SCHOOL LEADERSHIP AGILITY IN SOUTH AFRICAN SCHOOLS: SUSTAINING QUALITY PERFORMANCE IN TIMES OF CRISIS

by

MUHKTAR JACOBS

submitted in accordance with the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF EDUCATION

in

EDUCATIONAL MANAGEMENT

at the

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA (PRETORIA)

STUDY SUPERVISOR: PROFESSOR J. NYONI

(2022)

DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

I, Muhktar Jacobs, with student number 63285320, declare that the dissertation titled

SCHOOL LEADERSHIP AGILITY IN SOUTH AFRICAN SCHOOLS: SUSTAINING QUALITY PERFORMANCE IN TIMES OF CRISIS

is my own unaided work, and that all sources I have used or quoted have been acknowledged by complete references. Furthermore, I confirm that this dissertation has not been previously submitted for academic examination towards any qualification at any international or domestic institution.

2022-12-14

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Muhktar Jacobs   **Date**

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UNISA COLLEGE OF EDUCATION ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE

Date: 2022/05/11

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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 2022/05/11 to 2025/05/11.

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DISSERTATION TITLE

School Leadership Agility in South African Schools: Sustaining Quality Performance in Times of Crisis

POSTGRADUATE DEGREE

Master in Education (M. Ed) (UNISA)

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my family, especially my parents and siblings.

This dissertation is also dedicated to every "coloured" child growing up in our country's worst areas and circumstances. Always remember that you do not have to succumb to your circumstances, and by having dreams and aspirations, you will amount to something, do not let any person tell you that you are too ambitious, be as ambitious as you want because your ambition is your greatest ammunition to thrive in this world.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

AUTHOR'S DECLARATORY ETHICS STATEMENT

I, **MUHKTAR JACOBS** (63285320), the author of the thesis whose title appears hitherto, have obtained permission and approval for the research whose narrative will be detailed in this work. I, the author, declare that I have observed and complied with the ethical standards required in terms of the University of South Africa's code of ethics for researchers and the policy guidelines for responsible, just, and ethical research.

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ABSTRACT

Decisiveness and effective school leadership can make decisions quickly with the information it has during normal and crisis times. Effective decision-making comes with time and experience. Crisis leadership is used by a leader or leadership team during an event that threatens a school as an organization. This may involve planning for a crisis, motivating employees during a crisis, managing public relations, as well as protecting an organization in the aftermath. Schools are part of a community-wide social infrastructure that provides education to learners. The advent of the COVID-19 pandemic placed tremendous pressure on the leadership to maintain high teaching and learning levels and to uphold or improve learner performance.

This study analysed the secondary school leadership's exercise of legal and policy power to understand how the act improves the quality of learner performance in the Western Cape, Metro South Education District amidst the 2019 novel coronavirus (COVID-19) global pandemic. A phenomenological research design was adopted to analyse the views emanating from the school leadership ecosystem with the prime objective of understanding how the instruments of school leadership, policy and legal power are used to manage the quality of teaching and learning during a crisis such as the COVID-19 pandemic in secondary schools in South Africa. The use of online qualitative research data collection methods was underpinned by the qualitative research approach.

Keywords:

School leadership, COVID-19, crisis leadership, quality leadership, agility, academic performance, learning during COVID-19, phenomenology, school principals, teaching and learning

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

CAPS	Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement
DBE	Department of Basic Education
FET	Further Education and Training
HoDs	Head of Departments
MSED	Metro South Education District
NEEDU	National Education Evaluation and Development Unit
NSC	National Senior Certificate
PED	Provincial Education Department
PGCE	Post Graduate Certificates in Education
QMS	Quality Management System
SARS	Severe acute respiratory syndrome
SGB	School governing body
SMT	Senior Management Team
SOP	Standard Operating Procedure
UNESCO	United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation
WEF	World Economic Forum

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CHAPTER 1

FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY ORIENTATION

1.1   INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXTUAL BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

The research orientation describes and delves into pertinent issues that border on historical and present research on the topic explored. This chapter presents the introduction, philosophical overview, research paradigm, problem statement, purpose of the study, significance of the study, main research questions, and objectives of the research, as well as the objectives of the study.

"My fellow South Africans" (Ramaphosa, 2020) echoed throughout the country, paralysing the nation and leaving everyone in doubt and uncertainty, which was the order of the day.

Education is a societal phenomenon, a fundamental structure in every community and country. Hence, in Section 29 of the Bill of Rights (1996), the South African Constitution supports the right to access basic education. This right of access to basic education avows the democratic values of human dignity, equality, and freedom for all South Africans in redressing the past racially discriminatory laws. In addition, the National School Safety Framework (2015) foreword stipulated that schooling is one of the main structural blocks on which an impartial, comprehensive, and formative society has been built.

Post-1994, South Africa entered the world full of optimism, possessing the potential to conquer all spheres, especially education; however, South Africa has been lagging far behind other countries on learner performance in education. Letseka (2014) affirmed that the system performs inadequately and lags even more behind poorer nations, which spend much less on schooling than South Africa. The World Economic Forum (WEF) reported in its Global Information Technology Report 2016 that South Africa occupied the 139th position out of 139 countries for the quality of mathematics and science education. In addition, South Africa occupied the 137th position, surpassing Egypt and Paraguay. They took second last, and last place, respectively, for the quality of their education system. Hence, the South African education system is famously known for being in crisis;

Letseka (2014) and Maddock and Maroun (2018) asserted that South African education is often labelled as a "crisis", "a national disaster", that is, "in tatters" and is "wasteful and utilises assets ineffectively" and is "basically broken". These were extensively documented in academic papers, journals, and newspapers, offering appalling information about below-par academic achievement and under-trained educators. This is how South Africa was classified long before the outbreak of a monumental crisis.

The year 2020 dawned a new societal crisis with COVID-19, which forced all spheres of life to re-evaluate and adapt to the life COVID-19 expected of all. According to Ardington *et al.* (2021), one of the adaptations of COVID-19 was schools closures, and evidence from unscheduled schools closures stems from teacher protests in Belgium, Argentina, Canada and South Africa; shortened academic years in Germany, students missing school during World War II, the earthquake in Pakistan in 2005, the Ebola pandemic in West Africa during 2014-2015 and Hurricane Katrina in the United States. This led to numerous studies on the effects of long-term school closures, which concluded that students underperformed academically (Ardington *et al.*, 2021:2). Though the COVID-19 pandemic led to school closures, Bush (2021) emphasised that the pandemic had a profound impact on the tactical leadership and management. Thus, ineffective leadership in many schools resulted in inadequate academic performance of South African learners.

School effectiveness evaluated through learners' performance confirms a properly managed school. Dongo (2016) affirmed that learner performance reflects whether a school is operational, stemming from effective teaching and learning. The Grade 12 National Senior Certificate (NSC) Examination results will be used to decipher whether schools are successful. Dongo (2016) confirmed that Grade 12 pass rates are important when determining a school's success. Therefore, the work of school principals proves to be incredibly significant, as they are the main bodies to introduce positive change, guaranteeing learning (Republic of South Africa, 2015).

The South African Department of Basic Education's Action Plan to 2019 portrays principals as individuals who guarantee that teaching in the school happens as

expected and in conformity with the national curriculum (Republic of South Africa, 2015). Alam (2017) mentioned that schools exist to construct a milieu favourable for operational learning of the learners they educate. Principals are therefore entrusted with a pivotal role in the function of schools to administer effective teaching and learning. The South African Department of Basic Education's Action Plan to 2019 further emphasises that principals are expected to be knowledgeable about their role as a leader whose obligation is to advance unity, originality, and a hard-working attitude within the community (Republic of South Africa, 2015). Thus, the significant leadership role of principals in improving the value of schools must not be ignored (Alam, 2017:72).

Even though South Africa's schooling system was considered "a crisis", that does not deem it past salvaging; adjoining nations like Mozambique and Angola, which have risen out of many years of conflict with numerous losses of lives, are creating schooling systems that are receptive to their settings with manifested yearnings for competitiveness (Letseka, 2014:4867). As a result, the driving force of this study is to understand how secondary school leadership exercise legal and policy power to better the quality of learner performance in the Western Cape, Metro South Education District amidst the 2019 novel coronavirus (COVID-19) global crisis.

1.2   RESEARCH PARADIGM

Asghar (2013) claimed that choosing a suitable paradigmatic framework is pivotal for research because a paradigm, as noted by Asghar (2013), provides perspectives that characterise the nature of the world as the scope of opportunities for holders comparable to the real world. Namely, ontological, epistemological and methodological (axiological) concerns shape the elements of any paradigm.

Thus, the research paradigm selected for the study is the Critical Paradigm. The critical paradigm, infamously known as critical theory, is historically associated with the three foremost critical theorists of the original Frankfurt School (Asghar, 2013:3123). According to Asghar (2013), Horkheimer (1982), one of the founders of the Frankfurt School and Critical Theory, confirmed that critical theory can could

be defined as freeing human beings from the conditions that oppress them by searching for the emancipation of humans. According to Asghar (2013), Horkheimer (1982) embodied the first methodical struggle to adopt traditional empirical research techniques to enhance and assess propositions stemming from Marxist belief.

Critical theory is quite the opposite of conventional theory that investigates and affirms the norm. In contrast, critical theory challenges the status quo and hypothesises a fair and popularity-based society. It is especially concerned about forced relations inside the public and cooperation of race, class, sexual orientation, education, economy, religion and other social organisations that add to a social framework. Furthermore, critical theory is thought to have been developed to attain a vital assortment of scholarship in education that grants a focal point for comprehending the roles of schools in propagating and undercutting race, class and gender interests of state and society (Vandeyar & Swart, 2016:144). Asghar (2013) highlighted that Horkheimer (1982) proposed three rules for a sufficient critical theory, likewise further confirmed by Asghar (2013):

1)	It should be explanatory regarding the happenings with relevant societal reality.

2)	It should distinguish the action to transform it.

3)	It should give both clear standards for analysis and change.

Hence, this study explored how secondary school leadership exercise legal and policy power aimed at bettering the quality of learner performance in the Western Cape, Metro South Education District amidst a global crisis. It is evident that leadership in all aspects of a school faces the ultimate test of crisis management skills. Bush (2021) affirmed that the COVID-19 pandemic is the ultimate evaluator of all principals' and senior staff members' leadership skills in dealing effectively with the crisis.

## 1.3	STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Considering principals' consistent and rapidly expanding responsibility to improve learner performance and prepare learners for the country's socio-economic

advancement. Leadership remains a significant concentration among researchers, educators, specialists and the public. Leadership centres on learning, and principals' constructive leadership practices assist with transforming teaching and learning processes. Going forward, backing principals and improving their leadership skills, all researchers and teachers must persist in recognising issues experienced by principals in exercising their roles and reinforcing their ability to drive the school adequately and productively. Maponya (2020:183) confirmed that principals are the key players in strengthening teaching and learning at their schools. Therefore, leadership has been driven by the concern for teaching and learning, underpinned by qualified teachers (Bush, 2008:18). Bush (2008) further noted that holding conferences with teachers, encouraging teacher development and promoting teacher reflection are effective leadership attributes to possess.

There is evidence that school principals' leadership and a school's overall performance are interrelated (Bush, 2008:6). On the contrary, Bayat *et al.* (2014) stated that underperforming secondary schools are experiencing different elements which include but are not limited to the low financial status of the learners and their parents that contribute mainly to the underperformance of learners, especially in the Western Cape Province. Additionally, a pertinent factor contributing to underperforming secondary schools is the infamous COVID-19 global crisis, which Bush (2021) referred to as the "perfect storm" and emphasised that a perfect example of a global crisis is COVID-19 due to its profound impact on education, whereby school leaders embraced school closures, teaching online, and dealing with the effects the virus had on teachers and learners. Thus, Bayat *et al.* (2014) support the view that under-performance in schools is a key concern in the Western Cape and throughout South Africa. Hence, crisis leadership and management are critical in sustaining quality education in schools during pandemics such as COVID-19.

1.4   PURPOSE STATEMENT

The purpose of the study was to analyse and describe the meanings of principals' experiences and views in responding to the crisis management of Grade 12 learner performance amidst the COVID-19 global pandemic. Likewise, to understand how secondary school leadership exercise legal and policy power

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aimed at improving the quality of learner performance in the Western Cape, Metro South Education District amidst the COVID-19 pandemic.

1.5   PRIMARY OBJECTIVE

The study's primary objective was to analyse and subsequently describe the meanings of the school leadership ecosystem views on school crisis leadership and how it exercises legal and policy power to sustain quality teaching and learning.

1.5.1   Research questions

The study utilised the following main research question:

- *How does secondary school leadership exercise legal and policy power during crisis with the aim of sustaining academic quality performance in the Western Cape, Metro South Education District, amidst the COVID-19 global pandemic?*

1.5.2   Sub-questions

The following sub-questions undergirded the main research question:

- What is secondary school principals' understanding of leadership power?

- How does school leadership use law and policy power to develop crisis management plans for school performance sustainability?

- What strategies do leadership school systems use to improve performance while dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic?

- How can school leadership experiences be translated into making changes that improve teaching and learning during the crisis?

- What legal and policy power does school leadership have in making decisions in times of crisis?

1.6　RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

In a developing country like South Africa, education is a means of evolving, eradicating poverty and possessing individuals who can contribute meaningfully to the South African economy. The Minister of Basic Education, Angie Motshekga, stated in the foreword of the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) for Further Education and Training (FET) Mathematics that the goals of the Constitution are to:

"… improve the quality of life of all citizens and free the potential of each person; lay the foundations for a democratic and open society in which government is based on the will of the people and every citizen is equally protected by law; and build a united and democratic South Africa able to take its rightful place as a sovereign state in the family of nations."

The Western Cape Department of Education Mathematics Strategy 2015-2019 confirmed that several reports highlighted shortcomings in performance and suggested prospects for bettering the quality of education in the province. Thus, this obligates effective school leadership practices to produce skilful and trained citizens who can share the vision of the country. In line with this, the Department of Basic Education (2011:5) formulated the aims of the National Curriculum Statement Grade R-12 to produce learners that can:

"identify and solve problems and make decisions using critical and creative thinking; work effectively as individuals and with others as members of a team; organise and manage themselves and their activities responsibly and effectively; collect, analyse, organise and critically evaluate information; communicate effectively using visual, symbolic and/or language skills in various modes; use science and technology effectively and critically showing responsibility towards the environment and the health of others; and demonstrate an understanding of the world as a set of related systems by recognising that problem-solving contexts do not exist in isolation."

In addition to the above, one of the objectives of education is to reinforce the people and society's ability to problem-solve starting from basic education. extraordinary. The leadership role expected from stakeholders, particularly

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principals, to attain these aims and objectives is extraordinary. Bush (2008:6) agreed that leadership is frequently associated with school progress. Hence, principals ought to adopt strategies to improve Grade 12 results. Sharma (2017:33) confirmed that principals are at the forefront of educational policy agendas when improving learner performance.

However, in support of Longmuir (2021), change is not unusual for principals, as they work within systems that focus on change to improve learning. Therefore, this study needed to be conducted as it intended to understand how, amidst the COVID-19 crisis, secondary school leadership exercised legal and policy power to improve learner performance in the Western Cape, Metro South Education District.

1.7   SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Amidst a global pandemic, the need for effective educational leadership to improve Grade 12 academic performance in the Western Cape, Metro South Education District has become more prevalent. Thus, this study intended to present findings that may be useful to all participants within the education sector, particularly principals, deputy principals, HOD's and teachers who might take the findings of this research towards improving Grade 12 academic performance.

Significantly, all schools within the Metro South Education District could implement this study's findings. To the best knowledge of the researcher, there was no similar study conducted in the Metro South Education District, particularly in Mitchell's Plain. In addition, this study provides meaningful contributions to leadership and education because of the limited research conducted on leadership in relation to COVID-19. Sintema (2020) settled that presently there is very little to no literature available on educational studies about COVID-19; similarly, Guerra *et al.* (2021) affirmed that there is a scarcity of literature regarding educational leadership amidst times of crisis. Therefore, this study will contribute significantly to education, particularly crisis leadership in schools during COVID-19 and leadership agility.

1.8   OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study's objective was to analyse how school leaders and educators can improve Grade 12 learner performance while dealing with the effects of COVID-19. I also described how secondary school leadership exercise legal and policy power aimed at improving the quality of learner performance during a global crisis.

1.9   CHAPTER SUMMARY

A principal is at the forefront of improving the quality of academic performance. This study reports on the findings on how, amidst the COVID-19 crisis, secondary school leadership exercise legal and policy power aimed at bettering the quality of learner performance in the Western Cape, Metro South Education District. In addition, I analysed the experiences and views of principals in managing Grade 12 learner performance amidst the COVID-19 global pandemic. To understand these practices, I drew on Fullan's (2002) framework for the leadership model.

In this phenomenological qualitative analysis, I purposefully random sample three performing and three non-performing public schools in Mitchell's Plain based on Grade 12 learner performance. The participants selected for this study were principals, deputy principals and heads of departments. Semi-structured interviews, observations, and document analysis generated valuable data. The findings provided knowledge on improving the quality of learner performance and providing meaningful contributions to leadership and education amidst crises.

1.10   CONCLUSION

This chapter provided an orientation to the study, which included a brief background, the rationale, the research problem, aims and objectives. The next chapter presents an in-depth discussion of the theoretical framework on which this study has been based and a comprehensive literature review related to the researched topic. A brief literature review has been submitted, and the research methodology also discussed. The study's limitations and delimitations have been provided, key terms defined as well as the overall outline of the chapters.

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CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK UNDERPINNING OF THE STUDY

2.1   INTRODUCTION

This chapter consists of the researcher's theoretical framework, the foundations of quality education and educational leadership perspectives. It also contains the COVID-19 pandemic and learning through COVID-19, as well as leadership agility during the pandemic and leadership practices in schools. Additional sections of the chapter include leadership in a South African context, differences between leadership and management, quality leadership in a South African context, resources of leadership power in South Africa, quality measurement in South African schools, crisis leadership in education during COVID-19 and the chapter summary.

2.1.1   Theoretical framework of the study

The pertinent objective steering this study is to analyse and subsequently explain the meanings of the school leadership ecosystem views about school crisis leadership and how it exercises legal and policy power to sustain quality teaching and learning. Thus, this study established that agility, crisis management and the willingness for change are effective attributes that could be adopted in sustaining quality performance during times of crisis.
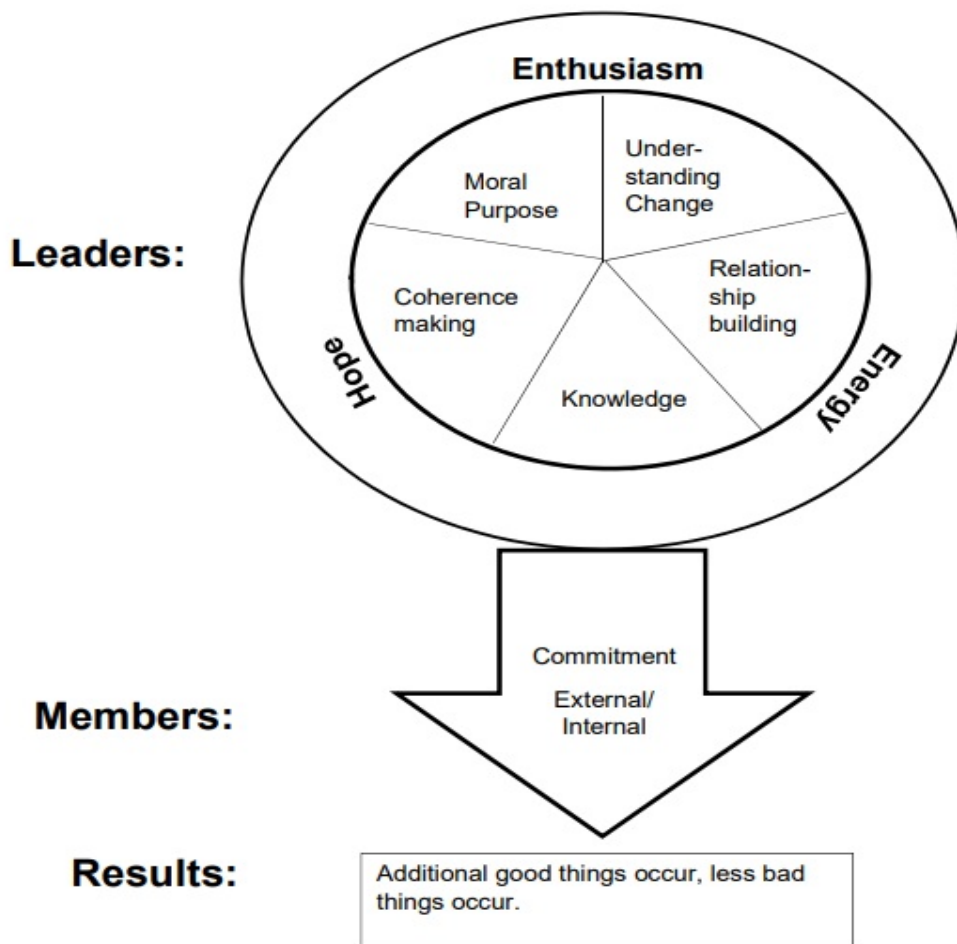
Figure 2.1: **Framework for Leadership Model** (adapted from Fullan, 2002).

Michael Fullan (2002) pioneered the Framework for Leadership Model. Fullan (2002) believed that effective leadership is the solution to the broader view of education reform. Hence, Asghar (2013) endorsed that critical theory is three-dimensional, whereby a problem is not merely explored, but also finding means and strategies to ensure that the repercussion is effective within society. Alternatively, emphasis ought to be entrenched more holistically and the necessary traits, which Fullan (2002) addressed as "the principal as a leader in a culture of change". The framework for leadership comprises personal traits of energy/enthusiasm and hope and five leading features of leadership: moral purpose, understanding change, relationship building, knowledge creation and sharing and coherence making (Fullan, 2002:3). Thus, this study adopted the Framework for Leadership Model by Michael Fullan (2002).

Figure 2.1 presents leaders immersed in the five leading features by showing and creating long-term responsibility in those with whom they work. Fullan (2001)

believed that leaders must first possess a moral purpose before the commencement of change. This is followed by understanding the complexities of the process of change. However, for successful change, the relationship ought to be improved. Furthermore, there must be sharing and creating new knowledge, thus leading to coherence making, whereby there is meaning to the changes (Fullan, 2001:4-9).

2.1.1.1   Moral purpose

According to Fullan (2002), moral purpose can be understood as the need for principals to have a feeling of moral purpose concerning the improvement of all schools and effectively look to have a beneficial outcome of closing the achievement gap between low and high performing learners. The moral purpose ought to dictate to principals to feel a sense of social obligation inside the school and society at large.

2.1.1.2   Understanding change

Fullan (2002) suggested that to be genuinely innovative; principals ought to comprehend the change process by following these six guidelines:

1. The objective is not to enhance the most. Developing specifically with intelligibility is better.

2. It is not sufficient to have the best thoughts. Principals help other people assess and discover significance and obligation in new ways.

3. Appreciating difficulties when trying something new — this is what Fullan (2002) labelled as the implementation dip.

4. Rethink obstruction as an expected positive power. School principals should listen to doubters as they might have significant contributions at some point.

5. Reculturing is the situation. Changing society prompts profound and enduring change.

6. Never an agenda, consistently intricacy. Crafted by changing society includes troublesome work and everyday reculturing.

Understanding the perplexing idea of progress is a significant segment of working with genuine social change. A consciousness of the intricacy will help school principals in creating enduring change.

2.1.1.3 Relationship building

It must be noted that the distinct factor common to effective change is enhanced relationships. Principals inclined to culture change understand the significance of utilizing enthusiastic knowledge to spur, stimulate and associate individuals inside the school to execute change and move positively (Fullan, 2001:5).

2.1.1.4 Knowledge

Fullan (2001) indicates that cultural change principles cultivate conditions where everyone engages with continuous learning. Fullan (2001) recommended that school principals should fill in as the main learner: by sharing pertinent data and empowering activity exploration, ceaselessly demonstrating and urging others to take part in scientific discovery and information refinement; furthermore, using social cycles to manage the moral and intellectual improvement of everybody in the education system.

2.1.1.5 Coherence making

Fullan (2002) proposed that having a moral purpose, comprehending change, improving relations and creating and sharing information cultivate intelligibility towards a culture of change. Fullan further mentioned that principals keep the "bigger picture" in mind and not simply "settle for the solution of the day".

In addition, there is a more personal trait that all leaders hold, which Fullan has branded as the enthusiasm-energy-hope constellation. However, Fullan (2001) admitted that it might not deem necessarily deliberate if this constellation is a cause or an effect of the five leadership features. On the other hand, there is a relationship between the constellations and the five leadership features. Leaders who are enthusiastic-energetic-hopeful "cause" for the superior moral purpose for themselves "…bury themselves in change, naturally build relationships and knowledge, and seek coherence to consolidate moral purpose" (Fullan, 2001:7).

2.2   THE FOUNDATIONS OF QUALITY EDUCATION

Quality remains at the core of education, which draws learners in, fulfils their essential need for learning, and improves their lives and encounters of experiences (Chinapah *et al.*, 2013:41). The idea of quality education is context-related and value stacked, and Chinapah *et al.* (2013) purported that it is a known fact that there is no commonly accepted definition, but rather numerous points of view: 1) the human resources approach regarding the possibility that quality education is essential for the development of the economy; 2) the approach of human rights, which contends that quality and value should cooperate to accomplish a quality education system; 3) the point of view of all involved having a voice and partaking in defining what quality is (Chinapah *et al.*, 2013:43). Therefore, Haseena and Mohammed (2015) established that "quality" is the defining feature of the 21st-century knowledge-driven society, however defining quality with regard to education is complex. UNICEF (2000) affirmed that defining quality education is complex due to numerous definitions of quality education, thus vouching for the complexness and multifarious nature of the concept of quality education. Productivity, adequacy, value, and quality are often used interchangeably.

However, according to Eze (2009), quality refers to the normality of something when contrasted with different things, such as how good or bad something is. Furthermore, Carrim (2013) conferred that quality is the possibility of value to that which is attractive, better and of some unrivalled worth. In addition, quality is expected to be "better than". Chinapah *et al.* (2013) suggested that research on the quality of education recommended that schools guarantee that learners learn and that what is taught applies to their requirements. More keenly, quality education should be available to better each individual's potential and the full advancement of a learner's character and defines quality as a mirror to qualities and convictions, needs and plans, and impacts and strengthens various role players' interests (Chinapah *et al.*, 2013:42-43).

Similarly, education performs numerous pivotal functions, and its impact on individuals depends on the effectiveness and insight with which one separates and decides life purposes and objectives (Fosu-Ayarkwah, 2020:22). Fosu-

Ayarkwah (2020) highlighted three essential functions of education, which are: developmental, differentiating and integrating. The developmental function of education specifies that education should foster the exceptional characteristics of an individual by aiding that individual to foster personal philosophy, social change as well as abilities in professional undertakings (Fosu-Ayarkwah, 2020:22). Furthermore, according to Kankam and Onivehu (2000) in Fosu-Ayarkwah (2020) the function of differentiating specifies that distinctions in capabilities, interest and purposes exist among learners; thus, these distinctions make it imperative for various efficiently coordinated projects to meet the differing interests and purpose of learners. Moreover, the function of integrating spans the gap in society, social steadiness, and the capacity to act cooperatively as a country relies on mutual understanding, perspectives, and individual beliefs. Thus, education creates a centre of shared beliefs, perspectives, values, and information (Fosu-Ayarkwah, 2020:23).

Consequently, UNICEF (2000) and Eze (2009) acknowledged that there is universal consensus regarding the foundations of quality education and presented six foundations:

2.2.1 Quality learners

The quality of learners refers to learners who are healthy, all around sustained and prepared to partake and learn, and upheld in advancing their families and communities; thus, the quality of life the learners possess before they commence formal schooling profoundly influences the kind of learners, they end up being. In agreement with Eze (2009), early childhood experiences contribute significantly to producing quality learners. Therefore, studies in Latin America, India, the Philippines, and Turkey, have proven that learners who partake in early mediation programs perform better in primary school than individuals who do not partake in formal early childhood programs.

2.2.2 Quality learning conditions

Quality learning conditions refer to conditions that are healthy, protected and gender-sensitive and provide sufficient resources and facilities. Therefore, three

principal features constitute quality learning conditions: physical feature, psychosocial and service delivery.

i. **Physical feature**: This consists of factors like modern and well-equipped structures, presence of educational materials, clean water supply, power supply and classroom maintenance, including class size.

ii. **Psychosocial feature**: This consists of a welcoming and non-discriminatory environment. It is also concerned with arranging calm, and safe conditions, particularly for girls. The Republic of Guinea framed a prominent "Equality Board" to understand various communities' necessities and qualities and policy reforms connected to the pregnancy of schoolgirls.

iii. **Service delivery**: Service delivery is concerned with managing health service contribution to learning by diminishing truancy and absenteeism in school/class. Thus, Eze (2009) reported that Mexico, India, and China show that students' illness is an essential driver for absenteeism.

2.2.3 Quality content

Quality content establishes content reflected in applicable educational programs and materials for obtaining essential abilities, particularly in literacy, numeracy and life skills, and information in subjects such as gender, well-being, nutrition, HIV/AIDS prevention, and peace.

2.2.4 Quality processes

Quality processes refer to how educators use learner-centred education approaches and how teachers and principals use contributions to approach significant growth opportunities for learners. Thus, their work addresses a vital variable in guaranteeing quality school processes. Therefore, there ought to be proficient learning for educators in their subject area and pedagogy to assist learners with learning effectively. However, in Togo, Uganda, and Cape Verde, 35% to 50% of learners are instructed by educators with no formal training. This influences the quality of education since learner performance depends vastly on the educator's knowledge of the subject.

2.2.5 Educators' working environment

Educators' working environment influences their ability to provide quality education, thus, managerial and administrative assistance is required, besides using technology to diminish as opposed to increase disparities.

2.2.6 Quality results

Quality results refer to results that incorporate information and abilities connected to societal objectives for schooling and positive support in the public setting, thus working towards achievement in literacy and numeracy, using formative assessment to improve results and experiential strategies to achieve desired results.

Spaull (2013) reported that four foundations prevent quality education in South Africa, namely:

a) **Improving the management of the education system**: limiting unnecessary layers of bureaucracy, giving intervention apparatuses that do not require high degrees of capacity, restorative interventions that ought to correspond to school performance, and improving infrastructure in underprivileged schools.

b) **Increasing the capability and limit of principals**: support should be given to principals considering areas of concern, appointing principals purely on merit, providing more significant powers to principals for the management of schools and considering principals responsible for their performance.

c) **Moving towards results-driven common responsibility**: fortify the responsibility chain, dispersing with a culture of blame and providing parents with feedback regarding their child.

d) **Further develop educator performance and responsibility**: varied propositions encompass compensation, incentives, content and pedagogical assistance and educator professionalism.

In contrast, Carrim (2013) highlighted three foundations that advanced the discourse of quality education in South Africa:

a) **The integration of schools**: The integration of schools occurred through migrating methods of African learners. African learners enlisted at extraordinary cost and penance at already "White", "Indian", and "Coloured" schools. However, most African schools located in African regions are still not integrated.

b) **School infrastructure**: One of the distinct features of apartheid was depriving African people and schools. In contrast with "White" individuals, Africans were compelled to live under horrifying, denied conditions and did not have access to basic facilities, including schools. Therefore, in the government's efforts for "redress", schools were placed into "quintiles" based on the availability of resources and financial circumstances. Schools with more resources and better financial circumstances will be given subsidies less than those from "poorer" schools; hence certain schools in the quintile have been placed in government-allocated subsidies less than those from "poorer" schools.

c) **School-based processes**: Education is not just about large-scale settings and strategies and policies that comprise schools; education focuses on what occurs inside the school. Therefore, five fundamental patterns in which school-based processes have advanced in South Africa: the concentration on school leadership; debates regarding information and educational program plans; focusing on learner performance, emphasis on teacher improvement and support; and investigating what might be seen as "best practice" in schools that appear to "work".

2.3   PERSPECTIVES OF EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

Educational leadership is the most explored concept regarding its attributes in conceptually historical processes, which components it contains, and which aspects it comprises. Leadership is the ability to prepare individuals gathered for a particular purpose to achieve institutional objectives and goals (Kalkan *et al.*, 2020:2). Therefore, all countries, regardless of school phase and size, are similar in their quest to maintain and achieving good academic performance, values, and aspirations (Day & Sammons, 2016:31). Bush (2008) claimed that leadership is

frequently associated with academic performance and emphasised its value, by quoting the following:

"Outstanding leadership has invariably emerged as a key characteristic of outstanding schools. There can no longer be a doubt that those seeking quality education must ensure its presence and that the development of potential leaders must be given high priority."

The *South African Schools Act* views educational leadership as a meaningful change in the culture and practice of schools. Thus, the degree to which schools can make fundamental changes will rely on the nature and quality of their internal management (Bush, 2008:7). Bush (2007) confirmed that the perspectives advocated by leaders naturally impact or determine decision-making. Thus, various leadership theories show various approaches to understanding and deciphering occurrences and conduct in schools and tertiary institutions (Bush, 2007:393-394). Kalkan *et al.* (2020) emphasised that the multifaceted field of leadership has prompted various methodologies and new developments, which show that leadership relies on individual perspectives and advances as properties are determined: the behavioural approach, specifying leadership behaviour will be learnt later; the modern approach, which fixates on human connections in authoritative design; and the contingency approach, which underscores that various circumstances require different leadership styles.

2.3.1   Theories of leadership

Benmira and Agboola (2021) concluded that the theory of leadership is a phenomenon that is dynamic and ever-changing. Various theories have surfaced, including the Great Man theory, which held that inherent characteristics predetermine a leader to lead. Trait theory progressed from the Great Man theory and claims that for effective leadership certain traits are necessary to be efficient in one's leadership role. In addition, a behavioural theory emerged, believing that the focus should be on the actions rather than on the characteristics of leaders (Benmira & Agboola, 2021:5).

Contrary to this, several other leadership theories will be based on environmental factors, namely, contingency and situational leadership. Moreover, as the world

evolved and the modern era emerged, there was a shift focusing on leaders and qualities, resulting in shared, collective, collaborative and inclusive leadership (Benmira & Agboola, 2021:5). Leadership styles stemmed from leadership theory as leaders possessed qualities and traits that go beyond the theory of leadership.

2.3.1.1   Leadership styles in schools

Leadership styles in education include a range of philosophies and theories. However, four leadership styles are considered the foundation for effective leadership (Smith, 2016:66). Smith (2016) highlighted the four foundational leadership styles – transformational, transactional, instructional, and inspirational.

2.3.1.2   Transformational leadership

Transformational leadership; is viewed as having encouraging effects on school and structural environments. Northouse (2001) in Smith (2016) outlined transformational leadership as persuading individuals to desire change, improvement and be led. Khan *et al*. (2020) presented that transformational leadership is considered a leader's ability to get execution from employees beyond expectation; therefore, four functions of transformational leadership are highlighted: (i) admired influence, (ii) persuasive inspiration to improve confidence, (iii) intelligence arousal, and (iv) individualised thought.

2.3.1.3   Transactional leadership

According to Smith (2016), transactional leaders are individuals who follow the rules within a defined system and try to maintain existing measures that are effective. In addition, transactional leadership, whereby individuals' interests are valued, is believed to be an exchange procedure. Şirin *et al*. (2018) claimed that transactional leadership links to a "conditional reward-based exchange" connection between the leader and the employees. Furthermore, transactional leaders do not mediate with the current working arrangement of the school; they persuade their employees with rewards, guaranteed cash and status to their employees for progress, and are not intrigued by their employees' attributes and vision.

2.3.1.4 Instructional leadership

Instructional leadership is concerned with learning and is the focal point of this style. Instructional leaders are directly involved with improving teaching and learning in collaboration with teachers (Smith, 2016:68). Smith (2016) further noted that it is of utmost importance that school principals have a learner-centred vision for their school. In addition, instructional leadership centres around school objectives, the educational plan, guidance, and the school climate (Stewart, 2006:4). Stewart (2006) declared that instructional leadership is excessively prescriptive and depends on a top-down course of management.

2.3.1.5 Inspirational leadership

Smith (2016) highlighted that inspirational leadership is a new style that allows a principal to accept and encourage varied individuals. Principals who adopt this leadership style are constantly adapting and reinventing themselves; hence they are a source of light to others who interact with them. Salas-Vallina et al. (2018) stipulated that inspirational leaders have a vision and more significant standards and gain respect and advance the support of employees. Furthermore, inspirational leaders provide significance to needs and are equipped to see what followers need and what they find challenging (Salas-Vallina et al., 2018:162).

2.4 COVID-19 PANDEMIC

COVID-19 became an immediate global crisis, with the first confirmed case in December 2019, in Wuhan, China, resulting in a declaration of a global pandemic and establishment of mandatory lockdowns (McNamara, 2021:1). The novel coronavirus is related to a form of pneumonia, and that it is a severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) coronavirus 2 (Zu et al., 2020:15). Wu et al. (2020) confirmed that the some of the symptoms include: fatigue, fever and a dry cough, and possible gastrointestinal symptoms, which occurred at the Huanan Wholesale Market, in Wuhan, Hubei Province in China. Furthermore, the initial outbreak reported 66% of the staff infectious, which led to the market shutdown on January 1, 2020, after the epidemiologic announcement alerting the public on December 31, 2019, regarding the virus (Wu et al., 2020:217). Moreover, Wu et al. (2020) purported that the virus spread throughout China, in provinces like Hubei,

Zhejiang, Guangdong, Henan and Hunan; and spread to major cities like Beijing and Shanghai. This soon led to the virus crossing borders, such as Thailand, Japan, Korea, Vietnam, Germany, the United States of America, and Singapore. The World Health Organisation (WHO) confirmed that as of February 6, 2020, there were 28,276 official cases with 565 deaths internationally, which included twenty-five countries (Wu *et al.*, 2020:217). This led to the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) later confirming that an average of 90% of learners globally have been affected by school closures (Longmuir, 2021:2). Pokhrel and Chhetri (2021) further affirmed that as of July 2020, 98.6% of learners globally were impacted by the pandemic, representative of around 1.725 billion individuals, from pre-primary to tertiary education, in two hundred countries.

In South Africa, according to Landa *et al.* (2021), South African president Cyril Ramaphosa announced a national state of disaster under the *Disaster Management Act* of 2002 as COVID-19 edged its way into the country, with the first confirmed case on March 5, 2020, by Dr. Zwelini Mkhize, the South African Minister of Health (South Africa, 2020:9). Though COVID-19 is a health issue, it resulted in school closures across the world, to save lives and reduce contact (Du Plessis, 2020:2). This led to a national lockdown in South Africa on March 26, 2020, that included guidelines for education emergencies, which dictated school closures (Landa *et al.*, 2021:167).

In addition, the pandemic resulted in school closures, which forced schools to resort to online platforms to ensure access to education; however, this presented issues for learners from poor communities in South Africa as these learners struggled to gain access to online teaching and learning platforms and resources (Landa *et al.*, 2021:167). Moreover, the lack of access to online teaching and learning platforms raised more significant issues Landa *et al.* (2021) confirmed that there are blatant inequalities in the outcomes of education for learners from differing socio-economic backgrounds; thus, COVID-19 is a new phenomenon.

2.4.1   COVID-19 protocols

The COVID-19 pandemic called for extraordinary precautionary measures; thus, Osman (2020) proposed the accompanying measures to remain safe:

- Learners who are unwell must be kept home and refrain from attending school and going into public spaces.

- Refrain from shaking hands with unfamiliar individuals; instead, use elbow butts and if not favourable, then refrain from making physical contact in its totality.

- Withhold the need to embrace unfamiliar individuals, instead greet individuals verbally from a distance.

- Avoid crowded spaces and/ or places, such as elevators and public transportation.

- Incessant hand washing should become a daily habit, and alcohol-based hand sanitiser is suggested.

- Social distancing is fundamental, and the recommended distance is 1.5 metres from others: and

- As highly advised, one should use one's elbow when pressing buttons in social settings.

Additionally, the Department of Basic Education stipulated in the Standard Operating Procedure for the Containment and Management of COVID-19 for schools and school communities the roles and responsibilities of the Senior Management Team (SMT), School Governing Body (SGB) and teachers as follows:

1. The SMT, SBG and other staff members should monitor the execution of the Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) and remain informed about COVID-19 through reputable sources, such as the Department of Basic Education and the Department of Health. The information received should be communicated to all parties, and the execution to forestall the spread of the virus should be monitored.

2. Awareness programmes should be established to explain to learners about COVID-19.

3.   A COVID-19 reaction group should be introduced, led by the principal, to arrange all COVID-related issues, including correspondence-related activities.

4.   Posters and signs must be posted encouraging hygiene, and these should be open to all learners, such as visually impaired learners, and must be in Braille.

5.   Encourage the frequent use of hand sanitising or hand washing.

6.   Hand washing facilities should be available with soap and water, and hand sanitisers must be alcohol-based.

7.   Prioritise the cleaning and disinfecting of the school building by the cleaning personnel.

8.   Warranting the daily removal of trash and that it is disposed of safely.

9.   Warranting the SGB to inform the Provincial Education Department (PED) to secure hand sanitiser, soap and dispensable drying material for classrooms, lavatories, office areas and staff rooms.

10. Warranting that schools and school buildings are not used for memorial services or any other public events to limit contamination of the school building.

2.5   LEARNING DURING COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic resulted in the global deterioration of teaching and learning, leading to school closures.

School closures were a means to curb the spread of the virus. According to Osman (2020), approximately 1.725 billion learners were impacted as a consequence of school closures due to the pandemic as of June 7, 2020.

In addressing school closures, UNESCO proposed using distance learning to reach learners remotely and regulate the interruptions of school caused by the pandemic (Osman, 2020:44). Pokhrel and Chhetri (2021) reported that the

COVID-19 pandemic has delivered a prospect to prepare for online learning, in contradiction the pandemic presented challenges to online learning, i.e., availability, affordability and adaptability. Various countries had profound issues with internet connectivity and digital device accessibility (Pokhrel & Chhetri, 2021:136).

Even though COVID-19 presented itself as a profound opportunity for educational advancement, remote learning brought many challenges to South African learners, especially those from impoverished communities. Dube (2020) agreed that learners from rural and/ or impoverished areas in South Africa faced phenomenal difficulties in changing in accordance with another method of life and learning; the dominating utilisation of web-based learning portrays the latter.

During the period of online teaching and learning, numerous learners in the country found themselves being barred from learning and unable to gain access to online materials because of a lack of infrastructure, the inaccessibility of power and electronic devices, and an absence of qualified educators who could facilitate web-based learning (Dube, 2020:137). Dube (2020) alleged that online learning favours the metropolitan and the privileged, extending the breach between the poor and the rich rather than joining the country in the battle against COVID-19. However, Maree (2021) purported that the lack of learner support materials, underqualified teachers, and deficient help, particularly in impeded communities, poverty and under-resourced schools, is not new to the South African agenda.

Furthermore, it became clear that non-public schools and schools in more affluent neighbourhoods have adjusted well and have successfully utilised a blend of ace-to-face, remote learning and web-based instruction and learning. Different applications, computerised correspondence methods, and conferencing applications, like WhatsApp, Google Hangouts, Microsoft Teams, Zoom, YouTube, and Blackboard, were used as a means of communication and information sharing between teachers and learners. However, various schools in impoverished and poor communities have battled with switching from face-to-face teaching and learning to advance effectively to online teaching and learning (Maree, 2021:252-253).

On the contrary, several issues needed to be dealt with before online teaching and learning could occur. Rudman (2021) presented three critical features: (1) reassuring learners that they are still socially integrated, (2) how to allow the transition to be as seamless as possible for the learners and (3) how to help learners through effective remote learning that relates to their learning process and make an accomplishment of the academic year. This meant that leadership needed to transition and make concessions that would be practical for their school. Therefore, Sintema (2020) maintained that the academic performance of learners is likely to be negatively impacted by the pandemic, especially in classes that are focused on year-end examinations, like the Grade 12 National Senior Certificate examination, stemming from full contact time with learners and the absence of discussion with teachers, when confronted with challenges in the learning process. E-learning soon became outdated in South Africa as the Department of Basic Education introduced rotational learning.

2.5.1   Re-opening of schools during COVID-19

Osman (2020) confirms that the Department of Basic Education (DBE) suggested that 95% of schools were ready to re-open for Grades 7 and 12 on June 8, 2020. However, the remaining 5% were schools in areas that required water and appropriate sanitation. Though COVID-19 was often considered unprecedented, the inevitable would come eventually. The re-opening of schools came with many uncertainties; however, Maree (2021) mentioned that research performed by the National Education Evaluation and Development Unit (NEEDU) stipulated educational conditions during the pandemic. The report publicised that schools execute the accompanying three scheduling models: (1) alternate rotation, (2) weekly rotation, and (3) platooning.

2.5.1.1   Alternate rotation

Alternating rotation days suggested that classes of learners substitute classes on various days of the week, for example, on alternating days. This approach will require cautious preparation by School Management Teams, educators, and other staff members. Planning the curriculum is essential to guarantee curriculum

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execution in various subjects. Day-by-day screening of learners was possible in this model (South Africa: Department of Education, 2020:9).

2.5.1.2   Weekly rotation

According to South Africa: Department of Education (2020), weekly rotation refers to classes of learners going to class on a weekly rotation. This model will require cautious preparation by educators to adjust contact time in the classroom and foster proper at-home exercises while learners are not at school for an entire week.

2.5.1.3   Platooning

Platooning refers to schools or a system in which two separate arrangements of teachers and learners utilise an unchanged school building, one set toward the beginning of the day and the other in the afternoon (South Africa: Department of Education, 2020:6).

2.5.2   International modifications to COVID-19

2.5.2.1   The People's Republic of China

Wuhan! Wuhan! These were the key words that echoed throughout the world and resulted in chaos. China was the first country affected by the pandemic; however, according to Xue *et al.* (2021), China took several preventative, control and treatment measures and established various policies. Policies on education, stipulated governing structures, instruction, teacher management and learner management.

Online teaching and learning were adopted early in the pandemic to ensure education continued. Furthermore, the Ministry of Education presented a "Notice for Schools at All Levels to Delay the Start of the School Year", which focused on and emphasised that local governments and schools could implement measures from the government depending on the situation locally (Xue *et al.*, 2021:884). Xue *et al.* (2021) further purported that the Ministry of Education incorporated state-of-the-art resources from the government during school closures, the "national primary and secondary school network cloud platform" to provide

appropriate learning material, and it will be made available at no cost. Moreover, the policy expects schools to precisely analyse learners' remote learning, analyse and assess learning quality, and recognise various grades and classes.

Xue *et al*. (2021) highlighted that there are five pivotal policies for teachers during the pandemic, which include:

- **Teachers' health is given importance**: This policy has always established a priority for teachers' health and lives, which states that schools ought to guarantee the well-being and security of teachers as per local preventative and control measures and should not organise teachers to partake in face-to-face training and large group meetings.

- **Online teaching and teaching behaviour**: This policy states that local education divisions and schools ought to change the measures to local circumstances for teachers to conduct online classes, teaching content and teaching plans. The Chinese education policy highlights that, considering national and provincial preparation programs, online teaching and learning and information technology applications should be conveniently coordinated.

- **Increase support and acclamation for teachers**: The Chinese central government focuses on advancing the energy of pandemic prevention of teachers. Therefore, the central government emboldened organisations and businesses that established "love funds" for areas in China where the pandemic is most profound.

- **Managing learners during the pandemic**: Eventually, when learners were allowed back at school, they needed approval from their schools. In addition, learners' identities and temperatures were checked religiously every day upon arrival at school. Learners who presented fever and/or cough symptoms were medically isolated and observed on the school premises.

- **Attention to mental health**: The Chinese central government stresses the significance of COVID-19 on learners' mental well-being, based on an evaluation focused on guidance, maintaining mental health, and preventing psychological stress caused by extreme events.

2.5.2.2   *Guyana*

On March 11, 2020, Guyana confirmed COVID-19. The Ministry of Education announced complete school closures in Guyana from March 16, 2020, which was planned to last for two weeks and was then later extended for another two weeks (Oyedotun, 2020:1). Within days of the confirmations, Guyana moved to online teaching and learning methods, using applications, such as GoToMeeting, Skype, WhatsApp, ezTalk, electronic mail, BlueJeans and Zoom. However, as in many developing countries, online teaching and learning brought about many challenges (Oyedotun, 2020:2). Oyedotun (2020) presented five challenges that Guyana faced during the pandemic and teaching and learning online:

- **Insufficient resources**: This included teachers and learners not being trained for online teaching and learning, lack of digital equipment for learners to use, and lack of internet among teachers and learners.

- **Lack of infrastructure**: Home internet speed slowed down due to internet traffic and power cuts due to the lack of a stable power supply.

- **Knowledge implementation issues**: Teaching and learning could not occur as usual as teacher and learner engagement were reduced or non-existent. Furthermore, due dates had been compromised, and assessments could not be efficiently monitored.

- **Learner issues**: The inflexibility of learners, as they have been accustomed to conventional teaching and learning, home issues also occurred since there were more distractions at home than at school. Moreover, mental health challenges were a concern as the learners could not cope with all the recent changes at home, school, and society, which resulted in anxiety and fear surfacing.

- **Cybersecurity issues**: Cyber issues stem from breaches, exposure to viruses, potential hacking, and cybersecurity threats. These issues resulted from computers and other technological devices being used daily in all spheres of society.

2.6 LEADERSHIP AGILITY DURING THE PANDEMIC

Education leadership took centre stage as the COVID-19 pandemic stepped into the spotlight, thus relying on principals to cure the effects the pandemic had on education. The learners and their academic performance were inevitably the ones that suffered the most, apart from the infected. Therefore, Bush (2007) claimed that interest in leadership has become more apparent in the 21st century due to the belief that effective leadership allows for significant learner performance. Engzell *et al.* (2021) conducted a study on the effect the pandemic had on learner progress in the Netherlands. They found that since COVID-19 emerged, academic performance has decreased among learners - validated by standardised test-scores. It has been confirmed that learners studied less during the pandemic compared to a typical school year. However, learners from disadvantaged households suffered even more (Engzell *et al.*, 2021:4).

In contrast, Buffone (2021) further purported that the coronavirus exacerbates issues associated with well-being and featured what imbalances in public schooling significantly mean for those in the public arena who have less. Hence, Mazurkiewicz (2021) noted that many countries had difficulty with policymaking and dealing with the crisis COVID-19 presented throughout this global pandemic. Mazurkiewicz (2021) further stressed that change needs to happen, which can benefit the future. For change to happen, education and leadership require transforming (Mazurkiewicz, 2021:3).

Thus, begging the question, what is change? Change is an endeavour that principals face daily due to the daily demands linked to school principals' jobs to find ways to improve learners academic performance and/ or manage challenging incidents. Longmuir (2021) approved that principals are acquainted with change and most principals work inside frameworks that would anticipate an emphasis on change to develop learning; thus, school leadership agility is crucial, and Misra and Pretorius (2021) reiterated that leading amidst a crisis necessitates principals to be agile to the challenges presented by COVID-19. According to Buffone (2021), agility is the aptitude to contemplate and move swiftly and effortlessly. The significance of agility as a fundamental component in moving forward for principals and systems post-pandemic, as the effect of COVID-19 on learners,

was inspected (Buffone, 2021:1610). Agility is a crucial quality that principals ought to hold in leading schools successfully amidst a crisis (Misra & Pretorius, 2021:207).

Bearing in mind the need for change to remedy the effects of COVID-19, agility is imperative.; Buffone (2021) thus posed the question: assuming that agility is the thing that is needed to explore the present status of intricacy, how might leaders in education react? Buffone (2021) proposed five unified elements that are deserving of consideration with regard to driving through the pandemic interruption, i.e., 1) focusing on strategic objectives in adjusted measure; 2) interfacing through building connections; 3) proactivity for successful change management; 4) skills to optimise resources over time and 5) developing systemness throughout the organisation.

2.6.1   Focusing on strategic objectives in adjusted measure

The significance of the consolidation of learning, value, and prosperity in the push ahead as principals by expressing that the aggregate need, regardless of anything else, is to work with emotional guidelines before academic teaching (Buffone, 2021:1612 Buffone (2021) further highlighted that it is incautious to concentrate on aiding learners "getting up to speed" with their "loss of learning" as this method can place superfluous (and harming) mental strain on learners. In its place, Buffone (2021) recommended a purposeful spotlight on play, imagination, and advancement while supporting the improvement of education and numeracy in a coordinated way. Buffone (2021) contributed that exploring schools and systems in a post-pandemic world will require adaptability and development by principals. To aid the academically, socio-emotionally, and custodial elements of schools, principals should obtain and apply current information, abilities, and capabilities in their preparation and direction.

2.6.2   Interfacing through building connections

Buffone (2021) argued that the significance of useful working connections and the building of partnerships addresses the value of availability and authentic cooperation, especially amid anxiety and unsteadiness. The co-establishment of needs and co-development of capability, including the advancement of mutual

perspectives and the execution of standard techniques among all partners, makes cooperative energies guarantee the conditions for sound, positive associations to arise.

2.6.3 Proactivity for successful change management

Proactivity is acknowledged as a training that is particularly significant for principals of schools and frameworks, characterised as the capacity to invigorate and oversee change for a huge scope and under complex conditions, demonstrating enthusiasm and constancy in achieving meaningful change; this individual leadership asset is irreplaceable (Buffone, 2021:1614).

2.6.4 Skills to optimise resources over time

Buffone (2021) affirmed that numerous changes would continue in education post-COVID-19, thus acquiring technological resources to move schools forward, especially if emergency lockdowns and/or school closures turn out to be progressively repetitive. The advancement of human, material or financial resources will require school principals to be imaginative and creative (Buffone, 2021:1614).

2.6.5 Developing systemness throughout the organisation

Systemness is a mind-and-action position, while systemic is a scientific term, thus resulting in systemness supplanting systemic (Fullan, 2021:32). The systemness includes various parties within a school, i.e., principals, SMT's and teachers, as they interact within the system, gaining from and adding to it, as the actual system develops. These individuals have free and related liability regarding changing the system (Buffone, 2021:1615).

2.7 CRISIS LEADERSHIP PRACTICES IN SCHOOLS

According to Parks (2013), crisis management is depicted as an organisation's anticipation, preparedness, relief, and remaking after an unexpected occurrence. On the other hand, (James & Wooten, 2011:61) believe that crisis management alludes to the capability to lead under extreme duress. Mutch (2020) proposed the differentiation of crisis management and leadership in schools by stating that crisis

management is considered operational, consisting of processes such as detecting and making decisions. In contrast, crisis leadership oversees crisis management but provides direction, vision, and objective thinking. Furthermore, defining leadership is considered a perplexing task since defining leadership depends on the context and position it is observed (Kathrada, 2013:13). Jackson *et al.* (2015) affirmed that to date, there is no solid definition for leadership; due to its complexity, hence people recognise it in unique ways. Jackson *et al.* (2015) agree that when faced with defining leadership, there is no settlement on the characteristics or behaviours that are leadership characteristics of behaviour. Thus, the definition of Kathrada (2015) is deemed more applicable.

Kathrada (2013) defined leadership as a procedure where an individual influences other individuals or groups to achieve the set goals; these goals are attained with obligations. It has been noted that leadership styles underpin effective leadership. Contrary to this, a study conducted in New Zealand on the practices of school principals during the COVID-19 lockdown, focused on eighteen principals from various secondary schools, found that all participants noted changes in their leadership practices because of lockdown resulted in leading differently, finding stability among swift and agreeable decision-making, and reinforcing the conveyance of authority (Thornton, 2021:27). Bouchamma (2012) conducted research in three Canadian provinces, based on the effective leadership practices in schools from poor communities and established six functions that highlight leadership practices in schools.

2.7.1 The effect of leadership and effective schools

Success in schools should be at the forefront of the leadership agenda and the effects on learner performance, as leadership is a pertinent trait of effective schools. The effect of leadership is regarded as unintended, with an impact coming from many sources: staff motivation, commitment, working conditions, the conveyance of force among everyone associated with the school, and the school's organisation and culture.

2.7.2 Setting goals and expectations

Principals can influence learner performance by accentuating distinct academic and learning intentions. School principals often stress about communicating goals and expectations. In successful schools, there is a more significant agreement among individuals with respect to the school's central goal, contrasted with the level seen in less successful schools. Among the overwhelming attributes related to school effectiveness is observing learners' progress and the significance of setting up focused objectives. These objectives are included into in the class schedules and strategies. Moreover, successful leaders decide on suitable objectives, impart them to their staff, and enact their obligation to accomplish these objectives. Consideration is additionally given to ensure a follow-up. Successful leaders invite input from all staff and get them aligned to the goal-making system with legitimate agreement and lucidity.

2.7.3 Planned resourcing

In settings of high learner achievement, there is a complementary connection between the school principal's set-up objectives and the number of teachers recruited. Moreover, it implies that the principal screens, enlists, and forms school goals.

2.7.4 Managing the curriculum

Effective school leaders separate themselves by contributing to arranging, organizing, and assessing the curriculum. The four interrelated sub-dimensions relating to this function are:

1. the principal's dynamic cooperation in discussions identified with schooling-related issues;

2. the principal's coordinated effort with staff in auditing and working fair and level of instructing;

3. the principal's degree of contribution to in-class observation and the necessary follow-up; and

4.   the principal's obligation to ensure that their teachers methodically assess their learner's advancement.

2.7.5   Teacher development

Effective school leadership support development among the staff as well as expressing interest in these exercises. A focus on professional development and improvement is bound to be seen by the staff as a reference in education, which recommends that they are more open and knowledgeable.

2.7.6   Ensuring order and support

Effective leadership in building up a safe, strong environment through an unmistakable code of morals and expectations. Educators' academic and professional development is focused on and shielded from unjustifiable pressure from outside factors. This principle creates an efficient, nurturing environment in the classroom and the school, where the educators have a solid sense of security at home and are appreciated.

In addition, Bagwell (2019) conducted research by exploring and identifying four themes of leadership practice. The leadership practices are a) an emphasis on instructional improvement, b) checking/ assessing teaching and learning in classrooms, c) strategies to advance cooperation, and d) supporting leadership development for educators (Bagwell, 2019:89). Bagwell (2019) further discussed the leadership practices as follows:

2.7.7   An emphasis on instructional improvement

In his study, Bagwell (2019) highlighted that both principals understood the significance of emphasising instructional improvement to increment learners' academic performance over time. The use of routines such as objective establishment, a data analysis cycle, and continuous data dialogues have been a means for the participants to associate themselves and their teachers with sustaining the objectives of teaching and impacting learning.

2.7.8 Checking/Assessing teaching and learning in classrooms

Checking teaching and learning in classrooms requires clear communication stating the purpose of assessing teaching and learning. Feedback forms part of the assessment, providing teachers with information about their classroom practice (Bagwell, 2019:96).

2.7.9 Strategies to advance cooperation

In establishing a more active learning environment at schools, structures must be created to assist teachers and allow them time for cooperation around teaching. It is understood that providing structured allocations for educators to participate in arranging, objective setting, and data analysis supports confidence in their leadership capabilities (Bagwell, 2019:97).

2.7.10 Supporting leadership development for educators

According to Bagwell (2019), teaching needs to become more transparent in supporting leadership development for educators by including educators in a cycle of enquiry using the information to determine learner performance. Also, meetings should be educator orientated and less subjective to the principal.

2.8 LEADERSHIP IN A SOUTH AFRICAN CONTEXT

In South Africa, much focus is on managing schools, not leading them. Sullivan (2013) agreed that South Africa has overemphasised management development and not leadership. Sullivan (2013) further established a distinct dissimilarity between management and leadership. Management refers to an executive entity whose sole purpose is to execute established policy. On the other hand, leadership focuses on concern for policy development and organisation alteration (Bush, 2008:1).

Sullivan (2013) confirmed that the definition and understanding of the responsibilities and leadership roles are not obvious to the Senior Management Team (SMT). Therefore, it is thought that Principals, Deputy Principals, and Heads of Departments (HoDs) are unaware of their job titles and responsibilities. Hence, the Department of Basic Education developed the South African Standard

for Principalship in 2014 due to the importance of building a detailed and concurring understanding of what the South African schooling system expects of the individuals who are, or yearn to be, entrusted with the leadership of schools (Department of Basic Education, 2014:6). Additionally, the Department of Basic Education (2014) noted that the South African Standard for Principalship entirely outlines the position of principals and the pivotal functions of professionalism, appearance, and aptitudes needed for this prominent position. Furthermore, the focal objective of the policy is to holistically improve leadership and management standards to the advantage of the learners of South Africa and the quality of the education system.

The Department of Education (2008), in the Understanding school leadership and governance in the South African Context, a module of the Advanced Certificate: Education (School Management and Leadership), detailed that a passion for achievement, passion for caring, a passion for collaboration, a passion for commitment, a passion for trust and a passion for inclusivity are a few qualities needed to pursue the role of principal. Withal, there are specific energies required, i.e., energy creators – where the individuals are constantly positive and embrace critical thinking; energy neutrals – where the individuals are willing to embrace varied tasks and can better themselves; and energy consumers – these individuals are of an opposing view, not willing to accept change and not wanting to better themselves (DBE, 2008:27). It is encouraged that principals strive to become energy creators since the belief is that an individual's self-worth and value system compliments energy creators. Fullan (1993) established that moral purpose and a perspective on general worth are evident in all good and effective principles.

Moreover, the South African Standard for Principalship consists of four components, (1) the main drive of principalship: has been based upon an explanation of the main reason for principalship in conjunction with the other three components that supports the practices of the principal's school leadership and management; (2) educational and social values: this refers to the guiding principles, both public and the school setting, which support all that occurs in the school and which notifies all that the principal does in driving and dealing with the

school; (3) important areas of principalship: referring to the role of the principals in any given school, which is charted explicitly in the Quality Management System (QMS) document; (4) personal and professional characteristics: these are the scope of characteristics that a principal brings to their job and which impact how leadership and management practices are achieved. The components are pivotal in assuring adequacy in satisfying the principal's job. These, together, give answers to three essential inquiries identified with the expert work of any principal. It is why a principal makes certain decisions, what the core purposes of principalship are and how the core purposes were achieved successfully. The core purposes refer to the principal's decision on a particular course of action (Department of Basic Education, 2014:9-10).

2.9 DIFFERENCES BETWEEN LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Though there is an overlap between leadership and management, Bush (2008) presented a contrast between leadership and management and proposed that leadership is related to change, while management is regarded as a maintenance task. Bush (2008) emphasised the importance of organisational tasks:

"By leadership, I mean influencing others' actions in achieving desirable ends. Leaders are people who shape the goals, motivations, and actions of others. Frequently they initiate change to reach existing and new goals. Leadership takes much ingenuity, energy, and skill."

"Managing is maintaining efficiently and effectively current organisational arrangements. While managing well often exhibits leadership skills, the overall function is toward maintenance rather than change. I prize both managing and leading and attach no noteworthy value to either since different settings or times call for varied responses."

Lunenburg (2011) alleged that leadership and management necessitate a special arrangement of exercises or capacities, two different yet mutual concepts of action in an organisation. Leadership is associated with adapting to change, while management is linked to adapting to intricacy. The leadership cycle includes:

(a)   fostering a vision for the establishment;

(b) adjusting individuals to that vision through correspondence; and

(c) inspiring individuals to act through empowerment and the basic need for satisfaction.

Subsequently, the leadership cycle makes for vulnerability and change in the establishment. Conversely, the management cycle includes the following:

(a) arranging and planning;

(b) coordinating and staffing; and

(c) controlling and problem-solving.

The management cycle thus lessens vulnerability and steadies the establishment. Moreover, it remains that management comprises executing the vision and direction given by leaders, planning and staffing the establishment, and taking care of everyday issues (Lunenburg, 2011:1-2). Thus, Lunenburg (2011) affirmed that leadership is achieved by individuals, not in managerial positions.

2.10 QUALITY LEADERSHIP IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN CONTEXT

In consonance with Le Roux (2012), the spotlight is on the quality of education, which puts pressure on principals because they are responsible for what occurs at their school, resulting in the need for quality leadership. Therefore, principals ought to understand significant issues or values of life, among others, i.e., power, equity, influence, and impact (Botha, 2004:241). Accordingly, Zammit *et al.* (2007) detailed that quality leadership in schools provides direction, comprises a means of impact with intention, and is value-based and goal-driven. Quality leadership is resolute in the ability to improve teaching and learning in schools. The South African Standard for Principalship (2014) presented that for quality leadership to be implemented, the principal must work with the School Governing Body (SGB) and the School Management Team – to ensure that teaching and learning in the school are of quality. In addition, the principal should launch and sustain effective systems of quality control and processes within the school. This ensures that all aspects of the school's operations are continuously evaluated and reviewed, supporting shared responsibility.

Le Roux (2012) maintained that for schools to improve teaching and learning, there must be some intervention to enable quality leadership rendered by the principal. The pivotal function of leadership is to construct environments where reflections, open discussion, respecting ideas of all, and professional development reside (Le Roux, 2012:27). Moreover, Le Roux (2012) stated that the user dictates quality, it may be estimated by measurable instruments, and its endurance relies upon the head teacher, suggesting the principal. Thus, quality leadership links to knowledge and the understanding of principals and how they apply and practise this in schools. Thus, Bush (2007) claimed that leadership's responsibility ought to extend beyond the leadership of the school head to an aggregative leadership within the school. Additionally, Botha (2004) extended the five cornerstones of quality leadership: reflection, vision, commitment, courage, power, and empowerment. These cornerstones are reviewed as follows (Botha, 2004:241):

2.10.1 Reflection

Reflection can be perceived as "reminiscent reasoning" or "focused review". Regarding reflection, principals try to recognise circumstances and end results, new learning, and suggestions from what was experienced. Reflection is significant, not purely for learning from the past, but for pondering what is yet to come.

2.10.2 Vision

Vision refers to a combination of experiences from the past and expectations and yearnings for the future. Thus, vision is a significant cornerstone from the conversation and is realised by all interested parties.

2.10.3 Commitment and courage

Commitment and courage are inseparable; however, their importance for principals lies in the eagerness and readiness to "stand up" for the things that are genuinely significant in schools.

2.10.4 Power and empowerment

Empowerment is the aggregate impact of leadership, where individuals feel esteemed and part of the action, where they realise their capability is significant, where sharing is valuable and where choice is an opportunity for all.

2.11 RESOURCES OF LEADERSHIP POWER IN SOUTH AFRICA

Admittedly principals act in *loco parentis* – meaning within the school; they have similar power and responsibilities as parents (Le Roux, 2012:13). Thus, implying that the principal has the legal authority to administer rules for the protection of learners at school. Conversely, Le Roux (2012) noted that leadership power is ensconced in education law and policies, which stipulate formal roles, duties, and responsibilities and the position of the principal. Furthermore, the policies and education law is guided by the powers that principals hold (Le Roux, 2012:5). Naidoo *et al.* (2012) highlighted resources of leadership power, namely: the *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa*, *South African Schools Act* 27 of 1996 and 94 of 1996, and *South African Council of Educators Act* 31 of 2000, among others.

2.11.1 Constitution and subordinate law

The *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa*, 1996, establishes South Africa's values, the rights possessed by the people, how the parliament and other legislatures function, how the national and provincial executives are selected, and how the courts operate. The *South African Schools Act*, Personnel Administration Measures, and the *Education Laws Amendment Act* guide principals to establish their school responsibilities and functions (Le Roux, 2012:5-6). This implies that principals can exercise their power by referring to the Constitution and subordinate law to lead their schools effectively. Le Roux (2012) affirmed that they utilised power for varied situations and purposes - principals could utilise it to influence or reward staff members and learners. Thus, allowing principals to exercise their leadership power according to the Constitution and subordinate law to drive their school forward.

2.11.2 Policy guidelines

Policy guidelines are based on the best practices internationally and aim at attaining an ideal education system based on the following fundamentals: equality and human rights. Hence schools are legally obligated to use the policy guidelines to promote equity and redress in schools (Engelbrecht *et al*., 2016:521). Le Roux (2012) confirmed that the legislation gives principals specific powers, and they will be held responsible for expecting to utilise these powers to guarantee that quality education continues. Le Roux (2012) further affirmed that the principal's power stems from various policy documents; for example, Section 16A of the *Education Law Amendment Act* states the roles and responsibilities of principals in relation to governing body of the school.

2.12   QUALITY MEASUREMENT IN SOUTH AFRICAN SCHOOLS

Each year Grade 12 learners write the National Senior Certificate (NSC) examinations, which determine whether a learner is eligible for tertiary education. Over the years, the Grade 12 NSC examinations results have been worrisome, as the results fluctuate drastically. Figure 2.2 depicts the National Grade 12 pass rates over 13 years.
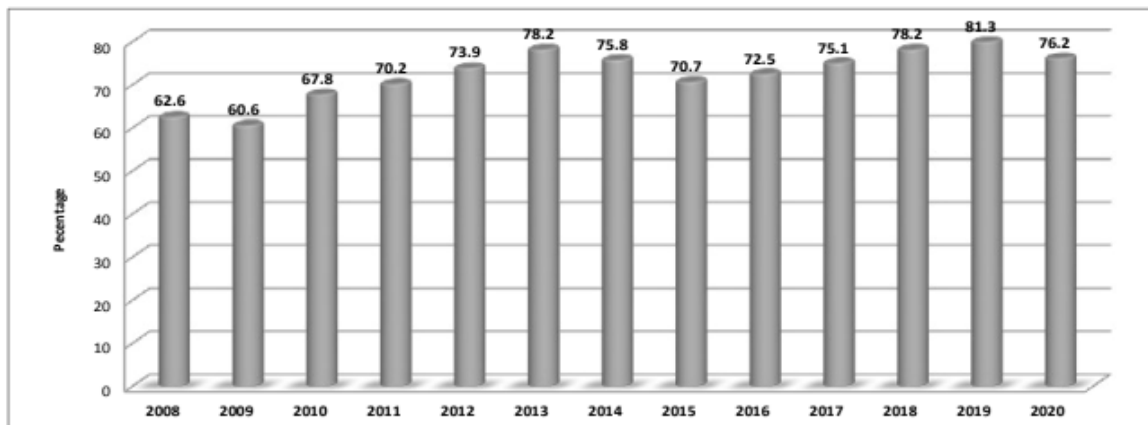
Figure 2.2:   The differentiation of the NSC Examinations pass rates from 2008 to 2020 (Department of Basic Education, 2021:6).

Upon analysing the differentiation of the NSC Examination pass rates from 2008 to 2020, it is evident that from 2008 to 2020, there has been a significant increase, with a slight decline in 2020. However, observing closer, notably, the Western

Cape Education Districts' NSC results, where in 2016, the province achieved 85.9%; in 2017, there was a slight decline, and the province obtained 82.8%. The province experienced a further decline with its 2018 pass rate of 81.5%; however, in 2019, there was a slight escalation, and the province obtained a pass rate of 82.3% (Department of Basic Education, 2020:71). Moreover, the Western Cape obtained 79.9% in 2020, which is at its lowest from 2016-2020 (Department of Basic Education, 2021:11). Additionally, the Metro South Education Districts' NSC results went from 85.3% in 2016, 82.9% in 2017, 80.9% in 2018, 81.0% in 2019 and 79.0% in 2020.

There are innumerable reasons why the Grade 12 results are a concern. These reasons include societal influences, socio-cultural settings, the impact of teaching resources on learning, and the role the teacher plays in the learner's education (Bishop *et al.*, 1993:1). In contrast, Stols (2013:1) noted that learners descend from varied backgrounds, and this results in inadequate prospects to learn: taught by unqualified educators, attend schools with restricted resources, or in below par managed schools. Osman (2020) highlighted Van der Berg's (2004) explorative study regarding the inequality in Western Cape schools, which agreed that socio-economic conditions and educational resources fundamentally affected educational results. Thus, it confirms that regardless of new developments within education, the number of learners prevailing in Grade 12 has not made great strides since 1994 (Osman, 2020:35).

2.13   CRISIS LEADERSHIP IN EDUCATION DURING COVID-19

COVID-19 marked the commencement of a new variant of crisis leadership, resulting in ignorance and disadvantaged in managing COVID-19 – McLeod and Dulsky (2021) confirmed that there is limited information about COVID-19; hence leadership experience mattered insignificantly against the pandemic, thus COVID-19 "is rapidly redefining schooling and leadership" (McLeod & Dulsky, 2021:4). Consequently, McLeod and Dulsky (2021) stressed that amidst a crisis, principals ought to participate in effective communication, facilitate sense-making in times of uncertainty, be malleable and adaptive and remain focused on the well-being and health of the employees.

Guerra *et al.* (2021) highlighted that a crisis is an unsteady time where inevitable change looms, particularly with the unmistakable chance of unexpected results. Leadership amid a crisis requires deliberately and gently offsetting delicate social abilities with successful and effective authoritarian skills. There are five classifications of school crises, i.e., short-term, cathartic, long-term, once-off, and contagious. In dealing with crises, Mayer *et al.* (2008) in Guerra *et al.* (2021) contended that most schools use a linear crisis management procedure: prevention, response, and recovery. Contrary to Guerra *et al.* (2021), maintaining trust is more vital amid a crisis (McLeod & Dulsky, 2021:3).

The COVID-19 crisis propelled principals to exhibit sympathy, empathy, care, and affectability, leading to recognizing individuals' diverse individual conditions and various reactions to the pandemic, expected principals to be sensitive to teachers on a personal level (Misra & Pretorius, 2021:208). Thus, a solid hierarchical vision established on clear values empowers principals to react in purposeful and compelling ways in dealing with a crisis. The significance of these essential constructions could not be more significant. Effective results of responsive choices made during crucial moments in times of crisis rely upon the strength and lucidity of a school's hidden values and vision (McLeod & Dulsky, 2021:5). Accordingly, Aagaard and Earnest (2020) stressed that during a crisis, communication between the principal and the rest of the school is pivotal for optimum functioning and agility. Furthermore, McLeod and Dulsky (2021) found in their research on crisis leadership during the pandemic that a solid hierarchical vision established on clear values empowers principals to respond in deliberate and exceptionally viable ways. However, of what is to know about effective school leadership during a crisis amidst the pandemic remains obscure and will require an exceedingly long time to uncover the long-term effects of COVID-19 on schools and leadership (McLeod & Dulsky, 2021:12). Harris and Jones (2020) declared that "a new chapter was transcribed about school leadership in disruptive times that will possibly overtake and overshadow all that was written before on the topic".

2.14   CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter discussed leadership agility during times of crisis, leadership practices in schools within South Africa, and crisis leadership in education. The

Framework for Leadership model of Fullan (2002) provided a framework for principals as leaders in a culture of change. A literature review introduced correlational research incorporating quality leadership in South African schools and resources of leadership power in South Africa.

However, the gap in the literature was to ascertain how school leadership exercises legal and policy power in sustaining quality performance during times of crisis and what strategies will be used to improve results when dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic. The gap led to the following question: How does secondary school leadership exercise legal and policy power during crisis with the aim of sustaining quality performance in the Western Cape, Metro South Education District, amidst the COVID-19 global pandemic; moreover what strategies do leadership school systems use to improve results while dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic?

The accompanying chapter examined the research methodology and design. The data collection technique and population sampling will be introduced to show if secondary school leadership exercises legal and policy power in sustaining quality performance during a crisis in the Metro South Education District. Regarding the schools with higher performance during the same period, the researcher ascertained all necessary information to support the objective of this study.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGICAL DESIGN AND METHODS

3.1   INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to present the research design and methodology that underpins this study. I prompt the reader with the main research question, sub-question, and objectives that inform this study. The main research question that steered this study was:

- *How does secondary school leadership exercise legal and policy power during crisis with the aim of sustaining quality performance in the Western Cape, Metro South Education District, amidst the COVID-19 global pandemic?*

The following sub-questions will be examined:

- What is secondary school principals' understanding of leadership power?

- How does school leadership use law and policy to develop crisis management plans?

- What strategies do leadership school systems use to improve results while dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic?

- What are the experiences of school leadership systems about making changes in teaching and learning during a crisis?

- What legal and policy power do school leadership systems have in making decisions in times of crisis?

The objective that anticipates this study:

The study's primary objective will be to analyse and subsequently explain the meanings of the school leadership ecosystem views on school crisis leadership and how it exercises legal and policy power to sustain quality teaching and learning amidst the COVID-19 pandemic.

I commence this chapter by discussing the research methodology explored in the study. Next, this study will discuss the research methods employed. Subsequently, the population and sampling methods used is examined in this study. This chapter's conclusion explains trustworthiness and ethical issues.

3.2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research methodology is an approach to resolve an exploration issue methodically. It was identified as a study concentrating on how exploration is done deductively (Patel & Patel, 2019). Therefore, qualitative research was adopted in this inquiry because it provides a holistic understanding of how secondary school leadership exercises legal and policy power during a crisis, i.e., COVID-19, to sustain quality performance. Consistent with Yobe (2019), qualitative research is a realistic exploration that utilises non-colliding techniques for collecting data to learn the normal flow of occasions and what participants infer from them.

Thus, the research methodology will apply this phenomenology. Phenomenology is associated with the comprehension of others based on their lived experiences. Kathrada (2018:37) further defined a phenomenological study as focusing on how people describe their experiences and what they experienced with the phenomenon.

Thus, to obtain appropriate data pertinent to answering the research questions, data was collected from three secondary schools in the Metro South Education District, comprising Mitchell's Plain area. These schools were selected based on their 2020 Grade 12 examination performances. The methodology also describes the research design, population, sampling, and data collection.

Against this backdrop, data was gathered from interviews and observations with principals, deputy principals, HOD's and teachers. The 2019 and 2020 Grade 12 School Performance Reports were used as secondary data sources for document analysis. - Semi-structured interviews have been conducted to collect information.

3.3   RESEARCH APPROACH

Interviews were instrumental for data collection in this study. Interview questions that drove this study focused on the main research question and sub-question for principals, deputy principals, HOD's and teachers. Semi-structured interviews were conducted collaboratively with participants to ensure interpretation noted and considered. The pith of the interviews was to ascertain the participants' perspectives on different facets relating to the problem statement. Grade 12 results of the various schools were utilised as instruments to measure how leadership exercised legal and policy power to sustain quality performance during the COVID-19 global pandemic. The data obtained from the semi-structured interviews and secondary sources were collected, analysed, and sorted. In addition, non-participant observations were conducted to experience the realities of the principals from the various schools. Creswell and Creswell (2008) identify the non-participant observer as one who visits a site and records notes without becoming associated with the exercises of the participant.

3.3.1   Philosophical overview

Research philosophy encompasses principles and conventions about the expansion of knowledge. Research philosophies are labelled as ontology, epistemology, and axiology. Philosophical approaches allow one to select which approach should be embraced by the researcher and why, stemming from the research questions (Saunders, 2009). The vital assumptions exist in research philosophy which expounds on the researcher's perception of the world. These assumptions regulate research tactics and the methods of those tactics. Therefore, this study will underpin Horkheimer's (1982) critical theory. Critical theory relates to leadership demonstrations, how essential features and assumptions stimulate organisational life, and what role leadership plays. Thus, illustrating how schools as organisations have become the drivers of social coercion and control. Critical leadership theory looks past the predominant standards within academia and well-known leadership writing, which advanced extensively through the perspective of schools.

3.3.1.1 Ontology

Ontology builds on the nature of reality or the study of being, which refers to how humans acquire knowledge through what exists in the world. The ontology allows researchers to notice how sure they can be regarding the nature and existence of objects they are studying (Moon & Blackman, 2014). Saunders (2009) agreed that ontological assumptions steer the way one sees and studies research matter. In critical leadership, discernible characteristics are hallmarks of exercising power effectively. The power of effective school leadership, as one of the characteristics, is measured by the success of a school through the effective use of resources in attaining its intended goals.

3.3.1.2 Epistemology

Epistemology is the study of knowledge of a particular subject (Saunders, 2009). According to Moon and Blackman (2014), epistemology deals with every aspect, including validity, scope, and the methodology of knowledge acquisition, i.e., a) what establishes an information claim, b) how knowledge could be obtained or delivered, and c) how can the degree of its transferability be evaluated. Epistemological research is translated as communicating knowledge to others (Saunders, 2009). Casteel (2018) emphasised that epistemological studies often involve the saying "how a person knows what they know" and is further associated with perceptions like justifications and sources of knowledge. In addition, epistemological studies recognise four sources of knowledge: prior knowledge (innate), posterior (experience), intuition, and authority (Casteel, 2018:6). In critical leadership, knowledge is understood as circumstanced because what is known today from a basic even minded view relies upon the time, space, and states of a given subject (Bourgeois, 2011:377). Hence, effective school leadership authority requires evaluation during a given time frame. Considering the reason for critical research as the desire to change the world, Bourgeois (2011) critical research methodology emphasises societal change, noting that conflict is not always apparent and that society is fraught with illusions, myths, and misrepresentations that cannot be evaluated fragmentally.

3.3.1.3   Axiology

Saunders (2009) defined axiology as an encompassing role that values and ethics play a role within the process of research. This integrates inquiries based on how researchers handle the research participants and their values; thus, values are guided by all human actions. Furthermore, axiology is a skill demonstrated by researchers, allowing them to decide on the research they are conducting and how they plan to execute it by articulating their values as the foundation. Moreover, the reflections of one's values as a researcher are based on one's choice of philosophy, and selecting one's subject matter over another implies that one subject matter is of more importance than the other. For instance, pursuing research where great significance was placed on collecting data using interviews proposes that one values personal collaboration with one's participants more exceptionally than their perspectives communicated through a questionnaire (Saunders, 2009:128).

The research philosophy chosen for this study is epistemology, on the basis that the epistemological research philosophy considering the nature of knowledge is that knowledge is acquired and transferred, is a power source, established through lived experiences and the social relations that creates these experiences, understood by economic and social settings. Along with this, the role of theory in epistemological research implies that theories were built in the demonstration of critiquing in a rationalistic way of reviewing and restructuring the world. Hence, theories analyse power relations constructed by deconstructing the world (Aliyu *et al.*, 2015).

As a result, epistemology as a research philosophy steers this study to critical theory as a research paradigm because, according to Aliyu *et al.* (2015), the philosophy of epistemological research points toward advancing critical consciousness, separating institutional structures and measures of action that produce unjust belief systems and social imbalances. At the forefront, epistemology shifts the balance of power to be more impartially dispersed. In addition, the philosophy of epistemological research addresses social issues and permits political liberation and expanding critical consciousness. Moreover, if research findings are accurate, the epistemological issues can be resolved within

a given context (Aliyu *et al.*, 2015). Therefore, phenomenology research as a methodology has been used to understand how secondary school leadership exercises legal and policy power to better the quality of learner performance in the Western Cape, Metro South Education District amidst the global crisis of Covid-19.

3.4   PHENOMENOLOGICAL RESEARCH DESIGN

As reported by Creswell and Creswell (2008), research designs are plans and research methods ranging from broad assumptions to detailed data collection and analysis techniques. The research design is the procedure selected by the researcher to consolidate the various parts of the study in a systematic and logical approach to address the research problem (Yobe, 2019:40).

This research investigated how secondary school leadership exercised legal and policy power during a crisis to sustain quality performance. This study adopted a phenomenological research design to explore school leadership agility in sustaining quality performance in times of crisis; the study adopted qualitative methodological instruments deemed necessary for collecting, coding, sorting, and analysing data relevant to the research question. As a result, the study centred around two secondary schools in the Metro South Education District in the Western Cape province of South Africa that has been underperforming during the 2020 Grade 12 National Senior Certificate examinations, as well as one secondary school in the Metro South Education District, in the Western Cape province of South Africa that has been performing well during the 2020 Grade 12 National Senior Certificate examinations. In this study, underperforming schools with less than 70% pass rates during the 2020 Grade 12 NSC examinations will be compared to those performing schools with pass rates of 70% or more.

This study used a phenomenological qualitative research approach to obtain data. Qualitative research is selected for this study since it allows the researcher to engage with the participants more closely, providing an opportunity for an in-depth enquiry into a phenomenon being investigated. Qualitative research also proposes the benefit of understanding a group's implicit comprehension and encounters participants' viewpoints (Hong & Espelage, 2012:117). Additionally, a qualitative research approach will be selected because the researcher does not intend to

predict but to understand and investigate an educational phenomenon concerning the Grade 12 learner performance in the Metro South Education District in the Western Cape.

3.4.1 Research site

The research was conducted at three research sites in three secondary schools in the Western Cape, Metro South Education District.

3.4.2 Research Strategy

This study adopted a qualitative research strategy, which steered the entire research process. Qualitative research is concerned with the fundamental characteristics of subjective encounters and a phenomenon and its related meanings (Du Plooy-Cilliers *et al*., 2014:173). Busetto *et al*. (2020) affirmed that qualitative research is "the study of the nature of phenomena" in conjunction with "their quality, different manifestations, the context in which they appear or the perspectives from which they can be perceived", but eliminating "their range, frequency, and place in an objectively determined chain of cause and effect". However, in layman's teams, qualitative research often includes data in word form instead of numbers.

3.5 POPULATION AND SAMPLING

Yobe (2019) alludes to the research population as a group from which the researcher sums up the chosen participants that are important for the study's sample size. This study intended to ascertain how secondary school leadership exercised legal and policy power during a crisis to sustain quality performance, with a population of fifteen participants. The study was conducted at three performing, and non-performing schools in Mitchell's Plain, which the Metro South Education District directs, in the Western Cape. Mitchell's Plain is a suburb in Cape Town which emerged during the 1970s, led by the apartheid system, as an area of residence for the Coloured community. The suburb is infamous for its conflicts with crime, gangsterism, unemployment, poverty, and abuse of substances (Hamdulay & Mash, 2011:84). However, some schools are performing exceptionally well, and yet some schools are underperforming.

Principals, deputy principals, HOD's and subject teachers were selected to participate. The intended method of sampling for this study is purposeful random sampling. Purposeful random sampling encompasses preserving credibility and not generalising, particularly if the sample size becomes too much to manage (Sikhakhane *et al.*, 2018:S4). Sample size is expected of at least three principals and/or deputy principals, three HOD's and six subject teachers interviewed in Mitchell's Plain for this study. Sikhakhane *et al.* claim that purposeful random sampling aims to guarantee that the researcher can categorise a sample to traits of a specific sub-group of interests. Principals, deputy principals, HOD's and subject teachers selected for the study who prefer not to engage voluntarily were allowed to withdraw. The population size comprised mainly of participants from three secondary schools explored. Consequently, three participants were principals; three were deputy principals, three were HOD's and six were teachers. Concerning sampling, this study employed purposeful sampling. Purposeful sampling involves the researcher selecting people and sites to learn or comprehend the focal phenomenon. The standard for selecting participants and locales is whether they are "information rich" (Creswell & Creswell, 2008:206).

Table 3.1:   Sample profile

Participants	No. of sites: three	Code	No. per site	Subs	Total
Principals/Headmaster	3	P1S1; P2S2; P3S3	1	1	3
Deputy Principals/Headmaster	3	DP1S1; DP2S2; DP3S3	1	1	3
HoDs	3	H1S1; H2S2; H3S3	1	1	3
Subject teachers	6	ST1S1; ST2S1; ST3S2; ST4S2; ST5S3; ST6S3	2	1	6
Total					**15**

Key: P for Principal and S for the site; DP for deputy principal; H for HoD and ST for subject teachers.

3.6   DATA COLLECTION METHODS AND INSTRUMENTS/TOOLS

Data collection is one of the most important aspects when conducting research and is understood to be a process whereby information is gathered and measured that permits research questions to be answered (Kabir, 2016:202). According to Creswell and Creswell (2008), the data collection methods include observations, interviews, and documents. This study conducted purposeful random interviews with principals, deputy principals, HOD's and teachers at three purposefully selected secondary schools in the Metro South Education District in Mitchell's Plain area. One secondary school was specifically selected based on its consistent results during the 2019, 2020, and 2021 Grade 12 NSC examinations, while two secondary schools were specifically selected based on their underperformance during the 2019, 2020, and 2021 Grade 12 NSC examinations. Past academic performance data of the three schools under consideration were compiled from the 2019, 2020, and 2021 School Performance Reports from the Department of Basic Education website. It is pertinent to highlight that all data collected was valuable in instituting secondary school leadership exercising legal and policy power during crises aimed at sustaining quality performance.

3.6.1   Semi-structured interviews method

Semi-structured interviews are a means by which a researcher is allowed to ask the participants a series of questions. Kabir (2016) identifies three characteristics of a semi-structured interview: 1) the interviewer and the interviewee participate in a formal interview. 2) the interviewer designs and utilises an interview guide. 3) the interviewer follows the guide but is allowed to steer the conversation away from the guide if the interviewer deems it necessary.

3.6.1.1   Data collection tools or instruments

The tools/instruments used to collect data for the semi-structured interviews are a recorder, a notepad (with guided questions), and an additional notepad and pen (to make notes for follow-up questions).

3.6.2   Observation method

Kabir (2016) refers to observations as a vital means of discovering the world around us. In addition, observation in research goes far beyond listening and looking; it is a "systematic enquiry made public". Furthermore, there are several reasons for collecting observational data – Kabir (2016) noted that these reasons include: 1) if the nature of the research questions focused on how and/or what questions. 2) if a topic lacks exploration and little is known to explain the topic. 3) if it is valuable to understand the meaning in a particular setting. 4) if self-report data is likely to differ from the actual occurrences.

3.6.2.1   Data collection tools or instruments

A notepad and pen were used as a data collection tool/instrument for observations to ensure that notes about observations are made in real-time as they occur.

3.6.3   Document analysis method

According to Bowen (2009), document analysis is a systematic process that entails reviewing or assessing documents in both printed and electronic forms. In addition, to improve empirical knowledge, advance understanding and elicit significant document analysis necessitates data to be studied and inferred. There are various forms of document analysis, namely: letters, memoranda, newspapers, press releases, survey data, and institutional reports, among others (Bowen, 2009:28). This study utilised the 2019 and 2020 School Performance Reports.

3.6.3.1   Data collection tools or instruments

The aforementioned documents were analysed electronically and note-taking was performed using a notepad and pen to record the data.

3.7   ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF DATA COLLECTION METHODS

As mentioned, this study conducted interviews, observations, and document analysis as part of the data collection process. However, in all aspects of our lives,

we experience advantages and disadvantages; similarly, the data collection methods adopted by this study had to weigh the advantages and disadvantages.

3.7.1 Advantages and disadvantages of interview data collection methods

According to Groenland and Dana (2019), there are advantages when using interviews as a means of data collection:

- A renewed sense of awareness was being ascribed to interviews.

- Information received is comprehensive and abundant.

- It presents an opportunity to go beyond and explore further the topic of enquiry.

- Participants present information that they deem valuable.

- Reliability is guaranteed due to elucidated responses and the probability of applicable information is provided.

- Research questions can alter to cater to individual participants.

- Qualitative research findings can produce from data analysis.

Consequently, Groenland and Dana (2019) proposed the following identifiable disadvantages:

- Time constraints.

- Varied responses.

- Interviewing requires experience and practice.

- Reduction and analysis of extensive information.

- Generalising is not easy.

- Interviewing depends on the researcher's characteristics and expertise.

3.7.2 Advantages and disadvantages of observation data collection methods

During observations, the following are deemed advantageous:

- The researcher does not need to obtain consent to access a particular setting.

- Reactivity is not a concern, as members are unaware that the individual leading the study is a researcher. Thus, they are less inclined to change their behaviour considering the researcher's presence (Groenland & Dana, 2019:266).

Additionally, Groenland and Dana (2019) included the following disadvantages:

- The issue of notetaking is being performed due to an individual being unaware that research may present difficulty in taking notes, and relying on memory may present risks.

- The issue of being unable to use other means of data collection when conducting observations.

3.7.3 Advantages and disadvantages of document analysis data collection methods

Groenland and Dana (2019) presented the following advantages of document analysis as a data collection method:

- In most cases, the documents are readily available and reputable.

- Documents are effective resources, seeing that it is inanimate and free of criticism.

- Documents contain data to provide a foundation for the study's background.

- Document analysis is cost-effective yet tedious compared to ethnography.

- The application of documents in various disciplines of exploration can be used as an essential means of data collection or as a supplement to different methods.

- Documents contain words and illustrations recorded without the researcher's influence ; thus, no predisposition exists in this regard.

Moreover, the disadvantages of using document analysis as a data collection method were listed as follows (Groenland & Dana, 2019:196):

- The documents used cannot be assumed reliable sources as they may be inadequate, or the findings are unreliable or conflicting.

- Due to the nature of a particular study, certain documents may be inaccessible due to sensitivity or topics stemming from politics.

- Bias is a factor that could exist when using document analysis as a data collection method, stemming from the researcher and the document.

3.8   DATA ANALYSIS METHOD

Conforming to Lester *et al*. (2020), there are a few standard practices that regularly (yet not consistently) endure across qualitative methods to deal with analysis, including the accompanying:

- Joining codes to field notes drawn from observations and/or interviews.

- Taking note of reflections or other comments.

- Arranging and filtering through these materials to recognise comparable expressions, connections between factors, designs, subjects, unmistakable contrasts among subgroups, and typical arrangements.

- Separating these examples and processes, shared characteristics, and contrasts and taking them out to the field during the next phase of data collection.

- Progressively explaining a minor set of generalisations that cover the textures perceived in the data.

- Going up against those generalisations with a formalised assortment of information in the type of theories.

Data collected from participants were labelled, coded, and arranged thematically to recognise differences and similarities. Thematic analysis is a qualitative data analysis technique that searches a dataset to identify, analyse, and report recurring patterns. This helps researchers learn more about what is happening in their data and how it affects their analysis. The code system is a way of describing data. However, it also involves interpretation in selecting codes and constructing themes (Kiger & Varpio, 2020:2).

The use of the Schools Performance Reports was to ascertain the relationship between the principal's agility in exercising legal and policy power to sustain quality performance during the COVID-19 pandemic. The participant interviews were analysed to establish among others, school leadership's agility in exercising legal and policy power to sustain quality performance in secondary schools. Data obtained from the Grade 12 Schools Performance Report 2019 and 2020 of the three secondary schools were arranged, categorised, coded and matched against data collected from the interviews. Further, the data from observations were likewise coded and categorised in terms of their similarities and differences to all the data collected and evaluated to support the investigation.

3.9   TRUSTWORTHINESS OF THE STUDY

Reed *et al.* (2009:339) characterised trustworthiness as a method of making research findings adequate to readers. However, Nowell *et al.* (2017:3) contended that trustworthiness is how a researcher can persuade the reader that the findings are sound and merit their consideration. In accordance with Denzin (1998) in Kathrada (2018), trustworthiness is critical and relevant to qualitative exploration since it confirms the quality principles witnessed in the study. Therefore, Erlandson *et al.* (1993) perceived trustworthiness as qualities that are conglomerate, and studies ought to feature the following:

- Exhibiting its true reality

- Providing the premise to apply it and permitting external judgement to be made about the consistency of its methods and the non-partisanship of its discoveries.

According to Du Plooy-Cilliers *et al*. (2014), the motivation behind trustworthiness in a qualitative study is to advance the comprehension of a phenomenon within a particular setting and not extrapolate the outcomes to a more extensive population. Thus, trustworthiness encompasses establishing credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability.

3.9.1   Credibility

Credibility as one aspect of trustworthiness was entreated in the study. Nowell *et al*. (2017:3) depicted the credibility of the study as analysing the findings against the understanding of the crude data. Face-to-face semi-structured interviews will be conducted to guarantee the study's credibility. To ensure that the data gathered is valid and reliable, fifteen participants were interviewed from three schools in the same vicinity. Furthermore, the analysis of documents was an essential method utilised to warrant the trustworthiness of the study. Overarching, the researcher utilised voice recording and transcribed all the interviews to certify further credibility.

3.9.2   Transferability

Nowell *et al*. (2017) and Lincoln and Guba (1985) agreed that transferability in qualitative exploration is how the findings could be reassigned to different contexts, thus being able to be applied to a broader research base. Data collected from participants will be transcribed to deviate from misrepresenting the audio-recorded interviews. . Due to the three schools interviewed, this study's scope was limited. The discoveries about school leadership exercising legal and policy power to sustain quality performance during crisis times could spread to other schools in the Metro South Education District and the Western Cape Education Department.

3.9.3 Dependability

In this study, dependability is guaranteed in warranting that all instruments, including voice recordings, are safely kept. If researchers can guarantee that the research process is logical, detectable, and documented, then dependability is achieved (Nowell *et al.*, 2017:3). Sepuru and Mohlakwana (2018) further argued that dependability demands that the outcomes gained in the study must be obtained assuming the study is directed in an identical setting, utilising the same techniques and participants. Dependability is guaranteed through the auditing process (Nowell *et al.*, 2017:3).

3.9.4 Conformability

Interview records were returned to participants to ensure conformability to be checked for correctness and to offer the participants an opportunity to give remarks or add data while transcribing the data. According to Nowell *et al.* (2017), conformability is based on instituting that the researcher's understanding and discoveries stem from the information, requiring the researcher to show how inferences and clarifications were reached. The researcher analysed data gathered through semi-structured interviews and document analysis. The findings about school leadership exercising policy and legal power to sustain quality performance during the COVID-19 pandemic stemmed from the collected data not from the researcher's predictions. Thus, conformability is about the research findings' fair-mindedness and objectivity.

Thus, Lincoln and Guba (1985) posited that trustworthiness in research is vital in assessing its worth. The researchers' stance guaranteed the study's trustworthiness; hence it did not sway its findings. Hence, the researcher would guarantee the study's trustworthiness by presenting how data analysis was performed through recorded semi-structured interviews, observations, and document analysis.

3.9.5 Triangulation and rigour

Noble and Heale (2019) defined triangulation as a means to increase the credibility and validity of the research findings. In support of this, four types of

triangulation have been proposed: 1) data triangulation, which regards things like eras, setting, and individuals; 2) investigator triangulation, which engages with using various researchers in a particular study; 3) theory triangulation, supports various theoretical schemes to allow interpretation of a particular phenomenon and 4) methodological triangulation encourages the using of various methods of data collection such as interviews and observations (Noble & Heale, 2019:67).

This qualitative study aimed to analyse how school leadership and educators can assist in improving Grade 12 learner performance while dealing with the effects of COVID-19. Furthermore, it aimed to describe how secondary school leadership exercises legal and policy power to improve learner performance during a global crisis. Several data sets were included and comprised of audio-recorded semi-structured interviews with principals, deputy principals, HOD's and teachers (n=15); observations of principals (n=3) and document analysis (n=1) to explore varied experiences and points of view. Thus, Denzin's (1998) triangulation approach has been used, as it encourages varied methods for data collection.

Rigour and truth are always crucial to quality research. According to Cypress (2017), rigour is a thorough and accurate quality or condition. Rigour has also been used to express attributes referring to the process of qualitative research (Cypress, 2017:254). According to Cypress (2017), Lincoln and Guba (1985) were the first to deal with rigour in reliability models of qualitative research. Reliability has been used as a crucial factor for a framework concept for expressing the rigour of qualitative research. Moreover, the rigour of qualitative analysis is part of the process and its reliability. In supporting the analytical mind required for understanding and theorising, the researcher ought to "dive" into the data, explore all nuances and relationships, view data from different perspectives, and comprehend that micro-to-macro switching is essential (Maher *et al.*, 2018:12). Moreover, Forero *et al.* (2018) stated that establishing rigorous standards in qualitative research, is known as credibility, dependability, conformity, and transferability. Thus, Lincoln and Guba's 1985 concept of trustworthiness informed this study and ensured trustworthiness.

3.10   ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS OF THE STUDY

Research ethics encompasses the belief regarding what is morally right or wrong; additionally, McMillan and Schumacher (2010) confirmed that research ethics revolve around what is ethically correct or incorrect while connecting participants are engaged or while information is collected. Furthermore, ethical consideration is relevant in essential research and document analysis (Rahman, 2017:107). Subsequently, Rankin and Ali (2014) stressed that ethical principles and methods should continue in all research. Thus, the researcher followed ethical processes by writing to the appropriate entities to acquire consent to conduct interviews in the schools under review. Participating principals gave consent. The identity of schools, educators, and principals was confidential and only known by the researcher. Information revealed was kept confidential. In this study, the rights of workers were cited and appropriately noticed. The researcher guarantees that the study's results were accounted for with impartiality and precision.

3.10.1   Measures of ethics

Research ethics deems no sensitive, intimate, or personal information should be published, as it may lead to embarrassment or harm to the participants. However, research ethics measured by ethical issues, include anonymity, confidentiality, informed consent, managing harm, rewards and benefits, data collection from participants and information sensitivity, and avoiding falsification and fabrication of the data (Du Plooy-Cilliers *et al*., 2014:264).

3.10.1.1   Anonymity

According to Du Plooy-Cilliers *et al.* (2014), anonymity is a promise made to participants implying that their names will not be recorded or made public and that their identity will not be able to be matched to the information they provided.

3.10.1.2   Confidentiality

Confidentiality refers to when the participant's identities match the information obtained; confidentiality ensures that the personal information of participants will not be known to anyone apart from the researcher. They should be communicated

to all participants, as it is likely to occur during one-on-one interviews (Du Plooy-Cilliers *et al.*, 2014:267-268).

3.10.1.3 Managing bias

Bias in research refers to accomplishing the desire or expectation for a specific outcome. This may result in the findings

on how and where the data was collected and interpreted (Du Plooy-Cilliers *et al.*, 2014:271).

3.10.1.4 Informed consent

McMillan and Schumacher (2010) stated that informed consent encompasses obtaining permission from persons willing to partake in the study before the research commences. In addition, participants should be aware that they are partaking in a study by being informed and allowed to give their consent. During the data collection process, participants should understand what is expected from them, how findings are implemented, and how their identities will be kept confidential (Du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2014:264).

Written permission to conduct this research was obtained from the Western Cape Education Department, the Metro South Education District, and the principals of participating schools and presented to the participants. Furthermore, participants were informed that an audio recorder will be used throughout the study to record them.

3.10.1.5 Managing harm

Du Plooy-Cilliers *et al.* (2014) emphasised that researchers should not cause harm to their participants in any way; however, the following are complex to avoid:

- Making participants recollect difficult incidents.

- Put forward questions in a group context that may be uncomfortable or embarrassing for one participant to respond to in the group setting.

- Establishing instances where a participant's career opportunities may be in jeopardy; and/ or

- Facilitating focussed group interviews in a way where certain participants feel that their responses are not as effective as the rest of the participants.

Thus, if the research is sensitive, the participants should be informed about it before giving consent.

3.10.1.6 Voluntary participation

Vanclay *et al.* (2013) stated that voluntary participation supported by the premise of informed consent, whereby involvement in a study is voluntary, and participants should not be forced or threatened to participate. In addition, participants should be made aware that they are allowed to withdraw at any given time and that their compiled responses are excluded from the analysis, where possible.

3.10.1.7 Non-publication of data

Due to the confidential nature of the data, caution be exercised to guarantee that data will be securely stored and safe from unofficial individuals. Additionally, there must be a declared timeline for the safe disposal of the data. However, this is per institutional rules and regulations (Vanclay *et al.*, 2013:247). The data from this study will be stored safely for five years and will subsequently be discarded according to the University of South Africa rules and regulations.

3.10.1.8 Falsification and fabrication of data

The falsification of information, according to Du Plooy-Cilliers *et al.* (2014), refers to purposefully altering or making up data, which is considered unethical; however, there are numerous reasons why researchers fabricate and falsify information:

- To maintain funding or ensure additional funding is granted.

- To satisfy their bosses or to ensure they keep their positions.

- To ensure their reputation is kept or to gain status.

- To keep away from challenging and tedious data collection and interpretation aspects.

- To achieve a longed result; or

- To keep a consumer.

3.10.1.9 *Faulty data-gathering methods*

According to Kulina (2020), data collection is complex, making error-free data collection more complex. The researcher's aim, objectives, and comprehension of the intended reader should be precise. If not, the data collection plan would be fraught with errors. Five of the most common faulty data-gathering methods are:

1. Population specification fault implies incorrectly assuming that a particular group is the target of the researcher's study.

2. Sample frame fault refers to sampling a significantly smaller group of participants than needed for the study to be faultless.

3. Selection fault alludes to researchers who collect data from participants they are familiar with, as opposed to randomly selecting their participants.

4. Non-response fault reflects a considerable number of participants not responding to the researcher's plea for participation or participants do not complete the entire data collection endeavour.

5. Measurement fault refers to situations that may hinder the data collection process, like noises, drawing incorrect conclusions, or participants falling ill.

3.10.1.10 *Rewards and benefits*

Providing rewards and/ or benefits to participants - such as money, refreshments, or a vacation may be regarded as a worthy gift in exchange for participation; however, there are ethical ramifications, as it may misrepresent the findings by:

- Substituting who partakes and a random sample may not be possible as the person is motivated by the benefits or rewards obtained from the study.

- Impacting how participants partake by being of the idea that they need to provide certain information and omit others to obtain the rewards.

Therefore, incentives should not be elaborate but should express an appreciation for their participation (Du Plooy-Cilliers *et al.*, 2014:265-266).

3.10.1.11 Responsible publication

Singhal and Kalra (2021) acknowledged that the language used to script a paper is essential to ensure responsible publication, as well as having it edited and proofread by an expert or native speaker of the language in which it has been written. Furthermore, a paper must present meaningful thorough research by contributing to building the knowledge and consciousness of the reader. Overarching, the paper ought to be original, overseen, and outlined with efficient methodology and momentous outcomes, well organised, well written, and brief but clear. Moreover, recent references ought to be current and relevant to the reader. Furthermore, the gap in existing knowledge, and how it will be addressed must be included. Furthermore, if the paper violate ethics or the law, such as plagiarism, then the paper will not be accepted for publication (Singhal & Kalra, 2021:66-67).

3.10.1.12 Auditing

Auditing is defined as the process of quality assurance and expands the method by recommending approaches to grow the lucidity of the auditing process (De Kleijn & Van Leeuwan, 2018:1). De Kleijn and Van Leeuwen (2018) claimed that ensuring the validity of conclusions in qualitative research given the absence of normalised systems and strategies and the moderately huge role of the researchers' understanding in coming to conclusions is difficult. However, there are several means to overcome this difficulty, specifically the auditing process pioneered by Akkerman *et al.* (2008) (De Kleijn & Van Leeuwan, 2018:1). This auditing process has pointed toward guaranteeing that quality, mostly of qualitative research concerning visibility, comprehensibility, and acceptability. The auditing technique offers researchers (auditee) an all-encompassing methodology to leave a path of decisions and choices made, which can be reviewed, in this manner, by an auditor (De Kleijn & Van Leeuwan, 2018:1-2).

According to De Kleijn and Van Leeuwen (2018), Akkerman *et al.* (2008) give the procedure for the auditee, who keeps an auditing track of the study, and the auditor, who checks the study for visibility, comprehensibility, and acceptability. Thus, suggesting that the overarching aim is to "link interpretations and conclusions in the final research document to the data, through all steps in between".

3.11 LIMITATIONS

Limitations are incidents that the researcher does not have control over, thus placing further restrictions on the success of the study, interpretation, and reliability of the research findings (Prince & Murnan, 2004:66-67). The limitations encountered in this study are:

1. Restrictions posed by time: multi-tasking presented a significant challenge due to time constraints.

2. This study relied on participants' voluntary availability and cooperation. Thus, it is time-consuming due to the demanding nature of the job of principals and other participants.

3. Participants could misinterpret questions, making their responses irrelevant to the study.

3.12 DELIMITATIONS

This study focussed on how school leadership exercises legal and policy power in sustaining quality performance during times of crisis in the Metro South Education District in the Western Cape. This study has not presented various leadership styles, their traits, or their effectiveness, as leadership styles did not form part of the scope of the study. Moreover, the study was limited to three Mitchell's Plain public schools within the Metro South Education District, as the researcher is familiar with and has taught within this area and district.

3.13 SUMMARY

This research provided an opportunity for principals and other entities within secondary schools to view how they exercise their legal and policy power in sustaining quality performance during the COVID-19 pandemic. Data was collected by means of semi-structured interviews, observations, and document analysis (2019 and 2020 National Senior Certificate Schools Performance Report). The participants included: principals, HOD's and educators from three secondary schools in Mitchell's Plain area of the Metro South Education District of both performing and underperforming schools. Moreover, this study was accomplished by using the essential qualitative methodological apparatuses, which were considered suitable for managing issues that require insights and feelings; in this case, school leadership agility exercises legal and policy power to sustain quality performance amidst times of crisis. This study is relevant as it enhances the body of knowledge in education management, particularly focusing on the COVID-19 pandemic and academic performance.

CHAPTER 4

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS, AND INTERPRETATION

4.1   INTRODUCTION

A discussion of the research methodology and design was presented in Chapter 3. The justification for the chosen research instruments and strategies was advocated. Chapter 4 presented the analysis of the data collected through semi-structured interviews with Principals, Deputy Principals, HOD's and teachers' observations of the three selected principles and the document analysis of the Grade 12 National Senior Certificate Schools Report of 2019 and 2020. The study sample was three secondary schools within Mitchell's Plain in the Metro South Education District (MSED) in the Western Cape, whereby one principal, one deputy principal, one HOD and two teachers represented each school. Participants were chosen from two underperforming schools and one performing school near each other.

The result of this study includes my description of the meanings by the participants of the three selected schools and a discussion regarding their locale and participants' information. Further, this chapter addresses the fundamental research question and the relevant sub-questions highlighted in Chapter 1.

The main research question of this study is: *How does secondary school leadership exercise legal and policy power during crisis with the aim of sustaining quality performance in the Western Cape, Metro South Education District, amidst the COVID-19 global pandemic?*

The following sub-questions further steered my study:

- *What is secondary school principals' understanding of leadership power?*

- *How does school leadership use law and policy to develop crisis management plans?*

- *What strategies do leadership school systems use to improve results while dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic?*

- *What are the experiences of school leadership systems about making changes in teaching and learning during the crisis?*

- *What legal and policy power do school leadership systems have in making decisions in times of crisis?*

For each sub-question, I present data thematically from a phenomenological analysis of three data collection methods employed: semi-structured interviews, observations, and document analysis. Thereafter, I present my inference of the data for each theme. To conclude each theme, I present an analytical interpretation of the findings by referring to my chosen theoretical framework.

4.2 QUALITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS

Lester *et al.* (2020) stated that qualitative data analysis brings meaning to a data set and is broadly conceived, with qualitative data, which includes a variety of materials, e.g., conversational data, images, observations and structured, semi-structured, or unstructured interviews, amongst others. Although qualitative data analysis encompasses various aspects, it is often aligned with a specific methodology, theoretical stand, research traditions and/ or field (Lester *et al.*, 2020:96). Ravindran (2019) purported that the characteristics of qualitative data analysis are as follows:

- The researcher endeavours to get to the meaning behind the actions and practices of participants.

- The researcher gets to be the instrument to produce information and ask explanatory questions.

- The quality and profundity of the portrayal accentuate a phenomenon instead of the number of considered participants.

- The participants' experiences are emphasised by the setting and all-encompassing view.

- The researcher is sensitive to the impact he/she has on the elucidation of data.

- Analytical themes as findings are presented rather than quantified factors.

Additionally, Ravindran (2019) revealed the steps for qualitative data analysis, which include: a) arranging the data; b) perusing and reflecting; c) coding, categorising and memorising; d) creating themes/conceptual models or hypotheses.

4.3 DEMOGRAPHICAL DATA RESEARCH SITES AND PARTICIPANTS

Following ethical clearance, letters giving information and requesting permission to conduct interviews and observations were written and distributed to participants randomly by purposeful sampling.

Semi-structured interviews with participants were conducted personally by the researcher. Interviews were conducted face-to-face with principals, deputy principals, HOD's and teachers of the Metro South Education District who gave consent to be interviewed for the purpose of the study.

4.3.1 Description of sites

4.3.1.1 Schools

The population targeted were three government schools, from the Metro South Education District, in the Western Cape. The three schools sampled were from Mitchell's Plain area, whereby fifteen individuals were assessed, including three principals, three deputy principals, three HOD's and six teachers. The participating schools selected as research sites were government high/secondary schools which enrolled learners from Grade 8 to Grade 12. Among the three schools, the enrolment of learners ranged from 1000 to 1380, while the number of teachers was thirty plus at each school. For support staff, the numbers were ten or more per school, including cleaners and teacher assistants.

4.3.2 Description of participants

4.3.2.1 Participants' description by gender

The participants included fifteen teaching personnel, which consists of three principals, three deputy principals, three HOD's and six teachers. Table 4.1 below illustrates demographics of participants in this study.

Table 4.1: Demographic information of participants

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Female	8	53
Male	7	47
Total	**15**	**100**

Table 4.1 illustrates the demographic information of the participants. The research demography of this study had a frequency of eight females and seven males, which presented a total frequency of fifteen participants. Female participants were 53%, while the male percentage was 47%.

4.3.2.2 Participants' description by age

Table 4.2: Age-frequency of participants

Age	Frequency	Percentage
21-30	1	7
31-40	2	13
41-50	3	20
51-60	8	53
61 and above	-	-
Undisclosed	1	7
Total	**15**	**100**

Table 4.2 illustrates the age frequency of participants in this study, as the ages 21-30 and one participant who opted not to disclose their age comprised only 7% of the participation pool. The age represented the most are 51-60, representing 53% of the participation entity. The ages 41-50 stood at 20%, and 31-40 stood at 13%, respectively. As evident from Table 4.2, the ages 61 and above were not represented as part of the participant sample.

4.3.2.3   Participants' description by qualification

Table 4.3 reveals the highest qualification of all the participants who partook in the research study. It is evident that the participants whose highest qualification is a Diploma, whether in Education or another field, represented the highest percentage which is 47%. Participants with bachelor's degrees or bachelor's degrees in Education as their highest qualification represented 27%, and the two qualifications represented the same percentage of 13% respectively, where Honours in Education degree holders and other, which refers to Post Graduate Certificates in Education (PGCE) holders. However, as shown below in Table 4.3, none of the participants were in possession or working towards a Master's or Doctoral degree at the time of data collection.

Table 4.3:   Highest qualification of participants

Qualifications	Frequency	Percentage
Diplomas and/or Diplomas in Education	7	47
Bachelor's and/or Bachelor's degree in Education	4	27
Honours degree in Education	2	13
Master's degree	-	-
Doctoral degree	-	-
Other	2	13
Total	**15**	**100**

4.4   FINDINGS: INTERVIEWS

This section presented the findings of the interviews conducted with principals, deputy principals, HOD's and teachers at the selected secondary schools of the

Metro South Education District in the Western Cape. Data from the interviews conducted with principals, deputy principals, HOD's and teachers at the selected secondary schools of the Metro South Education District in the Western Cape are presented and based on thematic categorisation derived from the questions used to collect information from the participants. These themes are leadership power; challenges COVID-19 presented to schools; agility during COVID-19; academic differences between schools in the same vicinity; using law and policies to develop crisis management plans; and Grade 12 results during 2019-2020. Furthermore, all participants' responses were recorded as verbatim quotes. For interpretation and analysis, I use the unit of analysis codes as explained in Table 3.1 in Chapter 3.

4.4.1 Theme 1: Concept of leadership power

Theme 1, derived from sub-question 1, questions what is secondary school principals' understanding of leadership power. The participants responded to the question as follows:

According to P1S1,

> I believe in leaders inspiring leaders do have powers depending on how you use it, but me personally do not believe in coming down on people. I believe in involving people in decisions that is being made at school. I believe that if everyone gives an input, you will have better buy-in, than coming down from top. I would rather prefer having them decide or having an input in decisions that is being made at school.

Furthermore, DP1S1 mentioned,

> Leadership power, I have a different view my thing is more on leadership being the one who, you talk and you do, that is what I think. What you say, you must do. It comes down to integrity. The power of leadership is to show by tactically showing, by practically doing it, and then people will follow you. Leadership is about following.

In the same vein, P3S3 viewed leadership power as,

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Leadership power is where you guide people, where you have people walking next to you, yes, it is a guidance, basically. Leadership is you lead, you lead meneer, and you lead the ship (laughing); see captain of the ship, so you guide where, in which direction we going on and if you see there somebody is steering the wrong way, then it's your job to get them in a straight line again. Let them go where you want them to go.

There was also the perception that leadership power deals with relationships, leading to individuals entrusting and working better with each other.

In this regard, P2S2 responded,

Look, when I speak about leadership, I have one sentence only. Leadership is about relationships; in other words, you must have relationships with your staff, and that will cascade down to the trust and people willing to work.

Some participants understood leadership power as executing mandates from a provincial or national level and adhering to the job specifications. This understanding was mentioned by DP2S2, who stated, *"to lead is basically to uh, uhm, to exercise in the school situation to exercise what is given to us by the department. Leadership for me is to implement the policies and, uh, the day-to-day work that we must do in school; that is what leadership is for me."*

Similarly, DP3S3 highlighted,

My understanding of leadership power. One thing I've learnt, it should always be about the position and not the person, uhm, I have realized that if I do not exercise all of the duties that is put in front of me, it causes lots of problems number 1, but I think, firstly I need to understand, that I have certain things to do in this position.

Finally, leadership power is viewed as building relationships, guiding, collaborating, mutual understanding, and trust. Subsequently, this highlights the theoretical framework in Chapter 2, which explains Fullan's 2002 Framework for Leadership Model. As stated in Chapter 2, building relationships and understanding change are two of the five features that ensure change is welcome.

4.3.2   Theme 2: Agility during COVID-19

Principals are the drivers through which policies and law in education are delivered. Thus, theme 2 aligns with sub-question 3, which questions how school leadership experiences can translate into making changes that improve teaching and learning during the crisis. Consequently, the researcher was able to gain insight into the changes enforced on principals and deputy principals. The responses are given below,

DP2S2:

> There's obviously always a problem with change and the society we come from, our learners do not like change; they like to stay in the comfort zone. And whenever there is changes and changes during COVID was very difficult; whatever changes, you need to get the buy-in from learners; if you make it yourself, without them and their parents, it won't work, and that is now the difficulty that we had to deal with. Besides that, our strategy was in during COVID to not keep our grade 12 learners at home, so they were basically here on a day-to-day basis, it's only the lower grades that was coming staggered, but that was hampering factor there was that learners saw that some other learners is at home and they take some chances to stay at home, so it wasn't a sort of a unified thing that everybody was at school, so that was a major struggle with that. And besides the fact that learners were also scared, you know, they were matric, they knew that was important to be at school, but they were scared, there was also uncertain about that pandemic itself, so it's a new fact that certain people were not school, and others had to be at school, that was that was a challenge.

DP1S1:

> The problem was the policymakers; I have a problem with that. Up there, right up, ministerial. Because they don't know what happening on the ground, they not in touch with what is happening, they make policies, and then it filtered down, but it didn't work for our schools. Making changes, my experiences were, out of, I would say was, very poor, 5 or 6 out of 10, it didn't work really. They tried to introduce; they forced people to come;

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people were anxious; people were scared at the time. How can you learn with that type of mindset? And that, okay, we know because they had their reasons for that, but still, uh, only those who had resources in the affluent areas obviously, they benefited because they had it all the time. Uh, here, at these township schools, we suffer, we had to, we suffered during that time. Learners did not come all the time, although they had alternative days, they didn't come, they missed out, uh, the other thing that we used didn't work. Uhm, there were too many changes, ja. Teachers were unhappy, teachers were scared, people were dying, teachers especially hey. That was that component that time, yoh. And, making changes, you can make changes, it is not, it's during any epidemic, during anything, but you must look at the context, let us look at the context of where who you are talking, who you making that changes too. Teachers, changes must be adaptable, cannot have strict reinforcement of a rule you see.

DP3S3:

In my subject, uhm, I think overall it was in terms of just the implementation, mostly positive because I think in this Physical Sciences, Life Sciences, Technical Sciences in our subjects, uhm there was, they considered the time lost and they catered to that, so I think it was mostly positive number one. I think the support that we got in terms of the lessons, this WCED lessons, which was a positive. Uhm, I would say that the big negative out of this entire experience was the constant access that everybody has to you suddenly, so in terms of the learners and parents, you know, WhatsApp groups became even bigger than it used to be, so uhm, everyone has access to me 24 hours a day. In terms of bureaucracy, the district offices, and provincial offices again, a meeting can be organized at any moment, at the drop of a hat, because you know you can do it from your computer right here. So that was a big negative, I feel like, I never stop thinking about that work these days because everybody has access to me 24/7, so that is one big negative out of it, I would say.

Contrary to the previous participant, P1S1 stated that,

Oh, we needed to make a lot a changes during the COVID or the crisis period, we had to move away from the traditional teaching by using other resources, and one of the best resources that they could use was to send voice notes or recordings via WhatsApp to the learners because WhatsApp don't use such a lot a data now our community is not well off, so it was either you have Wi-Fi, or we eat. So uhm, that is what we did; we needed to adjust the way we were teaching, so the one day we would teach and then when they leave, they would get activities to do when they at home. We needed to liaise a lot with the parents to make sure that they at home, to ensure that the children are busy doing their work, and then, uhm, other adjustment was the wearing of the mask and the screening and sanitizing learners before they can come into the class, so that took quite a lot a time and uhm, not having a staffroom, where the staff could be together as one. So, we had two different staffrooms; staff were in the hall. Uhm, parent meetings were, like far in few, when we had parent meetings, we had to reschedule, like one grade per day and then what we did, we gave them different time slots to come in because we could not have all of them. With the result was that not all your parents came, so that kinda impacted on schooling as such, and here we can think in terms of disciplinary problems. Yes, during COVID, we also had a lot of disciplinary problems, and after COVID, it really, you can see how COVID impacted on those learners. Uhm, the learners, was angry, they are still angry; there was not enough counselling given to those learners who lost family members or friends during COVID. So uhm, what we currently doing is, we trying to get all that anger because they got all this anger, and the reason they had this anger was because they went through a lot emotional and psychological problems during COVID, so it's going to take quite some time to get the learner where they were before COVID. So, it is not just the academic side; it is the child.

P3S3:

We had to adapt. We had to use methods that we had never used before. I had a whole, e-team, was looking at projecting lessons, recording lessons,

and giving to the learners, and so. But the thing that I had tried was e-learning, uh, so that we could project to the different, and luckily what saved us was that we did not have the learners here all the time, all the learners, all the time. So, we did recordings and give it, but there was a challenge again that the kids did not have data to download the lesson. So, most of the lessons, in the end, it was done here at school live by the teacher.

P2S2:

It was nerve wrecking; I am serious, it was nerve wrecking. For myself as a complying officer, it was nerve wrecking, all the rules and, you know, the new rules, I call instructions from the top, it was, my experience, the experience was a horror movie, none of us you know, developed and even skilled into this, it just came upon us, and it's almost like you did double work. Uhm, it was the type of system they had, the cascade system that we had. Ja, you had to plan, and still, people questioned it, you understand. They questioned this because we have a 1200 plus learners. The first thing is to sanitize learners, to get their temperature, that is the first thing; when do you start with your school? It was it was a nightmare.

4.3.3 Theme 3: Legal and policy power possessed by school leadership during times of crisis

Theme 3 emerged from sub-question 5, which wanted to ascertain what legal and policy power school leadership has in making decisions in times of crisis. During the researchers' interviews with participants regarding their legal and policy power, the following responses were presented by principals and deputy principals only,

P3S3: *"I have no power, meneer, (giggle) not honestly what I do is, is just follow."*

P1S1: *"Well, during times of crisis, you don't really have legal rights to make decisions."*

P2S2: *"I follow the rules that need to be followed."*

DP1S1: *"My job description is basically to assist the principal in his job and to follow up on departmental rules."*

DP2S2: *"I said we had very little legal power."*

DP3S3:

> I am with the principal and the SGB responsible for formulating policies, so I do have power in that regard, but the policy must obviously be in line with national policy. So, it can be adapted to our context, but I do have power to change or modify or to development new policies in line with National policy.

Furthermore, one participant provided examples of steps that need to be followed in order for a school to be closed, also if a COVID-19 case was confirmed positive at school,

P1S1:

> First, me as a principal, I need to ask the SGB; if the SGB says yes, then I need to inform the circuit manager, the circuit manager then needs to consult with the HOD, who then gives him permission, then he gives me permission. So, you do not really; you cannot make decisions regarding school closure, uhm, like we are talking in terms of a crisis. Even if there was COVID cases at school, you could not say, uhm, we need to close the school; you first need to consult, first ask them, then they will send people out to deep clean the school, and they will tell you when to come back. Then there were changes; you cannot close the school if there was COVID cases. Uhm ya, so basically, you could not make those kinda decisions; for you to make decisions, you first need to have the right of way from them. Internally you can decide to send someone home for something, but in terms of crisis, no.

Participants further responded to their legal and policy power, whereby P1S1 expressed that *"the principal that was sacked is a good example. They felt that the school was not safe enough because of the virus; people got sick, people were dying."*

4.3.4 Theme 4: Using law and policies to develop crisis management plans

Law and policies are the driving forces to all spheres of a school, especially when it comes to dealing with crises. Therefore, theme 3 emerged from sub-question 2, which wanted to investigate how school leadership use law and policy power to develop crisis management plans for school performance sustainability. During the researchers' interviews with participants regarding their use of law and policy for the betterment of their school and learners, the following responses were presented by principals and deputy principals only,

P3S3: *"If there's something on the news, they say school is starting that time or we only going till that time, and so on, I do not follow what they say; I wait until I get a letter, an official letter from WCED, then only I implement."*

P1S1: *"Uhm, during this period, I needed to make sure that I know the policies, and I needed to know the School's Act; it was like my little diary. I carried it around with me to make sure that I don't make decisions that contradicts the School's Act."*

DP1S1: *"You go strictly according to the law."*

DP2S2: *"It was forced upon us by the education department; remember, they came out with the uh, a number of protocols that we had to follow, and it was forced upon us."*

Participants alluded to the *South African Schools Act* (1996) as their go-to when crises occur to ensure that they develop plans in alignment with the act. Additionally, participants expressed those policies ensures that there are up-to-date resources to deal with unexpected crisis.

Furthermore, P2S2 expressed that,

> Every day is a crisis, to be honest. Look, the department does not understand what is going on here; it is a tick-box system. Now tick boxes does not work for me. Right from the start, we were given the bible; I call it the bible; it was a lot of things that we had to copy. The poor principals had

to study those documents with lots of annexures. I normally communicate everything to the staff, like circulars and minutes, and I make it clear that it does not come from me but from policy, and policies are mandatory.

4.3.5 Theme 5: Strategies used to sustain Grade 12 results during 2019-2020

Theme 4 was established from sub-question 3, which asked what strategies school leadership systems use to improve performance while dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic. Enumerating the strategies used to sustain or improve their Grade 12 results during 2019 and 2020, principals and deputy principals described their strategies as follows,

P1S1:

> We had the recovery period. The matriculants had class till a specific time because it was two schools at the same time. Uhm, what I mean by two schools, during the COVID period, the grade 9's and grade 8's have nine periods, whereas the FET phase have seven periods, which meant that the FET phase were done with school at the specific time. But we did not want them to go, so what we did with that time we had the recovery period. Where the teachers had to make sure that they do more work and revision, we had our e-learning classes; we had live streaming of, uhm, different subjects that were arranged by the subject advisors; we still have our Saturday classes.

P2S2:

> One is we have got our intervention strategies; I can say I threaten learners with two things, one is the valedictory, and one is matric ball. So, if you do not uh work with us, in our academic program, there's no social program for you; we have, uhm, after-school classes. There are holiday classes; we call it the last push, that is, at the end of the term, like this week when the teachers are busy with admin work, the grade 12's are here, last push. Uhm, then there is the uh, there's also the holiday classes.

P3S3 added that: *"what worked really is house calls. But then it is, the learner must be their man, and then, of course then it is limited time again, especially now in winter, its quick, very soon it is dark, six 'o clock it is dark already."*

DP1S1:

> Communication via WhatsApp, with parents and with learners, all the time and the resources from district, we just relayed it to the learners, they gave us notes, they gave us a framework of stuff that must go, and that was relayed to the learners, via WhatsApp. There were some online classes taking place.

DP2S2:

> We actually have a very firm hand on our grade 12s, and we make them fully aware from grade 10, and grade 11 that was is expected from them right. So, the strategies, after-school programs, for example. We tend to make it compulsory; there is no two ways about that. For example, we have our Saturday classes we had our after-school classes, where all grade 12's school ends at half past three or at half past two and then, of course, our holiday classes. We sort of "threaten" them that they will not attend, for example, uh, matric balls or valedictories, if they don't attend that. So that is the type of strategies, but we also let them realize that it is for the benefit of them to attend these activities.

Furthermore, DP1S1 shared his school's strategies and gave reasons as to why it failed,

> That year this school put everything in man, for the grade 12's, gave them extra classes, had them motivational speakers, uh Saturday classes, gave them food to eat, to get them to school, power sessions, before an exam, all those things were given to them. And still did not work; how come? Because they were given too much. I still believe you do not give stuff; they must work for it.

4.4   FINDINGS: OBSERVATIONS

The findings of the observations were thematically analysed, based on their similarities and difference, in line with the headings from the observation sheet.

4.4.1   School Profile

Upon observing the schools and principals, Site 1 was kept clean and had the office area gated and burglar proofed, including all classrooms. Furthermore, Site 1 had chalkboards, whiteboards, data projectors and textbooks in all classrooms. Site 2 likewise had gates and burglar-proofing. However, the office area was very dilapidated, whereby the windows were shattered, as well as in some of the classrooms. However, it was observed that there were chalkboards and textbooks, although no data projectors and whiteboards were seen. Site 3 was also gated and burglar-proofed; the entire school had chalkboards and whiteboards, and some classes had data projectors. They have fully functional workshops for their technology-based subjects, with all the necessary equipment and machinery.

Moreover, in Site 1, the teachers and learners were observed in respect of discipline; teachers roamed the school, and some classes were unsupervised. The learners were smoking cannabis and walking around during class using profanity. Furthermore, the learners were noisy and smoked freely. Also, Site 2's educators arrived late at school and lingered noisily around the office area. Upon observing Site 3, no teachers were walking about unnecessarily and seemed disciplined, including the learners.. Most learners were in class, except for the few visiting the ablutions and running errands for teachers.

4.4.2   Staff briefings

The researcher observed that Site 1 and Site 3 were the only sites that conducted 15-minute staff briefings punctually every morning at 08:00. All teaching personnel were in attendance, even though some arrived late. However, as regards participation, Site 1 had more novice teachers engaged in the briefings. Site 2 did not have a morning briefing on the two occasions the researcher visited the school. The principal remained constantly busy in his office; this could be because of June examinations.

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4.4.3   Principals meeting with teachers

Site 2 presented the researcher with many random and menial conversations. Besides the principal enquiring about reports, conversations around academics were not observed. At Site 3, the researcher observed a conversation concerning winter school. At Site 1, a parent enquired about the learner who was suspended.

4.4.4   Principals' daily routine

The principal's daily routine consisted of the principal's movement on the school grounds, visiting classrooms and inspecting books and teachers' portfolios. Although the former are observed at Sites 1 and 3, the latter was not performed. Furthermore, none of the routines at Site 2 were observed due to the principal being confined to the office area.

4.4.5   Unforeseen occurrences

No unforeseen occurrences at Site 3 were observed. At site 2, one parent insisted on meeting with the principal but advised the parent make an appointment. Site 1 had a parent enquiring whether her suspended child could write the examination of that day, which led to the principal's agreement.

4.5   FINDINGS: DOCUMENT ANALYSIS

Data which had been collected from the 2019 and 2020 National Senior Certificate (NSC) School performance reports , respectively, was used to analyse the meanings of the school leadership ecosystem views regarding school crisis leadership and how it exercises legal and policy power to sustain quality teaching and learning amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. The data from the respective documents on the previous Grade 12 results of the participating schools was considered representative of the learner's academic performance. Table 4.4 below shows the selected schools' performance in the National Senior Certificate (NSC) (Grade 12) examinations of the three participating schools from 2019 to 2020.

Table 4.4: National Senior Certificate (NSC) results in percentages from 2019-2020

Year		2019	2020
Provincial Pass rate %		82.3	79.9
District Pass rate %		81.0	70.0
School Pass rate %			
Performing school	Site 3	90.8	80.8
Under-performing schools	Site 1	58.6	66.4
	Site 2	81.3	66.9

National Senior Certificate Examination: School performance report 2019 and 2020.

Table 4.4 depicts the document analysis of the Grade 12 results of the schools selected for this research study in the Western Cape from 2019 to 2020. For the sake of confidentially, schools have been labelled Sites 1, 2 and 3 . An analysis of the results shows that Sites 1 and 2 performed below the provincial averages for the period under investigation, except for Site 2, which, in 2019, performed slightly above the provincial average. In view of the above, -these schools have been classified as underperforming.

Site 3 achieved pass rates above the provincial averages for 2019 and 2020, respectively, with a visible decline in 2020. Against the backdrop, this school was recognised as a performing school.

Table 4.5:   Categorization of schools

District	Schools	Quintile
MSED	(Site 1)	4
MSED	(Site 2)	4
MSED	(Site 3)	4

National Senior Certificate Examination: School performance report 2019 and 2020.

Table 4.5 illustrates the category of each school that participated. The categorization of the schools illustrates that all the selected schools are within the Metro South Education District (MSED) further indicating that the selected schools are categorized as quintile four schools, which means they have the same infrastructure, receive the same financial support from the WCED and are fee-paying schools.

4.6   ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

This study analysed the experiences and views of principals in managing Grade 12 learner performance amidst the COVID-19 global pandemic, as well as examining how secondary school leadership exercise legal and policy power aimed at improving the quality of learner performance in the Western Cape, Metro South Education District amidst the COVID-19 crisis. Data was generated through semi-structured interviews with participants comprising principals, deputy principals, HOD's and teachers, as well as observations and document analysis of the Grade 12 NSC 2019 and 2020 Schools Performance Report. The study utilised thematic analysis to analyse the data. This research employed phenomenological study methods, drawing on qualitative methodological tools deemed most suitable for the data collection to respond to the research question. A thorough examination of the research problem led to thematic categorization, patterns, and themes emerging from collected data.

Data from the Department of Basic Education (2019 and 2020 NSC Schools Performance Reports) provided the selected school's Grade 12 results in the Metro South Education District. It can be concluded from the data that Sites 1 and 2 were underperforming schools because of their inconsistent pass rates, which were below the provincial average within the period (see Table 4.4). Data collected by document analysis disclosed that Site 3 was a performing school because of its consistent pass rate, which was above the provincial average, during the same period (see Table 4.4).

The interviews with participants highlighted that some participants did not fully grasp the concept of leadership power. However, it was clear from responses that some principals did possess leadership power qualities. Below is an analytical summary of the findings:

- All the participants (100%) interviewed that their school followed a rotational system during the COVID-19 pandemic.

- Thirty-three percent of participants expressed using online learning as ineffective, as it presented challenges whereby not all learners had access to electronic devices and the internet.

- Twenty percent of the leadership participants responded by stating that they have little to no legal and policy power, as laws and policies are forced to be implemented and offer little freedom to adjust to the school circumstances.

- Forty percent of the participants presented that they have adopted various strategies to improve or sustain their Grade 12 results, which has proven effective.

- Thirty-three percent of the leading participants had negative views regarding their experiences of making changes to teaching and learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. This was due to the overwhelming workload added to all employees, the inaccessibility of electronic devices and Wi-Fi connections, and the lack of discipline regarding learners.

On the factors of the academic differences between schools in the same vicinity and their results, of which the findings were as follows:

- Fifty-three percent of the participants fully agreed academic differences exist between schools in the same vicinity. However, 46,67% did not express whether they agreed; furthermore, a few participants were wavering with regards to the statement.

- Ninety-three percent of the participants attributed the differences to leadership and subject choices. However, most participants viewed the difference by asserting that certain schools headhunt their learners by accepting only top learners in the community. The remaining schools need to accept academically strong learners into their schools. Additionally, it has been alluded that some schools are English Medium only and others Dual Medium, which results in not all learners getting accepted into their school of choice because of the language of instruction.

4.7   CONCLUSION

In this chapter, the collected data submitted in accordance with thematic categorization, patterns and themes to relate to and highlight the theoretical framework adopted by the study. Subsequently, the data has been analysed to expound on the meanings of the school leadership ecosystem views on school

crisis leadership and how it exercises legal and policy power to sustain quality teaching and learning amidst the COVID-19 pandemic.

Fullan's 2002 Framework supports the findings of the study for the Leadership Model, which advocated that effective leadership is the solution for extensive reform in education. For school leaders to exert their efforts towards sustaining quality performance, they need to possess hope, enthusiasm and energy achieved by attaining moral purpose, understanding change, relationship building, knowledge creation and sharing and coherence making. Consequently, attaining and sustaining quality performance should be placed at the forefront, which leads to dealing better with law and policy and achieving better results. Subsequently, in Chapter 5, a discussion of the findings and their inferences was further presented for schools in the Western Cape.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDIES

5.1   INTRODUCTION

All data collected were presented in thematic categories and analysed in the previous chapter. Section 3.8 expounded that thematic analysis is a qualitative data analysis technique that entails searching a data set to identify, analyse, and report recurring patterns. The code system is a method of describing data, but it also requires interpretation to select codes and construct themes (Kiger & Varpio, 2020:2). This chapter presents a summary of every chapters key issue. Thereafter, the study conclusions are presented. Moreover, the researcher presents the claims made for each research question based on the findings. Recommendations and limitations of the study will also be expanded on. The findings and conclusions were drawn from an analysis of the responses to interview questions, observations, and the Schools Performance Reports 2019-2020.

For the intent of this research, the researcher selected schools that the Metro South Education District directs in the Western Cape. The three secondary schools selected are township schools and were chosen based on their academic performance. Information was obtained from the interviews with participants, observations, and the Department of Basic Education School Performance Reports about each school's performance. Additionally, pseudonyms were employed to differentiate between participants, namely by referring to Principals as P1S1; P2S2; P3S3; Deputy Principals were referred to as DP1S1; DP2S2; DP3S3, Heads of Department were referred to as HOD1S1; HOD2S1, HOD3S3 and Teachers were referred to as ST1S1, ST2S1, ST3S2, ST4S2, ST5S3 and ST6S3 (see Table 3.1, in Chapter 3 for details). Furthermore, all the themes emerged from the sub-questions that drove this study (see section 1.5.2, in Chapter 1).

5.2   SUMMARY OF THEMES

5.2.1   Theme 1: Concept of leadership power

The findings revealed that the involvement of all personnel in decision-making and relationship-building are compasses that steer the school. All individuals must share this within a school. Thus, the literature review highlighted Lunenburg's (2011) leadership cycle because leadership power has been linked to adapting to change. Additionally, the literature review revealed that Zammit *et al.* (2007) viewed leadership power in schools as a provider of direction, comprised of a means of impact with intention, and value-based and goal-driven.

Participants revealed the following with regard to leadership power,

P1S1: *"I believe in leaders inspiring, so uhm, leaders do have powers depending on how you use it, but me personally do not believe in coming down on people. I believe in involving in people in the decisions that is being made at school."*

P2S2: *"Leadership is about relationship. in other words, you have to have relationships with your staff, and that will cascade down to trust and, uh, people willing to work."*

The theoretical framework confirms these findings as, according to Fullan (2002), that relationship building and moral purpose are among the essential features for leaders to possess to improve or sustain academic performance.

As influential leaders, participants stated that principals must ensure guidance and integrity are maintained and managed effectively to contribute to improving the school's academic performance. P3S3 pointed out *"leadership power, I'm going to say that is where you guide people, it is a guidance basically."*

Additionally, DP1S1 expressed *"It comes down to integrity. But the power of leadership is by tactically showing, by practically doing it. And then people will follow you."*

Thus, good leaders of power ensure that what is supposedly done is practised by showing and doing.

The key to effective use of leadership power is implementing policies and daily management of the school by understanding the job responsibilities to guarantee that work gets done. DP2S2 confirmed this by stating, *"to implement the policies and uh, the day-to-day work that we have to do in school, that is what leadership is for me."*

Furthermore, DP3S3 mentioned,

> I need to understand that I have certain things to do in this position. And at all times, I need to remember that I need to fulfil the duties of this position, and it should be about who is in that position; it is about what is the duties of the person in that position. If you do not feel like that, you simply cannot do this job.

Van Dijke (2020) affirmed that leadership power motivates followers to contribute to the collective. Additionally, Lunenburg (2012) coined leadership power as the ability to influence others. All participants complimented the concept well in their understanding of leadership power; however, they did give differing responses, thus adding to the knowledge gap of leadership power in education, based on the sub-question: *What are secondary school principals' understanding of leadership power?*

5.2.2   Theme 2: Agility during COVID-19

Agility is a concept that cannot be readily welcomed, and it was no different during the pandemic. The findings disclosed that uncertainty was the order of the day, throughout the pandemic, because of the changing policies and protocols and policymakers being out of touch with the realities schools encountered. Participants pointed out that: Participants viewed agility during COVID-19 as a stressful period for all spheres of the school community, teachers, learners, and parents. However, to an extent, WhatsApp was regarded as the most extensive and successful means of communication between schools and learners, but not everyone had access to crucial information provided by the school. P1S1 illustrated this,

We had to move away from the traditional teaching by using other resources, and one of the best resources that they could use was to send voice notes or recordings via WhatsApp to the learners because WhatsApp don't use such a lot a data, then going now our community is now well off.

However, DP3S3 disagreed by stating, *"I would say that the big negative out of this entire experience was the constant access that everybody has to you all of a sudden, so in terms of the learners and parents, you know WhatsApp groups became even bigger than it used to be, so uhm, everyone has access to me 24 hours a day."*

According to Misra and Pretorius (2021), agility is a trait that all principals need to possess to lead successfully during times of crisis. Thus, Buffone (2021) suggested five elements that could be considered to get through the pandemic (see 2.6). All participants confirmed that one of the most significant changes they adopted is the rotational systems (see 2.5.1) to teaching and learning during the pandemic; however, the Grade 12's was at school every day, and DP2S2 revealed that "Our strategy was in during COVID to not keep our grade 12 learners at home, so they were basically here on a day-to-day basis."

The findings further revealed that all school leaders possessed agility, as they produced means to bridge the gap COVID-19 presented by recording lessons and sending them to learners, providing them with the resources WCED distributed. Subsequently, the issue regarding data arose. Schools resorted to printing content and distributing it on different days to various grades, but this also presented a problem where schools were using too much paper, resulting in a shortage of paper. The findings presented newer strategies that were deemed effective, especially during the pandemic:

DP3S3: *"I think the support that we got in terms of the lessons, this WCED lessons, I think that was definitely a positive."*

P1S1: *"We needed to liaise a lot with the parents to make sure that they at home, to ensure that the children are busy doing their work."*

The findings revealed that emotional and psychological support was the most significant change that needed attention, as schools were unprepared to deal with the emotional and psychological effects the pandemic had on learners. P2S2 referred to the pandemic as a "horror movie" as schools were not developed and skilled in supporting the learners. P1S1 further pointed out, *"There wasn't enough counselling given to those learners who lost family members or friends during COVID."*

ST5S3 shared that,

> The learner would open up, and it is so; it is not just about schoolwork here at this school. So, you know, we can't educate a hungry child, number 1. We cannot educate a traumatised child, so the end of the day, we are not teachers; we are pastors, we are counsellors, we are social workers, we are everything here. So, that is also a strain, even before COVID, a strain on us, emotionally, because you must learn how to break off the school as you are driving because you cannot bring whatever you saw or happened here to your house, to your precious children at home. You know, you must know how to. I had to learn that because somehow, I went home with anger and whatever I had or went through the day, and then so I think that is the bad thing of the school if you don't know how to cut yourself off, it was traumatising to you.

In line with the literature review, the finding is confirmed by Buffone (2021), who provided five agreeable features that deserve consideration, namely: 1) focusing on strategic objectives in adjusted measure; 2) interfacing through building connections; 3) proactivity for successful change management; 4) skills to optimise resources over time and 5) developing systemness throughout the organisation. However, participants adopted aspects of the five features, leading to the knowledge gap and confirmed that Buffone's (2021) proposal is valid. Therefore, sub-question 3: *What are the experiences of school leadership systems about making changes in teaching and learning during the crisis?* Bridges the knowledge gap that deduced the need for psychological assistance for teachers and learners, now more than ever.

5.2.3 Theme 3: Legal and policy power possessed by school leadership during times of crisis

It became apparent that leadership in schools do not possess any legal and policy power in making changes, apart from implementing what is gazetted and communicated by the provincial department or the DBE. The participants revealed P1S1: *"Well, during times of crisis, you do not really have legal rights to make decisions."* Additionally, P3S3 pointed out, *"I have no power, no honestly what I do is, just follow."* However, P2S2 expressed, *" I stress this to everybody, you have to keep in line with South African Schools Act and all other legal entities."*

5.2.4 Theme 4: Using law and policies to develop crisis management plans

Based on the findings, it is evident that principals relied on the Department of Education for direction. However, this is due to school leadership's lack of exposure to crisis management and the skills needed to deal effectively.

P1S1 revealed that,

> During this period that was here, I needed to make sure that I know the policies I need to know the School's Act; it was like my little diary that I had to carry around with me to make sure that I do not go and make decisions that is contradicting to the School's Act. Some of the policies had to change had to be adjusted so that it makes provision for COVID.

P2S2: *"I stress this to everybody, you keep in line with the South African Schools Act, all other legal entities. So, in other words, I follow the rules that needs to be followed."* P3S3: *"Here, we have all the policies in place. Sometimes, it is just on paper, and it does not really work."*

Additionally, P3S3 pointed out "if there's something on the news, they say school is starting that time or we only going till that time, and so on, I do not follow what they say, I wait until I get a letter, an official letter from WCED, then only I implement."

DP1S1 expressed the following when asked about the use of law and policies to develop plans for crisis management,

> Policies are created by people, by humans in management positions, in leadership positions. So, that is only a policy, that is a policy I see as an idea, a good idea, of promoting something, according to them, which is good for the rest of the population. To develop plans for crisis management. You just have to work within those two. Within this ambit, within the law, and within the idea within in the policy, to develop and to try and uh, solve that problem or crisis and go strict according to the law, but like I said, a policy is only there, is only like a guide man, it is an idea, it is a guide, you use that policy within your context, and you still try and follow the law.

DP2S2 emphasised that,

> Our biggest law at school is obviously the South African Schools Act. And the South African Schools Act are very clear in terms of what is our roles and responsibilities. And most of the things that we exercise and do is according to the South African Schools Act. In the beginning, I said we had very little legal power, expect that, uh, it was forced upon us by the education department, remember they came out with a number of protocols that we had to follow, and it was forced upon us, but because of our commitment.

DP3S3 highlighted a different opinion by stating that,

> Myself, together with the principal and the SGB, are responsible for formulating policies, so I do have power in that regard, but the policy must obviously be in line with the national policy. So, it can be adapted to our context, I do have power to change or modify or to development new policies in line with the national policy guidelines.

Moreover, P2S2 additionally revealed that, *"Every day is a crisis management."*

The *South African Schools Act* was deemed the most important framework to refer to when crises arise. Le Roux (2012) referred to the *South African Schools Act* as a guide for principals to establish their school responsibilities and function.

Policies are ever-changing, and all personnel within education should be knowledgeable about changes in education. Thus, schools must conform to policy guidelines to promote equity and redress schools (Engelbrecht *et al.*, 2016:521). However, if principals abide by policy legally to promote equality in schools, is it true that the policies were created with disadvantaged communities in mind? Thus, DP1S1 revealed that,

> The policymakers, I have a problem with that. Up there, right up, ministerial. Because they do not know what happening on the group, they not in touch with what is happening, they make policies and then it is filtered down, but it did not work for our schools.

P2S2 further pointed out, "It was nerve wrecking, all the rules and you know the new rules, I call instructions from the top. It just came upon us, and it's almost like you did double work."

Contrary to this, therefore, P1S1 alluded *"Some of the policies had to change, had to be adjusted so that it makes provision for COVID."* The findings reveal that there were inequalities in the policies enforced and that school leadership was not adequately skilled and exposed to crisis management before and during the pandemic, therefore sub-question 2: *"How does school leadership use law and policy power to develop crisis management plans for school performance sustainability?"* bridges the knowledge gap that exists regarding how school leadership uses law and policy power to develop plans for crisis management to sustain school performance.

5.2.5 Theme 5: Strategies used to sustain Grade 12 results during 2019-2020

All participating schools had strategies in place to sustain or improve their results. These strategies have been tried and tested and have been successful; however, underperforming schools are still struggling to improve their results. Some

strategies include a recovery period, where P1S1 explained, *"The recovery period where the teachers had to make sure that they do more work and maybe revision."*

After school classes, Saturday classes, Holiday classes, motivational speakers, power sessions and the last push. P2S2 explained the last push as, "That is at the end of the term, like this week when the teachers are busy with admin work, the grade 12's are here, last push."

Consequently, this bridges the gap in the literature on the strategies used during the pandemic to close the gap between teaching and learning COVID-19 provided; Landa *et al*. (2021) stated that literature regarding COVID-19 and its impact on education is still building.

5.4   RECOMMENDATIONS OF THIS STUDY

➢   The Department of Basic Education and the Western Cape Education Department should allow input from schools before enforcing laws and policies.

➢   The DBE and/ or WCED should consider providing the necessary support to principals, teachers, and learners as they are still dealing with the effects of COVID-19.

➢   The DBE and/ or WCED ought to aim to provide schools with a framework to work when crises arise and provide resources that are effective for those schools located in communities that are destitute with poverty, gangsterism, violence, substance abuse, domestic violence, and unemployment.

➢   Principals should view change positively, as it often is to the benefit of the entire school and allows for necessary changes to be implemented, as Theme 6 presented.

➢   Schools are encouraged to continue implementing and trying new strategies to sustain academic performance, as they provide a means of investigating its effectiveness.

➢ Principals should consider working more effectively within the law and policies to claim their power as leaders because they have more power than they think, which aligns with law and policy.

➢ Adopting Fullan's (2002) Framework for Leadership Model, where the moral purpose is understood and worked towards; understanding change, where everyone has the drive to want change and welcomes it constantly; relationship building, where team buildings and activities outside of the school community are encouraged to understand individuals and get to know them outside of the formal work setting; knowledge, this is where principals encourage themselves and others to continue learning and growing professionally within education and coherence making, this is where all the aforementioned correlate for the greater good of the school.

5.5   RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

As the research was limited to the area of Mitchell's Plain, the researcher recommends further study extend to other schools within the Metro South Education District as well as the greater Mitchell's Plain area to ascertain how secondary school leadership exercise legal and policy power during a crisis with the aim of sustaining quality performance in the Western Cape, Metro South Education District, amidst the COVID-19 global pandemic. Furthermore, it was recommended mixed-method research approach should be used to allow a large sample size and provide more participants with an opportunity to share their experiences.

5.6   CONCLUSION

The purpose of the study was to analyse and describe the meanings of the narrated experiences and views of principals in responding to crisis management of Grade 12 learner performance amidst the COVID-19 global pandemic. Likewise, to understand how secondary school leadership exercise legal and policy power to improve the quality of learner performance in the Western Cape, Metro South Education District amidst the COVID-19 pandemic and/or crisis.

Leadership power is pivotal to the education system, especially pre-COVID-19 and post-COVID-19. School leadership is at the centre of the school system as they are key personnel involved in law and policy compliance. It is essential that schools are given the guidance and support needed to foster a sense of leadership agility during the crisis, particularly COVID-19. Strong school leadership is generally about positioning the school for the future, supporting and empowering staff and learners in pursuing excellence in teaching and learning. Leadership in times of crisis is about dealing with events, emotions and consequences in the immediate and minimising the personal and organizational damage to the school and its community. School staff, learners and school leadership cannot use usual coping strategies effectively and experiences dysphoric effect, such as anxiety or panic (Auerbach & Kilmann, 1977; Baldwin, 1979; Caplan, 1964; Sandoval, 1987; Schwartz, 1971). The crisis reactions are common and do not, in themselves, signify psychopathology (Baldwin 1979). When viewed as a function of the individual, the event, and the environment, it is not surprising that various circumstances may be experienced as crises. It is common knowledge that legal and policy power bestowed on school leadership must invariably assist leaders and managers in responding to a crisis such as COVID-19 without delay. This study's findings reveal that school leadership lacked the legal and policy tools to respond to the crisis. It shows that the school leadership waited for the authorities to provide them with direct skills and policies to handle a crisis at their schools.

Additionally, the findings of this study further revealed that principals do not have leadership power to effect change at their schools. Therefore, in alignment with the main research question: *"How does secondary school leadership exercise legal and policy power during crisis with the aim of sustaining quality performance in the Western Cape, Metro South Education District, amidst the COVID-19 global pandemic?* It has been revealed that school leadership does not exercise their legal and policy to sustain quality performance due to school leadership not being exposed to crisis management and the skills needed to deal with the inevitable. Therefore, the objectives set out by this study have been achieved.

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APPENDIX A: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

UNISA | university of south africa

Contact person's name: Mr. Muhktar Jacobs

Telephone number:

Email address: 63285320@myllife.unisa.ac.za

The Principal

(School Name)

Request for permission to conduct research at ..., from ... to ...

Research Title: **SCHOOL LEADERSHIP AGILITY IN SOUTH AFRICAN SCHOOLS: SUSTAINING QUALITY PEFORMANCE IN TIMES OF CRISIS**

Dear Sir/ Madam,

I, Muhktar Jacobs, am doing research under the supervision of Professor J. Nyoni, a lecturer in the Department of Educational Leadership and Management towards a Master of Education degree at the University of South Africa. I am requesting for your permission to conduct a study at your school.

The purpose of the study is to analyse the experiences and views of principals in managing Grade 12 learner performance, amidst the COVID-19 global pandemic. Likewise, I wanted to understand how secondary school leadership exercise legal and policy power aimed at improving the quality of learner performance in the Western Cape, Metro South Education District amidst the COVID-19 crisis.

Your school has been selected to participate, as it falls under the Metro South Education District and due to my interest in the area that your school is located in.

The study will conduct one face-to-face interview session with the principal and deputy principal, one Head of Department and two post level 1 teachers from your school, as well as conducting an observation where the researcher will be a non-participant observer. The interview sessions will last for approximately 45-60 minutes in length for all participants, respectively.

The benefits of this study are to present findings that may be useful to all participants within the education sector, particularly principals, deputy principals, Heads of Department and teachers who might take the findings of this research towards improving Grade 12 academic performance. Significantly, the findings of this study could also be implemented at all schools within the Metro South Education District, to the best knowledge of the researcher, there has not been a similar study conducted in the Metro South Education District, particularly in Mitchell's Plain. In addition, this study could provide meaningful contributions to leadership and education, because of the limited research conducted on leadership in relation to COVID-19.

There are no foreseen risks in this study. The names of all participants will not appear in any publication resulting from the study. In addition, all contributions made by participants will be treated with a high level of privacy and confidentiality. However, with the permission of participant's, anonymous quotations may be used in this study. Furthermore, if participants wish to withdraw from the study, they will be informed that they are able to do so at any time.

The feedback procedure will entail issuing the research findings to you as a participating school and individual participants in the form of both hard and soft copies before and after the research findings have been finalised.

Yours sincerely,

Muhktar Jacobs (email: 63285320@mylife.unisa.ac.za)

The researcher

Prof J. Nyoni (telephone number: 0124294474, email: nyonij@unisa.ac.za)

The supervisor

APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE OF PRINCIPALS / DEPUTY PRINCIPALS

Interview Schedule for Principals or Deputy Principals

Introduction of the interview to all participants

Thank you for allowing this opportunity to interview you about how you exercise legal and policy power aimed at sustaining quality performance during COVID-19.

1. **How long have you been the principal?**

2. **What are your qualifications?**

3. **How old are you?**

4. **What would you say was the biggest challenge at your school during the COVID-19 pandemic?**

5. **What is your understanding of leadership power?** In the event that the principal fails to describe leadership power, the researcher will pose the following follow-up questions.

   Follow-up questions:

   5.1 What does leadership mean to you?

   5.2 How do you perceive power?

   5.3 What type of leader do you consider yourself as? The researcher will provide a guide: **Do you do as you are told, even though it goes against what you think is best for your school?** Depending on the response, the researcher might ask the principal to elaborate.

6. **How do you use law and policies to develop plans for crisis management?**

7. **Based on your 2019 and 2020 Grade 12 results, what do you think were some of the strategies you used that you continue to use and why? In addition, mention some of the strategies you used during that time, that you feel aren't or didn't work.**

8. **What is your experience about making changes in teaching and learning during the COVID-19 crisis?**

9. **What legal and policy power do you have in making decisions during times of crisis?**

10. **What would you say is the biggest difference academically between your school and another school in your vicinity?**

11. **Would you agree that schools located in the same vicinity are achieving vastly differing results? What do you think the reason for this is?**

12. **Is there anything else you would like to mention or elaborate on or need some clarity on?**

Thank you so much for your time and I truly appreciate your contribution to my research project.

APPENDIX C: OBSERVATION SCHEDULE OF PRINCIPALS / DEPUTY PRINCIPALS

Observation Schedule of Principals and/ or Deputy Principals

	ASSESSMENT COMPONENT	COMMENTS
1.	**School profile** • School infrastructure and resources • School discipline – Teachers - Learners	
2.	**Staff briefings** • How often do they occur and for how long? • What time does it start and end? • Is the principal present? What is he or she doing? • Participation and attendance of all staff • What is the main concerns being addressed? Is teaching and learning and academic performance being prioritised?	
3.	**Principals meeting with teachers** • What is being discussed? • Are academics prioritised? • Does the principals provide suggestions to questions and answer queries?	
4.	**Principals daily routine** • Principals movement around the school grounds	

		- Is the principals popping into classrooms? - How regularly does the principal do class visits? - Checking books and teachers portfolios	
5.	**Additional/ unforeseen occurrences** E.g. a problem that occurred or an angry parent.	

APPENDIX D: CONSENT FORM

I have read the information presented in the information letter about the study entitled: **SCHOOL LEADERSHIP AGILITY IN SOUTH AFRICAN SCHOOLS: SUSTAINING QUALITY PEFORMANCE IN TIMES OF CRISIS**. I have had the opportunity to ask any questions related to this study, to receive satisfactory answers to my questions, and add any additional details I wanted. I agree to have my interview audio recorded to ensure an accurate recording of my responses. I am also aware that extracts from the interview may be included in publications that 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 advising the researcher. With full knowledge of all aforementioned, I agree, of my own free will, to participate in this study.

Participant's name: ....

Participant's signature: ....

Researcher's name: Muhktar Jacobs ....

Researcher's signature: ....

Date: ....