the vice-principal must learn to assume duties and roles where and when needed.

The school principal and vice-principal should aim to align their strengths to provide the best leadership for the school. Distributed leadership develops in a school climate of collaboration where teachers can choose meaningful leadership roles connected to teaching and learning (Botha & Triegaardt, 2014).

In today's effective school, the vice-principal functions in a multifaceted role that continues to expand and change. "*Many of the perspectives on principal leadership assume that the principal is responsible for leading a school, but new conceptions of principal leadership recognise the importance of teachers and other staff in leading a school*" (Clifford et al., 2012, p.3). In viewing the relationship between principal and vice-principal, this study explores how a shared vision and effective distributive leadership strategies are common threads in the vice-principal's job profile. It

highlights how a distributed approach to leadership supports the principal's evolving role. "*One of the many strategies that school leaders can use to ensure collaboration and subsequent improvement of schools is to distributed leadership among teams and individuals*" (Botha & Triegaardt, 2014, p.309).

Steyn (2002) highlights that new educational policies require educational managers who can work in democratic and participative ways to build relationships and ensure effective education delivery. Göksoy (2015) supports this by adding that the institution as an organisational framework in which educational agents coexist and interact demands a distributed leadership.

This relationship emphasises the vice-principal as a partner and educational leader with a direct mission and indicates that if principals embrace distributed leadership techniques, vice-principals can be more involved with decision-making, policy reform, and instructional management. Clearly defined job descriptions highlighting specific focus areas for both the principal and the vice-principal could eliminate any misconceptions about job function or focus by clearly defined expectations of each role, resulting in a more efficient and effective management team. Spillane (2005, p.146) states that "*leadership practice can be spread across two or more leaders who work separately yet interdependently*". For this type of leadership to be successful, the principal and the vice-principal must share a common goal and vision for the school to ensure success.

1.4 RATIONALE BEHIND THE STUDY

Leaders act in situations defined by others' actions. From a distributed perspective, leadership practice is constructed in these interactions (Spillane, 2005), indicating the need for developing an interchangeable role among vice-principals to support the school principal's evolving role. Therefore, this study explores the vice-principal's supporting role towards distributed leadership to accommodate the principal's evolving role.

I have been involved with school leadership for 14 years. I was appointed as Head of Department to the Senior Primary Phase of my school in 2008 and became vice-principal in 2011. In 2016, I was asked to assist in an acting-principal role as our school

experienced management change. In 2017, I was officially offered and appointed to the role of principal. Having experienced the two roles of both vice-principal and principal, I was interested in the dynamics between these two critical positions of management and the shared responsibility they carry. In my experience, the two roles are interdependent and critical to the school's success. Over the years, I experienced additional responsibilities, higher demands, and increased expectations in my job and role as vice-principal and now, principal.

As vice-principal, I was initially frustrated and confused because I was carrying added responsibilities and higher demands to what I had seen the previous vice-principals do during my earlier years of teaching. However, after much consideration and thought, I realised that the increase in demands on the vice-principal's role was linked to the principal's role that changed and evolved over the years. In my years as vice-principal, I found myself picking up duties and leadership roles that once fell to the principal.

Over the five years of being a vice-principal, my duties and job description evolved rapidly, and it became apparent that this was linked to the increasing demands of the principal's role. At the time, I discussed my experience with other vice-principals and realised that my experience was not isolated. Many vice-principals with whom I interacted found a similar pattern of a shift in their job descriptions, titles, and management structures to accommodate the principal's advancing role. Having now experienced the role of principal for the past six years, through my involvement, I can understand the increased demands of the principal and the need for an effective distributed leadership approach with vice-principals and staff to cope with the varied responsibilities of principalship.

This study aims to understand the principal's evolving role and highlight the importance of the vice-principal's role of support through a distributed leadership framework approach. The study acknowledges the critical role of the vice-principal in the SMT and the interchangeable role between vice-principal and principal.

1.5 THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

The literature section discussed above and my personal experiences set out in the previous paragraph now lead to the following problem statement, phrased as the primary research question for this study: How does the supporting role of the vice-principal towards distributed leadership accommodate the evolving role of the principal in Gauteng schools?

This primary research question can be divided into the following sub-questions:

- What are the job descriptions of the principal and vice-principal in independent primary schools in Gauteng?
- What does the evolving leadership role of the primary school principal in independent schools in Gauteng entail?
- Which external and internal driving forces have resulted in a change to the role and focus of the principal's job description in independent primary schools in Gauteng?
- How do these driving forces impact the distributed leadership role of the vice-principal?

1.6 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study highlights the importance of accepting distributed leadership within the ranks of vice-principals to accommodate the evolving role of the principal. It will explore how the evolving role of the principal has accelerated the rate of change in school leadership and how this change has affected the vice-principal's role. It will focus on the framework of distributed leadership and how this specific leadership style affects the vice-principal's role to support the principal in their emerging role.

This study will examine which external and internal forces have impacted the evolving role of the principal. It will investigate some of the critical changes and enhanced expectations within the job descriptions of the principal and vice-principal. It will examine if the vice-principal's job description variations are because of the principal's evolving role due to educational reform and a shift in their job description, resulting in the natural dissemination of the vice-principal's duties.

This research establishes the vice-principal's supporting role towards distributed leadership to accommodate the evolving role of the principal in Gauteng schools.

This primary aim can be divided into the following objectives:

- Describe the current job descriptions of the principal and vice-principal in independent primary schools in Gauteng (Chapter 2).
- Critically analyse the evolving leadership role of primary school principals in independent schools in Gauteng (Chapter 2).
- Distinguish which external and internal driving forces have changed the role and focus of the principal and vice-principal's job descriptions in independent primary schools in Gauteng (to be addressed as part of the empirical study).
- Analyse how these external and internal driving forces impacted the vice-principal's distributed leadership role (to be addressed as a main outcome of the study).

This study aims to understand the connection between the principal's focus area and its effect on the vice-principal's role. It will seek to understand the role of distributed leadership in supporting the principal's evolving role. If there is a better understanding of the interaction between the principal's focus and the vice-principal's job function, an enhanced synergy will strengthen the unified front for both the school and the SMT.

1.7 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

1.7.1 The research design

A research design is a framework or blueprint for conducting research. Regoniel (2017) explains that the plan details the procedure and instruments for data collection, how the variables associated with the phenomenon should be measured, and the statistical analysis to be applied to the data obtained. The researcher must look again at existing information to explain a subject or topic of interest, and there is a need to know more about a given phenomenon in all its dimensions. The researcher must understand the concept of research to understand which research methods and techniques to adopt, how to use them and where they will fit in the overall research process (Jongbo, 2014).

The researcher used a case study design as the research framework because the goal of a case study is to conduct an in-depth analysis of an issue within its context to understand the issue from the participants' perspective (Merriam, 2009; Simons, 2009; Yin, 2014). Yin (2014, p. 16) describes a case study as "an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon (the "case") in-depth and within its real-world context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context may not be clearly evident."

The case study explores the vice-principal's supporting role towards distributed leadership to accommodate the evolving role of the principal. The data examined the vice-principal and principal's roles and the relationship between these two critical management roles. The case study design allowed many sources and data to be collected and used. The methods used in case studies to facilitate achieving the aim of co-constructing data most often include observations, interviews, focus groups, and document and artefact analysis (Merriam, 2009; Simons, 2009; Stewart, 2014; Yin, 2014).

1.7.2 Research paradigm and research approach

Because most of the study was based on case studies where participants' views and experiences were explored, the researcher focused on the interpretivist/constructivist paradigm. The constructivist paradigm grew out of the philosophy of Edmund Husserl's phenomenology and Wilhelm Dilthey's and other German philosophers' studies of interpretive understanding called hermeneutics (Eichelberger, 1989). According to Creswell (2014), constructivism deals with developing subjective meanings and understandings of one's personal experiences concerning specific topics based on their social and historical background. Constructivism draws from hermeneutics, which aims at a holistic understanding (Tracy, 2013). Although hermeneutics allows for a certain amount of subjectivity, communication with one another aims to seek the truth, and the truth lies in lived experiences. The researcher chose a hermeneutics paradigm because hermeneutics is the science of understanding through communication. Understanding occurs through interactions with people and their lived experiences. Hermeneutics believe that the reason we communicate and attempt to understand is in search of the truth (Higgs & Smith,

2006). Hermeneutics is the study of interpretive understanding or meaning of lived experiences and the science of understanding through communication.

Case studies adopt an interpretive approach to data and consider aspects within a set context. Case studies consider the subjective meanings that people bring to their situation. Theoretically, case study research could be orientated from a realist or positivist perspective. The researcher holds the view that there is a single reality, independent of the individual and can be apprehended, studied, and measured through a relativist or interpretivist perspective. A relativist or interpretivist perspective adopts the premises that multiple realities and meanings exist, which depend on and are co-created by the researcher (Lincoln, Lynham & Guba, 2011; Yin, 2014).

Through interviews with four previous vice-principals who then became principals within the last five years and four current vice-principals, the researcher gathered information about the participants' lived experiences and drew similarities or common themes from their knowledge. A qualitative research approach was used to complete this study, as it relates to people in their set environments and personal accounts of varied experiences. "*Qualitative research describes and analyses people's individual and collective social actions, beliefs, thoughts, and perceptions*" (McMillian & Schumacher, 2006, p.315). By interacting with vice-principals and principals who experienced this specific leadership role and the significant link in the relationship between vice-principals and principals, the researcher could draw on their knowledge and experiences.

Each interviewed principal has experienced both the role of vice-principal and principal and could expand on their lived experiences, thoughts, and perceptions of each role. The vice-principals interviewed could provide their recent experiences of the vice-principal's role and expand on their views of the critical relationship and evolving role between principals and vice-principals. The qualitative approach gains insight into situations and perspectives through in-depth discussions, and participants can openly provide different views and thoughts on the theme being studied. The constructivist paradigm uses interactive data collected through personal interactions.

Therefore, the data collection will have elements of subjectivity and will be open to interpretation. Qualitative researchers are interested in understanding how people

interpret their experiences, construct their words, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Qualitative research can be interpreted as “an approach for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem” (Creswell, 2014, p.32). Gathering data through personal experiences allowed the researcher to understand better the vice-principal’s supportive role and the principal’s evolving role. Common themes were drawn and interpreted from the data collected. Berg and Howard (2012) characterise qualitative research as meanings, a concept, a definition, metaphors, symbols, and a description of things.

In this study, the researcher could interact with the vice-principals and principals in their school settings, allowing for authentic and thoughtful interaction. The reliance on the collection of non-numerical primary data, such as words and pictures by the researcher who serves as an instrument, makes qualitative research well-suited for providing factual and descriptive information (Johnson & Christensen, 2012). Through shared experiences and data collection, the qualitative design allows for human behaviour and thought to be analysed in a social context.

Qualitative methods, such as interviews, observations, and document reviews, are predominant in the constructivist paradigm. Hence, the qualitative research approach provides abundant data about real-life people and situations (De Vaus, 2014, p.6; Leedy & Ormrod, 2014).

1.7.3 Population and sampling

The population group included school principals and vice-principals in independent primary schools in the Gauteng area. With over 40 independent primary schools in Gauteng, the population was too large, and sampling had to be used to obtain a manageable sample. For this study, purposeful sampling was used as the sampling method. Patton (2015, p.264) provides the following description of purposeful sampling:

The logic and power of purposeful sampling lie in selecting information-rich cases for in-depth study. Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a

great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the inquiry. Studying information-rich cases yields insights and in-depth understanding.

Purposeful sampling was chosen as it *“is based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned”* (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). By interviewing both principals and vice-principals, this study established the connection between these two management fields and the link between the principal’s evolving role and the vice-principal’s job description or expectations.

The sample included four current vice-principals and four principals to understand the evolving aspects and the relationship between the two roles ($n = 8$). The four principals selected also had experience in the vice-principal role before accepting headship. This element allowed for a direct comparison between the two roles as they experienced it in their various schools.

Site selection was based in the independent primary school sector within the Gauteng Province, and the population included principals and vice-principals within these schools. A sample size of four principals and four vice-principals from the independent primary school sector was selected based on availability and access to this specific group of people within a set geographical range and the unique experience needed. Since this study's focus was on a specific group of informants and the purpose is based on a hermeneutic study of lived experiences, a small sampling group was used.

The participants selected had specific knowledge and experiences related to the research questions due to their management functions and roles. The sample of selected vice-principals worked under at least two school principals and could comment on the principal’s evolving role and job descriptions and expectations. The sample of four principals who had also experienced the role of vice-principal before accepting headship could share their insights on the internal and external forces driving change in the school’s management roles. They could also provide a comparative view of their role as vice-principal versus principal and speak to the changes and demands of these two management areas.

1.7.4 Research instruments

Qualitative research uses data instruments, such as observations, open-ended questions, interviews, or field notes, to collect data from participants in their natural settings. This study used in-depth interviews and document retrieval (job descriptions and management structures) as research data-collection instruments.

The researcher's data-collection techniques included a multimedia data-collection strategy to enhance trustworthiness. Data collection consisted of the following.

- **In-depth interviews** were conducted with each participant in their natural setting. In-depth interviews are a qualitative data-collection method that involves direct, one-on-one engagement with individual participants. The in-depth interview, while focused, was conversational and allowed the researcher and respondents' latitude to explore an issue within the framework of guided conversation. The interviews aimed to elicit relevant information around the topic of study and gain insight from the participants' experiences, views, and opinions—the open-ended structure of the in-depth interview allowed for a broad scope of conversation and information retrieval.
- **Documentation gathering** included biographical questionnaires, each participant's job description (principal and vice-principal) and the management structures of the schools. In some instances, advertisements for the jobs of vice-principal and principal were also included.

The interviews included both the principals and the vice-principals. There were eight interviews in total, four of which were multifaceted, as they could draw on the principals' experience as a principal and vice-principal. All interviews were one-on-one interviews to safeguard privacy and allow for open conversation. Before the one-on-one interviews, all participants (four principals and four vice-principals) were asked to complete an open-ended questionnaire designed to collect biographical information. Each participant was asked to outline their job description and school's focus. Each participant was asked to submit a diagram of their management structure. The data collected through these documents were then analysed and compared. Before the interviews, a statement of the purpose and intent of the study was communicated to allow the participants time to ask questions regarding the study's purpose.

Through collaborative methods, such as interviews and questionnaires, participants could share their unique stories and experiences. Through these interactions, the researcher gathered data to allow for a better understanding of:

- the job description of vice-principals and principals,
- external and internal factors affecting changes in the two roles, and
- the supportive role of the vice-principal to the principal through distributed leadership to accommodate the evolving role of the principal.

1.7.5 Analysis, interpretation, and presentation of data

The five phases of qualitative design are planning, beginning data collection, primary data collection, closing data collection, and formal data analyses and diagrams. Interview transcripts were mechanically recorded on a sound device (iPad) and analysed after the interviews. Immediately following each interview, the researcher recorded a detailed draft of the interview process and findings in writing by repeatedly listening to the sound device and transcribing the notes.

The researcher started coding the material into predetermined categories established by the research problem during the transcribing. Gibbs (2007) describes coding as how you define the data you are analysing. It involves identifying and recording one or more passages of text or other data items, such as the parts of pictures that, in some sense, exemplify the same theoretical or descriptive idea. The researcher divided the data into specific topics and themes using tabulation and colour coding.

Identifying patterns and themes through triangulation, which includes artefact collection, field observations and interviews, followed. Methodological triangulation involves using more than one option to gather data, such as interviews, questionnaires, and documents. The researcher used the various forms of data to add to the study's trustworthiness and be open-minded to devolving themes.

The thematic analysis involves searching across a data set, be that several interviews or focus groups, or a range of texts, to find repeated patterns of meanings (Braun & Clark, 2006, p.86). This study used thematic analysis to process and analyse qualitative data using inductive analysis.

The inductive approach, also known as inductive reasoning, starts with observations. The inductive approach is relevant when conducting an exploratory study or when no theoretical concepts are immediately available to help you grasp the phenomenon being studied (Linneberg & Korsgaard, 2019). Inductive research “*involves the search for pattern from observation and the development of explanations – theories – for those patterns through series of hypotheses*” (Bernard, 2011, p.4).

The data collected were collated and analysed. Interviews were recorded and transcribed, and the field diary and logbook were updated regularly. Throughout this process, the researcher sought patterns and themes to report and make meaning. The inductive approach begins with observations and data collection, then seeks to find patterns in the data and observations, followed by developing theories.

The thematic analyses included the following.

- A description and a brief history of the participants were given.
- Transcripts and interview notes were used to provide an overview of the process.
- An account emphasising the participants’ views and experiences of their reality was recorded.
- A narrative passage was used to summarise and convey the theories and findings of the analysis.

The researcher organised the data according to themes using data coding. According to McMillan and Schumacher (2014), the following steps identify and refine data codes.

- Obtain a sense of the whole by reading all the data and making notes as you read.
- Generate initial codes from the data by dividing the segments into groups.
- Compare codes for duplication and overlapping descriptions. Make a list of the major codes, important codes, and minor codes.
- Provide descriptive code names that correspond with the data and ensure that nothing was overlooked.
- Refine the coding system.

After the coding, the researcher formed categories. Categories represent major ideas used to describe the meaning of coded data, namely the labelling and systemising of data. The researcher organised the information into sections with meaning by using a coding method. Tables, colours, and different fonts were used to separate information. According to Crang (2005:224–225), Braun and Clarke (2013:234), and Willig (2013:61), data were examined through a process of inductive analysis to identify connections and contradictions. This was practised together with the researcher's bracketing process as an insider researcher (Nieuwenhuis, 2016: 78,105). Bracketing refers to isolating prejudices and previous knowledge regarding the research problem and intuiting, implying the complete engagement with the participants' experiences without preconceived ideas to gain an understanding (Brink, Van der Walt, & van Rensburg, 2013:120). Although the researcher was aware of her existing knowledge, she intentionally focused on what the participants brought in the form of data. Differences were analysed by combining visual data (tables and diagrams) and narratives to find the underlying meanings.

A qualitative data analysis method was used to analyse this study's data. Qualitative data analysis attempts to make sense of the raw data to understand participants' perceptions, feelings, and attitudes (McMillian & Schumacher, 2010). This process involved looking at themes, recurring words or quotes, and patterns in speeches or written text. Much time was spent arranging and rearranging data into codes and categories in this study. Furthermore, data were arranged into categories; therefore, providing an understanding of the themes, commonalities, differences, and trends among the participants. This process also allowed for irrelevant data to be discarded. Once all analysis processes were completed, the results were presented as findings.

1.7.6 Triangulation of data

In qualitative research, triangulation adds depth to the collected data. This rich, in-depth data support a direct link between triangulation and data saturation (Fusch & Ness, 2015). The researcher triangulated the data by conducting in-depth interviews with the participants and requested certain documents to confirm the information gained from the interviews. Therefore, verbal and written evidence was gathered to assist the researcher in gathering data and enriching the study. According to Jick

(2016), triangulation has advantages for gathering data for a study. In quantitative studies, using data triangulation adds value to validate the research results. Data triangulations help make the results of other research studies acceptable, thereby approving both studies.

Casey and Murphy (2009) propose that the following elements are considered the four main justifications for triangulation.

- Enriching has to do with using equally formal and informal output instruments as value-adding or enrichment by clarifying a particular matter.
- Refuting confirms that triangulation is critical, where one set of substitute approaches is utilised to nullify or oppose the expectations made by alternative selections.
- Confirming means that triangulation is crucial because a particular set of choices authenticates the theory of the additional set of potentials.
- Explaining is where triangulation contributes to explaining or clarifying established options on unforeseen consequences brought by an alternative set of choices.

Post-interview transcripts and personal notes were shown to the participants to ensure the accuracy of the information. The research's trustworthiness can be increased if the interviews are transcribed and analysed immediately. An attempt was made to capture the richness of themes emerging rather than reducing the responses to qualitative categories (de Vos, 2003)

A field diary and logbook were used to record the data. The diary included information on interactions and experiences with the participants, correspondence and relevant findings. Difficulties or limitations experienced during the process were also recorded in the diary.

1.7.7 Trustworthiness of the research

According to Moretti et al. (2011), the advantage of qualitative research is the richness of the collected data, and such data must be interpreted valid and reliably. One disadvantage of qualitative research is the element of subjectivity. One way to

safeguard against subjectivity is to ensure the validity and reliability of the research, and the researcher must constantly guard against their subjectivity affecting data interpretation.

From the perspective of establishing credibility, researchers must ensure that those participating in the research are identified and described accurately (Polit & Beck, 2012). The representation of the vice-principals and the principals for data collection and various data-collection techniques enhanced the study's credibility. By using mechanically recorded and written data, the researcher secured the credibility of her information. The relationship between the principal and vice-principal and its effect on the vice-principal's job description would be transferred into any school scenario. This study could be transferred to government schools or secondary schools.

To create rigour and trustworthiness within the study, the researcher validated her findings by including the triangulation method to identify valid links and patterns from her research. According to Bryman and Bell (2011), "*Triangulation means that the researcher uses data from a variety of sources applying a variety of methods. Doing so, the researcher gains knowledge that is more reliable due to the variety of approaches*". This process is known as triangulation.

The researcher used participant checking regarding interview transcripts. Participants could read their interview transcripts to ensure accuracy. The research findings were shared with the schools that participated in this research study. In qualitative studies, we refer to the trustworthiness of the research, and it consists of four components.

1.7.7.1 Creditability

According to Bertram and Christiansen (2014), credibility is ensured when the participants and end-users in the research agree that the data collected are believable. The study was credible because participants directly involved with the vice-principal and principal's roles were used to gather hands-on information regarding the two roles. The credibility of the data was further verified by conducting member checks (Marshall & Rossman, 2015), where each participant was allowed to provide feedback on the preliminary findings.

1.7.7.2 Transferability

Transferability refers to how the findings can be applied in other contexts or with other respondents (Babbie & Mouton, 2011). The study's findings were presented so that they could be applied to solve other related studies or contexts. In this study, the researcher made it likely that other primary schools might be experiencing the same challenges regarding the principal's evolving role and the shift to distribute leadership to accommodate the change.

1.7.7.3 Dependability

Dependability could be established if an inquiry provides its audience with evidence that its findings would be similar if they were to be repeated with the same or similar respondents in the same context (Babbie & Mouton, 2011). If this study were to be repeated using purposive sampling, it would yield similar results because the same research methods and techniques would be accurate and reliable to establish the vice-principal's distributed leadership role in supporting the principal's evolving role.

1.7.7.4 Confirmability

According to Moon and Blackman (2014), confirmability implies that the researcher must prove that the results are linked to the conclusion so that they can be followed and replicated. Anney (2015), citing Baxter and Eyles (1997), states that confirmability refers to how the results of an investigation could be confirmed or validated by other researchers. Tobin and Begley (2004) state that confirmability is concerned with stating that data and the interpretations of the findings are not illusions of the inquirer's imagination but derived from the data gathered (Anney, 2015). This study has produced results linked to a conclusion or outcome that could be followed and reproduced. The theory in the study has also been used to explain and understand the vice-principal's role in supporting the principal's evolving role through distributed leadership.

1.8 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Qualitative research involves people, and by its very nature, it could be invasive. Therefore, the researcher opted to follow an inclusive approach with her participants. Ethical procedures and guidelines were followed and respected. These included permission requests, consent forms, confidentiality, anonymity, and full disclosure of the study.

To collect data for this study, the researcher used in-depth interviews. A letter outlining the research and requesting assistance from the principal of the schools involved were sent to the relevant institutes. As the schools included were all independent primary schools, permission from the Independent Schools Association of Southern Africa (ISASA) to conduct the study was obtained. Contact was made with the relevant participants to request assistance with the study. Due to the sensitivity of this study, the involvement of both principals and vice-principals was voluntary. Each person had the study's intent explained in detail, for commitment was expected.

Each person who agreed to participate in the study signed an informed consent letter. In this letter, the data-collection techniques were explained, as was the study's general outline. Confidentiality and anonymity were assured, and it was made clear that the information provided by the participants would only be used in this research study. Interviews were conducted in private, on a one-to-one basis to protect confidentiality and anonymity.

A request for personal job descriptions of the vice-principal, principal, and management structures was made upfront to the Head of the school. Non-disclosure of these documents was respected where necessary. The participants could access the final submission of the study.

An application was made for ethical clearance from UNISA. This clearance ensured that the three basic principles of ethics, namely respect for people, beneficence, and justice, were met. The requirements of the ethical clearance were met by considering the risk to the participants, the procedure for collecting and protecting data, and the participants' human rights.

1.9 LIMITATIONS AND DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

A limitation of this study could be the constant change in globalised educational trends that constantly affect the focus and demand of the evolving role of school principals. Furthermore, limited documentation related to the link between the principal and the vice-principal could have an influence. While the researcher has found many articles on the principal's role, limited recent resources outline the change in the role of the vice-principal.

1.9.1 Scientific delimitation

To narrow the scope of this research, the study was contained in eight independent primary schools found within the region of the Gauteng Province. The study did not include high schools, government schools or schools from other provinces.

1.9.2 Demographic delimitation

The demographic delimitation of this research study was contained to only two designations within school management, each with predetermined years of service in their field of leadership, namely, the vice-principal and the principal.

Furthermore, the principals interviewed had to have experience in a vice-principal role during their tenure to enrich data. This requirement excluded certain principals from being considered for an interview. The researcher, therefore, feels that the full scope of this research was not reached.

1.10 DEFINITIONS OF KEY CONCEPTS

For this study, the following definitions will apply to key concept words.

1.10.1 Principal

According to the Encyclopaedia of Education, the school principal is the highest-ranking administrator in an elementary, middle, or high school. *Principals*, heads of schools, and others responsible for the overall operation of a *school* are often called *school* leaders.

1.10.2 Vice-principal

The vice-principal is the second most senior leader at a school: (1) quasi-deputy; (2) subordinate deputy; and (3) niche assistant (Watson, 2005). Vice-principals, deputy heads or assistant principals assist the school principal by providing support wherever needed. For this study, the researcher will use the term *vice-principal* as the primary reference to this position. Deputy Head or assistant principal will be used when direct referencing from a source is required.

1.10.3 Distributed leadership

Distributed leadership is understood as decision-making and influential practices performed by personnel at multiple levels instead of one predominant leader at the top (Elmore, 2000; Lashway, 2006; Hartley, 2007; Harris, 2009a). In contrast to the top-down leadership model, this leadership approach draws on the strengths of various people to achieve a common purpose or goal. A distributed leadership perspective recognises multiple leaders (Spillane, J.P., Halverson, R. & Diamond, J.B., 2004) and leadership activities are widely shared within and between organisations.

1.11 PRELIMINARY CHAPTER OUTLINE

Chapter 1 provides the study's context, orientation, and introduction. It outlines the study's background and intent and includes the problem statement and aims.

Chapter 2 presents a literature study. It critically analyses existing knowledge on the evolving role of the principal and the vice-principal. It describes the job description of the principal and vice-principal in independent primary schools in Gauteng.

Chapter 3 focuses on the research methodology used for the study. A qualitative design was used to conduct this study. It included the definition of the population, data-collection methods, data analysis, and chosen research methods.

Chapter 4 presents and analyses the data collected from the participants. It includes a narrative and thematic analysis that supports the concept of the vice-principal's distributed leadership role in supporting the principal's evolving role in Gauteng schools.

Chapter 5 summarises the study and concludes with the significant findings and recommendations from the study to highlight the effect of the vice-principal's distributed leadership role in supporting the principal's evolving role in Gauteng schools

1.12 CONCLUSION

This chapter served as a background to the research topic. The researcher's connection and interest in this topic were communicated, and a preliminary review was presented. The rationale behind the study was highlighted, the research problem outlined, and the aims and objectives explained. An outline regarding the research methodology, trustworthiness, ethical considerations, and limitations were also discussed. The vice-principal and principal roles are undergoing rapid change, and it is critical to the school's success that the relationship between these roles is understood to provide sound leadership for the future. The next chapter will discuss literature relating to the principal's evolving role and its effect on the vice-principal's job description. The concept of distributed leadership will be explored.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 1 introduced the focus of and presented the background to this study. The literature review includes books, journal articles and professional documents to critically analyse existing knowledge on the evolving role of the school principal and the distributed leadership role of the vice-principal. The chapter consists of two main sections. The first is the evolving role of the school principal and the framework of distributed leadership of the vice-principal in support. The second part of the chapter explores the job description of the school principal and different job portfolios of vice-principals in private primary schools in Gauteng and the relationship between the principal and vice-principal. This chapter analyses the vice-principal's role in supporting the principal's evolving role.

2.2 THE EVOLVING ROLE OF THE SCHOOL PRINCIPAL

2.2.1 Introduction

Educational leadership in the 21st century has evolved, placing high demands on the school principal. Brauckermann, Pashiardis and Ärlestig (2020) attest that recently, an international shift of perspectives can be observed about how global problems increasingly affect schools. Drifts in values, new technology, and other societal changes have enhanced expectations of school leadership. The principal's role in the school as an organisation has historically been necessary; hence, schools have always had the position of principal. However, the traditional principal's role has evolved, and today's principals are accountable for far more than only student affairs.

Pont (2020) agrees that school leaders' roles are shifting from leading the learning programme within the school to a more complex and refined approach as facilitators of the collective work of professionals at and around their school. One can better understand the expectations of the contemporary school principal by aiming to understand the demands of instruction for the 21st century and the responsibilities that

principals attach to their roles. In an increasingly complex environment, knowledge about topics relating to schooling, curriculum, organisation, management, school improvement and societal changes grows immensely. Moreover, the core of a principal's knowledge becomes increasingly context-dependent (Clarke & O'Donoghue 2017, Hallinger 2018).

The 21st century has brought about rapid changes in many fields, including education. Teaching and learning have undergone a significant transformation, and the school principal remains responsible for navigating this transformation. Some qualities of effective school leaders of the 21st century include setting and communicating a clear vision for the school, creating a hospitable environment for teaching and learning, fostering leadership in teachers, creating a standard of high expectations and managing the people and processes in the school (Wallace Foundation, 2013). Therefore, the principal's role as a school administrator alone is no longer appropriate in the context of 21st-century demands. Expectations of what a principal symbolises as a 21st-century leader have amplified and so too have their responsibilities. According to Swain (2016), the principal's work has a broad constellation of factors contributing to its complexity. External and internal factors challenge formal school leaders' working context and decision-making processes.

The recent Covid-19 pandemic placed enormous demands on the principal, as did the racial tensions around the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement that filtered into schools. According to Howard (2020), cultural and societal challenges of the past have now emerged at the forefront of national education policy discussions. The BLM movement is shaking society, and has been identified as the most significant movement in history since the Civil Rights Movement of the mid-twentieth century. Both the pandemic and the BLM movement are proof that the school principal's role remains fluid as it adapts to societal needs and the context of the educational landscape. Akinbode and Shuhumi (2018) emphasise that in the 21st century, society is more serious about school accountability and progress. The principal cannot be apolitical like in the past but must engage in social politics for school growth and development.

The school's core business has always been to produce learners equipped to meet workplace demands. While schools have always been institutions of knowledge, they must produce learners who will become global citizens equipped with functional skills, relevant knowledge and who can navigate a technically advanced society. Therefore, there has been a significant shift regarding leadership in schools. Expectations of the principal have shifted in the last few decades from the idea that principals were only managers of the school to the current frame of thinking that involves the principal as a manager, instruction leader and visionary (Witmer, 2005; Wallace Foundation, 2013).

This shift in expectation has affected the daily responsibilities of the school principal and resulted in increased areas of accountability and governance. As supported by Maifala (2017), education leadership in the 21st century presents countless challenges and demands for school principals. Brauckermann et al. (2020) state that to cope with and adapt to these challenges, school leadership, specifically principals, must be well-informed about schools' educational and environmental changes. They highlight that the educational leaders of tomorrow must be aware of their new roles and responsibilities, understand and accept them and finally, make sense of them. Principals should be open to their evolving and changing roles and willing to adapt to a new form of educational leadership. Principals have the crucial role of serving primarily as a flexible anchor and reliable compass in an environment that changes drastically and constantly, which could lead to many inconsistencies and uncertainties. The most recent example is the global Covid-19 pandemic, where principals found themselves having to redesign curriculum and educational delivery overnight. In just a few short months, COVID-19 has been a 'supernova' (Azorín, 2020), creating absolute chaos (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2020) and shaking the fabric of education. It has redefined learning as a remote, screen-based activity, limiting most learners to online teacher support.

Despite challenges that come their way, the principal remains responsible for keeping abreast with educational trends and global requirements. This vision requires a substantial shift in how we come to understand what is required of education leaders. According to Howard (2018), sustainable community growth and wellbeing, scalable education reform, and the leaders responsible for implementing that reform must

reflect the principles and values of sustainability and embody 21st-century competencies. Enabling this transformation requires a new vision of educational governance and leadership and a broader spectrum of support.

At the turn of the century, many raised concerns around the inability of 19th and 20th-century education structures, approaches, and pedagogies to meet the demands of 21st-century realities. To meet the demands of the new century, the 21st-century principal had to focus on different skill sets, knowledge and dispositions for their students than in yesteryear.

The four C's of 21st-century learning, critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creative problem-solving, form part of the everyday curriculum. Fullan and Langworthy (2013) added character education and citizenship, whereas others may specifically include culture, global awareness, agility, adaptability and computer and digital technologies. According to Ferrari (2018), sustainable community growth and wellbeing, scalable education reform and the leadership responsible for implementing that reform must reflect the principles and values of sustainability and embody 21st-century competencies. This transformation requires a new vision of educational governance and leadership. The 21st century has brought about numerous global changes, and these changes have impacted the education arena. As the school principal's role continues to evolve to meet developing global trends and demands and the ever-changing organisational needs of a 21st-century school, the school principal's evolving role impacts

2.2.2 The impact of 21st-century education on the evolving role of the school principal

As the world around us evolves, so too does education. Twenty-first-century learning was designed to meet the demands of the 21st-century learner and equip them with skills to be successful in a 21st-century world. Education in the 21st century has so far centred around the belief that this century is different from past centuries; therefore, new ways of teaching and learning must be revised to be relevant to new ways of thinking and living in the century (Mishra & Kereliuk, 2011).

The complexity of the 21st century has brought a higher expectation of the principal's role in leading the school. Technology and societal demands have broadened the scope of schools bringing about transformation in the educational arena. The global Covid-19 pandemic and the heightened awareness of transformation and diversity concerns within schools have deepened the need for rapid change in schools. Harris and Jones (2020) confer that crisis and change management are now essential skills of a school leader. Running an effective school in disruptive times will require more than routine problem-solving or occasional firefighting. Instead, all school leaders will need to be engaged in constant crisis and change management, requiring support and collaboration from all staff.

According to Mestry (2017), although school principals are critical for improving student learning and attaining educational outcomes, they work under strenuous conditions to deal with multifaceted transformational issues. To keep abreast of educational trends, a growing need exists for the school principal to connect with their school community and a broader forum, taking on additional responsibilities and expanding their areas of expertise. Principals must broaden their knowledge on school compliance, curriculum, organisational structures, management, school improvement, crisis management, and societal changes in an increasingly complex environment. Moreover, a principal's knowledge core becomes increasingly context-dependent (Clarke & O'Donoghue 2017; Hallinger 2018).

Schools have always been closely interwoven with the communities around them. Many principals work to engage parents and others outside the immediate school community, such as local businesspeople (Wallace Foundation, 2013). By doing so, they expand the impact of the school on society and secure closer community ties with those around them. Principals now function within a market-orientated and competitive environment to integrate and engage their schools with their external environments (Goldring & Schuermann, 2009). The principal's role has never been more complex and critical to the success of schools than now. Principals are expected to build teams, establish a vision, cultivate teachers' leadership and use data to inform instruction while constantly observing and implementing reform guidelines (Gawlik, 2015; Mendels & Mitgang, 2013).

Principals face increased measures of accountability. According to Bell (2016), these increased measures include meeting learners' varied emotional and social needs and being available for parents, teachers, and the community. Bell (2016) continues that leaders must have a tremendous skill set to identify the correct drivers to focus their attention on. The recent global pandemic and BLM movement redirected the principal's attention to crisis management and community support.

The school principal's role continues to develop and evolve to accommodate these various demands. Some factors increase the workload of principals in educational organisations, such as unplanned work, school funding, formal correspondence, time allocated to solve communication problems at school (Oplatka, 2017), new tasks arising from education reforms, a high level of community participation in schools (Hauseman, Pollock & Wang, 2017), and constantly dealing with uncertainty. With additional demands placed on today's principals, their role has progressed from administrative managers to programme managers to instructional and transformational leaders. Principals are teachers who share the goal of educating students to the utmost academic standard possible (Marishane, 2011). The implication of education on principals in the 21st century is that they too must evolve to fit into the new and rapidly changing world. The 21st-century principal's role extends beyond yesteryear's administrative and disciplinary facets. To meet the demands of the 21st-century school, principals must be change agents, inspirational and innovative leaders, have strong educational visions and values, control budgets, design marketing strategies, drive transformation within their schools, and remain strong influencers in instructional leadership.

Some qualities of effective 21st-century school leaders include setting and communicating a clear vision for the school, creating a hospitable environment for teaching and learning, fostering leadership in teachers, creating a standard of high expectations and managing people and processes in the school (Wallace Foundation, 2013). Therefore, the principal's role evolves daily. As additional demands and expectations are placed on school principals, they need support and assistance to meet these demands. Lynch (2016) specifically noted several expectations placed on principals, such as communicating effectively to all stakeholders in the building, modelling appropriate behaviour, supervising professional development, supporting

the development of the curriculum, and ensuring the high-quality instruction of that curriculum. He further included ensuring that assessments accurately measure the achievement of students and staff, making schedules, managing time, providing student discipline, implementing district policies, maintaining the building, staffing positions, preparing, and managing the budget, being politically astute, gaining support from key community members and deal with any other issues that may arise. One way for principals to cope with their increased workload is to embrace a distributed leadership approach. By doing so, they can draw on the strengths of their team members to assist with specific responsibilities. In reflecting on 2020, Azorín, Harris and Jones (2020) believe that distributed leadership has become the default leadership response in this current crisis requiring more school leaders to connect, share, learn and network their way through issues. Effective school leadership is now connected, collaborative, creative, and responsive through absolute necessity rather than by design.

Twenty-first-century learning, the recent global pandemic, and transformational conversations have altered the school's curriculum design and the principal's role. Researchers highlight the importance of principals' power to make strategic choices and interpret, mediate, alter and even disrupt the reform implementation processes to position themselves and their organisations in a favourable place (Coburn, 2016; Fullan, 2014). Twenty-first-century learning significantly influences the demands and job description of the school principal, bringing about change and development for the vice-principal's role. Oplatka (2017) found that principals shared leadership among assistant principals to cope with the workload and delegated some of their powers and responsibilities. Skaalvik (2020) explains that the new leadership role of the principal requires a broad range of skills and expectations to cope successfully with several areas, including instructional leadership. The new role could be experienced as challenging and stimulating but overwhelming, demanding and exhausting. Consequently, principals should aim to optimise their leadership teams to ensure greater success. Principals should aim to build teams within teams.

Munby (2020) advocates that for principals to adapt to the expectations of their evolving role, effective, flexible, intelligent, empathetic, and knowledgeable school leadership is crucial to respond positively and creatively to the challenges presented

by governments, communities and society. However, the question remains what the various global and societal demands on the evolving role of the principal are.

2.2.3 Global and societal demands on the evolving role of the principal

In addition to the shift in 21st-century learning, the principal faces an increase in various global and societal demands. The age of technology has altered the educational landscape, placing higher demands on schools and, ultimately, on the school principal. Waldron, Vsanthakumur and Arulraj (2015) state that contemporary management is a process in which people, tasks, resources and technology are essential because they are combined and coordinated to achieve teaching and learning effectively. To embrace the digital revolution, schools led by the principal must consider and implement modifications in both classroom design and school curriculum. According to the Department of Education PSSP enhancing the professional image and competencies of school principals (2015), the purpose of the transformation of any education system is to bring about sustainable school improvement and a profound change in schools' culture and practice. In South Africa, this change is influenced by the many complex economic, political, social, and health factors affecting differing communities in urban and rural contexts.

Education reforms on school effectiveness in the 21st century have focused on various areas, such as the curriculum for the 21st century and leadership, increasing the workload and role expectations for school principals (Botha, 2004). Embracing 21st-century skills and learning resulted in a redesign of the school curriculum and new approaches to educational management. Many schools have shifted from a traditional knowledge-based system to a skilled-based and value-driven curriculum.

Technology has given birth to new ways of thinking and skills sought 10 or 20 years ago that might not suffice in today's digital world (Jerald, 2009). To meet the global and societal demands of the 21st-century school and learner, the school principal's role has expanded to include a broader community, a revised approach to educational delivery and a collaborative approach to educational management. According to Fullan (2014, p.148), principals deal with rapid educational reform, referred to as the "*unplanned digital revolution whereby planning for and control of the explosion of technology access and availability to students evolves as it unfolds*". The fast-paced

movement of technology and increasing workplace demands require a shift in pedagogical focus within schools. Akinbode and Shuhumi (2018) continue that the 21st century is an era of information technology breakthroughs and that schools cannot be oblivious to the importance of technology in the instructional process. For schools to embrace the current trends regarding technology, the principal must infuse technology use in the school's vision and goal. In dealing with the recent global pandemic, principals had to rely heavily on technology as it became prevalent in the interconnectedness of schools and the school community.

School principals must constantly re-evaluate their curriculum programme to ensure that it meets the demands of what lies beyond school and prepares students for the future workplace. Many nations globally have undertaken wide-ranging curriculum, instruction, and assessment reforms to better prepare principals for the educational demands of life and work in the 21st century (Bush, 2005; Russell & Cranston, 2012). Because of the constant change, school principals rely on building relationships with additional stakeholders and external communities to ensure that the relevant demands for the 21st-century student are being met and that the school is ready for any form of transformation.

The COVID-19 pandemic is an example of sudden transformation. Technology had never played a more significant role than during this crisis when schools had to make a swift transition from classroom teaching to online teaching. The school principal had to continue meeting the students' needs during an unprecedented time of disruption and turmoil. According to Poornima and Mackenzie (2020), the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in global educational institutions being compelled to suddenly harness and use available technological tools to create content for remote learning for students in all sectors. Educators globally experience new possibilities to do things differently and with greater flexibility, resulting in potential benefits in accessibility to education for students globally.

Overnight, the 21st-century skills taught at school became the groundwork for ensuring a smooth transition to a new way of schooling, and the Internet and the digital world suddenly represented a novel way of interacting with both students and stakeholders. A new way of teaching using technology emerged with a necessitated

shift for teachers to adapt to the role of facilitator rather than a sole educator. The method is aligned with the viewpoints of authors such as Blair (2012) and Busthami, Byabazaire and Garba (2015). In this arrangement, the teacher functions as a facilitator, coordinating activities that have meaning and ignite defining moments for students. The COVID-19 pandemic is an example of why the school principal must remain flexible and ready for any situation that could present and draw on a broader team to assist in managing and leading the school.

As global and societal demands increase, the school leader should deliver at a higher rate than before to meet the demands of a changing society. There is an increased need for community support, innovation in teaching and learning, marketing and communication, environmental awareness, financial governance, and policy reform. Today's school principals should lead in a new environment marked by unprecedented responsibilities, challenges, and managerial opportunities (Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom & Anderson, 2010).

A significant element of principals' success lies in their relationship building and engagement with the community. The principal's role no longer extends to only teachers and students but the broader community and beyond. Akinbode and Shuhumi (2018, p. 144) state in this regard:

The school is not an ivory tower. It is operating under the influence of some visible and invisible power; the community where the school operates is inclusive. The community has both direct and indirect influences on all facets of the school activities.

Building these relationships requires time and investment, adding to the daily demands of the principal's diary. Principals must understand leadership as a process, develop human relation skills and promote joint action to ensure school improvement and effectiveness (Steyn, 2009). Furthermore, many schools find themselves in a competitive market, where staying abreast of educational trends is critical for marketing the school and remaining competitive in a global society. Akinbode and Shuhumi (2018) concur that the media and professional bodies determine the school's image; therefore, the principal should maintain a good rapport with them. The

principal's involvement with professional groups outside the school assists in building sound relationships and keeping abreast of the latest global trends.

The increasing demand for school improvement involves those within the school community, such as policymakers, politicians, school principals, middle leaders, teachers, parents, and students. School leaders find their roles increasingly complex when facing ever-increasing pressure to transfer school systems into dynamic learning environments (Fullan, 2014). As globalisation increases, schools have become increasingly competitive, with each school seeking ways to entice and retain its market. Schools have also become a place of value-driven education where parents seek assistance and support in educating their children and social support in raising their children. Bradley-Levine (2016, p. 28) states that

... being a principal is about making the tough moral decisions; it's about building relationships with the community, parents, teachers, students, and everyone else who has a vested interest in education. It is about bringing social change in order to meet the community's vision of what a graduate from their school will look like.

Added to the increased daily demands of the school principal is the higher level of accountability resting with schools and school management. According to Cieminski (2018), principals are instrumental to successful school improvement efforts and positive student outcomes. However, recent workforce trends, increased accountability, job demands, and turnover rates for school principals are worrisome. School principals are held accountable by the governing board, the school community and society. Principals must daily ensure that they have invested in and implemented the correct procedures, policies, approaches, and forms of communication to allow the schools and their reputation to be upheld and protected.

This intersection of internal school goals and external demands is a central concern for school leaders, as it questions standard practices and challenges the status quo (Kaniuka, 2012; Knapp & Feldman, 2012). The status quo is that a principal's focus is being an instructional leader, directing the curriculum and student achievement. Currently, instructional leadership is only one aspect of the multifaceted role of the 21st-century principal. The tasks and responsibilities related to principals' work have

expanded and have become more complex during recent decades (Lahtero, Ahtiainen, & Niina, 2019). To remain current in a rapidly changing world, additional demands on the school principal require more time and focus on matters outside the basic running of the school, resulting in the school principal relying more on the vice-principal for the daily running of the school.

Challenges to the status quo require school leaders to make sense of their leadership role in response to the dynamic interactions between internal goals and needs and external reform demands (Saltrick, 2010). One way of making sense of the new demands on school principals is allowing a distributed leadership model within schools and a close working relationship with the vice-principal. Society is at a turning point in history where the rate of technology and innovation is unparalleled, leaving education with no choice but to act swiftly and strategically (Friedman, 2008; Dutta, Geiger & Lanvin, 2015).

This shift in responsibility has resulted in the school principal becoming more reliant on the vice-principal to assist with additional roles and tasks within the school context. The concept of distributed leadership can be explored as a support model in assisting the principal to adapt to and manage their evolving role.

2.3 THE CONCEPT OF DISTRIBUTED LEADERSHIP

This study defines distributed leadership by various authors. A distributed perspective frames leadership practice specifically. Distributed leadership has come to prominence in school management and leadership discourse to provide teachers participation and empowerment in schools (Torrance, 2013). Leadership practice is a product of the interactions of school leaders, followers, and their situations (Spillane, 2005). Harris (2010, p. 55–56) defines it as

... the expansion of leadership roles in schools, beyond those in formal leadership or administrative posts, distributed leadership concentrates on the interactions rather than the actions of leaders.

Distributed leadership supports and strengthens outstanding individuals in a climate of trust, shared responsibilities, teamwork, and respect (Duif, 2012). According to

Harris (2014), distributed leadership means mobilising leadership expertise at all levels in the school, generating more opportunities for change and building the capacity for improvement. The emphasis is on interdependent interaction and practice rather than individual and independent actions associated with those of formal leadership roles or responsibilities.

Distributed leadership is first about leadership practice rather than leaders or their roles, functions, routines, and structures. Although they are critical considerations, leadership practice is still the starting point. Distributed leadership is not a new concept in school management; it can also be referred to as delegated or shared leadership based on three principal ideas, namely;

- the belief in a broader leadership team,
- an increased need for leaders, as schools become more complex places to manage and lead, and
- creating opportunities for growth and leadership for tomorrow's leaders.

Bush and Glover (2014) confirm that in the 21st century, the normatively preferred model is distributed leadership. In contrast to bureaucracy, leadership in this model is uncoupled from formal roles and could arise in any part of the organisation. Muijs and Harris (2006, p. 961) propose a view where educators can collaborate and learn from each other, and in such communities, leadership is distributed throughout the system. Harris and Spillane (2008) explain that a distributed leadership perspective acknowledges that multiple leaders and leadership activities are shared within organisations. Harris (2014) shows that distributed leadership is primarily concerned with the interactions and the dynamics of leadership practice rather than a preoccupation with the formal roles and responsibilities traditionally associated with those who lead. Therefore, distributive leadership involves shared and collaborative leadership. The vice-principal must adapt to the structures of distributed leadership set out by the principal to support and improve the organisational design of the school.

While this can affect the vice-principal's job description and require skills of adaptability, accountability, and initiative from the vice-principal, it also allows for leadership growth and sound preparation for the principal's role. Vice-principals build

up strong relationships with principals, increasing the possibility of broadening leadership responsibilities and extending responsibility for the school's development. Distributed leadership, or the expansion of leadership roles in schools beyond those in formal leadership or administrative posts, represents the most influential idea to emerge in educational leadership of the past decade (Hallinger & Heck, 2009). Distributed leadership allows collaborative leadership rather than the traditional top-down approach.

Scholars have offered several justifications supporting distributed leadership in the normative sense. Robinson (2009) proposed that distributed leaders can be a way for school leaders to be more democratic, less managerial, and less hierarchical or prescriptive for school improvement. Similarly, Mayrowetz (2008) noted that from the normative perspective, distributed leadership is a way to enhance the democratic notion of schooling, increase a school's efficiency and effectiveness, and build human capacity. Gronn (2002), Spillane (2005) and Harris (2008) proposed that shared or distributed leadership has significant positive effects on the success of organisations, thus favouring this model for 21st-century organisations. In a globally interconnected world, distributed leadership allows for shared accountability and responsibility and promotes leadership development.

Harris (2014) admits that, while the distributed leadership theory has pointed to multiple sources of influence within an organisation, it is not only a case of generating more formal roles. It is not about creating quantity but rather quality in leadership practices. Distributed leadership offers exciting growth opportunities for the vice-principal and much-needed support for the principal. What is required to allow this model of leadership to be successful?

Solly (2018) proposes three critical principles to distributed leadership: autonomy, capacity, and accountability. Each is equally important and interdependent, as represented in the Venn diagram below.

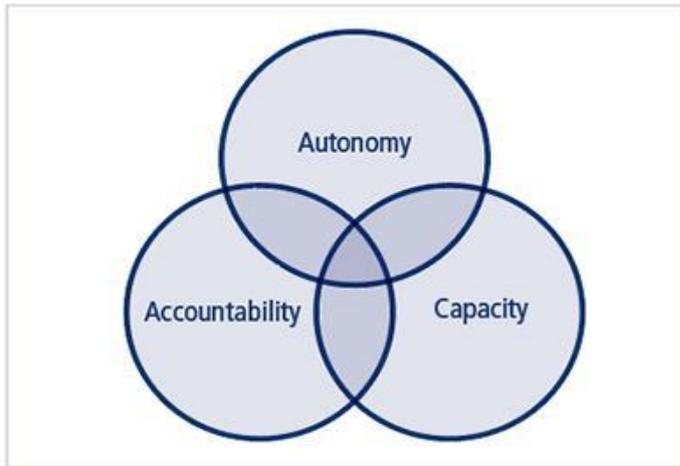


Figure 2.1: Key principles to distributed leadership (Solly, 2018, p.180)

If the school principal must rely on the vice-principal to assist with the school's leadership, a certain amount of autonomy should be given to the vice-principal in their area of responsibility. Vice-principals must then understand that this shared trust comes with a high level of accountability. Capacity speaks to the proper training, resources, and tools, allowing each leader to successfully deliver high levels of accountability and implement the school strategy.

The complexity of principals' and vice-principals' roles is closely interwoven, and while each remains accountable to the other, autonomy and capacity building become essential for success in some areas. Duif, Harrison, van Dartel and Sinyolo (2013) undertook a literature review on distributed leadership, and they proposed that distributed leadership within schools allow for seven distinguishing features.

- **School structure:** Distributed leadership allows everyone to participate in decision-making, agreeing on leadership roles. Informal leadership and professional development are facilitated.
- **Strategic vision:** There is a shared vision with common values for all, where ownership by both staff and pupils is essential. A learning organisation is a school goal.
- **Values and beliefs:** Underlying values typical for the school's culture are upheld by all and include mutual respect, confidence, and high expectations.

- **Collaboration and cooperation** are evident throughout the school as everyone works towards a common goal and purpose. There is a collective ambition to solve problems, and knowledge is shared.
- **Shared decision-making:** Professionals in the school have enough space to make decisions regarding their area of responsibility and the context of their work. Professionals are confident in making informed decisions. Everyone participates in whole-school decisions, and there is a high level of consultancy.
- **High levels of responsibility and accountability:** Professionals are kept and feel accountable for their performances. It is common for professionals to give back to their community and help colleagues improve their performance levels. Professionals can express their opinions regardless of their formal positions.
- **Initiatives:** Based on their level of expertise, everyone should contribute their ideas and propose new initiatives.

As the principal's role evolves and schools become places of high demand and constant transformation, a more collaborative and inclusive approach to educational management lends itself to meeting the needs of the 21st-century school. Duif (2012, p.1) states that:

... under distributed leadership, everyone is responsible and accountable for leadership within his or her area. Good ideas come from throughout the organisation, and many people will co-operate in creating change. Distributed Leadership is an environment where everyone feels free to develop, initiate, share new ideas.

The principal's evolving role has affected the vice-principal's job description and expectations. The vice-principal's role has expanded, and the levels of responsibility and accountability have increased. Distributed leadership allows for a closer working relationship between the principal and vice-principal and to share in the leadership and management of the school. Grubb and Tredway (2010) proposed that if school principals can facilitate a climate and culture in schools where leadership delegates balanced power, fosters collaboration, and promotes equity and equality, it will enable assistant principals to develop the necessary leaderships skills, advance the

knowledge of being effective instructional leaders and prepare vice-principals for future principals.

Principals meet the demands of their evolving roles within school leadership by being critical in distributing leadership throughout their schools. Principals remain critical for effective school leadership, but the increasing demands of their jobs have resulted in the need for a shared leadership approach. With additional responsibilities being placed at their door, principals become more reliant on their vice-principals to have a larger share in the school's leadership and management. According to Harris (2011), principals are critical in the teacher leadership equation and centre stage in the work redesign required to bring distributed leadership to schools. Therefore, the vice-principal and principal must collaborate closely to ensure that the school's leadership is shared and that there is a sound understanding of the complexity of the two roles in bringing about shared outcomes and success for the school.

This shift to shared leadership requires principals to relinquish some of their authority or power to vice-principals. By doing so, principals have more time to focus on the additional demands expected of them, allowing them to become more effective in their evolving roles. Harris (2012) continues that distributed leadership for principals means a fundamental change in their understanding of leadership and how they enact their leadership roles. It implies relinquishing some authority and power, which is challenging, and repositioning their role from exclusive leadership to a form of leadership that is more concerned with brokering, facilitating, and supporting others in leading innovation and change. By embracing distributed leadership and drawing on the vice-principal's skills and strengths, the principal allows vice-principal leadership growth and empowers them by preparing them for possible principalship later in their career. In turn, the vice-principal can assist the principal by assuming specific tasks or responsibilities so that the principal can embrace their evolving role.

2.4 THE IMPORTANCE OF DISTRIBUTED LEADERSHIP IN SUPPORTING THE EVOLVING ROLE OF THE PRINCIPAL

As with any business or organisation, a school cannot run itself, nor can it be run effectively by one person. For principals to be effective in their roles as school leaders,

they need a team's support, strengths, and skills. New tendencies for leading and managing schools are asserted to be based on the shared responsibilities of all learning community members in participative environments (Delgado, 2014). The vice-principal is critical to the school leadership team and will assume more responsibility and accountability alongside the principal. Distributed leadership allows the principal to draw on professional knowledge and skills within their team to enhance the individual's leadership growth and create better success for the school. While the principal's role is expansive and more clearly defined, the vice-principal's role has broadened over the decades (Rintoul & Bishop 2019).

Solly (2018) concurs that distributed leadership should increase the leadership capacity within a school so that the school can improve and grow authentically. By sharing leadership within the school, the principal can focus more on their additional responsibilities and evolving demands. While remaining at the helm of leading the school, principals can expand leadership within their team, specifically within the vice-principal and create more time for addressing the additional demands of their evolving roles.

According to Solly (2018), distributed leadership is primarily concerned with the practice of leadership rather than specific leadership roles or responsibilities. It equates with shared, collective, and extended leadership practice that builds the capacity for change and improvement. From the above evidence collected around the job descriptions of the principal and vice-principal, both roles are undefined by specific responsibilities or tasks but rather by traits of solid leadership and high accountability levels. By aligning the principal and vice-principal's strengths, the roles create a support framework on an interpersonal level and from a school management perspective. Solly (2018) attests that individuals are accountable and responsible for their leadership actions when distributed leadership works well. In new leadership roles, collaborative teamwork is the *modus operandi*, and interdependent working is a cultural norm. As the school principal's role evolves, there is a natural focus on the vice-principal's management and leadership. The redefining of roles and responsibilities allows distributed leadership to come to the fore and create new opportunities.

Spillane (2005) states that distributed leadership is first about leadership practice rather than leaders or their roles, functions, routines, and structures. It is a practice that the principal must believe and convey to their vice-principal. It is a partnership and collaboration driven by the principal for it to be successful within the school. Leaders act in situations that are defined by their actions. From a distributed perspective, leadership practice is constructed in these interactions. By providing the vice-principal with more autonomy and building their capacity, the principal makes a moral decision to share accountability with the vice-principal, allowing for additional time to focus on the new demands of principalship.

In a post-heroic leadership era, many principals have enacted aspects of distributed leadership to make the role more sustainable (Pounder & Crow, 2005). As principals grapple with their evolving roles, they have become more dependent on vice-principals to assist with the daily running of the school and assume greater responsibility in the leadership and management. This, in turn, allows the vice-principal's distributed leadership role to support the principal's evolving role.

The principal's role and responsibility are rapidly evolving. The global debate on what constitutes an effective principal has been shaped, in part, by changes in the principal's roles and responsibilities throughout the last century. The work of a 21st-century principal is more diverse and demanding than ever before. According to The Wallace Foundation, the school principal's role is moving away from "superheroes or virtuoso soloists" and toward an "orchestra conductor" who shares leadership and distributes it across the building (The Wallace Foundation, 2006, p.2). Distributed leadership is vital, allowing principals to be supported in their evolving roles. Vice-principals can share in the school's management and leadership through the distributed leadership approach allowing for a more supportive role towards the principal and their development of leadership.

However, a distributed perspective on leadership suggests a changed role for the principal. This shift is dramatic and can be summarised as a move from being at the organisation's apex, making decisions, to seeing their core role as developing the leadership capacity and capability of others. Harris (2011) believes that what distributed leadership means for principals is a fundamental change in their

understanding of leadership and how they enact their leadership roles. The principal's role is evolving and directly affects the vice-principal's role. Additional responsibilities and higher expectations now fall to the vice-principal to allow principals to meet the demands of their modified job function. Harris (2013) reminds us that distributed leadership implies a fundamental change in how formal leaders understand their practice and view leadership roles. Distributed leadership implies actively brokering, facilitating, and supporting the leadership of others.

A distributed leadership framework provides an alternative to examining the complexities of school leadership. Diamond and Spillane (2016) concur that it also contributes to a more integrated understanding of the leadership practice of school leaders instead of a narrow examination of isolated individuals. This study has used a theoretical framework of distributed leadership because it supports the notion of the vice-principal being critical in supporting the principal's evolving responsibilities. Distributed leadership supports the concept of vertical and horizontal leadership, allowing for shared responsibilities and developing leadership roles.

2.5 EXPLORING THE JOB DESCRIPTIONS OF THE SCHOOL PRINCIPAL AND VICE-PRINCIPAL IN INDEPENDENT PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN GAUTENG

2.5.1 Introduction

To better understand the complex role of the principal and vice-principal, this study investigated various job descriptions of the two roles. Job descriptions were viewed through a multifaceted lens, and several studies and documents were used to outline the core responsibilities of the principal and vice-principal.

2.5.2 Job description of the school principal

The changing context for leadership has been accompanied by changes in school principals' roles, and definitions of the roles and responsibilities of the school principal have been evolving. The work of school principals has become increasingly complex, and principals must spread their time over many responsibilities and work with various stakeholders. Dramatic changes in the policy environment of public schools over the past two decades have placed additional demands on principals to address multiple

and diverse responsibilities, resulting in significant constraints on how principals spend their workdays (Grissom, Loeb, & Mitani, 2015).

Grodzki (2011) claim that because of the complexities of principalship, it was challenging to define the responsibilities and skills necessary to fulfil the demands of the position. As the principal's role evolves and develops, it is challenging to pinpoint an accurate job description. Principals should be proficient in task management and serve as visionaries for their schools. According to Billingsley, McLeskey, and Crockett (2018), school principals lead instruction in evolving educational policies as they work with others to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse student population. Consequently, several perspectives exist by which a principal's job duties can be classified or outlined.

Murphy, Elliott, Goldring, and Porter (2006) claim that the touchstones for principals consistently focus on learning, teaching, curriculum, and evaluation and ensure that others in the organisation do so. The scope of these categories reflects the broad area of responsibility and ambiguity around a defined and detailed job description for the principal. Clifford, Behrstock-Sherratt and Fetters (2012, p.8) list five key roles that principals play in the school:

- human capital manager,
- school operations manager,
- instructional leader,
- visionary, and
- community, family outreach coordinator.

The Policy on the South African Standard for Principalship (PSSP), published by the DBE in 2015, aims to establish clear guidelines of what it expects from principals regarding leadership and management of schools. According to the Department of Basic Education of South Africa (DoBE, 2015), eight key interdependence areas constitute the core purpose of the principal in any South African context.

- Leading teaching and learning in the school
- Shaping the direction and development of the school
- Managing quality and securing accountability

- Developing and empowering self and others
- Managing the school as an organisation
- Working with and for the community
- Managing human resources (staff) in the school
- Managing and advocating extra-mural activities

Today, principals leading schools interact with all the mentioned areas, each area carrying a specific set of responsibilities. Each focus area is interwoven with the daily running of the school and the school's long-term vision and sustainability. Each key area must receive the correct amount of focus because they are interdependent with the success of the entire school. For principals to successfully address each area of responsibility, they must rely on the broader leadership team to assist them in meeting the daily demands and expectations of these focus areas. As the principal's role expands to meet the higher demands and evolving nature of school leadership, the vice-principal's role increases to support and assist the principal in leading the school. *"The principal's job is complex and multidimensional, and the effectiveness of principals depends, in part, on how they allocate their time across daily responsibilities"* Rice (2010, p.2).

The evolving role of the principal extends to task-orientated jobs and value-driven education and leadership, as supported in the DoBE (2015, p.6):

Embedded in the principal's leadership and management of the school are core societal, educational, and professional values, which are reflected in the manner in which he or she deals with all matters pertaining to the curriculum and human resources. These values inform the core purpose of principalship and, together with knowledge and skills, shape the nature and direction of leadership and management in the school.

Although a critical focus of the principal remains that of an instructional leader, there is a growing focus in other areas, such as value-driven leadership, human resources, school compliance, marketing, and stakeholder management. As the principal's role broadens, it involves several facets that link to character traits, such as creativity and innovation. While the policy outlines critical criteria for principals, Marishane (2016)

observes that the PSSP strongly emphasises the management aspects of the principal's work, with little focus on leadership.

The school principal is responsible for human resources management and creating and sustaining positive working relationships with staff, students, and parents (Gentilucci, Denti & Guaglianone 2013). Furthermore, as the world rapidly changes and education reform remains at the helm of necessitated modification, the need for a creative and pioneering spirit remains critical for principals. The principal must be innovative and intuitive and predict the outcome of events in the school based on the conduct of all stakeholders (Botha, 2013). In a fast-evolving world, the principal must lead rather than manage the school. According to Marishane (2016), the PSSP is not aligned with global trends addressing the tension between management and accountability versus leadership and innovation.

One focus area of the modern-day principal is to focus on innovative marketing strategies to sustain their schools in times of increased global economic pressure.

The Wallace Foundation (2013, p.4) describes the principal's job function as including five key areas.

- Shaping a vision of academic success for all students
- Creating a climate hospitable to education
- Cultivating leadership in others
- Improving instruction
- Managing people, data, and processes to foster school improvement

According to the Revised Personnel Administration Measures (RPAM) (RSA, 2016), determined by the Minister of Education regarding the Employment of Educators Act 1998 (RSA, 1998) and the regulations made in terms of the Act (RSA, 1998), the core function of the principal is set out below regarding the specific aims of the job.

- Ensure that the school is managed satisfactorily and complies with applicable legislation, regulations, and personnel administration measures as prescribed.
- Ensure that the education of learners is promoted correctly as per approved policies.

According to the RPAM (RSA, 2016), the job's core duties and responsibilities are individual and varied, depending on the approaches and needs of the specific school, and include, but are not limited to,

- general administration,
- personnel,
- academic performance of the school,
- teaching,
- extra and co-curricular,
- interaction with stakeholders, and
- communication.

A recent study completed by Linton (2017) theorises that today's principals must be engaged in at least five essential functions to facilitate reforms and improvements in schools. These include:

- establishing a clear focus on student learning, which includes having clear learning goals, a vision, and high expectations for learning for all students,
- interactions and relationships that embrace behaviours, such as emotional/interpersonal support, visibility and accessibility, communication and interaction, and parent/community outreach and involvement,
- a school culture that incorporates collaboration, continuous improvement, shared leadership/decision-making, and risk-taking support,
- instruction that comprises behaviours such as observing classrooms, discussing instructional issues, and giving feedback, and
- accountability that involves monitoring student progress and examining student data that drive programme improvement.

The above references reveal that the principal's job description entails numerous vital elements and attributes. Today's principals should lead people, manage programmes and facilities, and create a positive school culture and climate while building and implementing a solid school vision. *"The principal's job is complex and multidimensional, and the effectiveness of principals depends, in part, on how they allocate their time across daily responsibilities"* Rice (2010, p.2). To be successful in

adapting to their evolving role, the principal must draw on the strengths of the vice-principal and additional members of their team to share in the school's leadership. By doing so, the principal can meet the growing demands of their job more effectively and allow leadership development in their school team.

When looking at the most recent advertisements for Heads of Schools on the ISASA (2022) website, the following requirements were typical:

- An effective leader and ambassador for the school
- Partner with parents and other stakeholders to drive the school's brand
- Have a proven success record of managing resources, specifically people, financials and learning programmes
- Have an excellent understanding and grasp of curriculum issues and debate and their implementation
- Understand the opportunities and challenges of leading and managing a school in the 21st century in the context of national transformation
- Address and solve discipline issues
- Have a substantive understanding of the education environment and current pressures relating to family and socio-economic aspects
- A strong leader with interpersonal skills that can create a vision and deliver on strategy
- A firm grasp of school financial management and governance
- An understanding of the opportunities and challenges of managing and leading a South African school in today's environment
- Superior communication skills at all levels and forms and an ability to engage with stakeholders at all levels

In the wake of global educational reform, the principal's responsibilities increase and the vice-principal's role and job description become more complicated as increased delegation and additional tasks begin to fall at their door. The vice-principal's distributed leadership role in supporting the principal's evolving role has become paramount in ensuring the school's success and allowing the principal to successfully meet the growing demands placed on them as the school leader. The development of these leadership positions is linked because of their interdependent nature.

2.5.3 The job description of the vice-principal

The school principal should be a leader among leaders and ensure that the school remains sustainable during transformational change. Therefore, the principal must be equipped with flexibility and innovative thinking skills. For the principal to meet the daily demands and lead the school effectively, they will rely on the vice-principal to assist with additional duties, responsibilities, and shared leadership dynamics. According to Lattuca (2012), the complexity and demands of the vice-principal's role are shaped by social, political, and legal influences, making it challenging to create a standard list of duties that would pertain to all vice-principals, indicating the need for flexibility and adaptability among vice-principals.

Therefore, it is often challenging to pin down an exact job description for the vice-principal, as the role of the principal and vice-principal must remain fluid in meeting the demands of an ever-changing educational landscape. The assistant principal's job descriptions in the Department of Labour Handbook encompass almost every aspect of schools (DoL, 2010–2011). Moreover, the vice-principal's role can depend on the principal's strength and focus and the school's needs. Different schools have different approaches to the vice-principal's role. Certain schools have only one vice-principal who oversees several areas of responsibility, whereas other schools might have two or three vice-principals heading different portfolios, accountable for certain aspects of school management. Because the role can vary dramatically depending on the school context and the individual principal's philosophies and understanding of the role, vice-principals are often limited to which activities they can take part (Harvey, 1994; Oleszewski et al., 2011). Furthermore, vice-principals' roles and duties can vary significantly between schools within the same district from year-to-year (Matthews & Crow, 2003; Marshall & Hooley, 2006). Despite the varied responsibilities of the vice-principal, one main task is to support the principal in running the school. Consequently, the vice-principal must remain amenable in their offer of support and be directed by the needs of the principal and school.

In the South African context, the most helpful policy guidelines highlighting the duties and responsibilities of the vice-principal is the RPAM (RSA, 2016), determined by the Minister of Education regarding the Employment of Educators Act 1998 (RSA, 1998)

and regulations made in terms of the Act (RSA, 1998). According to this document, the vice-principal's core function is

- to assist the principal in managing the school and promoting the education of learners properly, and
- to maintain total awareness of the administrative procedures across the entire range of school activities and functions.

The job's duties and responsibilities are individual and varied, depending on the school's approaches and needs, and include but are not limited to

- general or administrative duties,
- teaching,
- extra and co-curricular duties,
- personnel management,
- interaction with stakeholders, and
- communication.

While the policy has outlined essential aspects of the vice-principal's role, it has not captured the increased levels of accountability experienced by many vice-principals or the move to overseeing and running the instructional programme and daily demands of school. The vice-principal's role covers a broad aspect of school life, including people management and academic focus. The vice-principal must have a sound understanding of the many facets constituting the school day to support and substitute for the principal where and when necessary. The principal assumes full responsibility for every aspect of the school, and the vice-principal must have sufficient knowledge in the various areas to help advise and support the principal.

A recent study by Petrides, Jimes, and Karaglani (2014) concludes that vice-principals view their roles within schools as more concerned with instructional leadership. Furthermore, because the vice-principal can function on ground level within a school, they often function as the go-between between the staff and the principal. The vice-principal represents the voice of the staff and can use this strength when advising the principal on staff matters. Due to increasing demands, the principal must regularly interface at a high level with staff, learners, and parents, whereas the vice-principal can remain hands-on with the school community. Therefore, the vice-principal can

inform the principal of any community issue to be addressed and assist in filtering the principal's voice to the community. The vice-principal's role is operational and deals with the school's day-to-day running. The role is complex, encompassing a servant-leadership approach because the vice-principal must serve and represent several critical stakeholders in the school.

Webb and Vulliamy (1995) reported that five types of activities dominate the work schedules of the vice-principal, namely

- class teaching,
- curriculum leadership,
- general managerial responsibility delegated by the principal,
- staff development, and
- pastoral support.

Cranston, Tromans and Reugebrink (2004) identified seven leading roles of vice-principals in schools as

- strategic leadership,
- education and curriculum leadership,
- management and administration,
- dealing with student issues,
- parent and community issues,
- staffing issues, and
- operational issues.

The above focus areas of the vice-principal indicate a shift from the original task of being a disciplinarian to a more involved and active participant in school leadership. Today's vice-principal's role encompasses far more than it did previously. The job description remains open to interpretation and addresses the needs of each school. To cope with the demands of this role, the vice-principal must display sound levels of managerial skills and strong leadership traits. The vice-principal's role has evolved from the manager to one of manager and leader. Barnett, Shoho and Oleszewski (2012) argue that vice-principals must transcend beyond the traditional view of

handling discipline toward affecting student achievement. The vice-principal should also be aware of the principal's needs and adapt to these needs to support the school.

The suggested focus areas provided by various policies guide the expected role of the vice-principal. A shortcoming of any policy is that while it provides a good roadmap for responsibilities and duties, it does not offer on-the-ground training or experience for the role. The policies do not consider the various management structures of different schools or the various expectations of the principals on the vice-principal.

Previously, the principal predominantly determined the vice-principal's traditional role; therefore, it is understandable that the principal's evolving role also influences the evolution of the vice-principal's role. The two roles are linked and becoming increasingly dependent on each other. Vice-principals' duties and responsibilities are broad and fluid, and they work to adapt to and support the principal. Therefore, it is challenging to define an accurate job description for the vice-principal. The commonality of teaching, curriculum leadership and general administration duties are critical.

Leithwood et al. (2006) advocate that developing people, setting directions, redesigning the organisation, and managing the instructional programme are the four core practices of successful school leadership. With educational leadership no longer confined to only the school principal, vice-principals find themselves dealing with the four core practices of successful school leadership. Leadership is no longer confined to school principals but extended to other school personnel such as vice-principals and departmental heads (Hallinger & Heck, 1998). A fundamental aspect of the vice-principal's role remains to be a strong support to the principal and substitute or deputise for the principal in all school practice areas where and when needed.

Vice-principals have become an integral and indispensable part of school leadership (Niewenhuizen & Brooks, 2013), automatically revealing the nature and importance of distributed leadership between these two pivotal roles in ensuring the school's success. Principals taking the distributed leadership approach are more likely to foster collaboration and facilitate a school culture where everyone can exercise a leadership role, including vice-principals (Hermann, 2016). The distributed leadership role of the vice-principal in supporting the principal's evolving role is critical in allowing the SMT

to meet the demands and expectations of the 21st-century school effectively. The shift in curriculum design and the focus on adapting to the altering educational landscape have affected both roles.

As the school principal's role evolves and additional tasks, roles and responsibilities are needed to ensure the school's success, a natural shift of responsibility and expectation has started to fall to the vice-principal. The development and evolution of the vice-principal's roles and responsibilities are intertwined with and impacted by the growing demands on the principal. Hence, a good working relationship between the principal and the vice-principal is essential.

2.6. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE PRINCIPAL AND VICE-PRINCIPAL

Goodman and Berry (2013, p. xv) asserted that *“the principal-assistant principal relationship is perhaps the single most important factor contributing to the quality of the assistant principal leadership development process”*. A school's success relies significantly on the school principal and vice-principal's relationship. Both roles are critical in steering the school's ethos, strategic visions, and curriculum goals and have levels of accountability in delivering the curriculum, student achievement, staff productivity and community engagement. Historically, the vice-principal's role has been to assist the principal wherever necessary. The vice-principal occupies a unique position in the school's organisational hierarchy: closest to the principal, with the responsibility to deputise for the principal when the latter is away, and with the potential to become a principal, but second in position to the principal (Ho, Kang & Shaari, 2020).

As the demands on the school principal have increased, so too have the demands on the vice-principal. According to Sun and Shoho (2017), vice-principals' roles and responsibilities have evolved in an environment where the mandates and demands have increased exponentially. The principal and vice-principal's roles have become increasingly reliant on one another. The roles are intertwined in numerous ways, and the relationship between the principal and vice-principal relies heavily on the values of accountability and trust. In providing guidance, giving direction and orientation to groups, building trusting relationships supports integrity, which sets the foundation for

mutual trust in the leader and between group members (Hakanen & Soudunsaar 2012).

A shared vision and clear understanding of the role and personal expectations must be established between the principal and vice-principal to present a united front in running and leading the school. A lack of trust will negatively affect shared leadership, delegation, communication, and productivity, placing the school at risk.

The 21st-century skill of collaboration is critical in the relationship between the top two leaders of the school. Hodges (2018) indicates that the need for re-evaluation and restructuring is immense. As the demands of education continue to change, so does the principal's role. Increased demands within school leadership are better served through effective teamwork. The 21st-century individual leaders should revolve around teamwork, communication, collaboration and learning for value creation, quality, responsiveness, innovation, and integration. The 21st-century education manager should both manage the institution and provide leadership. Therefore, they should be team players, mentors, facilitators, visionaries, and entrepreneurs who can stimulate creativity, innovation and promote learning (Longenecker, Clinton & Ariss, 2002).

The vice-principal's role in assisting in leading and managing the school alongside the principal remains critical to the school's success. Hodges (2018) agrees that today's principals must delegate responsibilities to vice-principals and regularly involve them in tasks that give them access to the myriad of duties in which principals participate daily. The primarily administrative or disciplinarian role of yesteryear's vice-principal has evolved into a more substantial role of assisted instructional and transformational leadership alongside the principal. The relationship between the principal and vice-principal should have a collaborative mindset, shared vision, and collective responsibilities.

According to Rintoul and Bishop (2019), the principal and vice-principal engage in complex, purposeful work that requires excellent interpersonal strengths, strategic thinking, an inclusive leadership disposition and values, organisational change capacities, and the ability to make evidence-based decisions. Furthermore, both should work complementary to advance students' academic and social learning; however, principals often lead, whereas vice-principals are left to manage despite the

need for leadership synergies. Both roles are critical to the school's success and rely heavily on each other; however, while the roles and relationships between the two portfolios are closely entwined, they remain diverse. Hence, the working relationship between the principal and vice-principal in understanding their diverse roles forms a critical element in the effectiveness of the school management structure.

The vice-principal's distributed leadership role in supporting the principal's evolving role remains critical to the school's success. Khalifa (2018, p.26) acknowledges that:

Continuing to leverage the assistant principal position and aiming to build upon assistant principals' capacities as culturally responsive leaders will be a significant step in meeting the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse students, families, and communities.

These two significant leadership positions within the school set the tone for the broader community, and each portfolio's job descriptions are becoming increasingly complex and intertwined. For the principal to invest in their evolving role, they are increasingly reliant on the vice-principal. Therefore, the relationship between these two crucial stakeholders is significant and requires immense trust and accountability.

In the current educational landscape, different forms of distributed leadership are emerging in schools as the executive head, co-headship, assistant heads, and leadership teams that traverse two or three schools in federation or partnership. Within the growing context of school-to-school networks, distributed leadership could provide more significant opportunities for members to learn from one another.

2.7 CONCLUSIONS

This chapter explored the principal's evolving role and investigated the global and societal demands affecting this evolving leadership position. The research sought to understand how this shift in focus for the principal could affect the vice-principal's distributed leadership role.

Furthermore, the researcher considered the merits of a distributed leadership approach for vice-principals to support principals in their evolving leadership portfolios. The theoretical framework of a distributed leadership approach could assist the

principal in managing their increased workload and allow for leadership development and growth for the vice-principal.

The researcher explored the principal and vice-principal's job descriptions and used evidence to outline specific areas of responsibility for both. The evidence shows that it remains challenging to pinpoint an accurate job description for either of these roles. The complexity of the roles relies on several factors, including management structures, school demands and the relationship between the principal and vice-principal.

In the next chapter, the researcher will explore the research methodology used to conduct the study. Furthermore, the research design will be included and discussed, and data-collection techniques and data analysis will be presented. Additionally, how the data will be validated and the study's reliability will be outlined.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

From the literature, the previous chapter outlined the principal's evolving role and explored how it affects the vice-principal's role. The principal and vice-principal's job descriptions were explored using various sources. The vice-principal's distributed leadership approach in supporting the principal's evolving role underpins this study. This framework is critical as it outlines the shared responsibilities of the principal and vice-principal in dealing with the increased demands of school leadership.

This chapter describes the research process, including the research aim, the research method, and a justification for the research method design. This chapter will address the population group and sampling technique selected for this study and explain the instrumentation used to collect data. Furthermore, data collection, analysis, and presentation are discussed. The chapter will discuss trustworthiness in qualitative research and outline how it was applied to this study.

The researcher explores the challenges faced by the principal and vice-principal in their evolving roles in school leadership. The dialogue between the researcher and participants was conducted as an interview. This study aims to understand the vice-principal's distributed leadership approach in supporting the principal's evolving role.

3.2 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

This study aims to establish how the vice-principal's distributed leadership role can support the principal's evolving role in independent schools in Gauteng. The main aims lead to the following objectives:

- Describe the current job descriptions of the principal and vice-principal in independent primary schools in Gauteng.
- Critically analyse the evolving leadership role of primary school principals in independent schools in Gauteng.

- Distinguish which external and internal driving forces have changed the role and focus of the principal and vice-principal's job descriptions in independent primary schools in Gauteng.
- Analyse how these external and internal driving forces impact the vice-principal's distributed leadership.

The objectives are outlined using the following sub-questions to recognise how these external and internal driving forces have impacted the vice-principal's distributed leadership role.

- What are the job descriptions of the principal and vice-principal in independent primary schools in Gauteng?
- How has the role of the primary school principal in independent schools in Gauteng evolved?
- Which external and internal driving forces have resulted in a change to the role and focus of the job description of the principal and vice-principal in independent primary schools in Gauteng?
- How have these external and internal driving forces impacted the distributed leadership role of the vice-principal?

Data collection and the consequent answers to the above sub-questions will assist the researcher in investigating how the vice-principal's distributed leadership approach can support the principal's evolving role.

3.3 THE RESEARCH DESIGN

Macmillan and Schumacher (2014) define research design as a plan describing the conditions and procedures for collecting and analysing data. Therefore, a research design is a plan or blueprint that must be followed to collect evidence. Empirical research relies on evidence gained through reflection and experiences; therefore, the research design specifies a plan for generating empirical evidence that will be used to answer the research questions. The design plan guides the researcher when investigating the research questions such that it will allow establishing valid, trustworthy conclusions.

This study focuses on the principal's evolving role and the vice-principal's supportive role through a distributed leadership framework. School leadership is critical for the school's success. Data were collected through various forms and investigated in its current setting to understand school leadership's complex and interdependent relationship.

The information gathered in the literature study will be explored and compared with the real-life experiences of the principals and vice-principals interviewed in their natural settings. It is critical to establish the difference between theory and experience when understanding the principal and vice-principal's evolving roles and the framework of distributed leadership within a school management system. Being connected to school leadership herself, the researcher wanted to explore the real-life experiences of others in this field to gain a greater understanding of school leadership in various contexts.

One qualitative research method is using case studies, which was the research design selected for this study. The case study method allows for confirmatory (deductive) and explanatory (inductive) findings (Baskarada, 2014; Yin, 2014) and can be based on single or multiple cases and include both qualitative and quantitative data. Harrison (2017) proposes that case study research has grown in reputation as a practical methodology for investigating and understanding complex issues in real-world settings. Case studies can be exploratory, descriptive, or explanatory. According to Baskarada (2014), case studies allow the researcher to gain an in-depth holistic view of the research problem and facilitate describing, understanding and explaining a research problem. Case studies are appropriate for exploratory and explanatory research and allow the researcher to collect, process, and evaluate data when investigating a research topic. Case studies' evidence includes interviews, documentation, archival records, direct observations, participant observation, and physical artefacts. One critical data source in qualitative case study research is the interview (Creswell, 2018).

Harrison (2017) reminds us that the versatility of case study research to accommodate the researcher's philosophical position presents a unique platform for various studies that can generate more significant insights into areas of inquiry. Exploratory case

studies are mainly used for theory building and can be undertaken to investigate relationships within a specific context. The case study method allows the researcher to explore socio-political influences and engage with the participants' perspectives. The fundamental goal of case study research is to conduct an in-depth analysis of an issue within its context to understand the issue from the participant's perspective (Stake, 2006; Merriam, 2009; Simons, 2009; Stake, Yin, 2014).

Denzin and Lincoln (2011, p.8–10) summarise the characteristics of qualitative research into five attributes:

- reducing using positivist or postpositivist perspectives,
- accepting postmodern sensibilities,
- capturing the individual's viewpoints,
- examining the constraints of everyday life, and
- securing detailed descriptions.

These characteristics are commonly demonstrated in case study research. Through the case study design, the researcher will capture detailed descriptions of the selected participants' real-life experiences by capturing the individuals' experiences and viewpoints and examining their expectations of everyday life within the boundaries of school leadership. Yin (2014) concurs that the *how* and *why* questions are better answered through case studies because they address operational links to be traced with time rather than mere frequencies or incidences. Exploratory case studies allow the participants being interviewed to share essential opinions, experiences, and insights into the topic being discussed.

Harrison (2017, p.10) states:

With the capacity to tailor approaches, case study designs can address a wide range of questions that ask why, what, and how of an issue and assist researchers to explore, explain, describe, evaluate, and theorise about complex issues in context. Outcomes can lead to an in-depth understanding of behaviours, processes, practices, and relationships in context.

Stake (2013) refers to three forms of case studies. Intrinsic case studies enquire a better understanding of a specific case of interest, instrumental case studies provide insight into an area or refine an issue, and collective case studies include multiple data and case study collecting. Stake warns that these studies are interlinked, as they seldom fit into one specific category.

A qualitative, exploratory case study design was adopted to assist the researcher in achieving her study objectives. Furthermore, the researcher focused on an instrumental case study design.

3.4 THE RESEARCH APPROACH

Empirical research can be conducted through quantitative or qualitative research. Quantitative research gathers numerical data to quantify opinions, behaviours, or other predetermined and defined variables. This research approach is scientific because it emphasises numbers and figures when collecting data. According to McMillan and Schumacher (2010), the qualitative research design seeks to understand certain phenomena by understanding the population's feelings, behaviours, and perceptions.

Qualitative research gathers non-numerical data to find meanings, opinions, or fundamental details from its subjects. The sample size for such research is small and lends itself to a conversational method to provide more insight or in-depth information about the problem. The researcher must understand the phenomena from the participants' perspective with qualitative research. According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), qualitative research reveals the meaning of an occurrence for the people involved in it. In conducting a study qualitatively, researchers are concerned with identifying how people describe their experiences. Researchers, therefore, must detach themselves from personal opinions to avoid bias and safeguard the study's trustworthiness.

This study was conducted using the qualitative research approach. Qualitative researchers want to obtain information directly from the source (McMillian & Schumacher, 2014). The qualitative approach allows for a better understanding of human thought and experiences and exploring human interaction and behaviour. The qualitative research approach allowed the researcher greater insight into the real-life

experiences of her participants and their first-hand accounts of school leadership. Through discussions with the participants, the researcher could establish common themes regarding the sub-questions and gain a deeper understanding of the participants' viewpoints. As supported by De Vaus (2014), the qualitative research approach provides abundant data about real-life people and situations. Denzin and Lincoln (2005) provide the following principles underlying qualitative research.

- Qualitative research is holistic; it explores the larger picture and begins with a search for understanding the whole.
- Qualitative research evaluates the relationships within a system.
- Qualitative research focuses on understanding a given social setting, not necessarily on making predictions about that setting.
- Qualitative research demands time-consuming analysis; it requires ongoing data analysis.
- Qualitative research design requires the researcher to become the research instrument and incorporates room for describing the researcher's biases and ideological preferences.
- Qualitative research design incorporates informed consent decisions and is responsive to ethical concerns.

This study will investigate the vice-principal's distributed leadership role in supporting the principal's evolving role in independent schools in Gauteng Province. The researcher selected a qualitative research method for this study because it highlights human interaction and focuses on understanding and interpreting meaning. Data collection was conducted using in-depth interviews and consisted of words rather than numbers, and evidence was collected in the participants' natural surroundings.

During data collection, the researcher intended to distinguish which external and internal factors have changed the roles of the principal and vice-principal to analyse their job descriptions and explore how the framework of distributed leadership can support the principal's evolving role. The researcher conducted semi-structured, in-depth interviews with chosen participants. The researcher recorded the interviews on an iPad and transcribed them within 48 hours to ensure the trustworthiness of the data.

The interview data and documents retrieved from the participants were analysed, and common themes were highlighted.

3.5 THE RESEARCH PARADIGM

Research paradigms refer to social worldviews that guide research (Fossey, Harvey, McDermott & Davidson, 2002). These include how data are collected or generated, the types of questions or observations used to generate data, and how the findings are interpreted (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014). The term paradigm is derived from the Greek word meaning pattern. Paradigms, therefore, have critical "*implications for every decision made in the research process*" (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017, p.26). The researcher selected the constructivist paradigm as the guided pattern for this research to collect and analyse data.

According to Creswell (2014), constructivism deals with developing subjective meanings and understandings of one's experiences concerning specific topics based on one's social and historical background. Constructivism creates and develops findings in the investigation process. Consequently, the researcher used the understanding of personal experiences to find meaning in the reality of the research being conducted. In this research paradigm, theory comes second to research. Research in the constructivism paradigm is grounded in the data collected and the interaction between the participants and researcher. The researcher influences research through interactions with participants and data (Mulugeta, Williamson, Monks, Hack, & Beaver, 2017), and the researcher's experience is valued in this process (Charmaz, 2014).

The constructivist paradigm assumes a subjectivist epistemology. The researcher collects data through an interactive process with the participants, which could include interviews and dialogue. Consequently, researchers create meaning from data collection by applying their thinking and reasoning through personal interactions with the participants. The researcher will construct knowledge socially because of her real-life experiences within the natural settings investigated (Punch, 2005). For this study, data were gathered through semi-structured in-depth interviews.

Relativist ontology underpins the constructivist paradigm. Therefore, the researcher believes numerous realities have been experienced and can be explored and understood through conversations between the researcher and participants. Chalmers, Manley and Wasserman (2005) highlight that realities can be explored and meaning can be made of them or reconstructed through human interactions between the researcher and research subjects and among the research participants. The researcher was aware that the participants would hold unique and varied experiences in this study.

The constructivist paradigm follows a naturalist methodology where the researcher remains neutral and can use data gathered through interviews, conversations, written texts, and reflective meetings. Finally, the constructivist paradigm seeks balanced axiology in that the researcher will present a balanced perspective of the research findings.

According to Morgan (2007), research within the interpretivist/constructivist paradigm exhibit the following characteristics:

- Admitting that the social world cannot be understood from an individual's standpoint
- Believing that realities are multiple and socially constructed
- Accepting that there is inevitable interaction between the researcher and research participants
- Accepting that context is vital for knowledge and knowing
- Believing that the findings create knowledge, can be value-laden, and the values must be made explicit
- The need to understand the individual rather than universal laws
- Believing that causes and effects are mutually interdependent
- Believing that contextual factors must be considered in any systematic pursuit of understanding

The researcher followed the constructivist paradigm for this study to construct knowledge using data. The researcher understood that there would be multiple

realities to her research questions and that contextual factors and social constructs must be considered when seeking knowledge.

3.6 POPULATION AND SAMPLING

3.6.1 Population and selection of participants

McMillan and Schumacher (2014) explain that a population is a group of individuals or events from which a sample is drawn, and results can be generated. The target population for this research are 160 independent primary schools in Gauteng.

3.6.2 Sampling technique

Rahi (2017) highlights various forms of sampling, such as probability, simple random, systematic random, and cluster sampling, and notes that judgement sampling defines a process where researchers use their judgement to select a group of people who knows about the problem. Judgemental sampling is also called purposive sampling because it involves a specific purpose. Judgement or purposeful sampling was used in this research because the researcher selected the sample group based on her knowledge.

Patton (2015) declares that the logic and power of purposeful sampling lie in selecting information-rich cases for an in-depth study. By using purposeful sampling, the researcher could select a small group of individuals familiar and experienced with the research problem being investigated. Van Manen (2014) proposes that purposive sampling indicates that interviewees or participants are selected based on their knowledge and verbal eloquence to describe a group or (sub)culture to which they belong.

Furthermore, McMillan and Schumacher (2014) identify different types of purposeful sampling, such as site selection, comprehensive sampling, maximum variation sampling, snowball sampling, and sampling by case type. Vice-principals and principals were selected for this study because of their specific insights and experiences. According to Patton (2002), purposeful sampling is widely used in qualitative research for identifying and selecting information-rich cases for the most effective use of limited resources. Creswell, Plano and Clark (2011) concur that

purposeful sampling involves identifying and selecting individuals or groups exceptionally knowledgeable or experienced in a phenomenon of interest. Consequently, for this study, the researcher will focus on purposeful sampling.

3.6.3 Sample of the study

McMillan and Schumacher (2014) clarify that a sample is a group of subjects from whom data are collected, and they often represent a specific population. Eight participants ($n = 8$) were selected for this study. Four participants (P1–P4) are current principals who were also vice-principals during their careers, whereas the other four (VP1–VP4) are current vice-principals from independent primary schools in Gauteng. The eight schools from which the sample group was obtained are also a sample from the population of 160 independent schools in Gauteng.

3.7 INSTRUMENTATION AND DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURES

3.7.1 Introduction

The definition of instrumentation provided by Hsu and Sandford (2010, p.608) is as follows.

Instrumentation refers to the tools or means by which investigators attempt to measure variables or items of interest in the data-collection process. It is related not only to instrument design, selection, construction, and assessment but also to the conditions under which the designated instruments are administered—the instrument is the device used by investigators for collecting data.

Instrumentation, therefore, refers to the researcher's specific method of collecting data to assist with the research. For this qualitative case study, the researcher used interviews (both semi-structured and in-depth) and documentation retrieval as instruments for gathering data.

3.7.2 Interviews

According to Hammond and Wellington (2013), interviews are conversations between the researcher and interviewee. Brinkmann and Kvale (2005) warn that one challenge

of conducting interviews is that they are conducted under the naive assumption that the researcher wants to understand through dialogue and discussion. It is critical to safeguard the interview's integrity and view the interview as an essential tool in collecting critical data. McGrath, Palmgren and Liljedahl (2019) indicate that data collection through interviews should not be conceived as informal chats with interviewees; they are data-collection instruments that can penetrate numerous research questions. The researcher adopted the interview process of Kasunic (2010) (Table 3.1).

Table 3.1: The interview process

Stage	Protocols
Orientation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make introductions and exchange contact details • Describe the study and interview process • Clarify and discuss any expectations regarding non-attribution, data sharing, and any other issues
Information gathering	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The interviewer uses a questionnaire to guide the interview and records responses
Closing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The interviewer reviews the key points, any issues, or action items and confirms accuracy with the respondent • The interviewee is invited to provide feedback on the interview process • The interviewer thanks the interviewee and seeks permission for further contact

Source: Kasunic (2010)

The researcher followed the subsequent guidelines regarding questions and prompts during the discussions with the participants (Table 3.2).

Table 3.2: Questions and prompts in interviewing

Type of Question	Definition	Purpose
Grand tour	General questions regarding the content of the overall research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initiate the interview • Assist participants to start talking about their experiences

	question that the participants know a lot about	
Core questions	Five to ten questions that relate to the information the researcher wants to know	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Answer the research questions • Help participants talk openly about the topic in an exploratory way • Typically asked of all participants
Planned follow-up questions	Specific questions asking for more details about specific aspects of the core questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Answer specific aspects of the core interview questions • Obtain greater detail about responses • Asked depending on participants' responses
Unplanned, follow-up questions	Questions that arise during the interview based on participant responses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Answer specific aspects of the participant's responses • Obtain greater detail about responses • Asked depending on participants' responses

Source: Adapted from DeJonckheere and Vaughn (2018)

Eppich, Gormley and Teunissen (2019) propose that interviews can be unstructured, highly structured, or semi-structured, the latter being the most common.

3.7.2.1 Semi-structured individual interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with four vice-principals of selected independent schools in Gauteng. Cohen and Crabtree (2006) highlight the following characteristics of semi-structured interviews.

- The interviewer and respondents engage in a formal interview.

- The interviewer develops and uses an interview guide—a list of questions and topics that must be covered during the conversation, usually in a specific order.
- The interviewer follows the guide but can follow topical trajectories in the conversation that might stray from the guide when they feel it is appropriate.

Eppich, Gormley and Teunissen (2019) highlight that a well-crafted semi-structured interview guide includes predetermined questions while allowing flexibility to explore emergent topics based on the research question. Dane (2010) concurs that semi-structured interviews can be more flexible and allow the researcher to better understand the interviewees' perspectives. For this study, the researcher followed a list of predetermined questions when interviewing the participants but allowed the conversation to develop based on the participants' experiences and train of thought regarding specific themes. The researcher, therefore, used semi-structured interviews when collecting data from the participants.

The researcher used a digital recording device to capture the interviews and took notes as an additional reference. When preparing for qualitative interviewing, familiarity with the data recording equipment is critical. The interview venue should also be considered, as it could affect the data collection (McGrath, Palmgren, & Liljedahl, 2019).

The researcher familiarised herself with the digital recording device and completed a mock interview before meeting the participants. The recording allowed complete capture of the interview and allowed the researcher to evaluate and validate the conversation. According to Tracy (2013), transcribing decisions affect the meaning of the data, and researchers should cautiously consider typing up the data themselves. Therefore, the researcher transcribed the data from the interviews into written form.

The interviews were conducted in participants' offices at their schools or on Microsoft Teams to ensure convenience and comfort due to COVID-19 safety procedures. If at their school, the researcher could observe the participants in their natural settings and make informal observations. Document retrieval was done at the beginning of the interview. The interview was concluded with the assurance that an interview transcript

would be sent to the participant for final evaluation and consent. The interviews lasted 60–90 minutes, depending on the participant's availability.

3.7.2.2 *In-depth interviews*

In-depth interviews were conducted with four principals of selected independent schools in Gauteng. In-depth interviews involve comprehensive conversations between the researcher and interviewee, with an overall purpose prompted by the research aims but are strongly guided by the interviewee's perceptions, opinions, and experiences (Dickson-Swift, James, Kippen, & Liamputtong, 2007). During an in-depth interview, the participant is considered the expert, and the researcher must be guided by their knowledge and experience. The in-depth interview allows the researcher to gather rich, detailed data from the participant and gain a greater understanding of the research topic from the participant's perspective. The researcher should allow for open-ended questions to allow for rich conversation rather than closed questions that will result in stilted answers. Queirós, Faria and Almeida (2017) explain that in-depth interviews provide rich information and allow asking follow-up questions, probing additional information, justifying previous answers, and connecting several topics. It also offers a comfortable atmosphere where people might feel more comfortable conversing.

Eppich, Gormley and Teunissen (2019) remind us that researchers must attend to essential elements before, during, and after the interview to collect rich interview data. The qualitative methodology affects critical aspects, including who conducts the interview, who participates in the interview, what is included in the interview guide, where the interview occurs, and how data will be captured, transcribed, and analysed. Conducting a good interview is paramount to the success of accurate data collection. The interviewer's preparation and experience will affect the collection of relevant information and allow for optimal gain regarding the interview. Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009) propose that the most critical matter at the beginning of the interview is establishing a rapport with the participant. The participant must be comfortable with the researcher, and there must be a high level of trust. Smith et al. state that you are unlikely to obtain worthy data from your participant unless you succeed in establishing this rapport.

Roller and Lavrakas (2015) outline various interview skills that a quality interviewer demonstrates to minimise inadvertent variations in the data associated with interviewer bias, maximising data validity and reliability. These skills include

- building a rapport with the participant,
- actively listening to the participant by demonstrating a sincere interest in their answers and asking appropriate follow-up questions,
- staying focused on the research objective but allowing for flexibility in the flow of the interview,
- being aware of verbal and nonverbal cues that add meaning to the data collected, and
- ensuring that the data obtained are accurate and complete during each interview.

Given the above, the researcher established a good trust relationship with the participants by outlining the study's objectives when asking them to participate in the study. The researcher provided the participants with the questions before the interview to allow for thorough preparation. The researcher established a feasible and comfortable location suitable for the participants and interviewed them per the participants' availability. All COVID-19 safety protocols were upheld during the interview process.

After completing the interviews, the researcher transcribed the interviews from the audio recording and typed up the findings. Any clarifications that were required were followed up with the participants. As a form of transparency, the participants were each given a copy of their transcribed interview.

3.7.3 Document analysis

Documents can refer to numerous items, including advertisements, brochures, letters, reports, minutes of meetings, and policy documents. Like other analytical methods in qualitative research, document analysis requires examining and interpreting the data to elicit meaning, gain understanding, and develop empirical knowledge (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Hammond and Wellington (2013) agree with data collection using documents by advising that in contemporary research, the study of documents might

complement other data collection methods. The documents collected for this study included participants' biographical information, any recent advertisements regarding the principal and vice-principal, job profiles of the principal and vice-principal, and leadership structures or management organograms.

The researcher used the document retrieval method and the semi-structured, in-depth interviews to support triangulation. According to Yin (2013), the qualitative researcher should draw upon multiple (at least two) sources of evidence; that is, to seek convergence and corroboration using different data sources and methods. Apart from documents, such sources include interviews and participant or non-participant observation. Bowen (2009) states that the rationale for document analysis lies in its role in methodological and data triangulation, the immense value of documents in case study research, and its usefulness as a standalone method for specialised qualitative research.

The documents collected regarding the sub-questions posed added insight into the roles of the principal and vice-principal. The researcher could compare themes gained from the semi-structured, in-depth interviews with that of the documents retrieved. Non-technical literature, such as reports and internal correspondence, is a potential source of empirical data for case studies, for example, data on the context within which the participant operates (Mills, Bonner, & Francis, 2006). By reviewing the documents presented by the participants, the researcher could uncover meaning and discover insights and deepen her understanding of the participants' experiences.

3.8 DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION

3.8.1 Data analysis

Data analysis is critical in qualitative research because it informs the study's outcomes. Qualitative data analysis makes sense of the raw data to understand participants' perceptions, feelings, and attitudes (McMillian & Schumacher, 2010). For this study, data analysis included organising the data-collection findings into smaller sections and finding common patterns and themes to make sense of it. Therefore, the qualitative technique of content analysis was used. Patton (2002) states that content analysis takes qualitative data and illuminates it to find consistencies and meanings.

This process can involve evaluating themes, recurring words, and patterns in speeches or written text.

Two content analysis techniques exist, inductive and deductive. Inductive data analysis was selected as the appropriate technique for the study, as it aligned with the data analysis objectives of the study. The inductive approach begins with observations and data collection, then seeks to find patterns in the data and observations, followed by developing theories. Table 3.3 presents the different stages of inductive data analysis, and each phase is briefly discussed below.

Table 3.3: Process of inductive data analysis

Phase	Aspects covered in this phase
1. Initial fieldwork and recording	Data collection <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify participants • Request job descriptions and management structures • Design questionnaire • Collate pre-interview notes
2. Continued fieldwork and recording with initial data collection	Data collection through written documents and interviews <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interview transcripts • Post-interview notes • Participant checking
3. Coding and categorising	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Predetermined categories will have been established through the research problem • Identifying patterns and themes through triangulation, including artefact collection, field observation, and interviews
4. Identifying patterns and themes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design narrative structures • Design visual representations

Source: McMillan and Schumacher (2006, p.365)

Phase 1: Initial fieldwork and recording

Data analysis begins as the researcher gathers essential information from the participants through documentation retrieval and biographical forms. The researcher prepares the basic questionnaire that will be followed during the interview process.

Phase 2: Continued fieldwork and recording with initial data collection

Data collection and analysis were conducted simultaneously because of the intimate nature of the two aspects. After each interview, the researcher transcribed the recorded interviews and aligned the documents retrieved. The researcher began processing possible themes but remained open to emerging patterns and themes.

During this process, the researcher also focused on data reduction. Marshall and Rossman (2013) explain data reduction as the process of selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting, and transforming large volumes of data collected through field notes or transcriptions into manageable chunks. By implementing data reduction, the researcher focused on relevant data related to the study and could organise her findings into suitable categories.

Phase 3: Coding and categorising

The researcher organised the field notes and interview information chronologically and created separate folders for each participant to create structure and meaning to the data collected. Each participant received a specific code (principals: P1–P4; vice-principals: VP1–VP4). The researcher kept both electronic and hard copy files of her findings to ensure information security.

By remaining open to reviewing and reorganising data, the researcher could categorise and code the information by considering the interview and documentation retrieval findings. The researcher sought to identify recurring ideas or language when identifying common categories. McMillian and Schumacher (2010) note that inductive data analysis breaks down data and groups it into categories and codes based on similarities and differences and things that stand out from verbal and written field notes.

The researcher made meaning of the data by identifying themes and patterns using coding. Coding involves labelling and systemising data. The researcher used colour and varied fonts to code her findings for this study. A code is a name given to a specific category or segment, and categories are the main ideas used to describe the denotation of coded data. The researcher created categories to discover patterns and themes in this study.

Phase 4: Identifying patterns and themes

Roller and Lavrakas (2015) confirm that it is only by complete immersion into code development and the coding itself that the researcher can identify the appropriate themes in the data, recognise the appropriate connections between these, and build the appropriate stores that effectively communicate the meaning of the study outcome.

The emergent themes were conveyed using a narrative passage, and tables were included to indicate descriptive information regarding each participant.

Note that the phases above are interwoven and overlap. Data analysis is an ongoing part of qualitative research because the investigation is conducted during and after data collection. Flick (2007) stresses that qualitative data analysis describes a phenomenon in greater detail, compares several cases, and develops theories of the phenomena. The researcher derived meaning from the study by comparing the emerging themes to that of the literature. Creswell (2013) states that the final step in data analysis involves interpreting and making meaning of data.

3.8.2 Data presentation

As mentioned above, the data were recorded, coded, categorised, analysed, and interpreted. Data were presented as narrative descriptions and included relevant quotations from the participants. Using tables also assisted in organising certain information. Data were managed manually and with the assistance of a computer to provide easy access and well-organised data results. The final records included:

- appropriate documents retrieved during the process,
- verbatim accounts from the interviews,
- summarised insights of each interview session,
- reflections from the researcher on each interview process, and
- reflections from the researcher on the participants' contributions.

3.9 TRUSTWORTHINESS OF THE STUDY

Trustworthiness or rigour refers to the degree of confidence in data, interpretation, and methods used to ensure the study's quality (Pilot & Beck, 2012). Trustworthiness to qualitative research is what validity and reliability are to quantitative research. The constructs are credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability. This study used these constructs to enhance the trustworthiness of the findings and will be briefly discussed.

3.9.1 Credibility

Credibility in qualitative research refers to the connection between what the participants say and how the researcher interprets and describes their viewpoints. According to Bertram and Christiansen (2014), credibility is ensured when the participants and end-users in the research agree that the data collected are believable from their perspectives. Elo, Kääriäinen, Kanste, Pölkki, Utriainen and Kyngäs (2014) state that to enhance credibility, the researcher must thoroughly analyse the data generation methods selected and ensure that they end up with the most suitable one for the enquiry. In this study, the researcher followed the strategies proposed by Macmillan and Schumacher (2014) of prolonged engagement, which implies spending adequate time with the participants to get to know them, build trust and rapport, and concurrently gather data until the study objectives have been met. Furthermore, the researcher will use triangulation. Baxter and Jack (2008) state that triangulation refers to using more than one data generation and analysis method to understand the perspective better. By using documentation retrieval, observation, and interviews, the researcher could gain insight from the interview process and documents and observations that supported what the participants were experiencing. Furthermore, the purposive sampling method ensured that participants selected for the study fit the purpose, enhancing credibility. The interviews were conducted in the participants' natural setting or on Microsoft Teams due to COVID-19 restraints with the participants' natural language, allowing them to express themselves fully and in-depth, giving more credible accounts of their realities.

3.9.2 Transferability

Transferability refers to how the findings can be applied in other contexts or with other respondents (Babbie & Mouton, 2011). This study's findings were presented such that they could be applied to solve other related studies or contexts. As school leadership develops, this study could be transferred to explore the evolving role of the school's executive head, which is a new position in many independent schools.

3.9.3 Dependability

Dependability can be established if an inquiry provides its audience with evidence that its findings would be similar if they were to be repeated with the same or similar respondents in the same context (Babbie & Mouton, 2011). To ensure dependability, a field log and journal were kept (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). The researcher logged all her calendar events, participant details, observations, and plans. Nothing was left to memory. The researcher also overlapped methods, such as interviews and document retrieval. Understanding that the perspective or position of the researcher shapes all research, the notion of reflexivity was considered. Malterud (2011) proposes that a researcher's background and position will affect what they choose to investigate, the angle of investigation, the methods judged most appropriate for this purpose, the findings considered most appropriate, and the framing and communication of conclusions. Mulugeta, Williamson, Monks, Hack, and Beaver (2017) concur that the researcher influences the research through interactions with participants and data, and the researcher's experience is valued in this process. Consequently, the researcher had to apply reflexivity and question her assumptions and biases. The researcher had to provide enough evidence so that the reader would accept her findings as valid.

3.9.4 Conformity

According to Polit and Beck (2012), conformity refers to the level with which data accurately depict the information provided by the participants and are further analysed to reflect on reality rather than tales invented by the researcher. The participants' direct words in the interviews are captured in quotation marks throughout the study. According to Elo et al. (2014), using quotation marks ensures a connection between the data generated and findings and ensures that what is reflected in the study is the participants' voices. Furthermore, the researcher's logbook obtained accurate records regarding meeting notes, observations, and times. Charmaz (2014; 2017) attests that researchers must be reflexive to avoid forcing their preconceived ideas on the data and views memo writing as a key to reflexivity.

3.10 RESEARCH ETHICS

Permission to proceed with this research was obtained from the UNISA Ethics Committee (REC). This tool allows for the proper conduct of the researcher and the correct ethical boundaries to be implemented during research. Yin (2011) explains that the researcher must behave appropriately and adhere to a code of ethics or ethical standards. The following issues were considered to ensure an ethical study.

3.10.1 Informed consent

To gather information for this research, trust needed to be gained between the researcher and participants. Following Mack, Woodsong, MacQueen, Guest and Namey (2011), the researcher remained truthful and straightforward about the research objectives and did not create a false expectation to obtain the participants' cooperation. The researcher requested permission from the ISASA to conduct a study (Appendix A) of selected schools and the appropriate authorities of the schools (Appendix B). Once permission was granted, a letter outlining the study's purpose was sent to the purposefully selected participants. These letters (Appendix C) contained the following information:

- information on the researcher
- introduction and background to the study
- purpose and aims of the research
- benefits of the study regarding schools
- research plan and outline of procedures
- role of the researcher and participants

Participants were asked whether they were willing to participate in the study. Confirmation of acceptance was in the form of a signed consent form (Appendix D). Participants received copies of their signed consent forms and their final interview questions and schedule.

3.10.2 Anonymity and confidentiality

The researcher explained to the participants that if they agreed to participate in the study, their identity and that of their schools would be protected by using pseudonyms

when presenting the findings, safeguarding anonymity and confidentiality. Tracy (2013) supports this notion and declares that participants have a right to confidentiality. Furthermore, it was explained that all information provided by the participants during the enquiry would be used only for the research and that their participation was voluntary. It was explained that participants could withdraw at any point in the study should they so desire.

3.10.3 Caring and fairness

All intentions of this study were made clear to the participants before they consented. Permission for this study was obtained from the ISASA of selected schools and the appropriate authorities of the schools. The researcher will promote fairness by having open discussions and negotiations with the participants (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014). Furthermore, all COVID-19 safety protocols were considered, and participants who were more comfortable using Microsoft Teams as a communication tool rather than face-to-face interviews were accommodated.

3.11 CONCLUSION

This chapter discussed the methodology and research design. The adopted research design is an exploratory case study design that will allow the researcher to generate rich, relevant data to answer the research questions. Selecting the qualitative research method was justified. The researcher explained that purposeful sampling was used, and a collection of eight samples were selected to participate in the study. Documentation retrieval and semi-structured and in-depth interviews were the instrumentation tools used to gather evidence for this study. This chapter also discussed how the researcher analysed and presented the data. The chapter concluded with the study's trustworthiness and ethical concerns by explaining the principles to which the researcher adhered.

The following chapter will present and provide an analysis of the research findings, and it will present and discuss the research data and findings.

CHAPTER 4

PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF RESEARCH DATA

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter provided an overview of the research design and the qualitative research method used to investigate the school principal's evolving role and the impact on the vice-principal's job description through the distributed leadership framework. The chapter highlighted which method and instrumentation would be used to collect data.

This chapter will present, analyse, and discuss emerging themes gained from qualitative data collection, interviews, and document retrieval. The principal's evolving leadership role will be discussed based on the data obtained and its effect on the vice-principal through distributed leadership.

As indicated in Chapter 3, semi-structured and in-depth interviews were conducted with principals and vice-principals from various independent schools in Gauteng. An interview guide formed the base of open-ended questions guiding the discussions. The data were processed by transcribing all interviews and analysing the responses, and document retrieval was used to confirm aspects of the interview responses. As described in Chapter 1, this study's aims can be divided into the following objectives.

- Describe the current job descriptions of principals and vice-principals in independent primary schools in Gauteng.
- Critically analyse the evolving leadership role of primary school principals in independent schools in Gauteng.
- Distinguish which external and internal driving forces changed the role and focus of the job description of principals and vice-principals in independent primary schools in Gauteng.
- Analyse how these external and internal driving forces affected the vice-principal's distributed leadership role.

The researcher identified the common categories and themes emerging from the data collection and coded the information. The researcher compiled a list of these, allocated codes and compared them. The categories were divided into themes derived from recurring codes. This chapter will provide an overview of the research process, interpret the data and highlight the link between theory and data.

4.2 THE RESEARCH PROCESS

4.2.1 Introduction

The researcher used a qualitative case study method for collecting data. Semi-structured and in-depth interviews were conducted with principals and vice-principals from eight independent schools in Gauteng. School permission for research was obtained, and each participant signed a consent form before interviews were set up. Interviews were recorded and transcribed to enhance the trustworthiness of the research. The transcripts were shared with the participants, who could make edits where necessary and confirm that they were happy with the transcripts.

4.2.2 Data-collection method

The researcher first obtained permission from the Head of the school to conduct research within their school. Once permission was obtained, the researcher emailed the participants an outline of the study and the relevant consent forms. Once the forms were returned, the researcher set up an interview time convenient for the participant. Data were collected using online, face-to-face, semi-structured interviews with four vice-principals and online, face-to-face in-depth interviews with four principals. One interview schedule was used to conduct and guide all eight interviews (**Appendix G**). The interview schedule was adhered to for consistent data collection, but the researcher allowed additional comments and insights relevant to the participants' personal experiences and the research. The in-depth interviews took much longer than the semi-structured interviews due to the opportunity for comprehensive conversation and the vast knowledge and experience being shared.

The interview questions were grouped into five sections. The first four sections focused on classifying the data into main sections derived from the sub-aims outlined

in Chapter One. The fifth section explored the participants' understanding of distributed leadership. The sub-aims were expanded upon during data collection to include a broader look at the reality of the principal and vice-principal's roles. During the interviews, an obvious overlap of questions in the interview schedule occurred due to the intimate nature of the two roles. In certain instances, the participants felt that they had already answered the question posed. The researcher explained that specific questions had to be posed close in content to one another to ensure that the information gained was accurate. The interviews occurred between June and August 2021. Purposeful sampling was used when selecting schools, and document analysis was part of the data collection.

The researcher maintained control of the interview process by alternating a principal with a vice-principal and contacted schools and participants. The first two interviews (P1 and VP 1) set the tone for the subsequent six interviews. The researcher contacted the Head of School for each participant and requested research permission (Appendix E). Once permission had been granted, the researcher contacted the participants and followed through with the necessary participant consent forms (Appendices D and F). Once these forms were returned, the researcher set up an interview time convenient to the participant and sent through the biographical and interview schedule (Appendix G and H).

Due to Covid restrictions and school protocols, most interviews were conducted online using Microsoft Teams. The researcher started each interview by thanking the participant for their time, indicating an understanding of how valuable time is during their busy schedules. The researcher also thanked the participants for supporting lifelong learning by making themselves available to share their expertise in research. The researcher summarised the study and asked whether the participants had questions regarding the forms they had signed. The researcher explained the interview process and requested permission to record the interview on her iPad and cell phone. The researcher highlighted that the school and participants would remain confidential, and the transcript was shared with the participants before processing the data.

The researcher then started the recording, and the interview began. The in-depth interviews conducted with principals who had also been vice-principals in their tenure

lasted 90–110 minutes because they had extensive knowledge of both roles and could share vast detail and knowledge on the subject. The semi-structured interviews with the vice-principals lasted 45–70 minutes. After each interview, the researcher asked whether the participants wanted to share anything else that they felt was not covered in the interview schedule. Most participants declined, saying that they felt the questions had been broad enough to discuss what they wanted to share. The researcher thanked the participants for their contribution and time and gave them an expected date to receive the transcript for final approval.

The researcher transcribed the interviews, and while it was time-consuming, it highlighted emerging themes and provided valuable insight into the questions being posed. After the interviews were transcribed and the participants verified them as an accurate account of the discussion, the researcher identified codes and grouped them under specific headings to answer the research questions. Initially, many participants indicated that they were slightly nervous about the interview. However, receiving the interview schedule before time allowed them to ponder on the questions, and they felt more at ease. Several participants indicated a desire to provide ‘correct’ answers. The researcher reminded participants that there are no correct answers and that she values their authentic experiences and insight.

After concluding the interviews, many participants mentioned that they enjoyed the process and the thought process that the questions provided. In many interviews, participants welcomed the opportunity to engage in rich discussions, encouraged by the researcher, partly due to the conversational tone set during the interview’s early phase.

Data trustworthiness was ensured by implementing the following strategies. The researcher transcribed the interviews to ensure that the words and the correct meaning were represented. Data reliability was enhanced as participants were asked to review and verify the transcripts. No participant reported fault on the data transcript. Strong measures of trustworthiness were upheld during this research process to eliminate bias or data misrepresentation.

4.2.3 Challenges experienced during data collection

Unfortunately, the interview process fell within the period of the third Covid wave. Lockdown conditions complicated the face-to-face interviews, and participants were reluctant and or unable to meet face-to-face due to personal reservations and their schools' Covid protocols. The participants and researcher agreed that the interviews could be conducted online using the Microsoft Teams platform, allowing face-to-face interviews and the necessary privacy and space to conduct the interviews conveniently and safely.

Coordinating the interviews took longer than anticipated due to participants' busy schedules and coordinating the necessary consent forms. One participant had to reschedule their interview for a later date after contracting the Covid virus and being booked off for two weeks. After a strenuous process, the researcher managed to coordinate, conduct, transcribe, and verify eight sets of interviews.

The second challenge experienced concerned document retrieval. Although document analysis was used, the data were not as comprehensive as initially anticipated. Some participants were reluctant to unearth and share the requested documentation. Although the researcher requested the documentation before the interviews and followed up after the interviews, some participants were reluctant to complete the document collection.

4.2.4 Positive aspects experienced during the research process

The schools were highly supportive of research being conducted in their spaces, and the participants were accommodating and happy to share their experiences and expertise. During the interviews, the participants provided valuable feedback to the questions and seemed genuinely interested in the study's outcome. The interviews also provided valuable time for networking. Each participant commented on how much they enjoyed the collaborative opportunity to connect with someone beyond their school space and share ideas. Many indicated that in the Covid times where people have become insular, it was good to connect with someone on a different topic in a different space.

4.3 BIOGRAPHICAL DATA OF THE PARTICIPANTS

This section represents the biographical data of the eight participants in table format.

Table 4.4: Participant codes

Participant	Code
School 1 – Current Principal	Participant A
School 2 – Current Principal	Participant B
School 3 – Current Principal	Participant C
School 4 – Current Principal	Participant D
School 5 – Current Vice-principal	Participant E
School 6 – Current Vice-principal	Participant F
School 7 – Current Vice-principal	Participant G
School 8 – Current Vice-principal	Participant H

Table 4.1 shows the current positions and codes of the eight participants.

Table 4.5: Gender of participants

Gender	Male	Female
	1	7

Table 4.2 shows that there were more female than male participants in management in the schools selected for this study.

Table 4.6: Age of participants

Age	Frequency	Percentage (%)
31–40	0	0
41–50	1	12.5
51–60	7	87.5
Total	8	100

Table 4.3 shows the age distribution, indicating that most of the management members interviewed were between 51 and 60 years old.

Table 4.7: Professional qualifications of the participants

Qualifications	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Doctorate	0	0
Master's	0	0
Honours	3	37.5
Bed Degree	4	50
4-year H.Dip.Ed	1	12.5
3-year Diploma	0	0
Total	8	100

Table 4.4 refers to the participants' qualifications, indicating that most participants hold either an Education or Honours Degree, although the qualifications vary.

Table 4.8: Management experience within the two roles of the principals interviewed

Experience	Vice-Principal	Percentage (%)	Principal	Percentage (%)
0–5 Years	3	75	1	25
6–10 years	1	25	2	50
11–15 years	0	0	1	25
16–20 years	0	0	0	0
Total		100		100

Table 4.5 shows the years of management experiences within the roles of vice-principals and principals of the participants. Most of the group had 0–5 years of experience as a vice-principal and 6–10 years of experience as a principal, indicating that most had more years of experience as a principal than vice-principal.

Table 4.9: Management experience of the vice-principal

Experience	Vice-Principal	Percentage (%)
0–5 Years	2	50
6–10 years	2	50
11 years or more	0	0
Total		100

Table 4.6 shows the years of management experiences of the vice-principals interviewed, indicating an even spread of 5–10 years.

Table 4.10: Total years in education

Experience	Frequency	Percentage (%)
0–5 years	0	0
6–10 years	0	0
11–15 years	0	0
16–20 years	0	0
20–25 years	1	10
26+ years	7	90
Total		100

Table 4.7 above shows the total years of experience in the educational field. The data indicate that most participants had 26+ years of experience within the education field.

4.3.1. Biographical Analyses

The biographical data collected indicate that the researcher selected to obtain evidence from two specific management designations, namely, the vice-principal and the principal. Although the researcher was not specific with gender selection, the biographical data indicate that more women participated in this research than men because four of the eight schools selected were girls' schools, and the other four schools comprised one boys' school and three co-ed schools. The biographical data further indicate that the participants interviewed all hold educational qualifications, aligning with the advertisements in the document retrieval that a relevant educational qualification is a prerequisite. The years of management experience among the participants are varied, but this allows for rich data collection from various viewpoints and experiences. The dual role of principals who were also vice-principals during their tenure strengthens the data collection. Finally, the total years of education among the candidates range between 25 and more years. Therefore, participants could draw on extensive knowledge through their years of management and from their early years when they started as teachers in the classroom. Each participant has spent enough time in education to comment on the evolving roles of the two positions, leading to rich discussions for the researcher.

4.4 DATA ANALYSIS

4.4.1 Introduction

The researcher conducted in-depth interviews with four principals and semi-structured interviews with four vice-principals of selected schools in Gauteng, in total, eight participants. These participants were selected because they could offer valuable insight into the research topic, namely *The distributed leadership role of the vice-principal in supporting the evolving role of the principal: A case study in Gauteng*.

This section presents the data obtained from interviews, arranged according to categories and themes. The results have been kept in sequence with the responses received, and the sequential order of the questions has been adhered to as far as possible.

4.4.2 Presentation and analysis of data obtained from document retrieval

4.4.2.1 management structures

When reviewing the various management structures provided by the participants, the researcher observed that different schools have different management team structures. There was evidence of two or three vice-principals within the management structure supporting the principal in various focus areas, such as curriculum innovation, discipline, administration, and pastoral care. There was evidence of only one vice-principal covering all aspects of support in most schools. In discussion with these vice-principals, they relied on additional staff members, such as Academic Heads or Heads of Grade, to assist them with some of their responsibilities. One school provided a management structure that did not have a vice-principal but rather additional portfolios for academic staff, such as the Head of Academics, Head of Pastoral and Head of Sport. The above aligns with the distributed leadership framework, where shared responsibility supports both the principal and the vice-principal.

4.4.2.2 Advertisements

Three participants provided a recent advertisement used by their school to advertise for a vice-principal position. Common themes in the advertisements included:

- Play a leading role in staff and pupil management
- Implement and oversee the school's instructional programme
- Demonstrate sound organisational skills to help manage the school day
- Maintain strong communal ties with the school stakeholders
- Report to the Head of School
- Support the Head of School in all aspects of school management and leadership

The above concurs with the thoughts that the vice-principal's role has evolved to include managing the instructional programme and running the general school day. It also concurs that the vice-principal is expected to play a significant role in maintaining pupil and staff relationships.

Two participants provided a recent advertisement used by their school to advertise for the position of Head of School. Common themes in both advertisements included:

- Have appropriate academic and professional qualifications
- Have a successful record of championing transformation and diversity
- Have a sound understanding of marketing and financial knowledge
- Demonstrate inspirational leadership and presence within the school community
- Build strong ties with both internal and external stakeholders

The above indicates that new focus areas, such as marketing, transformation, diversity and financial knowledge, are emerging as necessary skills to cope with principalship. The researcher noted that neither advertisements for Head of School contained a requirement for running the instructional school programme.

4.4.2.3 Job descriptions

Four of the eight participants provided job descriptions; however, participants were reluctant to share job descriptions, and the researcher respected this space. In reviewing these job descriptions of both the principal and vice-principal, the researcher observed the job descriptions to be broad and general.

Common themes contained in the job description of the vice-principal included:

- Work with the head and undertake roles associated with school leadership management
- Focus on pupil and staff management and wellbeing
- Undertake school administration
- Curriculum development and implementation
- Teach as required by the timetable
- Manage activities associated with the day-to-day administration of the school
- Support the school's head and the vision

Typical key responsibilities highlighted in the job description of the principal included information linked to the following headings

- Strategic direction/Shaping the future
- Leadership and management of the school
- Sustainability of the school
- Financial and budgetary understanding and accountability
- Community connections
- Leading teaching and learning

During discussions with the participants, they all concurred that while the job descriptions provide a broad outline of the expectations of the two roles, they fail to capture the daily essence of the roles on the ground.

4.4.2 Presentation and analysis of data obtained from interviews

The interview data are arranged in categories and consequent themes related to the vice-principal's distributed leadership role in supporting the principal's evolving role. Qualitative data use words rather than numbers to explain the vice-principal's

distributed leadership in supporting the principal's evolving role. Although the interviews were conducted online as per the correct Covid protocol, the data collected related to the participants' natural environment. Therefore, this design focuses on the participants' lived experiences and is rich and holistic in its offering. Qualitative research is a method where one-on-one interactions between the researcher and participants allow for the interaction of data collection.

Even though there were four objectives in this study, the researcher chose seven sub-headings to analyse the data. The sub-headings aligned easily with the questions posed in the interview. The additional sub-headings allowed the researcher to differentiate data collection between the principal's and vice-principal's roles and separate internal and external forces driving change. The researcher deliberately chose this method to ensure the data collected were detailed and covered each aspect of each sub-aim.

- Sub-headings one and two address objective one
- Sub-heading three addresses objective two
- Sub-headings four and five address objective three
- Sub-headings six and seven address objective four

4.4.2.1 Data regarding the school principal's job description

This section required participants A–D (current principals) to describe their daily duties and job description as school principals. Participant A explained that the principal's job description is to be accountable and responsible for the strategic and operational requirements of the school, and it includes leading various teams of teachers and administrative groups. Participant A indicated that the school's financial sustainability has also become a major focus for the principal over the past three years. Participant A indicated the following about her day:

The main focus of my day seems to be spent on marketing and protecting the sustainability of my school and ensuring that the wellbeing of pupils, parents, and staff are being prioritised. Little time is spent on the operational aspect of school, this is left largely to the deputy heads.

Participants B, C, and D concurred, indicating that sustainability and marketing of schools have become a major priority for principals and part of their daily job description. Participant B summed up her job description as follows:

The head reports to the Board of Governors on the following area of responsibility: Strategic leadership, professional and academic leadership, staff and school employee relationship development, sound administrative and budgetary practices. It is essential that Heads of School focus on renewing and repositioning their schools strategic thinking through positive change management.

Participant C indicated that leadership across the school was the best way to sum up her job description stating, “*Employee relationships, overseeing finances and budgetary requirements, marketing of the school and seeking innovative ways to remain current in a changing educational landscape are my main areas of responsibility*”.

Participant D listed sustainability, marketing, staff leadership, and upholding the school’s ethos as his focus. He commented, “*While I remain responsible for the teaching and learning of the school, I have created checks and balances that allow for others to lead this area. My aim is to focus on varied aspects and to work closely with my team so as to empower others*”.

Participants were asked to highlight the focus areas of their current job. Participant A listed financial sustainability, risk management on all fronts, and staff and pupil wellness as her focus. Participant B indicated that creating trusting relationships with staff, parents, and pupils, maintaining a sustainable school, marketing and finding ways to offer a world-class, all-around education were her priorities. While building sound relationships, staff employment and retention, marketing, and research were on top of the list for Participant C. Participant D felt that community links and groundwork in establishing new programmes across the school to accommodate the Covid pandemic have been a major focus. Three principals agreed that work in transformation and diversity has been critical and time-consuming.

While some similarities exist in focus, especially around relationship building and sustainability of schools, it is interesting to observe that there are also differences, indicating that different schools have distinct needs and principals could have various focus areas. All four principals indicated that the job description is fluid and can change depending on the school's needs, context, and environment. All four principles also indicated that interaction with the pupils on some level remains critical to the role and understanding of their main priority as Head of School. Only one principal was actively involved in the teaching of pupils; the other three remained connected through assemblies, storytelling opportunities, class visits, and discipline meetings. The three principals not involved with teaching expressed a desire to be back in the classroom but felt that their unpredictable diaries did not allow for a total commitment, and it could compromise their students.

When viewing the document retrieval that participants submitted, the researcher noted that the following key focus areas were common among all job descriptions regarding the principal's job description.

- Strategic direction
- Leadership and management of community
- Directing and leading teaching and learning
- School organisation
- Stakeholder engagement

When asked to compare their paper job descriptions to their real-day experiences, the principals shared broad comments. Consequently, the researcher has chosen a table format to highlight the words and phrases used by the participants to highlight the main thoughts on their daily experiences.

Table 4.11: Words and concepts used by principals to describe their real-day experience

Participant	Words and concepts used by principals to describe their real-day experience
A	The paper job description is broad—on the ground, there is much more to do. There is often not enough time in the 'real' day to meet the requirements of this job. The 'real' day revolves around decision-making, many of them spur of the moment decisions. I spend a large part of my day advising and making decisions. The job description asks for a vision and a future, whereas the day-to-day stuff is more demanding and takes time. There is also more interaction with parents than what the job description outlines. Parent interaction can be all-consuming as these relationships are complex. Parents often only want to interact with the principal, especially

Participant	Words and concepts used by principals to describe their real-day experience
	on disciplinary or bullying matters. I deal with quite a bit that is not mentioned in the job description that has been added to my role over the years.
B	The paper description is a good guide, but our real job is often around 'putting out fires'. However, in dealing with the small matters, you often land up addressing the bigger aspects such as building trust and relationships. Each day is different, and you need to be prepared for whatever comes your way. There is high demand for presence and so you day can start at 6 am and end at 8 pm. Weekends and holidays are not officially yours as you need to be available to your community 24/7. I love the idea of what my job description entails, but there is not enough time in my day to meet all the demands as outlined on paper. I think reviewing this document would be good.
C	I think the paper job description captures the perfect day and focus of a principal. However, on the ground, it is very different. So much has changed. You need an incredible amount of patience to deal with the different demands of the day. I did not realise how much of day would be taken up listening to others. I underestimated how much of day would be spent building employee and stakeholder relationships. Everybody wants a piece of your time. While there are some similarities to the paper description, on the ground, it is all about dealing with hands-on stuff and the various challenges that come your way. When I open my office door, I never know how my day will unfold.
D	My real-day involves dealing with minor things that can become major things if not dealt with immediately. As much as you would love to have some time in the day to do big picture thinking, your day can be very unpredictable, and you need to remain flexible. Covid, in particular, has disrupted my normal routine, and we have had to almost reinvent our diary's and our school day. Crisis control has meant that we have had to forgo some of the other areas we should be focusing on. The paper outline is very different to what happens on the ground. What happens on the ground changes every day—it would be impossible to capture everything on paper.

After reading the data gathered, the researcher realised that the daily reality of the principal's job and that of the paper job description did not always align. As outlined in many of the paper job descriptions, the lack of time to do the visionary work was a common thread mentioned by all four principals. Furthermore, the researcher noted that all four principals indicated uncertainty about what their day could bring and that they must prepare for more than only the paper job description. In discussion, all four participants noted a shift in their daily experiences from when they first started as principals.

Participant B commented on possibly needing to revise the paper job description in her organisation because things are so different. The following areas were proposed when the researcher asked participants what they would add to the paper job description.

- **Oversee and drive innovative marketing**

- Ensure the school’s sustainability
- Drive transformation and diversity
- Ensure the community’s health and safety
- Manage internal and external compliance and governance
- Manage mediation and conflict management
- Oversee and implement human resources

From the above discussions, the researcher could establish that the principal’s paper job description remains broad and does not always capture the essence of the daily job. Furthermore, the job description might need to be revised to include new focus areas, indicating that the principal’s role is constantly evolving and changing.

Once the researcher had established that the principal’s job description was varied and changing, it led to the discussion on identifying the key strengths required to fulfil the current principal’s job. The participants shared their thoughts on which skills they felt were necessary to be a successful current day principal. The responses of Participants A–D (current principals) were as follows:

Table 4.12: Words and phrases used to describe the critical strengths required of a principal

Participant	Words and phrases used to describe the critical strengths required of a principal
A	Flexibility, good decision-making skills, courage, the ability to grow and mentor others, strong emotional intelligence (EQ) skills, and the ability to influence and lead rather than manage.
B	Courage, bravery, a firm sense of your beliefs, a sense of hope, a good sense of humour, creativity, flexibility, and perseverance.
C	You need to be visionary, sensitive, and approachable, decisive, confident in your beliefs and abilities, you need to establish influence in your community, you need to be brave and flexible.
D	A sense of calmness and courage, good people skills, proactive thinking, knowledge of the curriculum and best practice, effective planning skills, forethought, and the ability to learn from the past.

Note that the principals have identified various critical strengths to enhance success for a role that should be consistent with requirements. Each key strength spoke to each participant’s lived experience in this role and highlighted the vastness of the

varied expectations and demands of the principal. It was interesting to note that all four principals indicated courage or bravery as a common theme in critical strengths and the ability to remain flexible. Flexible would imply the ability to shift and change and supports the notion that the principal's role is constantly evolving.

In viewing the document retrieval of recently placed advertisements for principals, the following common critical strengths or skills appear:

- excellent communication skills
- excellent interpersonal skills
- sound curriculum knowledge
- visionary leader

Note that words such as flexibility, courage, and bravery are absent from the advertisement for principal positions. However, these were common words highlighted in all participants' responses and referred to often in the discussions with principals and vice-principals interviewed. Flexibility indicates the ability to deal with change, whereas bravery or courage indicates the ability to embrace change.

The final section relates to the main difference in job description between the principal and vice-principal, as viewed by the principal. For clarity, the researcher uses a comparative table to highlight the differences.

Table 4.13: Comparative roles between the principal and vice-principal as seen and experienced by the principals

Participant	Principal's role	Vice- Principal's role
A	<p>Principals are strategically orientated and should be leading rather than managing.</p> <p>Principals must make final decisions and take full responsibility; therefore, accountability is higher for the principal.</p> <p>Principals must lead the school.</p> <p>Nowadays, principals focus more on the broader (outside) aspect of schools.</p>	<p>Vice-principals are more action-orientated and operational.</p> <p>Vice-principals are part of decision-making but not always ultimately accountable, as the final decision rests with the principal.</p> <p>Vice-principals must support the principal in leading the school.</p>

Participant	Principal's role	Vice- Principal's role
B	Principals focus on people management, strategic vision, marketing, and compliance.	Vice-principals focus on operational requirements and the basic functioning of the school day. Vice-principals need to deputise for the principal when and where needed.
C	<p>Principals should be looking ahead and deciding which curriculum programmes are relevant for their school; they are the eyes looking out.</p> <p>Principals are focused on marketing to the outside. They must be the face of the school and interact with communities beyond the school gates.</p> <p>Although in the know of what is happening, they rely on the vice-principals to run the school so that they can engage with additional stakeholders, such as parents, Board, Marketing and Finance committee. Principals invest a lot of their time dealing with compliance and governance of schools rather than operational requirements.</p>	<p>Vice-principals are operational and on the ground. Vice-principals drive the curriculum; they are the eyes looking in.</p> <p>The vice-principals often liaise with staff and pupils and is in the inside face of the school.</p> <p>The vice-principal takes control of the daily issues required to make the school function. They are there to support the principal and assist in any way needed.</p>
D	<p>The principal should be an idea generator.</p> <p>The principal focuses on the substantiality of the school by interrogating decisions, marketing plans, and finance.</p> <p>The principal must be visible and available to the community 24/7.</p> <p>The principal deals with staff and parent issues.</p>	<p>The vice-principal is often the doer or the person who implements ideas.</p> <p>The vice-principal does the groundwork, ensuring the daily engine of the school functions.</p> <p>The vice-principal, although available to the community, is there to support to the principal.</p> <p>The vice-principal deals with student issues.</p>

All four principals referred to their role as more external than internal and emphasised marketing and sustainability as focus areas for today's principals. From the above comparisons, the principals saw the school's operational needs and daily running as part of the vice-principal's responsibility and no longer that of the principals, indicating a shift in responsibility for both roles over the past five years. Reference was made to the vice-principals having an inward focus and the principal having more of an external focus.

All four principals referred to the importance of trust between these two roles and were aligned that as principals, they must feel supported by the vice-principals and have a strong element of confidence in their vice-principals. They agreed that the school's leadership would be ineffective without a shared vision and common understanding between these two roles.

Ironically all four principals indicated that it was hard to let go of specific responsibilities and allow the vice-principals to take control. However, given the additional roles expected of principals today, they realise that they cannot do the job alone and must rely more heavily on the vice-principal to assist. Participant A summed this up by saying,

If I compare my areas of responsibility and accountability when I was a deputy to that of my current deputies, there is a vast difference. So much more is required of the deputies of today, they have become decision makers and leaders in their own field. The two roles require an enormous amount of trust between each other because effectively both parties are running and leading the school, just in different fields. The roles are intertwined, and one cannot function without the other, hence the need for absolute trust.

From this quote, this principal has experienced and lived through significant change regarding the vice-principal and principal's roles.

4.4.2.2 Data regarding the vice-principal's job description

This section required participants E–H to describe their daily duties and job description related to the school vice-principal. Participants E–H are current vice-principals and have rich knowledge in this area. Participant E described her job description as overseeing the daily running of the school, including aspects such as driving the academic programme, timetabling, teaching, pastoral care, and discipline of students. She stated,

In my opinion, there is a lot more to this job than what you see on paper. You cannot be tied into a paper job description. If it comes across my desk, I do the

job. I am here to support both the principal and the school, that means do whatever it takes to get the job done.

Participant F listed overseeing the instructional programme, student management, operational aspects of school, staff guidance, and development as her focus. She summarised her role as follows,

I have discovered that the vice-principal role is not clearly defined. You think you have one job description, but you have varied responsibilities and roles, things are added to your role all the time and you have to remain flexible.

Participant G highlighted academic leadership, staff guidance, performance management, and the operational aspects involved in the daily running of the school. She stated,

Over the years, there has been an increase in expectation. Shared responsibility with the head has increased and more time is needed for on-the-ground issues. My role has shifted and changed over the past few years, and this has been exacerbated by Covid.

Participant H mentioned working with the Head of School to undertake various roles associated with management, such as curriculum development, staff wellness, teaching, and managing the everyday operational aspects of school life. She said, *“Every day is different, it can become very busy and overwhelming at times, but I enjoy my day and I enjoy being involved.”*

When asked to list the focus areas of their current jobs, the participants offered the following insights, listed in Table 4.11.

Table 4.14: Focus areas experienced in the current vice-principal job

Participant	Comments from the participants
E	Teaching, curriculum development, timetabling and the day-to-day running of the school are my main focus. I engage with parents quite a bit, and this takes time. Interacting with staff and keeping them motivated is imperative, and I also focus on ensuring my Head of School feels supported.
F	Besides teaching, I focus very much on the operational side of school. I focus on maintaining the academic programme and the administration side of school. I ensure that timetables and deadlines are effective and

Participant	Comments from the participants
	implemented. I believe that vice-principals should have more time to review the instructional programme, but your busy day does not always allow for this. I am responsible for ensuring that things tick over in the school. I also engage with parents and assist with school queries.
G	A large part of my day is spent on the operational aspects of school and organising the school day. I manage and engage with staff and work with deadlines. I encourage the pursuit of excellence when it comes to teaching. Staff and parent issues take up a lot of time and I try to resolve these as best I can to assist the head. I am also involved in teaching.
H	I have a large focus on the day-to-day academics and academic support for children in need. I teach and I oversee all the communication of the school. I assist with discipline, run assemblies twice a week and liaise with staff on school day requirements. I offer support to staff and assist the head wherever needed.

From the above, the common trends among the vice-principals' roles include teaching, managing the daily operational aspects of school, timetabling, working with deadlines, and engaging with staff. Supporting the head is mentioned by all the vice-principals.

Furthermore, all four vice-principals referred to driving or managing the curriculum or instructional programme. This might have been a focus of yesteryear's principal, but from the evidence gained, this has become a standard function of the vice-principal. When the researcher probed more into this area and asked whether the principal is still involved with the instructional programme, all four vice-principals concurred that while the principal might not implement or drive the instructional programme, they are still involved in its vision and selection. It was determined that the principal and vice-principal meet regularly to discuss the instructional programme, but the vice-principal has taken on more accountability in this area over the past few years.

It is also evident from the above comments that teaching remains a requirement for vice-principals and would support their ability to run and understand the merits of the curriculum programme. The vice-principals were vocal about enjoying their teaching and connection to the classroom. The principals also informally referred to not wanting to lose their teaching hours, as they felt that it kept them connected to the staff and students. However, the job demands have made it incredibly challenging to remain in the classroom.

Three of the four vice-principals mentioned involvement with parents, implying that certain aspects are dealt with at the vice-principal's level before being escalated to the principal, indicating the vice-principal's increasing responsibility. Moreover, all four vice-principals mentioned their role of early intervention with staff matters before escalating issues or questions to the principal.

Common critical strengths required to successfully fulfil a vice-principal's role, as listed by participants E–H, include

- strong organisational skills
- excellent people skills
- manage and resolve conflict
- open to new ideas and change
- patience and a sense of calm
- flexible
- high energy levels
- good listening skills

As mentioned by all four participants, strong organisational skills indicate that the vice-principal spends a significant amount of time organising the school day and seeing to the school's operational needs. Excellent people skills would aid in their many interactions with staff, parents, and pupils. As mentioned by three participants, character traits, such as patience and flexibility, speak to the need of the vice-principal to play a strong supportive role.

Finally, the vice-principals were asked to compare the principal's role to that of the vice-principal. All four vice-principals concurred that the principal's role is varied and constantly changing. They all agreed that while often interchangeable, the two roles have distinct differences, especially regarding accountability. Three vice-principals mentioned how in their time, they have noted a profound change in the principal's role and that as the current vice-principal, they feel they are doing the job of the principal from yesteryear.

Table 4.12 outlines the differences between the two roles as seen and experienced by the vice-principals.

Table 4.15: Comparative roles between the principal and vice-principal as seen and experienced by the vice-principals

Participant	Principal's role	Vice- Principal's role
E	<p>The principal is the face of the school.</p> <p>The principal works in the foreground.</p> <p>The principal establishes vision and interacts with major stakeholders.</p>	<p>The vice-principal is on the ground.</p> <p>The vice-principal is behind the scenes, making sure things happen.</p> <p>The vice-principals are the doers and often the problem solvers.</p>
F	<p>The principal deals with broader aspects, such as legal and compliance issues.</p> <p>The principal tends to be more involved with public relations, marketing, and writing policies.</p>	<p>The vice-principal is more on the ground and functions in the operational space.</p> <p>The vice-principal implements policy and ensures that the principal has time for external meetings.</p>
G	<p>The principal focuses on strategic aspects and interacts with the Board and the broader community.</p> <p>The principal is required to remain abreast of global changes and the impact on schooling and ensuring that the current infrastructure is effective and supports all elements of the school.</p> <p>Strong focus and accountability on the budgetary aspect of school.</p>	<p>The vice-principal has a strong focus on academics and the operational management of school.</p> <p>The vice-principal is involved with parents, staff, and pupils but not with the broader community or Board.</p> <p>Although the vice-principal assists in managing the budget, they are not involved in designing or allocating budgets.</p>
H	<p>The principal remains ultimately responsible and accountable for the school and all its functioning. Although aided by the vice-principal in many aspects, the buck still stops with the principal.</p> <p>Principals must have broad and deep knowledge of their school and their community.</p>	<p>The vice-principal assists the principals in the running and managing of the school but is not ultimately responsible for the outcomes.</p> <p>Vice-principals are required to have deep knowledge of their specific areas of responsibility.</p>

The above data correlate with the data collected from the principals on their understanding of the difference between the two roles. Both sets of data indicate that the principals' function focuses on strategic and stakeholder development, whereas the vice-principal's function is on the ground level, dealing with the daily running of the school.

A further difference noted in both datasets is the varied level of accountability between the principal and vice-principal. Both groups understood that regardless of the vice-principal's evolving role and additional duties, the final level of accountability resides with the principal. Therefore, it is imperative to keep the principal informed of all developments and interactions.

4.4.2.3. Data regarding the school principal's evolving leadership role

The principal's role becomes increasingly multifaceted daily. Schools are complex organisations that must address the demands and expectations of changing internal and external environments (Crow, Hausman & Scribner, 2002). The researcher asked each participant, "Do you believe that the role of the school principal has evolved over the past five to ten years?" All participants answered without hesitation yes. To elaborate on this point, the participants were asked to identify the major shifts they had witnessed or experienced that have impacted the school principal's evolving role.

Table 4.13 includes words and phrases describing aspects of the school principal's evolving role.

Table 4.16: Words and phrases used to describe a shift in focus in the principal's evolving role

Participant	Views on major shifts within the principal's role
A	Stronger business focus, financial sustainability, marketing, increased parent engagement, constant legal threats, reframing education due to Covid-19, and increased areas of accountability.
B	Compliance issues, such as POPIA, a higher demand for anti-discrimination upliftment in schools, technology, social media, increased parental input, and varied legal aspects and challenges.
C	Increased pressure from parents, legal threats, strong transformation focus, health and safety concerns, crisis management, increased levels of competitiveness in the market, more business-like approach, less involvement with academics, heads have become change leaders and are held to higher levels of accountability.
D	The principal now works within a business environment and is the leader of an organisation. No more top-down approach, rather a team-driven space with collaborative leadership. Increased legal and compliance demands. Higher engagement with the community. Increased demands from parents. Crisis control and differentiated thinking to survive the new challenges we face.
E	Survival of schools, marketing, compliance, finance focus, crisis management, community support, transformation focus, and increased demands from parents.

Participant	Views on major shifts within the principal's role
F	Parent and staff issues, legal challenges, compliance issues, increased focus on policies and procedures, transformation and diversity focus, crisis management, and the impact of Covid-19.
G	Increased demands from parents and staff, higher focus on human resource issues, marketing, stronger focus on driving diversity in schools, keeping schools relevant in a changing society.
H	Technology, increased parent demands, transformation and diversity in schools, increased compliance demands, Covid-19, and the redesigning of teaching programmes.

Table 4.13 shows that the most common focal points of the principals include:

- compliance regulations
- crisis management during Covid-19
- stronger focus on driving transformation and diversity in schools
- increased demands from parents
- marketing and sustainability of schools
- keeping schools relevant in a changing context

From the data gathered, the researcher can conclude that while the school's daily operational needs might have been the focus of yesteryear's principal, the above data indicate a definite shift in focus for the current principal. The above focus points indicate a much broader scope of responsibilities for the principal and a diverse set of skills to meet the varied requirements of the job. The researcher deduced that today's principals require curriculum and teaching knowledge, advanced human resource skills, and highly developed innovative and creative thinking skills.

4.4.2.4 Data regarding the external forces driving change in school leadership

While internal developments can drive the change in schools, external forces driving change link to global phenomena relevant in society, relating to all schools. Schools are an extension of society; therefore, societal changes naturally impact these institutions. Sociologists define social change as transforming cultures, institutions, and functions. Social change can evolve from several sources, including changes in

the ecosystem, technological changes, population growth, economic or political movements, war, or disease.

All participants had views on which external forces were driving change in school leadership and impacting the demands and evolving role of the principal. From the data captured, the researcher found seven common themes.

The headings below are the typical external forces identified by six or more participants.

4.4.2.4.1 Shift in global economic pressure leading to a focus on sustainability of schools and increased demand for innovative marketing

In April 2021, the South African Minister of Finance spoke of the many financial risks we as a nation face, including the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic and uncertainty about the sustainability of the emerging market debt during rising global interest rates. The schools that participated in this research indicated that the increased financial pressure on their parent body over the last few years has decreased student numbers. The decline in student numbers directly resulted in schools' financial stability, placing enormous pressure on principals to ensure that schools remain financially viable. To continue to attract students, the principal must focus on increased marketing opportunities and find innovative ways to ensure the school's sustainability. During the lockdown period of 2020, schools were unable to market through their normal channels, such as Open Days and onsite functions, resulting in many schools engaging more proactively with social media and digital marketing. Staying connected to your community and prospective clients became paramount.

Participant C commented,

Covid changed the way we market or schools. Never in my wildest dreams did I think I would be writing scripts and performing before a camera to attract pupils to my school. Digital marketing is ongoing. You have to be on top of your game, posting on Facebook and Instagram all the time. You cannot let your competitor be the last post that prospective parents see, it must be your post that that they click on and remember.

Six of eight participants felt strongly that the present economic times, exasperated by the Covid-19 period, have necessitated a complete shift in focus for the principal. In their experience, the principal spends much time focusing on the school's sustainability and has had to adapt to being innovative regarding how they market the school.

4.4.2.4.2 Increase in parent demands and the heightened legal approach that parents tend to follow when dissatisfied with the school

Many participants referred to increased demands from parents and the heightened legal approach by those dissatisfied with an aspect involving the school. Generations have changed, and certain schools are dealing with various generational groups. These varied groups can bring different thinking, and schools must adapt to the different generational approaches. The researcher deduced from discussions held with participants that the current generational parent (Millennial) is far more involved in school life than the previous generational parent group (Gen X).

Participant D summarised her experience as follows,

I have been in the teaching game for over 25 years, and I have experienced an enormous shift when it comes to parents. When I first started teaching, parents knew their boundaries, they respected the teacher and the expertise of the teacher. They would seldom interfere. Nowadays, parents are very involved, and they want to tell you how to teach. They seldom support the discipline boundaries of the school or respect the teacher.

Participants shared various stories where parents and staff were quick to take legal action against the school over a matter that, in the past, would have been resolved within the school. Today's principals must be highly vigilant around the legal ramifications of any interaction, decision, or non-compliance issue that might compromise the school. Accountability levels have increased for the principal as cases of legal action against the school or the principal have increased. Participant C stated,

I check and double-check everything I do. The school has a budget for legal advice, and I often tap into it. It saddens me that for many parents and even staff members, the first place they go is the legal route. We have lost the ability

to connect, to hear the other side and to try and reason. Today it is all about intimidation and threat.

From the evidence gathered, the researcher established that today's principals spend more time interacting with parents and managing various legal matters than previously.

4.4.2.4.3 Greater demand to create and apply school policies and enforce various stringent compliance measures

Participant B summaries this point as follows,

- Increased accountability measures for schools and school principals have resulted in the need for various school policies. Policies provide an excellent governance platform for the school and protect the employer and employee and or parent and student.
- Schools are tasked to create policies for almost every aspect of their daily interactions with parents, staff, and students. This takes time, and because the principal must enforce these policies, they are involved in creating and applying the policies.
- It is crucial to remember that once a policy has been created, it must be reviewed yearly to ensure it is still relevant and complies with any changes external to that of the school. This again requires the time and focus of the principal and can be extremely time-consuming.
- Apart from internal policies, the principal must also be familiar with external governance regulations and policies, such as labour law, the personal Protection of Information Act and the Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSACT).
- *While policies can take up an enormous amount of time, they do provide a level of protection when the legal route, that parents are so quick to take, happen. I invest a lot of time in this space because it has helped with difficult decisions. It often helps one to remain objective. External compliance can be complicated but again it offers a level of protection for all.*

4.4.2.4.4 Addressing and driving transformation and diversity in schools

All participants spoke to this point. Schools have been grappling with issues related to transformation and diversity for several years. However, the need to escalate the focus in this area was intensified with the BLM movement of 2020. Many schools found themselves facing a second crisis alongside Covid-19. *“On top of the health crisis, the killings of George Floyd and Breonna Tylor, among many others, incurred harm and terror in black communities and triggered anger from many in the broader society”* (Hinton & Cook, 2020; McArthur & Muhammad, 2020). Within our South African context, schools found themselves being called to task by alumni groups, and many schools were faced with student testimonials and demands for improved policies and approaches within the schools.

During the interviews, the researcher heard various stories from the participants about the pressure of heeding the call for transformation in their school and how this had added another level of focus and responsibility for the principal to deal with sensitively and immediately. All schools that participated in this research had to invest in varied approaches to address and drive transformation and diversity in their schools. All four principals were involved in community engagement with the alumni and school community. All participants were involved in developing transformation and diversity plans and policies. They indicated that going forward, this area must remain a key focus point for all principals and would form part of the school principal’s evolving role. According to Participant E,

Going forward, transformation and diversity will and should become a major priority for any school principal. It has become clear from the recent events we have experienced in our schools that this work is critical work and must be invested in. Remember, this work will encompass staff, students and parents and will require time, resources, and commitment.

Participants A and D concurred that they had not anticipated the impact of transformation and diversity work within their schools on their daily schedules. To free up time to focus on this work, they had to adjust other areas by distributing different responsibilities to their vice-principals. Three of four principals indicated that work in

this area has increased and evolved since being appointed. Furthermore, all four principals agreed that this work would remain at the forefront for principals.

4.4.2.4.5 Crisis management: Reinventing education due to the Covid-19 pandemic

Each participant referred to the enormous impact of the global pandemic of Covid-19 on schools and the future of education. Participant A referred to the pandemic as “*the change agent that has forced us all to re-evaluate every aspect of school including the role of school management and the way we lead our school.*”

The year 2020 was a painful, unpredictable, and profoundly disturbing political time for diverse populations across the world. With no COVID-19 vaccine or cure available in the midst of a global pandemic, physical distancing and sheltering at home had become the norm in an attempt to slow the transmission of the virus (Ramesh, Siddaiah & Joseph 2020).

While the participants could refer to various external global forces that have resulted in the principal's evolving role, all agreed that Covid-19 had been the catalyst for significant and long-lasting change. 2020 brought about enormous change. Principals globally had to find ways to reinvent various aspects of schooling while remaining relevant and reliable during a global crisis. All participants concurred that if there was ever a time that the principal's role had to evolve, it was during 2020. Participant B confirmed,

Despite all my experience, and having been in management for over 15 years, 2020 required a whole new set of skills. On many occasions I felt like I was a first year head again and I was fumbling in the dark. Shew! You had to learn to do things differently and do them quickly. Everyone was looking to you as Head of School for the answers, and truthfully there were often times when I didn't have the answer.

All four principals referred to Covid-19 as a game-changer regarding their role. Words such as flexibility, adaptability, resilience, problem-solving, innovation, re-invention, and sustainability, were used when talking about how their roles had to evolve during the Covid-19 pandemic. Participant A acknowledged,

2020 was an exhausting year. Principals were dealing with so much. We had staff, parents, and students in crisis. Everyone needed us and everyone wanted to see us. I felt like decision-making, crisis control, and seeking ways for human connection was the only thing I did all day. What I did in 2019 and what I did in 2020 were worlds apart. Who would have thought!

All four vice-principals indicated that during 2020, their role required them to be closely connected to their principal and seek ways to support them in their decision-making and implement the changes required to accommodate Covid-19. They highlighted changes in their roles brought on by the demands of adapting to the pandemic. Moreover, all four vice-principals were instrumental in ensuring that the instructional programme continued to provide a suitable framework for sound teaching and learning. Participant F stated,

Supporting my Head of School has always been a priority for me. However, 2020 called for a very different form of support. Suddenly we were in this together. Lines were blurred and we were both just adding and picking up where and when we could. Hours and hours of planning, crisis managing, and collaboration were taking place. Once the planning was done, I was asked to implement so that the head could start working on the next phase of planning.

From the above, the researcher established that all participants feel that Covid-19 has brought about immense change in the educational field and the principal's daily responsibility. This indicates that the principal's role has evolved and will continue to do so with time. It can also be established that vice-principals had to support the principal in their evolving role through distributed leadership.

4.4.2.4.6 Social media

Participant B shared the following,

The rise and expansion of social media has led to increased demands in controlling this space safely and effectively for both our schools and our pupils. We are constantly having to monitor this forum to avoid reputational damage. Teaching children to be safe on social media is a crucial aspect of education.

While social media can be effective in many spaces, as schools, we need to be vigilant around pre-empting the dangers of it as well.

All participants mentioned social media. From the discussion, the researcher concluded that this global development had impacted heavily on the principal's role and responsibility. Schools had to develop social media policies for the principal to monitor social media behaviour and implement these policies. Reference was made to the hours a principal can spend investigating, controlling, and implementing disciplinary measures regarding social media interactions in a school. The participants concurred that today's principal spends more time addressing aspects of social media than principals of yesteryear.

4.4.2.4.7 Technology

A common theme expressed by the participants was the advancement of technology within our educational spaces and personal lives. All participants agreed that technology has changed how they teach and run schools, affecting the principals' evolving role. The participants noted that today's principals must be strong advocates of technology and skilled in engaging with technology to be role models and leaders in this field. Some participants felt that technology has affected how they teach and engage with the community.

Six of eight participants felt that even before Covid-19, schools were on a path of rapid technological advancement. While Covid-19 expedited the process for many schools, the staff and children adapted quickly to new routines because the technology was already available and familiar in their spaces. According to Participant C,

To be a modern-day principal, you must be comfortable with technology. The schools of today operate in a very different realm to those of ten or twenty years ago. Many schools have gone paperless, and everything is managed in the cloud. This had to be role-modelled by the principal, and as a result, the principal's role in this space has evolved.

The researcher concluded that specific external forces currently drive change within schools; therefore, schools require a shift in focus regarding the principal's role. From shared experiences, the participants supported the notion that vice-principals had to

assume a more supportive role through distributed leadership to assist the principal in their evolving role. Therefore, this supportive role has automatically resulted in a shift in responsibility for the vice-principal.

4.4.2.5 Data regarding the internal forces driving change in school leadership

As listed by the participants, common categories relating to internal factors affecting the school principal’s evolving role included the following.

Table 4.17: Common themes related to internal factors driving change in the principal’s role and focus

Participant	Common themes related to internal factors driving change in the principal’s role and focus
A	Family dynamics: Certain family dynamics and structures have changed, and this has impacted the expectation of school leadership. Schools are often the disciplinarians, as parents find it challenging to discipline their children.
B	Human Resources: Managing contracts and aspects related to human resources. Increased expectations from staff. Staff policies and procedures.
C	Change in school management structures: Many schools have introduced an executive head, and this has altered the management structure and leadership model of the school.
D	Technology: Capturing of information, network provider, internal structures, and systems of a school and teaching strategies and spaces all require time and input.
E	Revised curriculum and polices. The principal must remain abreast of educational trends and necessitate change where needed. This often requires them to be out of the office and present at conferences or meetings.
F	Increased parent pressure and involvement. Principals must be diplomatic and cautious regarding parent involvement. Enormous time is spent meeting with parents. Many meetings require preparation work and follow-up activities.
G	Increased levels of competitiveness with the school down the road. Principals must often do comparative studies on other schools and their offerings. This often drives internal change, as we are required to remain relevant in our offering and competitive in the market.
H	Defending one’s ethos, school traditions, and religious standing within a changing society. Over the past few years, questions around core aspects of certain schools have been challenged. Principals are often required to spend time engaging with the community, defending or safeguarding key foundations within their schools.

As per the participants’ lived experiences, they have witnessed the above-mentioned themes drive change within their schools or schools around them. Because of these

internal changes, the principals had to adapt their roles. When discussing these themes, many participants referred to internal changes within their schools affecting the principal's time and focus. They agreed that change necessitates a different approach, and a different approach requires the principal's role to evolve. All participants reflected on the role of their school principal from five years ago to that of today. All concurred that a definite shift occurred in the school principal's role and can be attributed to many of the common themes mentioned in this study.

4.4.2.6 Data regarding the impact of the principal's evolving role on the vice-principal's role

All participants felt that the principal's evolving role affected the vice-principal's role. All participants have witnessed or experienced increased responsibility for the vice-principals. Participant A noted that vice-principals must be more involved with decision-making and lead more teams than before. Participant B stated that the vice-principal is often required to be present in meetings, especially when the principal is off the property attending community engagements. Participant C highlighted that although vice-principals have escalated levels of accountability and responsibility, it is often not recognised within the community.

Participant D shared the following view,

In the majority of our schools, the vice-principal is becoming more empowered to run with their own programmes and make decisions. They are being encouraged to become less of a 'yes' person and more of an innovative thinker. The modern vice-principal is being allowed to grow in their role rather than just being an administrative person. The focus has shifted to a professional manager and leader rather than just a disciplinarian.

Participants E and F noted an increase in decision-making opportunities and felt that in their experience, the vice-principal's role had been elevated over the past five years. Both specified that more is expected of them and that the workload has increased. Participant H mentioned that in bigger management teams, more than one vice-principal allows for joint decision-making and shared responsibility. More is required of single vice-principals in smaller schools. All four vice-principals indicated that the

principal's evolving role had affected their role as a vice-principal. Common experiences for vice-principals included

- Increased ownership of the curriculum programme
- Increased interactions with staff and parents
- Increased decision-making power
- Increased areas of responsibility and accountability across the school
- Increased presence within the school
- Running the school day

4.4.2.6 Data regarding understanding distributed leadership as a framework to support the principal's evolving role

To understand participants' interpretation of distributed leadership, the researcher asked each participant to define distributed leadership. The participants' thoughts and definitions are tabled below.

Table 4.18: Phrases and words used to define distributed leadership

Participant	Phrases and words used to define distributed leadership
A	Distributed leadership is about embracing a network of leaders and allowing the scope to lead the team. It is leadership that empowers many with a common purpose.
B	Distributed leadership is a framework that empowers others to make decisions based on the good of all. It is about shared responsibilities that play to people's strengths.
C	I would say that distributed leadership is about identifying and using different people in different areas of leadership within various roles of authority.
D	Distributed leadership allows space for people to lead a team with part authority. Accountability must be increased but remains a shared responsibility for the team. It is about finding growth opportunities for people.
E	Distributed leadership is an approach that encourages sharing of responsibilities, tasks and decision-making. This approach allows you to tap into people's strengths and to lead as a unit.
F	Distributed leadership allows for shared opportunities, skills, knowledge, and growth for the betterment of the team.
G	Distributed leadership is about collaborative and horizontal leadership. Sharing responsibilities and accountability.
H	I see distributed leadership as the delegation of tasks and giving people purpose and opportunity for growth.

While the researcher understands that distributed leadership is first about leadership practice rather than leaders or their roles, functions, routines, and structures, she observed that many participants referred to people in their definition. When discussing distributed leadership, all participants confirmed that trust is critical when implementing this framework. Distributed leadership supports and strengthens outstanding individuals in a climate of trust, shared responsibilities, teamwork, and respect (Duif, 2016). According to Harris (2014), distributed leadership means mobilising leadership expertise at all levels in the school, generating more opportunities for change, and building the capacity for improvement. The emphasis is on interdependent interaction and practice rather than individual and independent actions associated with formal leadership roles or responsibilities.

When asked, “*Do you think that distributed leadership is a positive framework for schools to follow?*” all participants answered yes. Various reasons were given for their shared thinking. Participant A felt that the distributed leadership framework provides an opportunity for ownership and shared responsibility, and participant B highlighted the merits of genuine interest and the development of others. Participant B warned that there should be risk assessment when engaging in distributed leadership because with empowerment comes accountability. Participant C felt that most schools are engaged in distributed leadership because of the design and nature of the institution and the expected responsibility of various leadership positions, such as Head of Grade, Academic Head, and Teacher in Charge of Sport codes. Participant D felt that distributed leadership was an essential framework to follow and vital for the modern-day school. He spoke about embracing agile leadership and allowing teams of people to lead the school. Participant D referred to the importance of language and using terms such as ‘we’ rather than ‘I’.

If you want a vibrant, modern school where people take ownership and lead in various forms, then distributed leadership is the only model to follow. When in a school, listen to the language shared amongst staff, this will indicate if you are a school that follows the distributed leadership framework. Distributed leadership also assists with succession planning, and it upskills people for their next role or position. Participant D

Participants E and F concurred that distributed leadership creates positive spaces for collaborative teaching and learning and empowers the majority rather than the minority. Participant G noted that this framework provides the principal with additional support and offers the vice-principal opportunity to draw on the strengths of others and empower the team.

The distributed leadership framework is supported among most schools and encouraged by the school management. Each participant could understand and acknowledge the merits of this framework and agreed that it encouraged shared leadership and empowered various members within the team. In conclusion, the researcher asked, “*Through the use of distributed leadership, how does the vice-principal support the evolving role of the principal?*” The responses were varied and are captured in the following table.

Table 4.19: Comments on how the vice-principal supports the principals’ evolving role

Participant A	Distributed leadership creates time and space for the principal to move into what is necessary and what is needed for the future school. It allows time to make connections with the broader community. It creates space for visionary work and big picture thinking. Distributed leadership allows the principal time to focus on the new elements that have become part of the daily focus of a school, and it allows for collaborative leadership with the principal and their team.
Participant B	Distributed leadership allows for shared responsibility and varied thinking. This framework will assist the principal by allowing for additional time to think creatively and to know that the team is looking after smaller aspects so that you can focus on the bigger picture. Gone are the days where school leadership should be left to one person. The principal requires a strong team of leaders to help them run and lead the school. Distributed leadership offers this opportunity.
Participant C	We decrease the pressure on the principal and allow them space to move into their evolving role. Visionary work takes time, and by using the framework of distributed leadership, we allow the principal time, space, and opportunity to focus on the bigger picture. The community still require the presence and leadership of the principal, but many of the smaller tasks, responsibilities can be shared and balanced amongst the team. In using this model, we grow the team and assist the principal.
Participant D	By distributing leadership roles, it gives the principal more time to focus on other strategic discussions. Distribute roles allows for increased strategy and it grows confidence in your team. I would guard against a community fault structure, as there still needs to be a level of authority that can make the final decision.
Participant E	In using distributed leadership, the two roles of the vice-principal and principal could merge, and each role could be intertwined. The focus would be to work individually yet collaboratively to support the outcomes

	of the school. Although the role and people may differ; the positions can dovetail and must be in support of each other. I would love to see the two roles become interchangeable, each person stepping up to their own strength.
Participant F	Distributed leadership will alleviate the pressure on the principal. The principal can focus on their new demands knowing that there is intellectual capital and shared skills in their team to steer the school. This will allow for more diverse thinking and more reflective thinking time for the principal. Knowing there is a team supporting you, gives the principal breathing space and time to do the visionary work.
Participant G	With the distributed leadership framework, the staff will assume certain duties and responsibilities and, therefore, have a better understanding of the organisation. Leadership can permeate through the different levels and raise accountability levels for staff. This then allows for 'our school' thinking rather than the 'principals school thinking'. Distributed leadership will support the evolving role of the principal because, as their job demands shifts and change, others are sharing in the leadership of the school.
Participant H	By sharing responsibility, the emotional toll on one person becomes reduced and this allows time for greater focus and vision for the school. By following the principles of distributed leadership, the vice-principal will offer the principal more time to focus on their varied responsibilities.

4.5 DATA INTERPRETATION

4.5.1 Introduction

It is exciting to see how closely the data collected from the interviews mirrored the literature review. The data were interpreted according to the expansion of the four sub-aims outlined at the beginning of the chapter.

4.5.2 Participants' view on the job descriptions of the principal and vice-principal in independent primary schools in Gauteng

The first observation was discovered early in the interview process, as each participant found it challenging to pinpoint an accurate job description for the principal and vice-principal's roles. The definition of the roles varied and was broad. Although the researcher could identify some common themes in the roles from the data gathered, the expectations of the two roles differed between schools and participants. This supports the findings that school leaders find their roles increasingly complex by facing ever-increasing pressure to transfer school systems into dynamic learning environments (Fullan, 2014).

When discussing the principal's job description, most participants mentioned common themes, such as sustainability, strategic envisioning, stakeholder engagement, and innovative marketing. The principal's recent focus points included crisis management during the Covid-19 pandemic and driving transformation and diversity in schools. Likewise, participants found it challenging to pinpoint an exact job description when discussing the vice-principal's job description. However, common themes included taking charge of running the general school day, implementing the curriculum programme, and increased interactions with parents and staff. The findings of this study support Maifala's (2017) notion that education leadership in the 21st century presents countless challenges and demands for school principals. The researcher established a gap between the principal's paper job description and what happens on the ground.

As per the Department of Basic Education of South Africa (DoBE, 2015), PSSP enhancing the professional image and competencies of school principals, eight key interdependence areas constitute the core purpose of the principal in any South African context.

- Leading teaching and learning in the school
- Shaping the school's direction and development
- Managing quality and securing accountability
- Developing and empowering self and others
- Managing the school as an organisation
- Working with and for the community
- Managing human resources (staff) in the school
- Managing and advocating extra-mural activities

The various paper job descriptions shared by participants and certain advertisements for Head of School consulted by the researcher included but were not limited to the above criteria. All four principals concurred that although their day can contain the above criteria, their days remain unpredictable, and they must be flexible regarding the job's challenges and complexities.

In reviewing and discussing the document retrieval regarding job descriptions for the principal, the researcher and participants concur that the principal's paper job

description allows for a broad understanding of the job's expectations; however, the participants simultaneously agree that their days remain unpredictable, and their roles constantly evolve based on daily demands and volatile global situations. In addition to the eight areas mentioned in the Department of Basic Education of South Africa (DoBE, 2015), PSSP, all four principals indicated other areas of leadership focus that were not listed in the criteria as set out by the Department of Basic Education (2015).

While there was definite debate about the eight key interdependence areas constituting the principal's core purpose in any South African context, many character traits mentioned by the four principals were found in this document, such as strategic, creative and insightful thinking, effective communication, self-confidence, maturity, and courage.

It is evident from the above that as the world evolves, so does the school principal's role, who is required to continue to shift and change as new responsibilities and challenges emerge. According to the Department of Basic Education PSSP (2015), embedded in the principal's leadership and management of the school are core societal, educational, and professional values, reflected in how they deal with all matters regarding the curriculum and human resources. These values include adaptability and responsiveness to change and political astuteness in situations of ambiguity, adversity, or opposition. This statement indicates the expectation of an ever-evolving role.

In discussions with the vice-principals, the researcher established that the vice-principal's role evolves with that of the principal; therefore, it can be challenging to provide an accurate job description. According to Lattuca (2012), the complexity and demands of the vice-principal's role are shaped by social, political, and legal influences, making it challenging to create a standard duty list for all, indicating the need for flexibility and adaptability among vice-principals. This supports the sentiments of the participants and the researcher's findings.

While the researcher received varied responses from the vice-principals, common themes included those supported by Cranston, Tromans and Reugebrink (2004), who identified the seven leading roles of vice-principals in schools as

- strategic leadership,
- education and curriculum leadership,
- management and administration,
- dealing with student issues,
- parent and community issues,
- staffing issues, and
- operational issues.

All participants identified the above themes and referred to them in their conversations with the researcher. The most significant difference was that the participants felt that the accountability levels in these areas had escalated over the past few years for the vice-principal. This could be attributed to the principal's evolving role and the domino effect on the vice-principal's responsibilities.

4.5.3. Understanding the evolving leadership role of the primary school principal in independent schools in Gauteng

Many principals work to engage parents and others outside the immediate school community, such as local businesspeople (Wallace Foundation, 2013). All participants agreed that the principal's role is evolving. Participants in this study agreed that the principal should be more engaged with the external community, leaving less time for internal connections. Participants referred to the principal as the school's external face and the vice-principal as the internal face.

Further, focus areas, such as managing the impact of Covid-19, sustainability of schools in a global economic recession, innovative marketing, school compliance, and driving transformation and diversity programmes, were examples of how the principal's role and focus have evolved over the past five years. Challenges to the status quo require school leaders to make sense of their leadership roles in response to the dynamic interactions between internal goals and needs and external reform demands (Saltrick, 2010). From the data, school principals are trying to balance the demands of internal goals and external influences driving change. The principal's role is evolving, the expectations are changing, and the demands are increasing. Participant C shared the following,

The role is shifting and changing all the time. As demands from both internal and external factors influence your day, you need to adapt and remain flexible. Compliance, legal, Covid-19, transformation, and diversity, these are just some examples of what is at the forefront of your day now but was not around or as prevalent ten years ago.

According to Mestry (2017), although school principals are critical for improving student learning and attaining educational outcomes, they work under strenuous conditions to address multifaceted transformational issues. The researcher confirmed this thinking through the data gained from the participants. Each referred to the strenuous conditions under which the principal works and the multifaceted challenge principals deal with daily. Key strengths required to cope with the evolving role, as mentioned by the participants, included flexibility, courage, bravery, innovative thinking, and strong decision-making skills.

According to Rintoul and Bishop (2019), the principal and vice-principal engage in complex, purposeful work requiring excellent interpersonal strengths, strategic thinking, inclusive leadership disposition and values, organisational change capacities, and the ability to make evidence-based decisions. In evolving successfully into their new role as modern-day principals, participants highlighted similar attributes as mentioned by Rintoul and Bishop, and several participants referred to value-based leadership.

4.5.4. External and internal driving forces affecting change to the role and focus of the principal's job description in independent primary schools in Gauteng

All participants acknowledge various internal forces driving change within their schools. Common themes raised were evolving management structures, revised curriculum programmes, and school policies. Moreover, increased competition with neighbouring schools, technological advancement, and intensified interactions with parents were highlighted as internal factors shifting the focus of the school principal.

Common external forces identified as driving change in schools and affecting the principal's evolving role were also determined, including a stronger focus on social justice issues, managing social media, technological advancement, global economic

pressure, transformation and diversity experiences, and the global Covid-19 pandemic. Akinbode and Shuhumi (2018) emphasise that in the 21st century, society is more serious about school accountability and progress. The principal cannot be apolitical as in the past but must engage in social politics for school growth and development. The pandemic and the BLM movement prove that the school principal's role remains fluid as it adapts to societal needs and the educational landscape.

Throughout each interview, the participants agreed with the above statement and were acutely aware of the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and the BLM movement on education and society. All participants referred to the impact these two external pressures had on the school principal's evolving role, school management, and schools in general. Each participant concurred that school leadership is changing due to global and societal changes.

The complexities of school leadership are interconnected with internal and external forces driving change. The participants could connect the school principal's evolving role to meeting the needs and requirements of an ever-evolving educational landscape. Pont (2020) agrees that school leaders' roles are shifting from leading the learning programme within the school to a more complex and refined approach as facilitators of the collective work of professionals at and around their school.

4.5.5 External and internal driving forces that have impacted the vice-principal's distributed leadership role

All participants acknowledged that the internal and external factors driving change in schools have also affected the vice-principal's role. As the demand on the principals has increased, so too have the demands on the vice-principal. The principal's evolving role has affected the vice-principal's job description and expectations. The vice-principal's role has expanded, and the responsibility and accountability levels have increased. Distributed leadership allows for a closer working relationship between the principal and vice-principal and to share in the school's leadership and management.

All participants agreed that the distributed leadership framework was a positive way for the school and the vice-principal to manage the principal's evolving role. The distributed leadership framework allows for shared responsibility and could alleviate

certain focus areas for the principal. This, in turn, would allow the principal more time to focus on their newly acquired responsibilities while remaining confident that the team is addressing essential aspects of school management. Solly (2018) concurs that distributed leadership should increase the leadership capacity within a school so that the school can improve and grow authentically. By sharing leadership within the school, the principal can focus more on their additional responsibilities and evolving demands.

Although the participants expressed some reservations about understanding where the final accountability level rests, it was determined that distributed leadership could empower and enhance the team if managed correctly. Robinson (2009) proposed that distributed leaders can either be a way for school leaders to be more democratic, less managerial, and less hierarchical or a prescription for school improvement. Several participants raised the importance of trust, believing that the distributed leadership framework would only work if there were high levels of trust between the principal and vice-principal. Distributed leadership supports and strengthens outstanding individuals in a climate of trust, shared responsibilities, teamwork, and respect (Duif, 2016). This view confirms that trust is a crucial element of distributed leadership and that by applying the framework, trust is deepened and strengthened.

All participants agreed that the distributed leadership framework would enhance the team's strength and assist the principal with evolving roles and focus areas. This supports the thoughts raised in Chapter Two, where Bush and Glover (2014) confirm that in the 21st century, the normatively preferred model is distributed leadership. In contrast to bureaucracy, leadership in this model is uncoupled from formal roles and could arise in any part of the organisation.

Several participants believed that the distributed leadership framework was already being implemented in their schools and that benefits were evident in the shared leadership structures within their teams. Participants B, C, D, E, and H referred to using the framework beyond the vice-principal and engaging additional staff members in leadership opportunities. Participant A raised the point of creating teams of leaders and using the varied strengths of the team for the school's greater good.

4.6 CONCLUSION

This chapter introduced the study's purpose, outlining the questions presented in Chapter One. The research process was explained, the procedure followed described, and the steps to ensure trustworthiness were defined. The analysis explaining the data collected from the interviews was highlighted. Biographical data collected from the participants were presented at the start of this section, and the data analyses were presented as seven subsections outlining the main themes. The participants' words were used as much as possible to improve the study's trustworthiness. Data obtained from the document study were only briefly reviewed due to the varying number of documents available. The study's interpretation followed the data analysis. This section was divided into four headings, formulated from the four sub-questions posted in Chapter One and reviewed at the beginning of this chapter. The empirical findings were compared to the literature review conducted in Chapter Two.

As the interviews progressed, it became increasingly evident that the principal's role had evolved, affecting the vice-principal's role and duties. There was a unanimous understanding of the interconnectedness of the two management roles and the advantages of a distributed leadership framework when leading a school. The participants were quick to acknowledge the importance of the vice-principal in assisting the principal in their evolving role.

The following chapter summarises and concludes the study. The study's findings are discussed, recommendations are made, and ideas for future studies are outlined.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter analysed, presented, and discussed the research data. This chapter presents the summary, findings, and recommendations. This study focused on understanding the vice-principal's supporting role towards distributed leadership to accommodate the principal's evolving role in Gauteng schools. The study's objectives were to

- describe the principal and vice-principal's job descriptions in independent primary schools in Gauteng.
- critically analyse primary school principals' evolving leadership roles in independent schools in Gauteng.
- distinguish which external and internal driving forces changed the role and focus of the job description of the principal and vice-principal in independent primary schools in Gauteng.
- analyse how these external and internal driving forces impacted the distributed leadership role of the vice-principal.

5.2 SUMMARY OF THE STUDY

This section summarises the most important aspects of the chapters of this research. Chapter 1 provided an overview of the study. The chapter started by providing background information about the topic (par. 1.2). It outlined the principal's evolving role and the effect on the vice-principal (par. 1.1). The study's rationale (par. 1.4.) was to determine the principal's evolving role and understand the vice-principal distributed leadership role in supporting the principal's evolving role. This study explored the external and internal driving factors contributing to the principal's evolving role.

The study focused on distributed leadership as a positive framework for vice-principals to apply when supporting principals and understand that the two roles are interchangeable. This led to the problem statement phrased as the primary research question for this study: How does the vice-principal's supporting role towards distributed leadership accommodate the principal's evolving role in Gauteng schools? This primary research question was divided into the following sub-questions (par. 1.5):

- What are the job descriptions of the principal and vice-principal in independent primary schools in Gauteng?
- What does the primary school principal's evolving leadership role in independent schools in Gauteng entail?
- Which external and internal driving forces have changed the role and focus of the principal's job description in independent primary schools in Gauteng?
- How have these driving forces affected the vice-principal's distributed leadership role?

Chapter 2 provided a literature study on educational leadership and the principal and vice-principal's roles. This chapter explored the principal's evolving role (par. 2.2) and explained various internal and external factors affecting this role (par. 2.2.3). The chapter defined the framework and principles of distributed leadership (par. 2.3) and explored how it could be used as a support structure within schools. The chapter concluded with how the vice-principal could apply distributed leadership to support the principal's evolving role (par. 2.4).

Chapter 3 provided an overview of the research methodology and design used in this study. The researcher explained why a qualitative case study was used to collect, process, and evaluate the data (par. 3.4). The researcher explained that semi-structured and in-depth interviews were chosen, and open-ended questions were asked to gather data (par. 3.7). This chapter outlined the strategies used to ensure the research's trustworthiness (par. 3.9) and motivated the researcher's ethical principles (par. 3.10).

Chapter 4 presented, analysed, and discussed the research data. The researcher discussed the method used to collect data (par. 4.2.2). The chapter outlined the

challenges experienced during the research process (par. 4.2.3) and the positive aspects (par. 4.2.4). The chapter ended with interpreting the data focusing on the study's objectives.

Chapter 5 summarises the study. This chapter will also discuss the findings by returning to each sub-aim outlined in Chapter 3. The chapter will conclude by making recommendations.

5.3 FINDINGS FROM THE STUDY

5.3.1 Introduction

The study's findings will be discussed based on the data analysed and interpreted, and the findings will consequently be discussed according to the four objectives.

5.3.2 Findings for objective one: To describe the principal and vice-principal's job descriptions in independent primary schools in Gauteng

The first objective (par. 4.4.3) related to the principal and vice-principal's job descriptions. As stated in Chapter 4, the principal's role is complex and constantly evolving (par. 4.4.3). The study revealed that these management positions' job descriptions are fluid and could change depending on the school's needs, context, and environment. The study found that although there were some common themes in the principal's job description (par. 4.4.3), including aspects such as stakeholder relationships and strategic vision, each job description was tailored to the school's needs. The vice-principal's job description varied depending on the management team's size and structure. The study revealed that both job descriptions were broad in explanation and could be interpreted in numerous ways. The reviewed and discussed job descriptions varied in nature and listed different focus points. The researcher did not find generic job descriptions for either role, indicating that no standardised job description exists for a principal or vice-principal.

This study revealed a discrepancy between the principal and vice-principal's paper job descriptions and their lived experiences of the role (par. 4.4.3). Most participants felt that they did far more in a day than what was captured on paper. The study also

established that the actual responsibilities and expectations of the principal and vice-principal far exceeded what was captured in the paper job description.

Furthermore, it was established that the existing job descriptions did not fully cover the principal's evolving role nor the vice-principal's enhanced responsibilities. Many focus areas of the evolving job raised by the principals were not mentioned in the existing paper job descriptions provided. This pattern was also noted in the vice-principals' job descriptions (par. 4.4.4). While the vice-principals fully understood their distributed leadership role in supporting the principal's evolving role, it was not always clearly defined in the paper job description.

In conclusion, it is challenging to define an accurate job description for the principal and vice-principal. The roles are complex and constantly evolving, and the two management roles are intricately linked and interdependent. Consequently, a change to one role affects the other. Our educational system is fluid and shifting; therefore, the job descriptions of these two roles cannot become static and should constantly be transforming.

5.3.3 Findings regarding objective two: To critically analyse the evolving leadership role of the primary school principals in independent schools in Gauteng

The second objective relates to the principal's evolving leadership role. The age in which we live requires the principal to be involved in various aspects of schooling beyond only the daily running of their school. The study revealed that the principal's role has become multifaceted (par. 4.4.5) to include additional responsibilities, such as marketing, parental concerns and demands, compliance, and, more recently, coping with crisis management during the pandemic.

While the school's daily operational needs might have been the principal's focus from yesteryear, the study established a definite shift in focus for the current principal. Today's principal has a much broader scope of responsibilities, and they require a diverse set of skills to meet the varied requirements of the job. Participants concurred that today's principal requires curriculum and teaching knowledge, advanced human resource skills, and highly developed innovative and creative thinking skills.

From the available research (par. 4.4.5), common focus areas for the principal today include innovative marketing, sustainability of their school, compliance regulations, Covid Health and Safety, and a strong focus on transformation and diversity within the school programme. The outline of the principal's current role encompasses many more stakeholders and community connections than yesteryear's principal. It was established through the interviews that, while the principal remains connected to their internal community through assemblies, school walkabouts, and interactions with parents, they spend a significant amount of time connecting to external communities.

The daily demands are varied, and all participants agreed that the principal should be fully present and physically available 24/7, placing enormous pressure on the principal. Therefore, the vice-principal's role in supporting the principal becomes crucial. Participants in this study agreed that one area that has altered is that the principal should be more engaged with the external community, leaving less time for internal connections. Participants referred to the principal as the school's external face and the vice-principal as the internal face.

In conclusion, the principal's role is constantly evolving. Several new focus areas have been added to the principal's role. Over the past few years, there has been a greater demand for principals regarding their internal and external presence. In trying to accommodate the additional responsibilities, principals have had to rely more heavily on their vice-principals, affecting the vice-principal's job description and expectations.

5.3.4 Findings regarding objective three: To distinguish which external and internal driving forces have changed the role and focus of the principal and vice-principal's job description in independent primary schools in Gauteng

Objective three identified the external and internal factors driving change to the principal and vice-principal's roles and focus. The study confirmed common external and internal factors identified as driving change. The participants concurred that changes brought on by the listed internal and external forces necessitated a different approach to school leadership. Common external factors identified as contributing to change included the following.

- **A shift in global economic pressure leads to a focus on the sustainability of schools and increased demand for innovative marketing**

Global economic pressure has decreased student enrolment at independent schools, placing enormous pressure on the principal, who must ensure that the school remains financially viable (par. 4.4.6.1). Principals must focus on innovative marketing strategies for their schools to manage and increase student intake. There is a stronger focus on marketing today than in previous years, requiring the principal's attention.

- **Increase in parent demands and the heightened legal approach that parents follow when dissatisfied with the school**

Many participants referred to increased demands from parents and the heightened legal approach of those dissatisfied with an aspect involving the school. The researcher could deduce that the current generational parent (Millennial) is far more involved in school life than the previous (Gen X). The study established (par. 4.4.6.2) that today's principals must be highly vigilant around the legal ramifications of any interaction, decision, or non-compliance issue that might compromise the school. Accountability levels have increased for the principal as cases of legal action against the school or principal have increased.

- **Greater demand to create and apply school policies and enforce various stringent compliance measures within schools**

Schools are tasked with creating policies for most aspects of their daily interactions with parents, staff, and students, which is time-consuming, and because the principal must enforce these policies, they must create and apply them (par. 4.4.6.3). Participants understood the importance of policies and procedures but were also cognisant of the principal's time spent creating and applying them. It was confirmed that there had been a definite increase in school policy and compliance matters, all of which the principal must manage.

- **Addressing and driving transformation and diversity in schools**

During the interviews, the researcher heard various stories about the pressure of heeding the call for transformation in their schools, and it added another level of focus and responsibility for the principal to manage sensitively and immediately

(par. 4.4.6.4). All schools participating in this research had to invest in varied approaches to address and drive transformation and diversity. Furthermore, all four principals agreed that this work would remain at the forefront for principals.

- **Crisis management: Reinventing education due to the Covid-19 pandemic**

While the participants could refer to various external global forces causing the principal's evolving role, all agreed that Covid-19 was the catalyst for significant and long-lasting change (par. 4.4.6.5). 2020 brought about enormous changes, and principals globally had to find ways to reinvent various aspects of schooling while remaining relevant and reliable during the global crisis. All participants concurred that if there was ever a time that the principal's role had to evolve, it was during 2020.

- **Social media**

All participants mentioned social media. The researcher could establish that this global development has significantly affected the principal's role and responsibility. Schools had to develop social media policies to monitor social media behaviour and implement them according to the principal. Reference was made to the hours a principal can spend investigating, controlling, and implementing disciplinary measures regarding social media interactions in a school. The participants concurred that today's principal spends more time managing social media aspects than principals of yesteryear (par. 4.4.6.6).

- **Technology**

The participants expressed that a common theme was the technological advancements within our educational spaces and lives. All participants agreed that technology had changed teaching and running schools, affecting the principal's evolving role. The participants noted that today's principals must be strong advocates of technology and skilled in engaging with technology to be role models and leaders in this field (par. 4.6.6.6.)

It was established that the external factors required the principal's complete focus, and the changes have shifted the leadership focus and additional time requirements from the principal's day. The research revealed that external factors are driven by societal and global changes that naturally filter back into schools.

Internal factors identified as contributing to changes included (par. 4.4.7):

- **Change in family dynamics:** Family units have become more complex, and the principal must manage various family dynamics within the school.
- **Stronger focus on human resources:** Increased expectations from staff, managing contracts, and implementing policies and procedures are now added responsibilities of the principal.
- **Change in school management structures:** Many schools indicated an internal shift in their management structure, resulting in shared responsibilities and different focus areas for team members.
- **Advancement in technology within the classroom:** Schools have been required to invest in staff training and the effective rollout or implementation of varied technological aspects. Decision-making regarding technology in schools and implementing programmes is time-consuming.
- **Revised curriculum policies and plans:** Much time has been spent over the past two years researching and revising curriculum plans and policies relevant and effective in accommodating the new educational approach. Principals have been heavily involved in re-imagining education in the wake of Covid-19.
- **Increased parental pressure and involvement:** All participants referred to increased parental pressure and involvement, which becomes time-consuming for the principals to manage.
- **Increased competitiveness with neighbouring schools:** Principals are often expected to keep up with whatever neighbouring schools are doing or offering, placing the school, resources, and staff under immense pressure and adding to the demands on the principal.
- **Defending the school's ethos, values, and mission in times of rapid change:** In a rapidly advancing world, many schools are being questioned regarding their traditions, ethos, and values. Principals find themselves balancing the old with the new, and navigating a path where certain community groups want change while another group might not is time-consuming and emotionally draining for the principal.

As per the participants' lived experiences, these themes drive change within their schools or schools around them. Because of these internal changes, the principals had to adapt their roles to meet the demands of a new school era.

In conclusion, specific external and internal forces drive change within schools; therefore, schools need a shift in focus regarding the principal's role. The participants agreed that the vice-principals had to assume a more supportive role through distributed leadership to assist the principal's evolving role. This supportive role has automatically resulted in a shift in responsibility for the vice-principal.

5.3.5 Findings regarding objective four: To analyse how these external and internal driving forces affected the vice-principal's distributed leadership role

The fourth objective related to how the external and internal driving forces affected the vice-principal's distributed leadership role. The study discovered that the external and internal forces driving change within schools affected the principal and vice-principal's job descriptions. Both roles have acquired additional responsibilities and various new focus points regarding their daily demands. The participants confirmed that the principal's evolving role resulted in a higher need for distributed leadership regarding the vice-principal's job description (par. 4.5.5).

Some participants spoke about the vice-principal managing the general school day while the principal focuses on the broader community and school aspects (par. 4.4.9). The researcher heard that vice-principals have become more involved in staff issues, driving instructional programmes, and meeting with parents to assist and alleviate the principal to focus on other aspects of the school day. One participant (a vice-principal) indicated that they are doing the work of the principal of yesteryear because the current principal is doing the work of tomorrow.

Due to principals' evolving roles, vice-principals have found that their job descriptions have shifted. Participants concurred that additional responsibilities and accountability levels were added to the vice-principal's role. Furthermore, participants agreed that many schools have opted to follow a distributed leadership framework, as this supports the notion of shared responsibilities and strengths within a team (par. 4.5.5). The study confirmed that participants viewed distributed leadership as a positive framework to

apply in schools, and many participants confirmed that their schools were using this model.

In conclusion, the internal and external factors affect the principal's job description and the vice-principal's role. In supporting the principal's evolving role, the vice-principal can apply the distributed leadership framework to assist and support the principal. The distributed leadership framework is a positive form of shared leadership within schools and maximises the team's strength.

5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE STUDY

5.4.1 Introduction

This study explored the vice-principal's distributed leadership role in supporting the principal's evolving role in Gauteng. Furthermore, the study identified internal and external factors contributing to the principal's evolving role. The principal and vice-principal's job descriptions were investigated, and the distributed leadership framework was examined.

Data were gathered by conducting in-depth interviews with four principals and semi-structured interviews with vice-principals. Recommendations can now be made from the qualitative case study's findings through a purposeful sampling process. The following recommendations indicate that the researcher has reached the study's aim by exploring the vice-principal's distributed leadership role in supporting the principal's evolving role in Gauteng schools.

5.4.2 Recommendations regarding research objective one: To describe the principal and vice-principal's job descriptions in independent primary schools in Gauteng

Objective one was to describe the principal and vice-principal's job descriptions in independent primary schools in Gauteng. Job descriptions vary from school to school and do not capture the full extent of what happens daily in these two roles. While the varied job descriptions of the principal and vice-principal both held common themes, the content was broad and did not capture the reality of the daily job description (par. 4.5.2).

The principals agreed that their job descriptions had evolved far more than the paper job description. The vice-principals agreed that a substantial portion of their day dealt with operational demands, not always captured in their job description. All participants agreed that the school's success relies on both roles to be fully functional by not being too bound but remaining flexible and purposefully focused on the strength of each team member so that the school can maximise the entire team's skills and talents.

Recommendation: Based on the above findings, the researcher recommends revisiting job descriptions and updating them yearly. The principal and vice-principal's job descriptions have evolved over the past two to three years. Significant contributors to the change in these roles have been the adjustments brought on by the pandemic, the focus on driving a specific transformation and diversity programme within schools, and global economic pressure resulting in a strong focus on the sustainability of schools within the marketplace (par. 4.4.6).

In the wake of so much change, the researcher recommends that each school revisits the principal and vice-principal's job descriptions to include new focus areas mentioned in this study and identify which areas that were once the principal's focus should now be included in the vice-principal's portfolio. This might clarify both roles' expectations better and allow the principal the freedom to focus on the correct areas of importance. The researcher also recommends that the new job descriptions or job focus points of each portfolio be shared with the broader community to understand the role changes and priorities for each management area.

The researcher further recommends that the principals and vice-principals receive training in their newly acquired focus areas. Through the interview process, the researcher noted that the principals felt overwhelmed by the new focus areas, especially those linked to marketing, school sustainability, and successfully managing transformation and diversity. It is a recommendation that the school provides relevant training in these areas. The vice-principal will also require support and training in their new focus areas as they assume additional responsibilities.

5.4.3 Recommendations regarding research objective two: To critically analyse the evolving leadership role of primary school principals in independent schools in Gauteng

Objective two was to critically analyse the evolving leadership role of primary school principals in independent schools in Gauteng. This study revealed that the principal's role is evolving and that principals should be more engaged with the external community, leaving less time for internal connections and the expected focus on curriculum implementation (par. 4.5.3). Participants referred to the strenuous conditions under which the principal work and their daily varied and multifaceted challenges. It was established that they are trying to balance the demands of internal expectations with external influencers driving change, placing enormous pressure and strain on the principal and leading to burnout in some instances.

Recommendation: Based on the above findings, the researcher recommends that principals be given the proper support from their school board and community to manage the job's expectations, including additional training in new areas. It should also include access to a life coach for the principal, as the principal's emotional wellness affects the broader school community. Given the tremendous pressure principals experience, taking care of their social-emotional wellness is critical in ensuring the principal's longevity in this demanding role. This offer of emotional wellness support could also be extended to the vice-principal.

It is also recommended that the principal spends some time with the school board defining their new role and fully understanding the expectations of new focus areas. This will provide clarity for the principal and school board and allow for a better understanding of the principal's evolving role. The vice-principal's role should also be investigated and clarified regarding their need to support the school principal's evolving role. Clearly defined expectations would assist in alleviating some uncertainty of the evolving role and allow for support in areas that might be new to the principal. All principals interviewed spoke about managing marketing, sustainability, and driving transformation in their schools. It would be recommended that schools upskill the principals in these fields by finding relevant short courses enhancing the principal's

knowledge in these fields or providing a board member trained in these areas to offer support and work closely with the principal.

A further recommendation would be for principals to continue networking with other principals to feel supported and less alone in their evolving roles by attending appropriate conferences and external meetings that include principals from other schools. By gaining knowledge through shared lived experiences with other colleagues, principals could harness support and advice from co-workers to cope with their new demands. The school finance committee should ensure that a relevant budget is set aside to allow the principals to network and enhance their skills.

5.4.4 Recommendations regarding research objective three: To distinguish which external and internal driving forces have changed the role and focus of the principal and vice-principal's job descriptions in independent schools in Gauteng

Objective three was to distinguish which external and internal driving forces have changed the role and focus of the principal and vice-principal's job descriptions in independent primary schools in Gauteng. The study identified various external and internal forces that drive change within schools, resulting in the school principal's evolving role (par. 4.5.4).

Common external factors included crisis management in the wake of Covid-19, global economic pressure, high levels of parental involvement, and a stronger focus on social justice issues. The study confirmed that the external factors had placed additional demands on the principal's role, requiring additional focus from the vice-principal to support the principal.

Common internal factors driving change included a change in management structures, competition with neighbouring schools, and the rollout of revised curriculum plans to accommodate the pandemic. The study established that while the principal was heavily involved in planning the revised curriculum, the vice-principal became accountable for its implementation and was required to support the principal in various areas related to the school's internal functioning and daily operational requirements.

The study revealed that the distributed leadership framework was effective and worthwhile for schools to follow regarding the vice-principal supporting the principal in their evolving roles. All schools that participated in the study indicated implementing this leadership framework.

Recommendation: The researcher recommends that school principals understand and accept their changing roles based on the findings. Principals should work closely with their vice-principals to establish how best they can redesign the two management roles to accommodate the principal's newly acquired focus areas. Through open communication and collaborative leadership, the principal and vice-principal should find ways to distribute the various leadership requirements between their roles so that the school continues to function optimally.

It is recommended that the vice-principal receive additional responsibilities and higher accountability. This will support the principal in their evolving role and grow the vice-principal's leadership skills. Communicating the vice-principal's various responsibility areas and accountability levels to the school community will enhance this management role and allow the principal to relinquish some of their original focus areas.

It is further recommended that the principal be highly visible within the new focus areas so that the community understand the importance of the principal's leadership in these critical governance fields. Clear communication to the community on the principal's involvement and advancement of evolving focus areas will dispel any notion that the principal no longer runs the schools. The community should understand that the school's final responsibility remains that of the principal but that the vice-principal supports the principal in their evolving role.

5.4.5 Recommendations regarding objective four: To analyse how these external and internal driving forces affect the vice-principal's distributed leadership role

Objective four analysed how these external and internal driving forces affected the vice-principal's distributed leadership role. The study revealed that the external and internal forces driving change also affected the vice-principal's role and job description. As the demands on the principal increased, so too have the demands on

the vice-principal (par. 4.5.5). The distributed leadership framework was a positive way for schools to allow the vice-principal to support the principal's evolving role.

Recommendation: From the findings, the researcher recommends that the distributed leadership model be deepened, and schools consider permeating the structure through to Heads of Department, Academic Heads, and Grade Heads. This will support the principal and vice-principal's evolving roles and provide further leadership opportunities for additional staff members. Schools should establish sound structures with specific accountability and responsibility areas and ensure that each role's expectation is defined and understood. Clear job descriptions for each leader must be established and revisited regularly to keep up with global and internal changes. By encouraging a shared leadership approach, schools will enhance and strengthen their teams, allowing a more manageable day for the school principals to adjust to their evolving roles.

5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

A further research option is to evaluate the executive head's role within independent schools. Many independent schools have added a tier to their leadership structures by introducing an Executive Head of School, linked to schools with more than one campus or phase of schooling (Preschool, Junior School, and Senior School). This newly developed role has a strategic focus, offering support to existing principals by assisting with some themes mentioned in this research. The researcher could interview various Executive Heads to determine what this new role entails and how it supports the principal's evolving role.

Second, further research could focus on the correlation between a principal's years of experience in their leadership role and their ability to distribute leadership among others in the team. In two interviews conducted, the principal's vast years of leadership experience indicated an ability to distribute leadership efficiently among the team and better understand the need for shared responsibility and staff empowerment. During the interview process, it was uncovered that the principals with fewer years of experience were still establishing trust and finding it more challenging to let go of specific responsibilities and areas of control.

A third research option could explore how various principals coped with the impact of Covid-19 on their schools and the instructional programme. All participants discussed the impact of Covid-19 at length, describing the impact of the pandemic on various aspects of the school. Reference was made to redesigning the instructional programme, teacher fatigue and stress, overnight adapting to an online model, new assessment strategies, and the community's social and emotional wellness. Investigating how schools adapted to the demands of online learning and the impact on students and teachers would allow the researcher to obtain knowledge and understand best practices regarding crisis management in a school and the principal's role in steering a community in need.

5.6 LIMITATIONS TO THE STUDY

Only eight of 160 school principals and vice-principals were interviewed. If more schools had been interviewed, the researcher could have obtained a better idea about the accuracy of the results presented in this study. The emerging themes could have been strengthened by increasing the number of participants. The study was limited to independent schools. If government schools were included, it might have resulted in a different outcome for this study and yielded different insights about the principal and vice-principal's job descriptions. This study's findings could have been different given the different contexts and dynamics of independent and government school systems. The interviews, unfortunately, occurred during the third Covid-19 wave, and seven of eight interviews had to be conducted online. While the online Microsoft Teams option was a good substitute for the interviews, the researcher would have preferred to do a real-life interview at participants' schools, as this could have given further insight into their environments.

5.7 CONCLUDING REMARKS

This study focused on determining the vice-principal's distributed leadership role in supporting the primary school principal's role in Gauteng. The study determined the principal and vice-principals' job descriptions to critically analyse primary school principals' evolving leadership roles in independent schools in Gauteng. It further distinguished which external and internal driving forces have changed the role and

focus of principals and vice-principals' job descriptions and analysed how these external and internal driving forces impacted the vice-principal's distributed leadership role. In conclusion, the study revealed that the principal's role is evolving due to internal and external factors. Due to the constant state of flux in the educational arena, the principal and vice-principal's job descriptions are challenging to pinpoint and remain flexible. It was further established that vice-principals find the distributed leadership framework effective and empowering to support the principal's evolving role.

APPENDIX A – PROOF OF REGISTRATION



1952

VAN NIEKERK B K MRS
P O BOX 16404
HURLYVALE
1611

STUDENT NUMBER : 0847-099-5
ENQUIRIES TEL : 0861670411
FAX : (012)429-4150
eMAIL : mandd@unisa.ac.za

2020-01-31

Dear Student

I hereby confirm that you have been registered for the current academic year as follows:

Proposed Qualification: MED (EDUC MANAGEMENT) (98420)

CODE	PAPER	S NAME OF STUDY UNIT	NQF crdts	LANG.	PROVISIONAL EXAMINATION	
					EXAM.DATE	CENTRE(PLACE)
Study units registered without formal exams:						
DFEDU95		MEd - Education Management	**	E		
@ DFEDU95		MEd - Education Management	**	E		
@ Exam transferred from previous academic year						

You are referred to the "MyRegistration" brochure regarding fees that are forfeited on cancellation of any study units.

Your attention is drawn to University rules and regulations (www.unisa.ac.za/register).

Please note the new requirements for reregistration and the number of credits per year which state that students registered for the first time from 2013, must complete 36 NQF credits in the first year of study, and thereafter must complete 48 NQF credits per year.

Students registered for the MBA, MBL and DBL degrees must visit the SBL's E5OnLine for study material and other important information.

Readmission rules for Honours: Note that in terms of the Unisa Admission Policy academic activity must be demonstrated to the satisfaction of the University during each year of study. If you fail to meet this requirement in the first year of study, you will be admitted to another year of study. After a second year of not demonstrating academic activity to the satisfaction of the University, you will not be re-admitted, except with the express approval of the Executive Dean of the College in which you are registered. Note too, that this study programme must be completed within three years. Non-compliance will result in your academic exclusion, and you will therefore not be allowed to re-register for a qualification at the same level on the National Qualifications Framework in the same College for a period of five years after such exclusion, after which you will have to re-apply for admission to any such qualification.

Readmission rules for M&D: Note that in terms of the Unisa Admission Policy, a candidate must complete a Master's qualification within three years. Under exceptional circumstances and on recommendation of the Executive Dean, a candidate may be allowed an extra (fourth) year to complete the qualification. For a Doctoral degree, a candidate must complete the study programme within six years. Under exceptional circumstances, and on recommendation by the Executive Dean, a candidate may be allowed an extra (seventh) year to complete the qualification.

BALANCE ON STUDY ACCOUNT: 0.00

Yours faithfully,

Dr F Goolam
Registrar

0108 0 00 0



University of South Africa
Preller Street, Muckleneuk Ridge, City of Tshwane
PO Box 392 UNISA 0003 South Africa
Telephone: +27 12 429 3111 Facsimile: +27 12 429 4150
www.unisa.ac.za

APPENDIX: B: LETTER REQUESTING PERMISSION FROM ISASA



LETTER REQUESTING PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH.

Request for permission to conduct research at Eight Independent Schools in Gauteng Province.

Research Topic: The distributed leadership role of the vice-principal in supporting the evolving role of the principal in Gauteng schools.

14 August 2020

Information and Technology Manager: ISASA

simonl@isasa.org

Dear Simon

I, Beverley Kim van Niekerk am doing research under the supervision of the Department of Educational Management towards a master's in educational management at the University of South Africa. I would like to gain permission to enter eight independent schools in Gauteng to interview the school principal or vice-principal to gain information on The distributed leadership role of the vice-principal in supporting the evolving role of the principal.

As society has evolved, the expectations and job descriptions of the school principal have expanded. The sharing of decision-making powers and the distribution of specific responsibilities to attain a common goal and purpose for the school has increased the demands and expectations of the role of the vice-principal and resulted in many schools adopting a distributed leadership model.

This study aims to highlight the importance of acceptance of distributed leadership within the ranks of vice-principals to accommodate the evolving role of the principal. It

will explore how vice-principals must deal with an accelerated rate of change in school leadership and how this change has affected their job description. It will focus on the framework of distributed leadership and how this specific leadership style affects the job description of the vice-principal to support the principal in their emerging role.

This study will also seek to explore how the evolving role of the principal has affected the vice-principal's duties and job description. It will investigate some of the critical changes and enhanced expectations of principals. It will examine if the variations in the job profile of the vice-principal/principals are because of the principal's evolving role, resulting in the natural dissemination of duties to the vice-principal.

Independent schools have been selected as they have broad leadership opportunities and are within the researcher's field of scope.

The study will involve entering the school for approximately one and half hours to conduct an interview. After gaining access to documents such as job profiles for the principal and vice-principal, visual management organograms and/or structures and any recently posted advertisements for the job of principal or vice-principal.

The benefit of this study will be a more transparent outline of how the vice-principal can support the evolving role of the principal through a distributed leadership framework.

The schools used to conduct this study will be kept confidential to protect them from criticism or judgement of other school principals who read the study.

The principals or vice-principals concerned will be sent the transcribed interview to maintain clarity and transparency.

Kind regards

Bev van Niekerk

APPENDIX C – LETTER OF RESPONSE FROM ISASA

Dear Bev,

Yes, all well thanks; I hope you are keeping well too.

ISASA is a voluntary association rather than a governing body, so we unfortunately cannot grant direct permission for research at member schools. This permission is best obtained directly from the individual schools in question, or if they are part of a larger school group (e.g., Crawford schools are part of the Advtech group) then from the group head office.

Best regards,

Simon

APPENDIX D – PARTICIPANT LETTER



Participant information sheet

1 November 2020

Title: The distributed leadership role of the vice-principal in supporting the evolving role of the principal in Gauteng schools.

Dear Prospective Participant.

My name is Beverley van Niekerk, and I am doing research, under the supervision of Professor Botha who is a Professor in the Department of Education Management, towards a Masters' Degree in Education at the University of South Africa. We are inviting you to participate in a study entitled: The distributed leadership role of the vice-principal in supporting the evolving role of the principal.

I am conducting this study to find out how the distributed leadership role of the vice-principal supports the evolving role of the principal. The information collected will shed light on how the vice-principal can support the evolving role of the principal through a distributed leadership framework.

As society has evolved, the expectations and job description of the principal has evolved and expanded. The sharing of decision-making powers and the distribution of certain responsibilities to attain a common goal and purpose for the school has increased the demands and expectations of the role of the vice-principal and this has resulted in many schools adopting a distributed leadership model. The two leadership portfolios are closely aligned and rely heavily on each other to ensure success of the school.

I am requesting your participation in this study as you have first-hand experience in the leadership role/roles under review in this study and therefore have the correct experience to contribute rich, relevant data. Furthermore, my study is set in independent primary schools in Gauteng and your school qualifies in this category.

I will be interviewing four school principals and four vice-principals in Gauteng starting with those in my immediate vicinity.

The study involves conducting an interview of approximately one and a half hours. This interview will be recorded and transcribed into data that will be used to understand the phenomenon under study. I would also like to request that I am able to collect certain documentation that will aid this study. This includes but is not limited to job profiles of the principal a vice-principal, management structures within the school and any recently placed advertisements for the position of principal or vice-principal.

Participation is voluntary and you are under no obligation to participate. If you decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep and asked to sign a written consent form. You are free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason. It would be appreciated however, that once the interview has taken place and data captured, that you consider very carefully when withdrawing as once the data has been transcribe it will form a vital part of the study.

The schools that take part will be given a copy of the transcribed interview which may be helpful in identifying areas of strength and areas that need to be worked on within the school. The school will also receive a copy of this study which may be of assistance when understanding the evolving role of the principal and the role of the vice-principal in supporting this change.

The identity of both the school and the participant will be kept confidential. No one apart from the researcher will know about your involvement in this research. Your answers will be given a code number or pseudonym and you will be referred to in this way in the data, any publications, or other form that the data may take.

The data will be transcribed by me and no one else besides my Supervisor and the Research Ethics Review Committee will have access to the data from the transcribed interviews.

The data from the interviews will be used in this research project and may at some time be used for other purposes such as a research report, journal article or

conference proceedings. If this research project does get published individual participants will not be identifiable in such a report.

Hard copies of the answers to the interview questions will be kept in a locked storeroom for a period of five years. Electronic information will be stored on a password protected computer. Future use of the stored data will be subject to further Research Ethics Review and approval if applicable. After five years hard copies of data will be shredded, and electronic copies permanently deleted from the hard drive of the computer throughout the use of a relevant software programme.

This study has received written approval from the Research Review Committee of the UNISA Ethics Committee (REC). A copy of the approval letter can be obtained from the researcher if you so wish.

Once the findings have been presented and recommendations made the finding can be made available if you wish to be informed as to what they were. Should you require any further information or want to contact the researcher about any aspect of this study please contact 082 556 1204 or email bvanniekerk@standrews.co.za.

Should you have concerns about the way in which the research has been conducted, you may contact Professor Botha at botharij@unisa.co.za or phone 0824116361. Alternatively, contact the research ethics chairperson of the College of Education, Prof A.T. Motlhabane at motlhat@unisa.ac.za.

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet and for participating in this study.

Kind regards

Bev van Niekerk

**CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY.
(RETURN SLIP) CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN
THIS STUDY. (RETURN SLIP)**



I, _____ (participant name), confirm that the person asking my consent to take part in this research has told me about the nature, procedure, potential benefits, and anticipated inconvenience of participation.

I have read (or had explained to me) and understood the study as explained in the information sheet.

I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and I am prepared to participate in the study.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time.

I am aware that the findings of this study will be processed into a research report, journal publications and or/ conference proceedings, but that my participation will be kept confidential unless otherwise specified.

I agree to the recording of the interview and to assisting with document retrieval.

I have received a signed copy of the informed consent agreement.

Participants Name and Surname:

Participants Signature Date

Researcher's Name and Surname

Researcher's signature Date

APPENDIX E – LETTER REQUESTING PERMISSION FOR SCHOOL RESEARCH

PERMISSION REQUEST FROM SCHOOL



Dear Principal

Request for permission to conduct research interviews in your school

I would like to request permission to conduct a research interview with your Principal /Vice-Principal of the primary school. I am currently completing my Master of Education (Education Management) degree and would value your assistance in helping me complete my research.

My dissertation topic is: *The distributed leadership role of the vice-principal in supporting the evolving role of the principal in Gauteng schools.*

The objectives of this research are to:

- To summarise job descriptions of vice-principals and principals in Gauteng.
- To analyse the evolving role of the principal and determine how external and internal factors have affected both the principal and vice-principal's role and job description.
- To recognise how these external and internal driving forces have impacted on the distributed leadership role of the vice-principal.

The researcher will conduct one in-depth, semi-structured interview with the principal/vice-principal in the school. An interview schedule will be presented to the participant and no disruptions will be caused in the school programme. Considering the COVID-19 regulations, interviews may be conducted online through Microsoft Teams if preferred.

Informed consent will be obtained from the participant and all data gathered will be held in confidence and be used strictly for research purposes. Names of schools and participants will not be disclosed in the study.

Please may I request your permission to conduct this research at your school.

This study is supervised by Prof R J Botha (0824116361 or Botharj@unisa.ac.za)

Yours faithfully

B. van Niekerk (082 556 1204)

If you understand the request and agree to permit the study, please sign the consent form below.

.....
.....

CONSENT FORM

I _____ (Full name of PRINCIPAL) hereby confirm that I have read and understood the contents of this document and the nature of the study; and consent to the study being undertaken in my school.

Signature _____ Date _____

APPENDIX F – LETTER REQUESTING PERMISSION FOR ADULT PARTICIPATION IN STUDY



A letter requesting an adult to participate in an interview.

Dear Mr/Mrs _____

This letter is an invitation to consider participating in a study I, Bev van Niekerk, am conducting as part of my research as a master's student entitled: The distributed leadership role of the vice-principal in supporting the evolving role of the principal in Gauteng, at the University of South Africa. Permission for the study has been given by your school principal and the ethics committee of the College of Education, UNISA.

I have purposefully identified you as a possible participant because of your valuable experience and expertise related to my research topic. I would like to provide you with more information about this project and what your involvement would entail if you should agree to take part.

Global trends and educational reform dictated that transformation within the leadership fields of our schools should become critical in how we address the increasing demands of school management and how we meet both the needs of the 21st-Century learner and find balance by maintaining the ethos and traditions of past generations. Discussions around what constitutes an effective 21st-Century principal are often based on the shift in responsibility and leadership focus for the principal. To meet the demand of a 21st-Century school, the job profile and expectation of the school principal has been greatly altered. As additional demands on the school principal increase, further expectations are being placed on the vice-principals. The school principal and vice-principal should aim to align their strengths with each other to provide the best leadership for the school. By adopting a distributed leadership

approach and entrusting certain responsibilities to the vice-principal, the principal can focus on staying abreast of educational reform and international trends to find the best educational practice for their school and, specifically, their learners. I would like to explore the importance of the distributed leadership model in supporting the evolving role of the principal.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. It will involve an interview of approximately 90 minutes in length to take place in a mutually agreed upon location at a time convenient to you. You may decline to answer any of the interview questions if you so wish. Furthermore, you may decide to withdraw from this study at any given time without any negative consequences.

With your kind permission, the interview will be audio-recorded to facilitate collection of accurate information and later transcribed for analysis. Shortly after the transcription has been completed, I will send you a copy of the transcript to give you an opportunity to confirm the accuracy of conversion and to add or to clarify any points. All information you provide is considered completely confidential. Your name will not appear in any publication resulting from this study and any identifying information will be omitted from the report. However, with your permission, anonymous quotations may be used. Data collected during this study will be retained on a password protected computer for a period of 5 years.

There are no known or anticipated risks to you as a participant in this study.

If you have any questions regarding this study or would like additional information to assist you in reaching a decision about participation, please contact me at 082 556 1204 or by email. bvanniekerk@standrews.co.za.

I look forward to speaking with you very much and thank you in advance for your assistance in this project. If you accept my invitation to participate, I request you to sign the consent form which follows on the next page.

Yours sincerely,

Bev van Niekerk

Consent form:

I have read the information presented in the information letter about the study: The distributed leadership role of the vice-principal in supporting the evolving role of the principal.

- ✓ I have had the opportunity to ask questions and add any additional details necessary.
- ✓ I am aware that I have the option of allowing my interview to be audio-recorded to ensure an accurate recording of my responses.
- ✓ I am also aware that excerpts from the interview may be included in publications to come from this research, with the understanding that the quotations will be anonymous.
- ✓ I was informed that I may withdraw my consent at any time without penalty by the advising the researcher.
- ✓ With full knowledge of all foregoing, I agree, of my own free will, to participate in this study.

Name of Participant (please print):

Participant's signature:

Name of Researcher:

Researcher's signature:

Date: _____

APPENDIX G – INTERVIEW SCHEDULE



Interview Schedule:

Topic: The distributed leadership role of the vice-principal in supporting the evolving role of the principal

Section One: Job description:

1. What does your current job description entail?
2. What are the focus areas of your job at present?
3. In what way is your 'real-day' reality different to that of your job description?
4. Since taking on your role, have you noticed a shift in your job description?
5. What key strengths do you require to fulfil your job description?
6. What are the differences in the job description regarding the principal and the vice-principal?

Section Two: Evolving leadership role of the school principal:

7. Do you believe that the role of the school principal has evolved over the last five to ten years?
8. Discuss three major shifts you have seen/experienced in this role?

Section Three: External and Internal forces driving change:

9. What external forces may have contributed to this shift of focus for the principal?
10. What internal forces may have contributed to this shift of focus for the principal?
11. In your personal experience, what changes have you noticed in your leadership role?

Section Four: Impact on the role of vice-principal:

12. How has the evolving role of the principal impacted the role of the vice-principal?
13. What shift have you noticed in terms of the vice-principal in schools and the management structures?
14. How would you sum up the role of the vice-principal in a school vs the role of a principal in a school?

Section Five: Distributed leadership:

15. What do you understand about the term distributed leadership?
16. Do you think distributed leadership is a positive framework for schools to follow?
17. How would you see the distributed leadership role of the vice-principal supporting the evolving role of the principal?

Please feel free to share any further insights you have on this topic.

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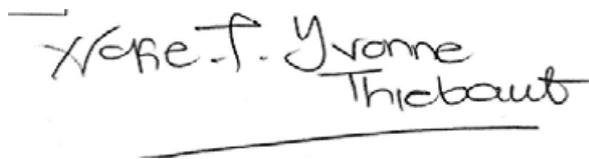
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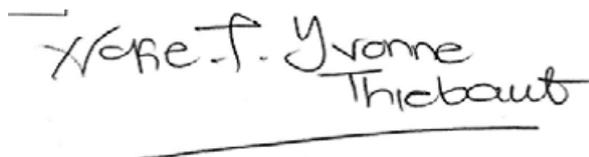
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THE DISTRIBUTED ¹ LEADERSHIP ROLE OF THE VICE-PRINCIPAL IN
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by

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