Exploring the dynamics of chronic conflict in four selected schools in the Durban region

by

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DECLARATION

I, Shobana Mandraj declare that:

1) The research reported on in this thesis, except where otherwise indicated, is my original work.

2) This thesis has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university.

3) This thesis does not contain other persons' data, pictures, graphs or other information, unless specifically acknowledged as being sourced from other persons.

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   i. their words have been re-written but the general information attributed to them has been referenced;

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to:

The memory of my Mum, Mrs LAXMI MANDRAJ, who passed away
while I was completing this thesis, and to the memory of my late dad,
Mr BADRI MANDRAJ of Pietermaritzburg, whose passion for teaching and
learning instilled in me a thirst for knowledge which
I hope to eternally perpetuate.

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ABSTRACT

Using reflexive narrative and autoethnography, this study explores the nature and manifestation of 'chronic conflict' in school leadership. With autoethnography as a method in this study, the researcher employs a systematic self-reflective analysis in exploring her own life story within a sociocultural and historical context in which it occurred, alongside those of her colleagues. This approach challenges traditional ways of doing research and presents research as a socially conscious activity, the reflexive nature of which makes it both a process and product.

In presenting the rationale for the study, it is argued that educational leaders should become reflective practitioners since they engage with educational reform and find ways to facilitate and sustain school improvement.

The purpose of the study was to develop a deeper understanding of the phenomenon of conflict as experienced by school principals and educators during their interaction with staff and important stakeholders, like governing body members. The use of the term "chronic" in this thesis is a borrowing from a medical disease model where chronic conflict is regarded as an illness that develops slowly over time, producing symptoms that remain continuous or intermittent.

The research confines itself to a series of in-depth narrations by selected participants of four schools, two secondary and two primary where the narrators of each of these institutions presents a vivid account of recurring conflicts at their specific schools. The case study approach used in this study responds to the key questions of this study, namely, *what is the nature of chronic conflict at schools; how is chronic conflict manifested at schools, and why does chronic conflict manifest in the way it does at these schools?*

Complexity theory, one of the main theories to dominate the conflict theory landscape is used to underpin the observations and analysis of conflict in this study. This theory asserts that changes in any system are non-linear, unpredictable and the product of complex processes and multi-systems, which necessitates deep self-reflection, original strategy development and intervention for each conflict scenario.

The findings reflect that the manifestation of conflicts multiply in frequency and intensity which, over a prolonged period, "mastasizes" and forges an array of "intractable" consequences which contributes to the idea of chronicity.

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Prologue: Foregrounding the rationale

> *The White Rabbit put on his spectacles.*
> *"Where shall I begin, please your majesty?" he asked.*
> *"Begin at the beginning, "the king said, very gravely,*
> *"and go on till you come to the end: Then stop!"*
> *(Carroll, 1998: p.105)*

A researcher like me, involved in a reflexive narrative autoethnography, may find recollecting my beginnings quite a distant past from which to gather detail, yet simultaneously find that particular moments have so significantly punctuated my history that they have embedded themselves in my consciousness, and hence my perceptions.

In writing this thesis I reflect upon the 38 years of my professional life in education – my trajectory as a student, then a teacher, and as a Superintendent of Education (Management) within the Department of Education in KwaZulu-Natal. As an education manager, it is an almost daily occurrence that I intervene in some conflict or the other in the schools that I manage. Some of these conflicts are constant, and despite many attempts to remedy them, they seem to escalate, or break through the bandages we apply to the bruises. In attempting to understand the dynamics of chronic conflict at schools, I present a retrospective journey in this Prologue that reveals particular experiences of conflict from my early childhood that impinged upon how I regard conflict as well as deal with it. However, unlike Carroll's white rabbit it is difficult to ascribe an end to my story, as I still engage with schools, and such an engagement is dynamic and fluid, and so is the reflexive process that I use to understand it.

Lazaridou (2015) stated that educational leaders should become reflective practitioners since they engage with educational reform and find ways to facilitate and sustain school improvement. The reflexive journey of my study itself produced a conflict – was I to merely report on salient moments of conflict, or to also include, what later became obvious – the concept of self? It dawned on me that conflict, decision-making and the self are inextricably interwoven, and thus the reflexive process which I use in this study serves my intent well. Reflexivity as we know is described as the "ways in which a researcher's involvement with a particular study influences, act[s] upon and informs such research" (Cromby & Nightingale, 1999: p.228). Researchers

embark on regular efforts to consider their own thoughts and actions in the various contexts (Deborah et al., 2010). Reflexivity therefore is a researcher's on-going critical reflection of his or her own prejudices and on how such biases influence all stages of the research process (Deborah et al., 2010). As a researcher one becomes part of the society one studies and thus becomes closely involved in the research process. Thus, the reflexive self-study I engage with in this research, allows me a recollection of salient events in my biography, as well enables a critical self-awareness of my own practices. Thus, the study tends toward the use of a*utoethnography* as a method where systematic self-reflectivity is used to explore my own life story within the sociocultural and historical context in which it occurred (Maréchal, 2010; Ellis, 2003). It challenges that research can be done objectively and neutrally, presenting research as a socially conscious activity, the reflexive nature of which makes it both a process and product (Adams & Holman, 2008). Although it may appear contentious and dissident as a method, autoethnography emerges as a critical response to prescriptive ways of how research should be done, and recognizes how research is influenced by institutional requirements, funding, and personal circumstance (Tullis et al., 2009). It even critiques the traditional formats and structure of research presentation in terms of rigid headings like introduction, literature review, methodology, findings, and conclusion. In my writing, the reader will recognize certain normative expectations, but simultaneously I use the latitude allowed to an autoethnographer for a more flexible presentation while retaining rigour.

Reflexivity thus affords the researcher the opportunity to self-critique one's frame of reference, cultural biases and the emerging ethical issues (Deborah et al, 2010). In general, it refers to circular relationships between cause and effect and therefore includes both a subjective process of self-consciousness, enquiry and the study of social behaviour (Bourdieu et al., 1993). Likewise, Foucault (1984), argues that the social sciences, far from being objective, produces truth in their own mutually exclusive discourses where he states that man is both knowing the subject and the object of his own study. Influenced by the literature that dictates the significance of self-study as a reflexive process, particularly as an important contributor in the acquisition of a deeper understanding and insight into my own practice, I chose to embark on this journey of self-awareness, one that affords me the greater latitude to engage with my practice. It helped me to identify with issues that I am curious and passionate about, thus guiding me to 'practitioner-led',

context specific ideas for change and to explore ways to make that change happen (Mitchell & Weber, 2005).

Identity is a central concern in self-study of teaching practices (Loughran & Hamilton, 2016), and more especially of auto ethnography. This is often done in co-auto ethnography, through the narrative process (Lyons, 1998) and features when we make sense or interpret our very experiences by telling stories, either of ourselves or the other. Thus, my self-identity was imperative in this study since it impacted so profoundly on both my personal and professional experiences and which I believe has influenced my worldview. Further the decision to embark on a self-study permits me to gain a clearer understanding of who I am as a person and who my constituents are as 'learners'. It allows me to draw upon my personal and professional experiences and accommodates my inner sense making quest, permitting me to explore and examine my own practice thus becoming a very learner alongside my constituents. It further permits me to contribute to the knowledge base of teaching as a knower and not just as a receiver of knowledge, as Loughran & Russell (1997: p.15) states: "the gaze is neither entirely inward nor outward but on the space between the self and the practice engaged in". I have selected those experiences which have left indelible imprints on my mind and which I am convinced have influenced my later understanding and managing of conflict. These may be categorized as the external context, the familial (includes friends and associates) context, and the individual context.

The External Context

The Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), is a labour organisation often in the media, and reminds me of my early years in Pietermaritzburg, where, with my friends, I would spend weekends volunteering my service to the Federation of South African Trade Unions (FOSATU), under the leadership of Jay Naidoo. It was a trade union formed during South Africa's tumultuous political and social history. FOSATU focused on the workers' struggle whereby the worker was central, and workers' democracy and control were the core tenets upon which the Union was founded (Ulrich, 2009). FOSATU later merged with other unions to form COSATU, the largest trade union in South Africa with Jay Naidoo as its first General Secretary.

Pietermaritzburg is a city steeped in rich history and reminiscent of South Africa's colonial and apartheid past, a city which had a significant bearing on much of my lessons of life particularly in respect of dissent and conflict.

I spent all my school life in Pietermaritzburg, a city which was often referred to as a, "sleepy hollow" something which always goaded me as a youngster to becoming unnecessarily defensive. As I progressed through primary school, I learnt that the nickname of "sleepy hollow" was due to Pietermaritzburg's physical location which was in a deep valley surrounded by prominent and luscious hills stretching to the foothills of the Drakensburg Mountains. In the early years Pietermaritzburg was a serene and picturesque city, a city less inhabited and further characterised by many of its Victorian inspired streets, lined with Jacaranda trees and sidewalks paved with Azaleas and other seasonal petals and blooms. People were warm and hospitable in this relaxed city whilst entertainment and fun were generally home driven. Despite this seemingly less energetic and entertaining lifestyle, Pietermaritzburg always boasted its political and progressive culture. Today Pietermaritzburg which falls under the Msunduzi Municipality is the administrative capital of the Province of Kwa-Zulu-Natal and is distinguished by museums, historical routes and rich Victorian architecture, and a rapid urban expansion attributed to the introduction of the Reconstruction and Development programme (RDP) of South Africa in 1994 (Cilliers & Preiser, 2010: p.38). I grew up in a suburb called Raisethorpe, an established old suburb is situated some five kilometres from the city centre, less populated largely due to the lack of available vacant land.

Pietermaritzburg's history is profound, both politically and socially, and is punctuated with the influence of great icons: Mahatma Gandhi, Nelson Mandela, Alan Paton, Harry Gwala, Chota Motala, Phyllis Naidoo, individuals who impacted extensively and specifically on the city's political landscape and that of South Africa. Consequently, my growing up in Pietermaritzburg with parents that diligently served on the local civic, religious or political structures was a context that affected my own values and practices.

I vividly recall how as children we huddled around the glowing embers of our green and cream enamel coal stove in our cosy wood and iron home in the old Greytown Road, now called Chota

Motala Road of Raisethorpe, Pietermaritzburg. Dad would narrate riveting stories to the rest of us siblings seated around the fire, as we waited for Mum who was only assisted by the eldest of the siblings, Sister Sue, whose chore it was to set up the large six-seater dinner table. The stories were largely political in nature or scriptural generally based upon a strong code of morals, values and ethics. This indeed was a sense of burgeoning activism. I always sensed dad playing down his involvement as an activist, in particular a Unionist of the Leather Workers' Federation, under the stewardship of the late Dr Chota Motala. Motala was a prominent political and human rights activist responsible for reviving the Pietermaritzburg branch of the Natal Indian Congress (NIC) and who was later elected as the Chairman of the Pietermaritzburg Northern Branch of the African National Congress (ANC). With time our families became very close, and us children spent considerable time in each other's homes.

The Motala home during the dark days of apartheid was often a meeting place for many of South Africa's prominent political leaders including Nelson Mandela, South Africa's first democratic President. Implausible as it may seem, Dad informed us that Pietermaritzburg was also the city where the revered Mahatma Gandhi initially flexed his political muscle and commenced his enduring struggle against social injustices and oppression through non-violent methods (Reichardt, 1992). My father narrated how, in June 1893, a young lawyer, Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, had come from India to work in South Africa. On his way to Pretoria on work, in June 1893, Gandhi boarded a train in Durban where he was issued a first-class rail ticket. However, the objection of a white passenger to the presence of a 'coolie'[1] in the same carriage and Gandhi's subsequent refusal to move resulted in him been thrown off the train where he was forced to sleep overnight in the station's waiting room despite the bitter cold. It was at the Pietermaritzburg railway station that he made the critical decision to remain in South Africa and fight racial discrimination. Hence Gandhi's active non-violence, 'Satyagraha'[2]campaign commenced and his subsequent close association with Pietermaritzburg. In later years, the statue of Mahatma Gandhi who clearly introduced me to this concept of

[1] A 'coolie' during the 19th and early 20th century was a British term for a locally sourced unskilled labourer, mainly from India, for example, helpers carrying luggage in railway stations. It was used as a racial slur in Africa, particularly in South Africa for people of Indian descent.
[2] "Satyagraha" – loosely translated as "insistence on truth", is a philosophy or policy of passive non-violent resistance advocated by Mahatma Gandhi against British rule in India and political reform in South Africa.

omnipotent conflict which I only realized much later was erected at the station to commemorate his inhumane experience at the very site.

Likewise, the iconic Nelson Mandela shared a long and fond history with Pietermaritzburg and I like many others feel privileged to have been raised in a community that was leaps ahead in its progressive thinking particularly in the field of human rights, another considerable experience of emergent conflict which played a significant role in my unfolding understanding of this phenomenon. Mandela's close association with Pietermaritzburg and his profound influence on the history of South Africa led to the city's fathers' bestowing on him the Freedom of the City in 1997. This is what he had to say at that point, "I accept the Freedom you bestow on me with humility, knowing that through me, you are honouring the whole South African nation" (Mandela, 1997).

Dad informed us that as a regular visitor to Pietermaritzburg and long before his famous incarceration on Robben Island, Mandela became known as the "Black Pimpernel" because of his ability to evade the security police in various disguises. As mentioned earlier, he often stayed over at the home of Dr Chota Motala where most of the ANC meetings were held. During his keynote address at the 'All-In-Africa' conference held in the Plessislaer Arya Samaj Hall, in a suburb, some 15 kilometres from Raisethorpe, Mandela made the famous clarion call for a "non-racial, democratic constitution". This was to be his last speech before his arrest the following year in 1962 in the town of Howick, approximately 20 kilometres north of Pietermaritzburg. The arrest pronounced the onset of his infamous twenty-seven years of incarceration, many of which were spent on Robben Island. Today a monument has been erected at the very place of his arrest, called the Nelson Mandela Capture Site attracting tourists from far and wide.

Pietermaritzburg can also claim the rights to another world prominent icon – the visionary novelist, writer and politician – Alan Paton, a further influence in my experiences of early conflict. Born in Pietermaritzburg, Alan Paton drew attention to the plight of black South Africans through his world-renowned novel, 'Cry the Beloved Country', written in 1946 and set in the heart of this very city. Paton, a founder member of the then liberal party of South Africa was torn between being an author and politician. Recognized as a struggle veteran against

apartheid in South Africa, many of his papers, books and journals are archived in the Alan Paton Centre (APC) established in 1988, as documentation of his involvement and contribution to the history of South Africa's politics (Alan Paton Centre and Struggle Archives, 1998).

Living in the context of such history and being extensively exposed to individuals and families of some of South Africa's social and political legends, the particular conflicts associated with such contexts were indeed paradoxical privileges that overwhelmingly shaped my views and experiences of conflict which I shall expatiate later. I recollect my early childhood in a home that was relatively "peaceful", where differences between my parents were resolved in an amicable way, and a home in which no profanity or slang was permitted. Although both my parents had limited formal education, they were highly intelligent and actively involved in community and civic affairs, and my dad's counsel was often sought by family, friends and even strangers. We were a family of seven –three daughters, two sons and my parents.

My brothers were the younger siblings. The youngest brother Sen was born into a somewhat different era, a more globalised one, in which he held a different world view to the rest of us. My two older sisters, Sue and Ray were rather conventional and generally compliant, and I appeared to be less co-operative, which gradually increased as I grew older. Sen's presence shattered my notions of a "peaceful" home. He consistently questioned and argued about most things before complying. This was disrespectful to many and caused a disturbance at home. Although on hindsight I am appreciative of his questioning mind and critical thinking, such disparity was a potential conflict for me and ill prepared me for the realities of the big, brutal world which I stepped into as I grew older. Ironically Sen's behaviour and sometimes mine was frowned upon by the predominantly Indian community who largely viewed compliance as obedience, distinct traits of a conservative divided and generally subservient community, clearly perpetuated at that time by an apartheid Government. Hence my brother and I were often considered "misfits" by our conservative relatives.

Sen grew up in the Outcomes Based Education system era, an attempt by the Department of Education to cleanse the education system of its links to traditional apartheid education. It sought to link education more closely with the real world affording students "the necessary skills to

access, criticize, analyse and practically apply knowledge rather than simply absorb and repeat in parrot-fashion" (Botha, 2002), a system that attempted to give learners practical experiences to deal with issues in daily living, issues of community relations and equality. The OBE system however failed in many aspects and was heavily critiqued by many prominent researchers and educationists (Christie et al., 1998).

Sen readily appeared to be a product of the Outcome Based Education System, a more globalized worldview and attitude. My parents, particularly my mum, realised the individualisation of my brother's thinking and would therefore sometimes in the confines of our home openly admit that Sen was 'ahead of his time'. She would occasionally acknowledge that he was not disrespectful but rather "restless and quickly bored". I believe that my Dad too realised this but being a prominent civic and community leader who was often called on to make public addresses he had to live up to a certain unspoken code of righteousness, self-imposed I might add. Hence it might have been taboo to have a child of this highly respected man appearing to be wilfully disrespectful and argumentative.

I am convinced that my Dad endured huge inner conflicts; his very nature not allowing him to burden anyone with his own emotional turmoil, not even sharing that with my mother. My mother also played a significant role in the local and religious organisations of the Raisethorpe suburb of Pietermaritzburg. Both served actively on the Parent Associations of several primary schools, as well as and Raisethorpe High School my *alma mater*. In the early seventies, my mother together with a group of other active women formed the first local women's' religious organisation called the, 'Raisethorpe Stree Samaj' (Raisethorpe Women's Organisation). That was the turning point for many women in the Raisethorpe community as it suddenly offered these volunteers a recognition and acknowledgement that was until then the exclusive domain of their husbands and men. Upon reflection, I realise that this was a defining moment for my own gender activism which progressively developed and accentuated my later empowerment of individuals and females.

Primary school experiences

A retrospective analysis of my primary school years provides a flood of incidents that left indelible scars of conflict in my memory. My primary school, it must be mentioned, was situated about 500 metres from our home. Being in such close proximity to our house and having both parents serve on the School's Parent Teacher Association, our home was almost an extension of school with our teachers being solely reliant on my parents for many resources. These ranged from classroom aids for example, scissors, ice-cubes, including refreshments for educators on a chilly day which they openly requested, as well as for the visiting school circuit inspectors, a strange twist of fate given my present job.

It was in a specific classroom, room 2A of my primary school, that my experiences of abuse at the hands of an educator was first realized and certainly, not the 'haven', that our parents thought it was. A graphic image of a big, burly individual with thick wide lips, a huge nose, supporting thick black lensed glasses, a big mop of black unkempt curly hair drooping over his protruding ears fills my mind – the obnoxious Mr N who for punishment would plonk a big fat kiss on the lips of us girls and who would often cause me to hastily jerk my head to the right in avoidance of his lips, resulting in him biting my cheeks. Discussing his physical unwelcomed gestures with friends at the time in the hope of garnering their support left me lonely and conflicted and even at that tender age of six years, I knew I had to do something to arrest his sexual advances. Hence, I wrote an anonymous note and dropped it off in the Deputy Principal's office which I learnt the teacher soon realised was from me, and which resulted in him subsequently rewarding others in the class for charitable deeds and deliberately omitting me.

It later became clearer that he used coercive power instilling fear and intimidation of my class friends, to get them to comply. Studies reveal that sexual favouritism exists where a person who is in a position of authority tends to reward only those who respond to his or her sexual advances (Smit & Du Plessis, 2011). I tried further to expose Mr N's repulsive and unacceptable behaviour to a favourite female educator of mine. She said she believed me and supported my stance to expose him, but literately begged me to exclude her from any involvement stating that I was an academic achiever and that he would victimize me. Again, a further moment of intense inner

conflict left me convinced that my favourite teacher Miss D was instead the victim, based on the knowledge that she was engaged in an extra-marital affair with a senior member of management and one which Mr N was aware of. So, lo behold, a vicious cycle of wrong doings and perpetuated injustices, left me dispirited and fuelling my already conflicted self.

Another poignant moment of personal conflict in my primary years was my hostile encounter with my vernacular school teacher whom we referred to as "Guruji". All four of us siblings apart from Sen were compelled by our parents to attend Hindi vernacular classes throughout our primary school years. School being in such close proximity to home afforded us the privilege of dashing home, enjoying a quick meal, a change of clothes and a hasty return to Hindi school which we endured for two hours daily. As a tom-boy, I was more often in shorts than in dresses. Once in Hindi class I was requested to read a poem and as I stood up, my Guruji yelled at me to leave the class, and "dress up respectfully and return when properly dressed". My feeble whimpers of protest were met with a wailing of a "besharam", meaning "shameless" and a subsequent bellowing of "leave now" which left me utterly confused and very dejected. As I limped out of the class feeling despondent and rather bewildered, struggling to conceive my 'disrespectful attire' an overwhelming disappointment gripped my entire being, these moments of inner conflict were becoming an almost constant during these early years.

I galloped home to explain to my parents, believing that my mother would be at variance with such thinking, only to have her say that I should don a dress and return to class. My attempt to get a rational explanation was met with a rebuff and a curt response of, "Dad is so well known, everybody looks up to him, don't embarrass him". I strongly believe my mum deliberately suppressed her own thoughts and emotions on this issue. Years later I still fail to fathom the "disrespect" of what I considered my favourite and enchanting pink and white polka dot short set which I had worn to Hindi classes on that fateful summer afternoon.

Upon reflection and with hindsight, I recognise the early origins of my own experiences with conflict and a subsequent gaping void of inappropriate understanding and management. The next few years at primary school and vernacular classes were no different from my earlier experiences of conflict although they were of remarkably lesser intent, due to my increased maturity and

confidence. Research has shown that many countries where relationship-oriented values are high, people tend to avoid conflicts, for example, in a collectivist society such as China. The West too has conceded that avoiding conflict maybe one approach but hastened to add that is largely an ineffective one, whilst the Chinese as collectivists identify strategies within conflict avoidance to promote task productivity and strengthen relationship in a bid towards co-operative goals (Tjosvold, 1998).

My adolescent years at high school and later at university proved no less conflictual, and in even more complex situations. Whilst primary school was adjacent to home, high school was even closer, approximately 30 metres away and diagonally across our home with gates facing each other. Since my parents were members of the Parent Teacher Associations of both schools and members of the local community structures, it was an arduous task to engage in anything unconventional without being found out, if not by the school then certainly by neighbours and residents. My high school years were particularly memorable but not without drama and a litany of conflicts. To narrate them would require volumes of writing so I have chosen to restrict my choices to those which I believe manifested the highest degree of confusion and conflict for me personally and presented my parents with what they deemed acute embarrassment.

A distressing experience for us all was in my grade ten year, when I decided to show solidarity with my friends who travelled from the Central Business District of Pietermaritzburg to our high school Raisethorpe and who frequently had to tolerate an ineffective public transport system. And so, on that fateful winter morning, I left home early, secured a lift to the city centre and walked back five kilometres with my friends in protest, to arrive at school at ten o`clock in the morning. Standing in the main assembly arena, waiting to be addressed by the Principal, I huddled myself in the crowd, hoping to be concealed or so I thought until the Senior Management members arrived. Some twenty minutes later and after constant repetitions of, "unappreciative, ungrateful, agitators" by an already enraged headmaster, I heard the bellowing of my name followed by a, draconian, "get to the front, you live behind the school's lavatory, what are you doing with these rabble-rousers?" His disapproving glare accompanied by the usual, "do your parents know what you've done?" plunged me into my already rapidly filling pool of inner conflict.

Needless to say, all our parents were called to school and mine were increasingly apologetic to the school, at the same time unforgiving and intransigent to my explanations. What baffled me even years later was my father's unwillingness to relent, although he was a Unionist. My mum attributed his behaviour to his over- protectiveness of his family, which I struggled for a long time to understand, considering that as 'double-standards', although today with greater experience, maturity and wisdom I must confess, my view of his conduct then has deviated to a slightly more favourable understanding.

Similar experiences peppered my high school years, with me frequently battling to understand the rationale of adult intervention in situations that they believed they were managing or resolving. What exasperated the situation at high school was the presence of my older sister, by eighteen months and who was considered by all at school to be a model student. The raison d'^etre for such classification was her timid conservative nature and a general ready to please, unchallenging disposition.

On one occasion several of us Grade eleven, learners had decided to use our evening extra tuition classes to increase our political awareness. Pietermaritzburg, unlike other cities in Kwa-Zulu Natal specifically and South Africa generally and as already mentioned was considered a hot bed politically, giving birth and experience to many of South Africa's political veterans in the height of South Africa's struggle for liberation from a racially segregated and oppressive system of Government. Hence growing up in such an environment and having close personal relationships with such families afforded many of us students at the time the privilege of becoming politically astute and active. Hence often on the pretext of attending extra tuition classes in the evenings a group of some fifteen of us learners utilized the opportunity to sharpen our political conscientiousness. On one such occasion we used the opportunity to intimidate certain educators whom we knew where reactionaries and very supportive of the South African Government. What often unnerved me during those activities was the presence of my sister who always attempted to restrict my activities causing us to be in constant conflict, and often threatening to expose me to our parents.

Of greater concern were the frequent attempts of her favourite teachers to interrogate her and a few other students of similar disposition to reveal all. My fear and conflict arose through the notion that my sister was not strong enough and that she would succumb to those teachers and implicate me in having a sister who would be labelled an "informer", a taboo in progressive circles. Her ability to withstand the barrage of questions with constant repetitions of "I don't know", "I'm not sure" however, convinced me of the strong values of trust and support that our parents had instilled in us. Her chosen silence earned her a new respect from my politically active friends and fortunately those teachers were far too short sighted to discern her selective remembrance.

University life later was far less stressful than that of high school based on a growing sense of independence and maturity amongst us students. Further, at university I drifted, like many others towards the camp of politically active students. Living at the university residence allowed me to conceal from my parents the many political programmes that my friends and I were engaged in. This continued until three of my very close friends were arrested and my best friend and I were forced out of the University residence. Whilst this was an unduly pressurized period of my university life, it was by comparison, far less traumatic than living the lie I did when returning home to Pietermaritzburg fortnightly and pretending to be still residing at the university residence.

The truth about lying is that it is far more complex and convoluted than being truthful and can often leave one with acute pangs of guilt and discomfort particularly when it concerns loved ones. It is therefore not surprising that research also confirms that the closer we are to people, the more likely it becomes that the lies we tell then are usually altruistic ones. Paulo's studies (1998), show that most liars generally remain conflicted about their behaviour and "not entirely, at ease with their deceptions". He goes further to explain why lies are more likely to be told over the telephone which allows for anonymity rather than a face-to-face contact.

Being a student activist at university at the height of South Africa's smouldering youth uprisings, for example, the local Student Representative Council boycotts, the historical 1976 Soweto student unrests amongst others presented its own inventory of conflicts for me as an individual

particularly when having to live virtually two lives, an energetic, subversive politically active, sometimes dangerous one at university level and then resorting to a more sublime, somewhat routine, compliant life when returning home over specific weekends. With greater involvement and increased activism at university, I was steadily outgrowing the regular scheduled, routine life of home which accentuated my anxiety and discomfort because of my sprouting inner conflict. I found myself often at loggerheads with my parents and siblings, arguing over the minutes of issues, and being frequently defensive. Whilst I understood my outbursts perfectly well, I had limited understanding of managing or coping with my conflicts.

The most unfavourable of these experiences was having relatives visit our home over the weekends, visits which I was convinced was no coincidence but rather to interrogate me about my "progress" at university, not as much academic as political. I had a keen sense that many of these relatives had known of our activism at university and where in some ways alerting my parents. Hence their visits I believe, where agenda driven, based on their preconceived attitudes. Conflictive attitudes are closely related to conflictive situations and behaviour. Mitchell defines them as 'common patterns of expectations, emotional orientation and perception that accompany involvement in a conflict situation' (1981, p.28). My frequent avoidance of them often resulted in cacophonous dialogue with my parents once they had left and with my Mum becoming melodramatic and Dad launching me on a guilt trip.

Most studies reveal that conflict is inevitable in any interpersonal relationship and can be a very positive experience if managed properly and that the ability to manage conflict is probably one of the most essential social skills an individual ought to learn. However, many of us were raised with the notion that conflict is something to be avoided and is regarded as a sign of failure. Being the daughter of a prominent member of the local civic structures did in no way assist my cause. I struggled to understand and reconcile my parents' deep understanding of the conflict and challenges of outsiders and my father's dexterity in resolving their complex situations, yet at the same time my parents' failure to grasp my struggles and conflicts. Research shows that as individuals we learn to see the world in diverse ways about what's best for us and what's best for the group and which signals that change is necessary and possible (Coleman, 2003).

Wafting between my academic and political life at university, I nevertheless successfully graduated as an educator, in absentia of course. As activists we had embarked on a boycott of all graduation ceremonies as a symbol of our non-alliance of the University's administration, which exercised absolute control over all student affairs. This we executed successfully, however with grave consequences, like being hounded in all our movements and activities on and outside campus.

What followed having completed my initial university studies was another intriguing experience, an irony of sorts. I was appointed as an educator to my *alma mater* Raisethorpe High school in Pietermaritzburg! I had applied for teaching posts in the last year of university for areas outside of Pietermaritzburg, including Durban. Raisethorpe High School was not on my horizon of aspirations and therefore was excluded from my application schedule. I did not want to teach where my teachers were still teaching, as well as return to my "backyard", a phrase which still unpleasantly resounded in my ears, from the severe chastising by my former school Principal during my school days of activism. Notwithstanding the above, I attempted to reconcile with my new work environment. Admittedly it was challenging, especially in the first few months and with a few senior, conservative educators who had taught me and had often regarded me as a provocateur. It was blatant that these educators were experiencing immense difficulty, their own inner conflicts in accepting me as an equal educator.

Despite my frequent nonchalant shrugs, the staffroom where the females sat had become increasingly lonely. And so, I was naturally drawn to the males' tables, an activity which a few females also found irksome. It was therefore not uncommon for me to saunter back to my classroom during intervals, seeking solace in the company of some of my learners who would occasionally drop by to chat.

Despite my initial reservations of being back at my former high school, I was undoubtedly later well received by most of the teachers generally, particularly my teacher of English Mr AB, who was then Head of Department, and was well acquainted with my flair for languages. What I did not account for in the later years was that after successfully grooming my high achievers to the top matriculation class, they would be taken from me and handed to some other teacher with the

excuse that I was still young and energetic, something which I objected to. However, I soon settled into my teaching and the teaching of English Literature became a mutual gratification for my students and me. It allowed us freedom of expression, and my students distinctly elucidated their thoughts, often challenging the opinions of poets, authors and even mine, much to my delight.

Teaching English was an enviable welcome with artistic poetry writings keeping both my learners and myself enthralled and removed from the acerbity of the real world. The five to six-year age gap between the senior learners and myself contributed tremendously to our understanding of one another's world views and mutual rapport. Diametrically opposed, was my agony in the staff room, staff meetings and other similar engagements where I had to endure tortuous mundane, insipid, platitudinous conversations. My intermittent comments and interjections into the discourses were regarded as controversial especially if I disagreed with the general thinking. In one instance, a learner was suspected of being a supplier of cigarettes, and both Mrs G and Mrs D felt that he should be removed from the class, and have corporal punishment administered if necessary, until such time that he admitted to his offence, and further that his parents should be informed immediately. I questioned their evidence, challenging the significance of removing him from the classroom and denying him tuition – a situation that resulted in my becoming the offender. Hence it was not uncommon for similar experiences of conflict to allure me back to my classroom where I began to spend an increasingly greater amount of time. It was during this period that South African students were at the threshold of experiencing political awareness, having emerged from the recent Soweto uprising.

With heightened media coverage and a tense atmosphere, almost everybody was whispering in undertones and questioning the recent happenings, and so were my critical thinking learners. Developing their young minds towards critical thinking was abundantly rewarding and so naturally the more astute learners hastily picked up on the injustices of the time. In my eagerness to seize such opportunities, I encouraged their thinking and questioning and imbued their mind with basic human rights issues. I had no reservations about discussing the history of the Soweto student action, the learners' protest against the Afrikaans language as a medium of instruction in local schools and the ensuing police brutality. Afrikaans as the language of the oppressor during

the politics of the time became the focus of the discussion**.** A few learners extended their thirst for related knowledge to the lessons of a few other teachers, questioning their views about student politics.

Needless to say, the lessons of 'critical thinking' spread like wildfire. Teachers of History and Afrikaans felt particularly peeved and a furore broke out in both the staffroom and the headmaster's office to which I was hauled a few days later and incriminated as a rabble-rouser. My vehement attempts to explain my understanding of education was thwarted with wild accusations of incitement and castigation and set me for a while on a trail of being closely monitored and supervised in terms of my relationship with senior students.

The ensuing conflicts between certain colleagues and me, including "friends" as well as those between the conservative teachers and my learners astounded me. The intensity sometimes led to self-doubt and questioning of my own intention and my identity, causing me to become increasingly conflicted. As the year ensued, my saving grace was the consistently excellent academic performance of my learners which subsequently confounded the Principal and certain members of staff, especially when I was appointed as a sub-examiner of English in my second year of teaching, something unheard of at the time. This earned me considerable respect of many colleagues as well as the head of my department.

My later years were less troubled as individuals appeared to have accepted 'who I was' or perhaps wilfully chose to ignore me, in the hope that I would mature, and would mend my ways (as I found out later). I found it increasingly difficult to accept the obstinacy of colleagues in recognising the importance of developing critical thinkers, despite my numerous attempts to explain. Clearly South Africa's apartheid past had so successfully indoctrinated peoples' thought processing that they would 'shut down' with incredible ease and total indifference, a situation which I had immeasurable difficulty in digesting. According to Beyer (1995), critical thinking refers to the ability to make clear, rational judgements and well thought out ideas, a facet my colleagues appeared to lack. It was moments such as these that troubled my own thinking, and which sometimes caused me to question my practice as an educator. These conflicting moments disturbed my confidence and sometimes resulted in personal instances of

self-doubt. I believe this was the surreptitious entry of conflict into both my personal and professional space.

In my current space as Superintendent of Education my work continues to be peppered with dealing with daily conflicts, a situation that made me delve into a deep reflection of my own conflicts in the past and question my own role in the ensuing conflicts that are part of my job. In my daily work, conflicts have so many different natures – some conflicts at schools faced by principals and stakeholders are difficult to resolve, others simmer for ages, some appear to have temporary reprieve, only to rear again when least expected. These conflicts that appear not to have rapid resolution I have called *chronic* conflicts; borrowing from a medical model of disease that describes ailments that are often difficult to cure, often lingering or intermittent. The conflict in the contexts of the schools researched in this study is shown to be endemic.

This retrospective understanding of conflict also urges me to understand my current involvement with the chronic conflicts that I deal with. Being in the situation may not always provide me with the appropriate distance from which to view the conflicts and develop a solution. In many ways this biographic approach has fashioned how this thesis would be approached. I question whether my closeness or my lack of understanding of those dynamics of conflict may have also made me complicit in the problem. The trajectory I describe is a retrospective look at conflict points in my life – reasons for which may not have been clear then. Thus, this self-study affords me the opportunity of an inward glance, and a need for adjusting and improving my thinking and practice.

Chapter One: Introduction
Conflict: A Multidimensional Concept

1.1   Introduction: describing the problem

In this Chapter, I describe the idea of conflict and delimit the context in which the research is located. This is followed by a discussion of the rationale for my study which has already been explained in detail in the Prologue. I further provide an explanation of autoethnography as my main research framework which allows me to focus on my leadership practice reflexively within the varied and continuous experiences of conflict at selected schools. I look at the conflict and try to understand what is occurring, and at the same time I stand apart from myself as an external observer and look at what I am thinking, and how I am viewing the conflict situation as it presents itself before me. I then clarify key concepts and explain the key questions which forms the bases of the phenomenon of the study, focusing on the dynamics of 'chronic conflict'. This chapter provides an outline of the thesis.

Perhaps one of the most enduring conflicts, as well as bewildering in its complexity for me, is the Arab-Israeli conflict that has existed for more than sixty-five years. The chronicity of such violence in a period of our history marked by greater democratic and human rights is a stark reminder of the fragility of peace. Conflict is a multidimensional concept and may manifest in diverse ways. Attempts to understand conflict have ranged from philosophical ruminations that all things strive to become manifest and therefore produce discord, or as social behaviour where individuals or groups attempt to get something that both cannot have. Conflict is also regarded as a potentiality or a condition, as a structure or a manifestation, as an event, consequence or process (Rummel, 1976). He recommended that conflict exists on multi-levels – from global conflicts that dominate the news daily (like the Arab-Israeli conflict) or to small scale domestic or personal conflicts. In South Africa, the conflicts of our apartheid past, continuing political violence, service delivery and student protests, as well as violent crimes bring the reality of conflict closer home. On whatever level they exist, conflicts have the potential to cause irreparable physical and psychological devastation, particularly if the conflicts are unending, or

chronic. Jacoby (2013) asserts that throughout history conflict has expressed itself through physical force and violence.

D'Oosterlinck, and Broekoert (2003) regard conflict as an essential and inevitable human phenomenon since people have different preferences they will disagree. Jordaan (2012) concurs with this assertion but also declares that it is the inability to deal constructively with differences in the diverse contexts (personal, political or organizational) that produced the escalation of conflict. The word *conflict* however, appears to describe any situation in which individuals feel their physical, material or psychological interests are threatened by others, (Merriam-Webster, 2014), and further can arise in any context where people interact with one another. The notions of peace are bound to the understanding of conflict, and although knowledge alone is insufficient in ending conflicts, it does appear as an important precursor to finding a solution (Vásquez, 2000).

In this study of conflict, my research is confined to exploring conflict in a local context. The purpose of undertaking this study is to explore the nature and manifestation of 'chronic conflict' and to develop a deeper understanding of this phenomenon as experienced by school principals and educators during their interaction with staff and important stakeholders, like governing body members. The research confines itself to a series of in-depth narrations by selected participants of four schools, two secondary and two primary where the narrators of each of these institutions presents a vivid account of recurring conflicts at their specific schools. These are conflicts which, over a prolonged period, multiply in frequency and intensity bringing with it an array of consequences, the analysis of which attempts to respond to the key questions of this study, namely, *what is the nature of chronic conflict at schools; how is chronic conflict manifested at schools, and why does chronic conflict manifest in the way it does at these schools?* This chapter orientates the reader to the study and to the specific form of this thesis.

Viewing conflict reflexively through personal lenses, it appears as a feature of what and who I am. The experiences of conflict as described in the *Prologue* of this dissertation begins at the tender phase of my primary schooling where I had little knowledge or understanding of this corrosive phenomenon, and which I realise now, if not captured timeously may become intrusive

and impactful on one's understanding and coping later in one's life. With the increasing demands on schools and school principals, whether these are demands of curriculum, governance and management, leadership, school finances, teaching and learning; discipline or time management; almost all these inevitably produce a web of conflict which often indicates that leadership is ill-equipped to cope with it. Hence resultant conflict, if not nipped in the bud, which is often the case, continues incessantly, becomes compounded and gives rise to chronic conflict.

In this research, I share my subjective experiences of chronic conflict encountered in the schools under my supervision. The profile of my emerging personal conflict has been described in my *Prologue*. I use an autoethnographic stance which allows me to focus on my leadership practice reflexively on the varied and continuous experiences of conflict at the selected schools, mindful of the academic requirements of this undertaking. This reflexivity vacillates between the external conflict as observed, and the internal conflict as observer – in other words, as a central character in dealing with work conflict, I look at the conflict and try to understand what is occurring, and at the same time, I stand apart from myself as an external observer and look at what I am thinking, and how I am viewing the conflict situation that is presenting itself before me. This would be more clearly illustrated in the later chapters of the study. To give more credence to my methodological stance, I explain some of the salient principles of autoethnography in the next section.

1.2   Autoethnography

Autoethnography is a method where a researcher employs a systematic self-reflective analysis in exploring her own life story within a sociocultural and historical context in which it occurred (Ellis, 2003). It challenges traditional ways of doing research and presents research as a socially conscious activity, the reflexive nature of which makes it both a process and product (Adams & Holman, 2008). Using research, writing and story forms, it has gained ground as a qualitative method within a diverse range of disciplines from Social studies, Education, English literature, Art, and Business Studies (Maréchal, 2010; Ellis, 2003). Contentions do exist about its definitions as well as its use, but autoethnography emerges as a critical response to prescriptive

ways of how research should be done, and recognizes how research is influenced by institutional requirements, funding, and personal circumstance (Tullis et al., 2009).

It even critiques how studies are constructed in rigid ways (like structuring it according to introduction, literature review, methodology, findings, and conclusion). In my writing, the reader will recognize certain normative expectations, but simultaneously I use the latitude allowed to an autoethnographer for a more flexible presentation while retaining rigour. Autoethnography also critiques the claim that research can be done objectively and neutrally. Thus, rather than assuming that subjectivity and researcher's influence do not exist, autoethnography embraces and emphasizes it (Ellis, 2003).

I find it logical to understand that the realities of people's lived experience do not follow the supposed clinical objectivity of rigid research methods. People's lives follow uneven trajectories, and I assert that it makes more sense to engage with a methodology that mirrors the realities of the subject, in this case, my own life, and specifically my experience with conflict that I had to address in the work environment as an education manager. Therefore, as an autoethnographer I embed in my research and writing my personal social and cultural beliefs, practices and experience to write about particular realisations and reflections that have left indelible impressions upon me. However, such stories are not whimsically written, but are meant to be analysed by the theoretical and methodological rigour of the social sciences and weighed against claims made by existing research (Denzin et al., 2018), which distinguishes it from writing just an ordinary autobiography or story.

1.3   An annotated literature review

Conflict occurs on several levels: from global, national, to local. It also occurs in diverse contexts – institutional, corporate, individual, and in the case of this study, at school level. In the review of literature some salient components of conflict and its dimensions are interrogated to provide a background to the dynamics of conflict and understanding of why conflictive behaviour arises circumstances. The concept of chronicity is introduced to describe long and continuous violence with no signs of abating, a concept used to describe the conflict in the context of this research at school level. On a global level, the chronicity of violence is evident in

such long-standing wars like the Arab Israeli conflict (Morris, 1997), which began in the late nineteenth century, but with much longer religious and historical roots. Several analyses have been undertaken to understand the chronicity of such violence (Jacoby et al., 2013). Using such studies, the parallels between international conflicts and incidents of inter-racial and political violence in South Africa, though on different scales, provide a reminder of the fickleness of peace.

A review of literature for this study reveals the concept of conflict is commonly understood as violence or tension between groups, often political in nature (Kerzner, 1998), but also reveals a dearth of information on "chronic conflict" at the school level both nationally and internationally, hence I navigate towards more general ideas of conflict. Conflict may also be viewed as an essential and unavoidable human phenomenon because where there is human interaction there is a likelihood of personal likes and dislikes. Conflict is therefore a condition where the concerns of two interdependent parties appear to be incompatible (Van Schaik, 2004). Such agreements and disagreements among individuals and groups lead them to conflicts (D'Oosterlinck & Broekoert, 2003). At the same time, conflict can have detrimental effects in an organisation. It may be harmful to individuals, rivalries and the organisation itself if not identified at an early stage, a scenario revealed in this study

Jordaan (2012) asserts that conflict like all other daily experiences is an inescapable and potentially significant part of human existence. Yet most people are ill-equipped to deal constructively with differences, whether in the personal, political or organisational context. Although the word 'conflict' is often negatively connoted, this is not always the case. Disagreements in team tasks, or on procedures or methods, may prove constructive as it will enable more critical thought, thereby improving decisions and enriching the discussion. Conflict is often seen as an expression of hostility, antagonism and misunderstanding between staff members or individuals, usually due to poor communication. Hartwick et al. (2004) views conflict as a frequent occurrence in organisations affecting individuals, processes and outcomes. Some researchers argue that conflict is a fact of life and not necessarily a terrible thing (Bennett, 2014).

The general idea of conflict however, appears as tension between or among individuals when they feel their physical, material or psychological interests are threatened by the actions of others, or due to conflicting demands (Dolgopol & Gardam, 2006). Several models of conflict will be interrogated with a view to understanding the dynamics of conflict: Mitchell's triangular typology (1981) although an early model, in which he divides conflict into three important components viz. situation, behaviour and attitude, still has relevance in contemporary times. Chadwick (2001) identifies five key factors associated with conflict, viz., change, power, scarcity, diversity and civility. Bennett (2014) examines power as a crucial resource in different organisations because he indicates that individuals compete for jobs, positions and prestige. This view is also shared by Ngcobo (2003), and Mullins (1999). Kruger & Van Deventer (2003) as well as Henkin et al. (2000) regard poor communication as a major cause of conflict.

Hord and Sommers (2009) suggest that a lack of understanding of different social groups may lead to conflict amongst teachers and may strengthen cultural stereotyping based on gender, ethnicity, race and disabilities. Bradshaw (2004) asserts that South Africa's democracy has not been infused with "analytical conflict management institutions", and hence basic human needs have not been substantially met nor have valued relationships been addressed, producing "deep-rooted social conflict". Ngcobo (2003) avers that within the South African context, conflict between teachers are often related to issues of personal antagonism; lack of resources; incompatible goals; inequitable treatment; organisational size; lack of skills for managing conflict; varying beliefs and values; poor communication; gossip; environmental change and stress.

Several researchers (Moore et al., 2012; Alper et al., 2000; Bennet, 2014), suggest that conflicts may be broadly seen as two categories, viz., *constructive* conflict, that which may generate positive results in an organization and *destructive* conflict, which is dysfunctional. The second category is the focus of my research, located in the context of chronic conflict at selected schools in the KwaZulu-Natal province, South Africa. The rationale for the use of the metaphor of "chronic" conflict as borrowed from a medical disease model is discussed in Chapter Two. Chronic conflict is regarded as an illness that develops slowly over time, producing symptoms

that remain continuous or intermittent. Thus, this section provides an annotated review of some salient points about conflict and will be described in more detail in Chapter Two.

1.4   The research methodology

In keeping with the assertion by Ellis (2003, p.30) that narrative autoethnography 'focuses on generalisation within a case extended over time,' that "single case" in this research is me as the central protagonist whose story unravels through the thesis. However, my story is constructed within a socio-educational context, and therefore includes the stories of three heads and one deputy head of four schools that help me understand the phenomenon of chronic conflict.   Four schools under my management ambit form the sample. I reflect upon the conflict in these four schools and analyse them to provide a deeper understanding of chronic conflict. Mouton (2001) emphasizes the potential of case studies in understanding the interaction of individuals and their contexts, and diverse perspectives on the phenomena under research.   The rich data is evoked from a qualitative enquiry (Cohen et al., 2000) of four "live" cases from my own work environment. As an insider with access to confidential information, and the nuances of power my position awarded me, I sought to minimize my direct influence and ethical breaches by involving the use of the three heads (principals and one deputy head) of schools who were dealing with issues of conflict.

1.4.1   Participants, data collection, data analysis

Purposive, non-probability sampling was used to identify participants for the study, based on relevancy (Oliver, 2010) typicality (Cohen, et al., 1994) and those likely to provide most depth (Palys et al., 2008). Using this rationale, three heads and one deputy head of schools within my geographical and administrative jurisdiction were approached. These four schools were in the Chatsworth West Ward of the Umlazi District in the Province of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban, South Africa. These schools had continuous conflict in management and were reported for intervention

to the Department of Education by external stakeholders like school governing body members, teacher organisations, local councillors, politicians, support agencies such as the South African Police Services, and welfare agencies. The conflicts in these schools were also reported in the media, and had a history of documented court cases, and grievance hearings at the level of the District and Provincial Department of Education.

My research topic was essentially drawn from my work environment and as such it offered me the opportunity as the education manager, of being a *deep insider* with privy to much information. I describe the position of deep insider and the ethics associated with this position in more detail in the Chapter Four, Research Methodology. Based on this reality and consideration of the ethics of the context in which I found myself, I approached the three heads and one deputy of four schools to describe to me their understandings of the conflict situations at their schools. Using a semi-structured interview, the responses of the participants are presented as cases or cameos (Grant, 2010) of chronic conflict at their specific schools. Principals had further opportunity to involve others to clarify, elaborate or add value to the cases. Thus, the study is of four cases under my management ambit. These selected case studies / chronicles emphasize several events or conditions and their relationships. I interrogate the experiences of school principals who repeatedly attempt to manage and resolve conflict situations at their schools. Thus, the study of these cases, in which I adopt a self-autoethnographic stance as an insider provides me with an effective method to examine real-life situations, in this case of "chronic conflict" situations at the school level.

The data obtained was subject to a first level analysis which included several readings of all four narratives to acquire an overview of the main thread/s of the stories, the context and conditions within which the prevailing circumstances unfold at each of the four schools. At this level, I explored the participants' understandings of 'chronic conflict' through a process of content analysis of their narratives. This also allowed for categorization of salient issues, for example; frequency of conflicts, participants in the conflicts, types of conflicts, durations of conflicts and consequences of conflicts.

A second level of data analysis allowed me to understand themes that were emerging (Corbin et al., 2008). This led me to categorize the more prominent and dominant themes of certain narratives. This will be discussed in greater detail in the Research Methodology in Chapter 4.

1.5   Chapter outlines

In this chapter, I described the idea of conflict and delimited the school contexts in which the research is located. I described my rationale and the research problem, and thereafter I provided an explanation of autoethnography as my main research framework and gave an annotated explanation of the research method employed.

In *Chapter Two*, I provide a discussion of "chronic conflict". It begins by a reflection on the nature of global, national and local conflict in corporate contexts and at the school level. Conflict at the various levels of social interaction is discussed to introduce the reader to some important components of conflict and its dimensions. The idea of conflict from my own experience is also discussed. In this chapter a wide range of conflict perspectives (Morris, 2008; Jacoby, 2013; Davis, 2004; Chadwick, 2001; Mitchell, 1981) and theories, are provided to understand why people indulge in conflictive behaviour.

Chapter Three orientates the reader to the broad theoretical framework used in the study to understand the dynamics of 'chronic conflict' at the school level. This framework provides the relevant conceptual tools to offer a deeper understanding and insight into the phenomenon of 'chronic conflict'.   One of the main theories to dominate the conflict theory landscape is Complexity Theory (Davis, 2004), which is used to underpin the observations and analysis of conflict in the study. This theory asserts that changes in any system are non-linear, unpredictable and the product of complex processes and multi-systems, which necessitates deep self-reflection, original strategy development and intervention for each conflict scenario. Complexity Theory is trans-disciplinary in nature (Davis, 2004) and allows other theoretical frameworks to be collaboratively used to understand conflicts. In this chapter, the main concepts of Complexity Theory and as well as the salient characteristics of other aligned theories are also described.

The research methodology used in this study is further elaborated in *Chapter Four.* Using an interpretivist, qualitative framework to the research attempts to capture the words and meanings of four heads of schools, whose narrative describes chronic conflict in their contexts. This study underpinned by an interpretivist paradigm, uses a qualitative case study approach to make sense of, and interpret the meaning participants bring with them (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018) in the context of interpersonal interaction and conflict in four schools that were sampled in Durban, Province of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. In this chapter, I describe the research design and methodology – sampling, data collection and the data analysis used in the study. A physical and historical description of each of the four selected schools for the study is also provided, and the criteria for selecting each of the schools are given.

In *Chapter Five*, I described the context of each of the selected schools and the stories of conflict in each one as narrated by the participants. The preceding chapters provide a review of the relevant research on conflict, the main theories explaining conflict as well as a description of the research methodology used. The narratives in this chapter apprise the reader of the unfolding of events at these schools that produced the chronicity of conflict. The stories are narrated by the Principals of Beachwood Secondary, Ajanta Primary and Kashmir Primary who are male while the story of Parklane Secondary is relayed by the Deputy Principal who is female. I thereafter present my interpretation of the situation which allowed me to identify critical emerging themes from the relayed stories.

In *Chapter Six*, I orientated the reader to the various themes that emerge from the selected narratives of each of the institutions. It commences with the first and prominent theme of Processes and Procedures, a theme which largely embraces several other sub-themes, including the dominant issue of school-based promotions which appear to be the root cause of much dissension and conflicts at, at least three of the four selected schools. Another important theme of corporal punishment followed by Racism and Gender occupy significant dominance at some of these schools. Outside these major themes, I further present other sub-themes which are less prevalent and conclude with a final conspicuous theme of Leadership at each of the schools which is argued to have a strong bearing on the management and administration of each of the four selected schools.

In *Chapter Seven*, I provided a landscape of all the chapters as they weave to provide an overview of enduring conflict trends at certain schools, projecting distinctive characteristics in the burgeoning and sometimes overlapping themes. The chapter commences by introducing a personal reflection that encapsulates my journey from childhood to adulthood and through to be an Official in the Department of Education. This trajectory sees my journey embedded in a sea of conflicts from trivial to persistence and recurrence which leads up to the phenomenon of 'chronic conflict' with an explanation and rationale of using a medical analogy. This medical metaphor is extended throughout the thesis with a parallel between the chronicity of disease to that of conflict, with special focus on inappropriate 'treatment' and management as is presented in the four narratives of this study. I then use a model to give credence to my assertion of the consequence of delayed or inappropriate intervention into conflict and the resultant germination and evolution of chronicity of conflict.

1.6 Chapter Summary

In this chapter I described the idea of conflict and delimited the school context in which the study is located. I further discussed the rationale for my study, explained the key questions, and reviewed the literature to obtain the historical and definitional aspects of conflict by researchers in the field. I thereafter provided an explanation of autoethnography as my main research framework and gave an annotated explanation of the research method employed. In the next chapter, the literature describing conflict is reviewed.

Chapter Two:
Literature Review

2.1   Introduction

Although the word 'conflict' is often negatively connoted, this is not always the case. Disagreements in team tasks, or on procedures or methods, may prove constructive as it may enable more critical thought, thereby improving decisions and enriching the discussion. The general idea of conflict however is that it emerges when individuals feel their interests, which may be physical, material or psychological are threatened by the actions of others, or due to conflicting demands (Dolgopol & Gardam, 2006). Conflict may arise in any situation or organisation where people are in contact with each other, and they could disagree with one another or with authority.

The main purpose of this section is to provide a discussion of "chronic conflict". In this chapter I begin by reflecting on the nature of global conflict, then national, local, and thereafter conflict in corporate contexts and at the school level. I identify and locate conflict at the various levels of social interaction as I deem it necessary to introduce the reader to some important components of conflict and its dimensions. In doing this I wish to provide a background to the dynamics of conflict, draw parallels with certain characteristics of conflict both globally (e.g. The Arab-Israeli conflict) and locally and weave a thread through ideas of conflict from my own experience of the temperamental nature of peace and conflict. In this chapter I refer to some older sources of literature to provide a more primary or seminal idea of conflict, e.g., the works of Morris (1997) and Van Schaik (2004). Lastly, I proceed to consider a wide range of perspectives, appropriate models and theories, e.g. Conflict theory; Complexity theory; Attribution theory; Equity theory; Field theory; Interactionist theory; Social Exchange theory (SET); Phase theory; System theory and Transformation theory to understand why people indulge in conflictive behaviour. Some of these I understand that incidents of conflict I gathered

over my years have created impressions that shape my perceptions of conflict. By such description it is hoped that I can provide the reader with the workings of my mind.

2.2. Global conflict

My first encounter of a philosophical notion of conflict came from my readings of a text on the history of the Israeli-Palestine conflict which began in 1949. I learnt how towards the end of the nineteenth century, Palestine was divided between the Arab Muslims and the smaller numbers of Jews, since at that time most of the Jewish worldwide lived outside Palestine in Eastern and Central Europe (Morris, 1997). The ensuing conflict is estimated to have started in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, where two major nationalist movements of the Jews and the Arabs respectively were positioned towards attaining sovereignty for their people in the Middle East (Morris, 2008). The continuing conflict and violence in this region for more than 65 years perplexes me. The chronicity of such violence in a modern world where man is meant to be socially and culturally evolved, his outlook underpinned by democratic and human rights principles, is a frightening reminder of how deep hate can extend to foster chronic conflict. Global conflicts drag on for years and even when gross physical violence is stopped, tensions continue to simmer, and the smallest reasons seem to catapult them back into violence again. The Middle East, India-Pakistan, North and South Korea and the North Africa bring home this point.

For much of history, "human strength or muscle power has determined the forms that conflict, and violence have taken" (Jacoby, 2013). From rudimentary tools of spears and arrows through to the industrial revolution era and ultimately to the age of nuclear technology - each of these time capsules saw the progressive emergence of sophisticated treatises analysing the roots of chronic behaviour (Jacoby, 2013). According to Jacoby (2013), these have not only focused upon the causes of conflict, but also included notions of peace, implying an inevitable connection between peace and conflict. Conceptually then, peace like all things is only comprehensible through a process of antonymic comparison. In phenomenological terms, war is, as Tuzin (1997, p.24) declares: "in some sense, a necessary prelude to peace, how else could the latter be

identified?" While most accounts of conflict and violence share the common understanding that "knowledge does not guarantee a political solution to public problems, without knowledge there can be little reasonable expectation for the amelioration of perennial problems such as war" (Vásquez, 2000, p.6).

The parallels between international conflicts and those in South Africa, though on different scales, are a stark reminder of the capriciousness of peace. Inter-racial violence, political violence and violent crime underscore the deeply conflictual nature of South Africa.

2.3   Conflict in South Africa

I reflect on my father's early literature on the African National Congress's (ANC) historical background, precious documents that he believed he had safely tucked away during the dark days of apartheid, in the 1960's. I chose to wade through his "safely concealed" treasure cove, primarily for understanding any commonalities of conflict experiences within the different contexts. While perusing through one such piece, I recalled how political violence in Kwa-Zulu Natal, a province of South Africa where I was born, reared and educated, existed as part of my childhood, but re-emerged and escalated from the early 1980's onwards. The roots of the violence were largely attributed to the on-going conflict between the African National Congress (ANC) and the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP), the two prominent political parties in Kwa-Zulu Natal (Jeffery, 1993). Whilst both the above dominant parties shared the same ultimate vision, that is the abolishment of apartheid rule and their abhorrence for a divisive government, their political ideologies and subsequent strategic plans differed immensely. The ANC's on-going protests and aggressive campaigns were opposed to the IFP's initial call for realism, pragmatism and opposition to the armed struggle and economic sanctions, which often led to serious conflicts between them (Jeffery, 1993).

Hence whilst the cause of the political conflict and ensuing violence in the KwaZulu-Natal was generally attributed to the apartheid system, it became abundantly clear to many that the apartheid system did indeed create institutions, organisations and political parties which during time pursued their own agendas, interests of power, control, identity and dominance. These

episodes form a backdrop for the type of conflict in the microcosm of my work situation, although not physically violent, reflect principles which are not dissimilar to political conflict. Through a comprehensive review of some 520 documents related to education, conflict and peace building, researchers found that education is a key driver of social development, peace and social transformation in post conflict settings (Smith, 2014). Similarly, Senior Education Advisor, Jordon Naidoo of the United Nations Children's' Education Fund (UNICEF) states that the role of education in peace building is pivotal in post-conflict countries. He asserts further that education is fundamental for economic growth, national advancement and can serve as a conduit for social cohesion and reconciliation in countries recovering from crisis (UNICEF, 2011).

Whilst the term conflict and more especially 'chronic conflict' immediately conjures up a negative connotation, it must be recognised that most literature on conflict balances its negative influence with that of its positive impact. In South Africa conflicts in schools over race, fees, school governance, power, personality or language frequently make headlines. Such conflicts project multifaceted challenges of learner diversity, encompassing racial, class, gender, language, culture, socio-economic and other differences, as seen particularly in South Africa's post-apartheid classrooms. The need to handle these differences in fair, transparent and reasonable ways poses new challenges for teachers and teacher education. This discussion will unfold in the narrations given in the succeeding chapters.

According to McMillan & Schumacher, "a literature review is usually a critique of the status of knowledge of a carefully defined topic" (2001, p.108). A review of literature for this study reveals the concept of conflict is commonly understood as violence or tension between groups, often political in nature (Kerzner, 1998), but also reveals a dearth of information on "chronic conflict" at the school level both nationally and internationally. Thus, my presentation of ideas on conflict draws from diverse sources. Conflict may also be viewed as an essential and unavoidable human phenomenon because where there is human interaction there is a likelihood of personal likes and dislikes. Such agreements and disagreements among individuals and groups lead them to conflicts (D'Oosterlinck, and Broekaert, 2003). At the same time, conflict can have detrimental effects in an organisation. It may be harmful to individuals, rivalries and the organisation itself if not identified at an early stage, a scenario revealed in this study.

A prevalent form of conflict as observed and experienced in my interaction with schools is that which I would refer to as, 'personality conflict', which results when it is not the issue that is in question, but rather a difference in values and how individuals approach or perceive things and people. Often individuals tend to remark negatively about the person or the group rather than the issue or situation at hand. Another form of conflict occurs when people within an organisation agree on the goals but do not agree on the procedures needed to attain the goals. Rivalries, power struggles and disagreements about an individual's role in organisations are common forms of organisational conflict (Furlong, 2005).

In July 1993, the Institute of Directors in Southern Africa (IoDSA) established the King Committee on Corporate Governance, which published the first report on Corporate Governance on 29 November 1994 in South Africa (Natesan, 2017). This document is the recognized code of governance, which consists of principles [that is, proposed outcomes to be achieved] and recommendations [that, is, the proposed methods to achieve the principles] (Federation of Governing Bodies of South African Schools, 2016). Much of the school governance has been influenced by the King Report on Corporate Governance. Daily conflicts between supervisors and supervisees, employer and employee, bosses and subordinates, tend to usurp considerable productivity. Conflict is therefore a condition where the concerns of two interdependent parties appear to be incompatible (Van Schaik, 2004). At the learner level this type of conflict may range from learner fights to more serious forms of assaults including gangsterism, sexual assaults and even rape.

Likewise, individuals also feel threatened when their material interests are the basis of conflict (Van Schaik, 2004). Studies have however shown that more tenuous than physical and material threats in conflicts are those of a psychological nature, especially because it is based largely on perceptions. The greatest cause therefore of interpersonal conflict is perceived threat to one's psychological needs (Van Schaik, 2004). These usually threaten one's reputation, status, self-esteem and belief that they have been subjected to unfair treatment. Van Schaik (2004) says that conflict arises the moment we feel our "personhood" is violated. He cites the example of a young manager being promoted to Head of his Department above an older manager, resulting in tension

and constant conflict between the two, since the older employee may use every opportunity to undermine the authority of the new one. He, the older manager may believe the new Head prevented him from achieving his goals resulting in constant conflict. Hence it is safe to say that to be ridiculed, criticised, proven wrong, taken advantage of, or treated unfairly poses psychological threats to one and will therefore always create situations of conflict. This perceived threat as a cause of conflict and arising from promotions is particularly common at the school level as will be revealed by the co-researchers in their narrations later in the study.

2.4 Conflict at School level

Conflict at the school level like at any other organisation is part of human existence, which often poses a challenge to effect positive change. Conflict thus continues to be an issue in many schools which constantly appear to be centres of tension and possibly a manifestation of problems in the school community. Drawing from my vast experience with schools I have frequently observed minor conflict in schools taking on various forms, for example: teachers resisting Principals' instructions; poor relations amongst staff and school's governing body members, teachers' domestic stress and poor learner discipline. Many teachers find policy changes around student rights in South Africa threatening to their professional identities (Hunter & Mumford, 2007).

During the apartheid era teachers were expected to exert authority over students. However, post-apartheid policies saw the abolishment of corporal punishment and the presence of greater human rights bringing with it untold challenges. Teachers subsequently found themselves in frequent situations of conflict with students. Several teachers have found it hard to adapt to these changes and viewed such situations as unnecessary imbalances in power with students having more rights. That together with a ban on corporal punishment they believe gave rise to escalating conflicts resulting in disrespect, indiscipline and constant violence (Hunter & Mumford, 2007). On the other hand, students have indicated that teachers are physically violent towards them and they are often afraid of teachers and members of the school's management team (Dunne & Leach, 2007).

Similarly, other conflicts in schools over race, fees or language frequently make headlines in South Africa. Such conflicts project multifaceted challenges of learner diversity, encompassing racial, class, gender, language, culture, socio-economic and other differences, as seen particularly in South Africa's post-apartheid classrooms. The need to handle these differences in fair, transparent and reasonable ways poses new challenges for teachers and teacher education and requires a deeper understanding of conflict at school level. On an ongoing basis, schools get flooded with several types of conflicts, be they over relationship issues between the various stakeholders, for example, management and staff; staff and governing body; or staff and learners. Given South Africa's horrendous apartheid past, issues of racism of perceived as well as gender discrimination is not uncommon at our schools and often gives rise to dissension and in many instances sow the early seeds of ongoing conflict particularly when not attended to promptly or appropriately.

2. 5   Understanding conflict behaviour

Conflict is often seen as an expression of hostility, antagonism and misunderstanding between staff members or individuals, usually due to poor communication. Hartwick et al. (2004) views conflict as a frequent occurrence in organisations affecting individuals, processes and outcomes. Some researchers argue that conflict is a fact of life and not necessarily a terrible thing (Bennett et al., 2014). Traditionally a literature review will examine research on the various aspects of one's study, and I found it necessary to divide this section of the literature review into 3 sub-sections, namely; an understanding of conflict concepts; conflict management and an appropriate model in understanding conflictive behaviour, although structurally one may examine these in a section that may be considered the theoretical chapter.

2.5.1   Conflict concepts

Several researchers (Moore et al., 2012; Alper et al., 2000; Bennet, 2014), suggest that conflicts may be broadly seen as two categories, viz., constructive conflict and *destructive* conflict. McNamara et al. (2003) and Bennet (2014) elaborate that the destructive conflict is dysfunctional

conflict and constructive conflict is functional. Barge (1994) regards constructive conflict as functional because it can generate positive results in an organization. Tjosvold (1998) also maintains that constructive conflict is more likely to generate better solutions and promote insight into issues, thereby helping individuals to grow. Schools are prone to various conflicts. Conflict helps people, teachers at the school level to recognise and benefit from their differences. Moran & Embree (2001) regards conflict management as a set of philosophy and skills that helps individuals and collectives to get a better understanding of and managing conflict as it emerges in various contexts of their lives.

Destructive conflict is viewed as negative and is that which has not been timeously identified, intervened on appropriately managed, and may interfere with achieving organizational goals (De Dreu et al., 2010, p.75). Destructive conflict or dysfunctional conflict reduces performance in an organization. My research study focuses on this category of conflict. It is this type of conflict which is prevalent at selected schools and is often characterised by its enduring, protracted, festering, corrosive and threatening presence, hence the term "chronic conflict". In a study of conflict management in secondary schools in the Osun State of Nigeria, Okotoni (2003) contend that the accumulation of a series of conflict without devising appropriate means of managing them is like sitting on a keg of gunpowder which could explode anytime. In considering why conflict manifests in the way it does, I focus attention on the probable causes of conflict. Thus, some major causes of conflict at the Osun school included: unsatisfactory conditions of service; retrenchment of teachers (like the current rationalisation and redeployment of teachers in schools in KwaZulu–Natal, Department of Education); administrative incompetence of Principals; misappropriation of school funds; personality clashes; nepotism; negligence of duty; role conflicts and labour issues (unions in South Africa).

These causes generally give rise to conflicts, virtually the same as manifested in our local schools. Consequences of the Osun school conflict included: disruption of the academic programme; unplanned transfers, inadequate staffing; hostility; suspicion; and unquantifiable losses for students and parents. These consequences are frighteningly similar to those conflict-ridden schools with whom I engaged as part of my work, especially the four schools selected as the sample for this study.

2.5.1.1.   'Chronic conflict' – A medical metaphor

During my work experiences with schools, I have observed that virtually all schools encounter several types of conflicts daily involving the different stakeholders. However, while some schools can manage these to some extent, others repeatedly encounter conflicts which when neglected or are given inappropriate responses, tend to reappear, often becoming more intense and complex, to the extent that they spread to uninvolved initial stakeholders. These rapidly bear negatively on the general ethos of the institution, becoming so serious and persistent at certain schools that they render the school unstable. I draw on the use of the medical term "chronic" as an analogy that I feel befits the description of the type of conflict that I deal with on a regular basis.

Stedman (2005) in the *Medical dictionary for the health professionals and nursing*, uses the term "chronic" to describe a persistent disease, or illness, prolonged or long term (sometimes also of low intensity). Stedman also refers to 'chronic disease' as disease of long duration whilst 'chronic care' refers to care provided for long term health problems. Such illnesses generally require constant and ongoing care and position themselves in a vicious cycle of, 'bubbling over', treatment, remission and relapse. Dorland's (2007) also refers to a chronic disease as one of slow progress and long continuance. It indicates that illnesses that develop slowly over time and do not end, while symptoms remain continuous or intermittent. Correspondingly at the school level, my experience has disclosed that the daily short-term interventions often provide temporary reprieve to the parties involved in the conflict and they likewise slip into a state of 'chronic care' when not managed effectively. Thus, the medical metaphor *chronic* appears quite appropriate to describe the recurring and protracted conflicts at the four schools selected for this study.

White (1981) refers to instances of 'chronic conflict' as issues which generate continuing intense anxiety, and which results in frequent re-structuring of the organization. Very similar to 'chronic conflict' is what is termed, 'intractable conflict', which Mitchell (2014) refers to as a type of conflict that resists resolution, Research on intractable conflict reveals that identity is integral to this concept. Coleman (2003) also avers that a central characteristic of 'chronic conflict' is that

it is of long standing, sometimes spreading over years. Everard and Morris (1990, p.69) hold the view that a crucial factor in resolving conflict is the ability to manage it. A primary objective for mediators, interveners or rather relevant individuals working towards resolving apparent, intractable conflicts is, to help promote stakeholder, "ripeness" or a willingness and commitment to engage constructively in the conflict (Coleman, 2006). In my study the respective parties in most instances share a long history of animosity; suspicion; hostility; and sometimes fear or insecurity. However, 'ripeness theory' as pointed out by Coleman (2006) is a useful starting point for understanding the nature of the conflict, an idea that I elaborate later.

2.5.2   Explaining conflict management

As South African schools become more diverse, the potential for socio-cultural and racial misunderstanding increases. Hord and Sommers (2009) suggest that a lack of understanding of different social groups may lead to conflict amongst teachers and may strengthen cultural stereotyping based on gender, ethnicity, race and disabilities. Often differences in religious and cultural practices and intolerance of other practices may lead to conflict as we often see not only in the South African context but across the globe. This sensitive and critical issue is one such area that often develops an instance of conflict into 'chronic conflict' at schools, particularly when not fortuitously and prudently intervened on.

Bradshaw (2004) suggests that South Africa's democracy has not been infused with "analytical conflict management institutions", and hence basic human needs have not been substantially met nor have valued relationships been addressed, producing "deep-rooted social conflict". The initial euphoria of South Africa's democracy has long settled, but what continues to rear its ugly head are the constant 'unsettled cracks' – racial tensions arising because of not addressing issues of social cohesion, especially at the level of the school with its wide range of stakeholders and their accompanying agendas. Unfortunately, in most situations these are treated with inappropriate models that provide quick fix solutions rather than resolutions to the problem for the long term. In contrast many see the absence of conflict between groups or individuals as indicative of effective intergroup relations.

Within the South African context, the changing complexities of democracy and subsequent environmental demands accompanied by team-based structures at the school level have presented ongoing challenges for the school management teams at large. Often groups pursue their own interest at "the expense of the overall organisational goal" (Tjosvold, 1998), and compete over scarce resources (Mohrmann et al., 1995). They fail to manage the disruptive dynamics of social categorization (Terry, 2003). Similarly, Bodin and Crawford (1999) maintained that this is largely so since a school is an organisation which comprises of different people of various ages and generations, different interests and values and of different political ideologies. Various conflict management strategies are adopted for handling conflict, the most important being mediation, negotiation, avoidance, and collaboration. These will be further elaborated in Chapter Three under theories of conflict.

Hence, specifically within South African schools that are multifaceted and must reflect the face of its democracy, negotiation and mediation must be identified as the best strategies for reducing conflict. It is vital that school managers recognise conflict as early as possible, particularly identifying its destructive potential and learning how to manage it. Competent administrators are said to be effective leaders who recognize the need to capacitate or promote leadership in aspirant others, thereby encouraging others to take responsibility for themselves (Bennis et al., 1985). According to these administrators or leaders can reduce conflict by advocating for vision of the institution.

Studies repeatedly reveal that the early detection and intervention of conflict at schools will assist in enhancing constructive and creative work by eliminating unnecessary time and effort spent on what may become chronic situations. Often a lack of communication or poor communication as already cited at the school level, leads to misunderstanding and notions that the principal has "favourites" as indicated by Henkin et al. (2000), who argue that a satisfactory outcome can be achieved through effective communication. Conflict management refers to reduction, elimination and control of conflict to make conflict more beneficial and less demanding to all parties (Spangler & Leverett, 2003). Further Ngcobo (2003) points out that within the South African context, conflict between teachers are often related to issues of personal antagonism; lack of resources; incompatible goals; inequitable treatment; organizational size;

lack of skills for managing conflict; varying beliefs and values; poor communication; gossip; environmental change and stress.

2.6   Conclusion

The issue of personality clashes hinges strongly on power struggles and this together with poor communication appears to take centre stage in the chronic conflicts of the selected schools in this study. Institutional conflicts typically involve various stakeholders be they: educator versus educator (s); educator versus management; management versus staff; parent versus educators; staff versus school governing body; and so forth. Practically every school finds itself embroiled in periodic disputes over issues of teaching allocations, perceived interference from parents; learner and class discipline and so forth. What is often at stake in such conflicts is its early detection and management, and its prevention from graduating into a cancerous state of 'chronic conflict'.

Chapter Three:
Theoretical framework

3.1   Introduction

Conflict has been theorized on various levels, from the grand universalising macro theories of conflict propounded by Karl Marx[3], who regarded conflict as arising from competition for limited resources, to the micro theories like Field Theory (Lewin, 2009) or Systems Theory (Emerson, 1996).

The purpose of this chapter is to orientate the reader to the broad theoretical framework used in the study to understand the dynamics of 'chronic conflict' at the school level. This framework provides the relevant conceptual tools to offer a deeper understanding and insight into the phenomenon of 'chronic conflict'. One of the main theories to dominate the conflict theory landscape is Complexity Theory, which I use to underpin my observations and analysis of conflict in my study.   This theory asserts that changes in any system are non-linear, unpredictable and the product of complex processes and multi-systems, which necessitates original strategy development and intervention for each conflict scenario. This requires deep self-reflection and awareness from those who are involved in conflict intervention. Complexity Theory is trans- disciplinary in nature (Davis, 2004) and allows other theoretical frameworks to be collaboratively used to understand conflicts. In this chapter, the main concepts of Complexity Theory and as well as the salient characteristics of other aligned theories are also described. To facilitate an understanding how these theories, interrelate, these are listed below.

COMPLEXITY THEORY	CONFLICT MANAGEMENT THEORY
Self – organisation	Multi – Team System' (MTS's)
Emergence	Circle of Conflict
Non-linearity	Walton's Theory of Lateral Relationships
Attractors	Lawrence & Lorch's Negotiation
	The 5 A's Technique
	Thomas Kilman Conflict Resolution Model (TKI)

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[3] from 1848 onwards

3.2   A Model explaining Conflict

An early model that still has relevance to explaining the dynamics of conflict is Mitchell's (1981) triangular typology. Although Mitchell's model maybe considered seminal in some respects, many of the components and characteristics still have application to the contemporary scenarios of conflict described in this study. Mitchell's model divides conflict into three important components viz., situation, behaviour and attitude.

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                        ┌──────────────┐
                        │  Situation   │
                        └──────────────┘

              ↑                              ↑
              ↓                              ↓

┌──────────────┐                        ┌──────────────┐
│  Behaviour   │ ←──────────────────→   │  Attitude    │
└──────────────┘                        └──────────────┘
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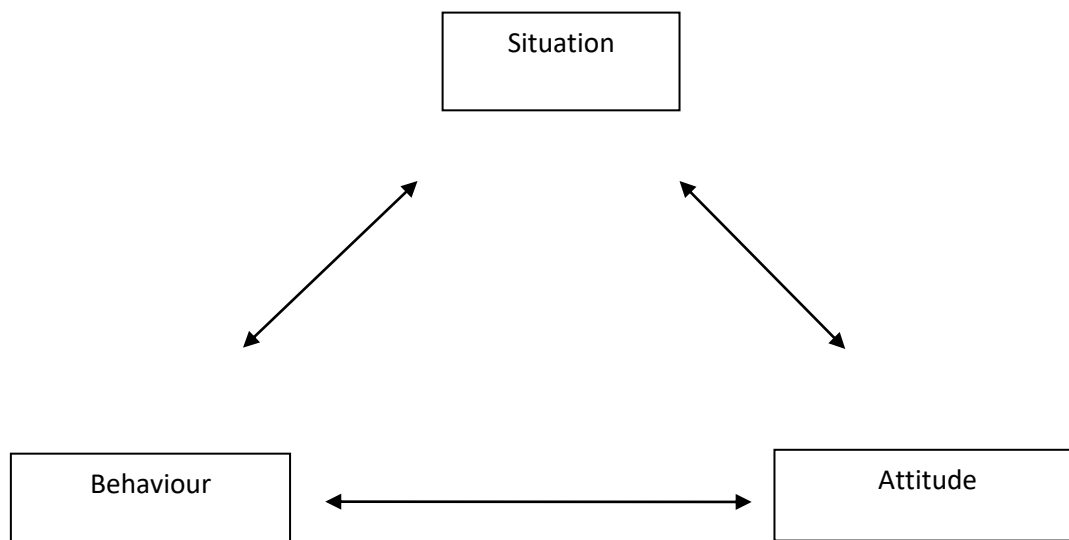
Figure 3.2 A Model - The structure of conflict. Adapted from Mitchell (1981)

According to Mitchell (1981), a conflictive situation is one in which two or more parties or social entities believe they have incompatible goals. This view is shared by Kriesberg who defines conflict as occurring, "when two or more persons or groups manifest the belief that they have incompatible objectives" (2003, p.2). Basic to the above approach is the embracing of non-violent forms of conflict. These could include parent-child relationships, competitive sport, contact between ethnic groups or an impasse in diplomatic relationships between two states. A key component in all these instances is incompatibility (Jacoby, 2013). This would imply that individuals or parties perceive the pursuit of their objectives as being jeopardised and stifled by the other. The importance of such goals to the persons involved would influence the intensity of the conflict. According to Jacoby (2013), the involvement of others in the conflictive situation or

the increase of the value of the goals in question will escalate the conflict and extend its domain. This appears to be a key factor in moving conflicts from a regular domain to one of persistence, recurrence and of prolonged duration to ultimately chronicity as will be revealed later in this study.

Conflictive situations need not necessarily be founded on genuine issues or actual events. Jacoby (2013), states that while realistic conflicts are based on past occurrences that have led to the perception of incompatible goals and conflicts of varying intensity, unrealistic conflicts may stem from misperceptions and a lack of clarity or pursued for conflict participation rather than specific goals. He goes on to say that most conflictive situations comprise both realistic and unrealistic elements. He uses the concept of 'zero-sum' which relates to situations whereby the total benefit to all individuals always adds up to zero; implying that no one party can benefit without an equal loss to the other. He provides the examples of instances of limited resources such as land shortage in Palestine or diamonds in Sierra Leone. On the other hand, the latter that is variable-sum situations involves conflicts over goods which are not necessarily in short supply such as status, religious expression, dignity, and so forth and do not theoretically speaking imply the loss of one party or individual to be the gain of the other. In these instances, perceptions of scarcity may be over material goods, for example oil, or positional goods such as access to political representation or economic management (Jacoby, 2013).

Qualitative differences in the type of goals pursued also influences the nature of a conflicting situation. Often different interests lead to conflict, although individuals may agree about the value of specific positions, roles or resources. These types of conflict generally exist over issues of distribution, for example, a husband and wife (Jacoby, 2013). At the same time, conflicts of *value* exist where parties fundamentally respect desirable ends around social and political issues, e.g. conflicts between the goals of the World Trade Organisation and the Anti – Globalization Movement (Jacoby, 2013). Jacoby also points out that conflictive attitudes are closely related to conflictive situations. Mitchell defines them as 'common patterns of expectations, emotional orientation and perception that accompany involvement in a conflict situation' (1981: p.28). In these instances, emotions such as anger, resentment and suspicion are common. According to Jacoby, such emotions become self-perpetuating and that previous experiences of a conflict will

thus reinforce conflictive attitudes. Attitudes, he says often push individuals towards conflictive behaviour.

In accordance with Mitchell's model, conflictive attitudes are also greatly influenced by conflictive situations and behaviour. He explains that the emergence of changes in group identity is not common when conflict progresses. This he elaborates is revealed when individuals begin to seek security and prestige in identifying with others, hence, threats to the values of the group results in threats to the individual, he asserts. Leaning towards group affiliation thus assists individuals in justifying their behaviour. This is defined by Mitchell as "actions undertaken by one party in any situation of conflict aimed at the opposing party with the intention of making the party abandon and modify its goals" (1981, p.29). Conflicts, he indicates may also originate in an intention to punish an opponent for a real or perceived previous action. It could thus be seen that a general model of conflict frequently takes the occurrence of 'goal incompatibility as the starting point from which a conflict becomes manifested and each of the three elements namely situations, attitudes and behaviour – begin to interact' (Jacoby, 2013).

Aligned to the inter-related motive of Mitchell's model, conflictive attitudes are also strongly influenced by conflictive situations and behaviour. As conflicts intensify changes in group identity become common. During individuals seeking security and status in identifying with others, threats to the group often become threats to the individual. Jacoby (2013), says that in this way group affliction assists individuals to rationalise their behaviour. He uses the concepts of transference and displacement to violent conflict as a common consequence of attitudinal change. Transference he explains occurs when violence is directed at an object or individual resembling the perceived source of goal incompatibility. This may often be irrational, for example after the German football team's defeat of England during the European Championship in 1996, German brands of automobiles belonging to England supporters were damaged in areas where the game was being watched. At the school level based on observation and experience, this could be assimilated to the SGB chairperson cautioning late coming of educators who then persistently victimise his children, an act of association culminating in subsequent acts of vengeance and retaliation.

In contrast, Jacoby regards displacement as violence directed at any object or person irrespective of their connection to the perceived source of goal incompatibility. Jacoby uses the example of the delayed social security payment resulting in the claimant beating his wife who in turns beats her children who then assaults the pet, and so forth. In this instance the conflictive behaviour, spurred by the initial source of goal incompatibility results in perpetuating the conflictive situation. At the school level this could translate to the Principal reprimanding the educator for failing to go on ground duty on a day and who soon after beats up a learner in class, a clear situation of misdirected or displacement of response or reaction.

Reciprocally connected to changes in conflicting attitudes is conflictive behaviour. This is defined by Mitchell (1981, p.29), "as actions undertaken by one party in any situation of conflict aimed at the opposing party with the intention of making that party abandon or modify its goals". Jacoby thus concludes that a general model of conflict often takes the existence of goal incompatibility as the starting point and from which a conflict manifests and whereby each of the three elements namely, situation, attitudes and behaviour begin to interact. Conflictive behaviour can, he indicates harden attitudes, widening issues and increasing the number of individuals involved in the conflict, thereby altering the conflictive situation. This in turn will alter behaviour as efforts are heightened in the pursuit of goals; increasing mistrust and suspicion. Thus, in resolving conflicts it becomes important to embrace all three factors. Whilst Jacoby (2013), in this regard states that, "actors achieving attitudinal integration will develop a consensus, those attaining behavioural integration will conform and those accomplishing situational integration will realise goal compatibility", I view this as a rather simplistic resolution since my experiences with conflict situations at the school level would hardly have evolved to the level of chronicity if consensus and goal compatibility were so uncomplicated.

Institutional conflicts typically involve various stakeholders, be they: educator versus educator (s); educator versus management; management versus staff; parent versus educators; staff versus school governing body; and so forth. Practically every school finds itself embroiled in periodic disputes over issues of teaching allocations, perceived interference from parents; learner or class

discipline and so on. What is often at stake in such conflicts is its early detection, management and its subsequent prevention from graduating into a cancerous state of 'chronic conflict'.

Chadwick (2001) identifies five crucial factors associated with conflict. These are change; power; scarcity; diversity and civility. Similarly, Mullins (1999) further identified factors such as the following which he asserts to have a strong influence on conflict. These include individual differences; limited resources; departmentalisation; specializations in schools; inequitable treatment of staff: violation of territory; environmental changes and communication as factors. In considering Chadwick's (2001), factors and comparing it to that of Mullins's (1999), similarities between their studies are easily identifiable. For example, change, limited or scarce resources as well as civility and inequitable treatment of staff, which implies that certain factors of influences on conflict appear to be constant.

According to Bennett (2014, p.145), power is a crucial resource in different organizations because "individuals compete for jobs, titles and prestige". Chadwick also goes on to say that resources such as funding, staffing and time may also give rise to conflict situations at the school level (Chadwick, 2001). This opinion is shared by Ngcobo (2003), Kruger and Van Deventer (2003), and Mullins (1999) who indicate that limited resources often causes conflict in schools because teachers must fight for a share. Poor communication is a major cause of conflict, people communicate differently, and use different body language that may cause conflict amongst people at schools (Kruger & Van Deventer, 2003). Many scholars argue that organisational conflict has both functional and dysfunctional outcomes in different institutions (Rahim, 2001).

According to Carpenter & Kennedy (2001, p.1) a pattern of events common to most conflicts appear to spiral as follows:

•   Sides form as controversy grows, minor conflicts become complex as individuals choose a side
•   Positions harden as parties become narrower and more rigid in their perspective
•   Communication stops, and parties become adversarial

- Conflict goes outside the immediate context as parties look for support and power for example; unions, community structures. Perceptions become distorted and parties lose objectivity.
- Sense of crisis emerges as community divides into factions and coalitions.

The main source of conflict appears to be organisational variables, i.e., goals of the participants, goals of the organisation; the interdependence amongst roles, status of participants, and variations in personality. Cetin & Hacifazlioglu (2004, p.155) indicate that, "throughout the centuries, conflict has been observed as a major problem in educational organisations, and with the coming of the 21st century conflict became one of the most important tools in the development of organisations when it is carefully managed", a proviso that has become obscured. The issue of poor communication as a possible strong contributor to persistent conflicts at the school level is clearly observed at some of the selected schools in this study.

In this study conflict at the four sample schools is viewed in its negative aspects, its alarming frequency, persistence and recurrence that undermine positive structures and healthy working relationships, heralding the onset of conflict chronicity. Davis (2004, p.16) explains that when positive or transformation conflict becomes negative, that state is referred to as spiralling of conflict or conflict escalation. Complexity Theory (Hendrick, 2009; Davis, 2004), views the interaction of various components in a system which tend towards stability, but in which disturbances in one component produces perturbations in another.

3.3   Complexity Theory

Complexity theory is an interdisciplinary theory that had its origins in systems theory. It is a model that originates from the natural sciences, which explains uncertainty and non-linearity (Grobman, 2005) in systems. It accommodates the idea that although systems may be influenced by rule-based principles, they can be unpredictable, and may be altered or changed by the type of feedback within the system (Burnes, 2005).

Complexity theory has been used in the fields of strategic management and organizational studies, and in education (Davis, 2004). The use of Complexity theory in the social sciences has also been described by Mitleton-Kelly (2005, p.2) as "an explanatory framework that helps us understand the behaviour of a complex social (human) system". Schools in my study can be considered organizations in which individuals interact with one another, and where intricate relationships exist with a complex social system (the school). Therefore, Complexity theory provides an innovative perspective from which to view the development and persistence of social phenomena like conflict, and is useful in the explanation, in this case, of conflict in schools. I draw from Hendrick (2009) and Davis (2004), whose explanations of Complexity Theory clearly elucidates its core principles. Davis (2004) specifies Complexity Theory as a framework to explain conflict and conflict transformation at a school level.

Hendrick (2009) on the other hand asserts that not only are the intra-personal activities and practices of the conflicting parties important, but also those of who intervene in the conflict, as well as researchers involved in transformation. A complexity approach also makes the intervener aware of the analyst to the probable effect of his or her own actions in the system. The intervener becomes part of the system that she seeks to intervene, and therefore self-reflection, self-awareness, and mindfulness must permeate the entire process from analysis, developing strategies and intervention, which concord with the autoethnographic stance I adopt in this study.

3.3.1   Features of Complex systems

As a background to understanding the application of Complexity Theory to education and conflict, a description of its salient characteristics is necessary. The explanation is drawn from both Hendrick (2009) and Davis (2004). The following characteristics are described: self-organization, emergence, non-linearity and attractors.

- *Self-organisation* is a central feature of a complex system. Deriving from research on biological systems, Maturana & Francisco, 1980) it explains that in the internal processes of a complex system, each part produces transformation of another (Walby, 2003) by which the entire system is transformed and reproduces itself. Irene (2014) avers that self-organisation

in such systems results from interactions with the environment and is not exclusively internal and an independent process. Self-organisation suggests that people within social organisations are in a constant state of satisfying mutual needs and as such unintentionally organise themselves into a system of buying and selling with no one person in charge or consciously planning (Waldrop, 2008). Hence self-organisation has implications for leadership. Davis (2004) thus asks whether schools of fish and flocks of birds respond to a good leader or whether they are indeed good examples of self-organisation. This contrasts with the school systems whereby there is a general expectation of explicit instructions all the time.

- *Emergence* is another characteristic of a complex system. Mitleton-Kelly (2005) explains that emerging properties, characteristics, arrays, or structures derive from the interaction of the individual components – in other words, larger entities result from the interactions of smaller or simpler entities. The larger entities have properties that the smaller ones individually do not, e.g. a snowflake. That which has emerged is greater than the sum of its parts. Emergence produces a new order (Mitleton-Kelly, 2005, p.19).

- *Non-linearity* – Contrary to the normative understanding of cause and effect, causal relationships in systems are not proportionate. Conventional science principles suggest outputs of a system are proportional to the inputs, but in a complex system this is not necessarily the case (Hendrick, 2009). Davies (2004) describes this as 'complex adaptive systems' (CAS's), alternatively called dynamic or non-linear systems, for example, physical systems like the weather or the brain, or social systems, like the economy. Negative and positive *feedback* influences the emergence of a new order. Minor changes, called *perturbations* can produce huge effects, e.g. destruction of creatures in an ecosystem will have a ripple or magnified effect on the entire ecosystem. Davis (2004, p. 22) describes the 'butterfly effect', the notion that "the flap of an insect's wings in China could change the course of a hurricane in Haiti in a week later".

Thus, in a linear system, the components are independent of each other, while in non-linear systems the various components are interdependent. Davies (2004, p.20) avers that Complex theory has "profound applications to education and to conflict". In the educational context of my

study, disruption caused by specific individuals or a group of individuals at a school will produce disruptions in the different sectors of the schools.

- *Attractors:* When something changes (or is changed) in a system it influences the system. It takes a little while for the system to change and settle down, known as the transient phase. The system then adapts to the change and settles down in response to the "attractive" pull of the new variable or *attractor* (Rickles et al., 2007). An attractor is therefore whatever the system acts like after it has passed the transient stage. The set of points that are "pulled" towards an attractor is known as the basin of attraction. If an attractor is a point that does not move, it is known as a fixed point. However, in complex systems, which are open systems, this rule may be violated as attractors can change as this is referred to as *strange attractors*.

Rickles et al. (2007) explain that strange attractors are not always in a steady state or produce the same pattern of behaviour. In the context of the school, the creation of solutions to conflict will mean the creation of a new dynamic to break the hold of the dominant attractors and bring about transformation (Morgan, 1997). If the current attractor is too strong, change will not occur. People have types of fixed thinking and behaviour (attractors) that make it difficult for change to occur. So deep can thoughts, feelings and emotions run, that even if the other party makes positive attempts to remedy the conflict, these are still seen in a negative way (Coleman, 2006). A good example of this is *racism* – attempts by one group to remedy the problem, may still be viewed by the other with suspicion because identity is a strong attractor.

Therefore, Complexity theory enables one to see education systems as, "particular sets of strange attractors coming together to enable adaption to new turbulences in society" (Davis, 2004, p.28). A key area for conflict is social exclusion, which impacts on schools as it is influenced by the social capital of students and their orientation towards education. Hence in school settings, Brook & Smith (2001) suggests the presence of control parameters which can be connectivity, variety and diversity, rate of information flow and anxiety.

Coleman (2003, p.7) refers to large scale conflicts that have continued for extended periods of time as "intractable "conflicts. He asserts that such a conflict situation is paradoxical –although

it is a disruptive situation, it has been enduring for so long that it has become a "stable" situation. It persists for so long, yet it is a volatile situation. To illustrate his point, he describes the example of the Arab-Israeli conflict that has occurred for decades. The chronic conflict I describe on the local or micro scale – that is, at the school level is also complexified by the several interlocking factors and the non-linear relationships amongst them. Therefore, Complexity Theory is a relevant model through which to view chronic conflict at schools. However, one must also be cautious not to claim that everything is affected by something else. One must consider two overarching factors – the environment in which the conflict is taking place, and the actors' beliefs, attitudes, actions which perpetuate the problem. The strategy must analyse where to intervene – is it at both levels, or one, or the other? Thus, there is the need to consider the different views and opinions of all parties in the conflict context to analyse how certain characteristics have become entrenched.

Davis (2004) asserts that although there has been a strong focus on inequality, social class and gender issues within the sociology of education, the issue of conflict has received far less attention. She further indicates that we lack a suitable theoretical framework which can explain the role of education in either reproducing conflict universally, or how education can contribute to peace, or why some schools resist conflict while others succumb to it. In attempting to theorize on the dynamics of 'chronic conflict' at the level of the schools selected for my study, I rely on Complexity Theory, which has emerged as an insightful way among current and contemporary ways to analyse and understand educational organisations.

In this section I have described some salient characteristics and concepts of Complexity Theory. The rationale for doing so is that such concepts will assist an enhanced exploration and understanding of facets of the conflict contexts, will assist in the analysis of conflict, and in the development of strategies for conflict transformation.

3.3.2   Complexity of conflict

Davis (2004) asserts that there is no sign that the world will become a less conflictual place. She stated that in-spite of peace agreements and the spread of international human right conventions, the emergence of conflicts in various places, states, countries are unstoppable. Whilst various laws may be a prohibiting factor in some countries, domestic violence, school violence continues. She asserts that conflict is a part of our lives. I share her view that it is difficult to foresee a time when there, "will not be a struggle for resources and when those seeking or maintaining power will not use some form of conflict in power interest" (Davis, 2004, p.3).

As a dispute, conflict is universal in the politics of family, community and nation (Agerback, 1996, p.27). In that sense any dynamic human system is by nature a conflictive one, encompassing the play of opposing interests. The crux lies in how such conflict is managed. So long as the social and political processes provide channels for dialogue, participation and negotiation, conflict plays a constructive role. Where such channels are blocked, and basic needs remain unmet, then resentment and desperation will build up, and results in protest, repression and violence. According to Davis (2004), it is this description of conflict that links the universal nature of it with important aspects of it where it stems from and how people respond to it. Implicit in this understanding is the dynamism of conflict, its fluid nature, its presentation of interests of the varying participants and importantly how it is managed or not managed.

Isenhart & Spangle (2000) offer the following understanding of the nature of conflict:
- A real or apparent incompatibility of interest or goals.
- A belief that parties' current aspirations cannot be achieved simultaneously
- A struggle over values and claims to status, power or resources
- An intermediate stage of a spectrum of struggle that escalates and becomes more destructive.

I draw on the ideas of Davis (2004) on the nature of conflict to understand the conflict at school level. I concur with Davis (2004), that the link between conflict and education is a grossly un-analysed area, as it encroaches on an uncomfortable terrain of policy, decision makers and curriculum developers. It is safer for policy makers to focus on literacy and numeracy, on measurable targets, diverting the attention to that which is quantifiable and less conflictive.

Until recently with the introduction of life skills, and Life Orientation into the school curriculum, the issue of human rights and peace-education within the South African Schooling system was left to the NGO's (Non-Governmental Organisations). There is an urgent need to integrate such into the mainstream of education, on the basis that everything is interlinked and therefore needs a "robust sociological theory, a vision as well as description of everyday reality" (Davies, 2004, p.7).

In developing a deeper understanding and insight into the phenomenon of conflict and specifically conflict chronicity it becomes essential to consider its causation. Davis (2004) suggests this is important to understand the role of education in this equation. Hence to understand the connectivity between the various theories of the causes of conflict in relation to education, I summarize the main ideas of some prominent theories. I suggest that this description will extend the explanation of Complexity Theory as an analytical framework of conflict at the micro-level of the school context.

3.2.2.1 Attribution theory

When people attempt to understand their world, they assign qualities and causes to people and situations, often claiming positive consequences to their own actions whilst assigning negative ones to that of others. This theory of behaviour interpretivism was first researched by Heider (2015) and is largely concerned with the "how" and the "what" by which people process information in attempting to understand situations or events and can be used in understanding the behaviour patterns of individuals in the selected school's stories of this study.

3.2.2.2 Equity theory

From a perspective of justice and fairness, individuals feel aggrieved when they feel they are being treated unjustly. This theory is accorded to the research work of Adams & Butterfield (1965) and is based largely on an advocacy of fair balance between the employees' inputs and

their job satisfaction by way of benefits. In the context of our schools, this relates to Union activism, the watchdog of teachers that ensure teacher protection.

3.2.2.3 Field theory

The best-known proponent of which is Kurt Lewin (2009) who emphasised the notion that individuals and groups are interdependent and that their actions are products of their contextual factors. Lewin believed that the social group is the primary influence of a person's thoughts, feelings and behaviour. Isenhart & Spangle (2000) also declared that communities, groups or schools serve as a physiological field where competing individuals create safe or hostile environments. It is the dynamics of the respective environment which individuals find themselves in that influence their responses to specific situations of conflict. This is evident in each of the four selected schools where initial conflicts unattended or poorly managed fester in a fertile environment giving life to conflict chronicity.

3.2.2.4 Interactionist theory

Is of the view that conflict is a consequence of on-going negotiations about that which is valued, how behaviours are interpreted and the subsequent meaning of events. The interactionist view emphasises the influence of direct human and social interaction instead of large social institutions or historical developments. Interactionism does not claim actions to be inherently right or wrong. The value of an act is socially prescribed. These moral assumptions are personal convictions received through social interaction (Coleman, 2003).

3.2.2.5 Social Exchange Theory (SET)

This theory suggests that social behaviour is the result of an exchange process, the purpose of which is based widely on choices made to maximise benefits and minimise costs. Accordingly, these theorists propose that people choose relationships based on potential benefits and risks and terminate such relationships when the latter is greater. Hence positive relationships are those whereby benefits exceed costs.

3.2.2.6 Phase Theory

Refers to the present and latest way to consider or study the cyclic nature of the system as proposed by Chomsky (2005). In consideration of the nature of conflicts at the level of the school, this theory suggest that conflicts proceed through a foreseeable or predictable sequence of behaviours, and that such behaviours that spur conflict can be identified and tend to perpetuate or increase conflict. In exploring on-going conflicts at school level, phase theory is suited to understand the nature and manifestation of conflicts at school based on the recurring behaviour patterns of individuals. For example, in the sampled schools, types of behaviours and characteristics preceding conflicts became apparent and predictable over time.

3.2.2.7 Systems Theory

Another significant theory to consider in theorising conflicts is that of systems theory which broadly analyses conflict in terms of roles, processes and patterns and the function the conflicts serves within the system. It attempts to discover the specific rules that govern the system's behaviour. Conflict according to Emerson (2007), suggests that conflict erupts when the system or sub-system breaks down or individuals exceeds their roles thus creating imbalances. The systems approach is according to Emerson (2007) based on certain basic principles, namely:

a) "systems operate as an interdependent unit with no villain, heroes, good and bad people, healthy or unhealthy members" (Emerson, 2007, p.131). This principle focuses on patterns of interaction between individuals pointing to the circular causality of components within the system – that is, everyone affects the behaviour of the other and is affected by it in turn;

b) "The cycle can be changed by any one person changing his or her behaviour" (Emerson, 2007, p.132). The second principle focuses on sustenance of the system based on the roles assigned to people within the system and the co-operation amongst them in fulfilling their responsibilities, and

c) systems with intense relationships tend to produce triangles, Triangles they state behave in predictable ways and sometimes in toxic ways over a period (Hocker et al., 1994).

3.2.2.8 Transformation theory

Conflict transformation is the process by which conflicts, e.g. ethnic conflicts, are transformed into peaceful outcomes (Galtung et al., 1995). Its approach differs from that of conflict management or conflict resolution in that it aims in transforming the relationships that support conflicts and violence whilst conflict management seeks to manage and contain conflicts. Conflict resolution attempts to move conflicting parties towards positive outcomes, often with the assistance of external agents. In contrast to other conflict management approaches, it recognises that present day conflicts go beyond a reframing of positions and the 'win-win' outcomes. Like systems theory, it focuses on relationships suggesting that the structure of parties and relationships maybe immersed in a pattern of conflictual relationships that extend beyond the specific site.

Conflict transformation therefore is a process of transforming relationships, interests, discourses and if necessary the respective society itself (Galtung et al., 1995). It propels parties or a society to deal with deeper social issues. For example, as found at a sample school, the application of rules about mobile phones forced the school to eventually deal with deeper issues about racism.

Botes (2003) asks whether "conflict transformation" is not an issue of semantics and questions whether conflict transformation has indeed offered new theoretical notions to conflict studies or whether it is a mere reformatting of the term conflict resolution. Whilst he concedes that there is a slight shift towards conflict transformation, it is argued by most that conflict transformation needs to be more directly defined to position it appropriately in the study of conflicts. Likewise, Mitchell et al. (2002, p.1) argues that the concept of conflict transformation came about as a response to the increasing misuse of the term, 'resolution' to represent anything less than victory, defeat and revenge as an outcome. Interestingly Mitchell et al. (2002, p.1) suggests that "transformation is a process that will make up for the inadequacies of mere resolution". He

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concludes that the two approaches that is, conflict transformation and conflict resolution" are closely linked and have much in common but is unsure if they refer to the same phenomena.

In a similar vein, at the school level, it would be incumbent on all stakeholders to regard conflict as a necessary combination of all its aspects, be it conflict resolution, conflict transformation or conflict mediation if one is to successfully manage conflict. Organisational psychology speaks of the distinction between cognitive conflict and affective conflict which is deemed necessary in a deep understanding of the phenomenon conflict and more so 'chronic conflict'. Davis (2004) refers to cognitive conflict as task oriented and being overt and which generally focuses on roles and responsibilities, procedures and policies and resources which enhances group performance, whilst affective conflict she says occurs more subtly and refers to emotions, like hatred or jealously, which can reduce performance. She suggests however, that it is unlikely, especially in education, that there is a clear distinction between the two, an assertion I am inclined to accept. Given the recurring and persistence of conflicts at each of the four schools, based on numerous factors as will be seen in analysing the narration, it would be hazardous to attribute these chronic conflicts clinically to any one of these states. As Fisher (2000, p.10) states "Peace is a process...stable peace is a relatively rare state" and so is conflict also a process based on our daily experiences of life.

As indicated earlier, not all conflict is necessarily harmful and destructive, so too in exploring the above theories, it is abundantly clear that not all the theories are associated with the negative outcome of conflicts but relates to positive outcomes as well. I agree with Davis (2004, p.16), when she suggest that a "certain amount or type of conflict is necessary for a functioning democracy, whereby challenges are made to injustice or to incompetent governance". In this study conflict at the four sample schools is viewed in its negative aspects, its alarming frequency, persistence and recurrence becoming cancerous to the extent of demolishing positive structures and undermining healthy working relationships, heralding the onset of conflict chronicity. Davis (2004, p.16) explains that when positive or transformation conflict becomes negative, the state is referred to as "spirals" of conflict or conflict escalation.

According to Carpenter & Kennedy (2001, p.1) a pattern of events common to most conflicts appear to spiral as follows:

- Sides form as controversy grows, minor conflicts become complex as individuals choose a side
- Positions harden as parties become narrower and more rigid in their perspective
- Communication stops, and parties become adversarial
- Conflict goes outside the immediate context as parties look for support and power for example; unions, community structures. Perceptions become distorted and parties lose objectivity.
- Sense of crisis emerges as community divides into factions and coalitions.

Davis (2004) proposes that the spiralling is a type of triangulation where each party within the conflict seeks alliance of another, for example, a pupil leaning on a parent for support against a teacher. This defensive, 'face- saving' behaviour occurs when parties perceive threats to their social identities (Isenhart & Spangle, 2003). Thus, the process of resolving conflicts becomes ensnared as parties spend time and energy on protecting their images, a condition Woollcott (2006) refers to as 'threat inflation'.

3.4. Conflict Management Theories

An important conception of conflict is frequently influenced by the position that the respective parties assume, be it **subjectivist** or **objectivist** (Jacoby, 2013). Jacoby (2013) suggests that a conflict is largely subjectivist to the extent that it relies on the actors or subjects involved in the conflict to define their situation as conflictive. Mitchell (1981, p.51) suggests that an understanding of conflict tend to comprise three elements prior to the manifestation of conflictive behaviour:

- **Incipient:** is regarded as a situation in which a conflict is not recognised by one or more parties. In reflecting on my profession trajectory, as already discussed in the Prologue of this study, I am reminded of my older sister who was a year apart from me at high school and

always regarded as the 'good' one and who repeatedly failed to recognise my ongoing conflict with her, and other students of her disposition as well as several teachers.

- **Latent:** arises when goal incompatibility is perceived but not persuasive enough to result in observable conflictive behaviour. In contrast of Mitchell's second element, I draw on my early data where goal incompatibility between my former teachers (who later became my initial colleagues) and I is revealed. Whilst they embarked on a 'jug-mug' education journey, mine was to develop critical thinkers who never failed to question and challenge. Despite our mutual understanding of our incompatible goals, that is with those of my colleagues, they never readily pursued debates or discussions, hence our disagreements often took a moderate tone.

- **Suppressed conflict** exists when one or more parties are aware of a conflictive situation but pursuing their goals is too costly to produce conflictive behaviour. In a similar vein, when I attempted to report the sexual advances of our primary school History teacher to my form teacher who readily sympathised with me but could not pursue the matter for fear of exposure of her extra-marital affair.

The latter two stages as depicted by Mitchell do not readily characterize conflictive situations of the selected schools of this study since they appear to be far more passive and tolerant. On the contrary had they been experienced at any or all the four selected schools, an eminent emergence of conflicts and not 'chronic conflict' might possibly have been the resultant outcome. With hindsight and a firmer grasp and sharpened understanding of conflict, I now find myself in a favorable position of understanding Mitchell's exposé of the three suggested elements of conflictive behaviour.

Defining what constitutes a conflictive situation by itself will offer a more objective position, i.e. the object as opposed to the subject. It is often argued that this offers a more inclusive way of identifying conflicts. Hence Jacoby (2013) states that conflicts are "not seen as a matter of subjective definition but as determined by the social structure".

3.4.1   Multi-Team System' (MTS's)

The theoretical framework of 'Multi-Team System' (MTS's) demarcates the effectiveness with which sets of groups perform collaborative tasks (Mathieu et al., 2001). MTS boundaries are defined by the fact that all teams within the system while pursuing different goals share at least one common goal, usually in the interest of the organisation and therefore establish a sense of interdependence. Mathieu illustrates this by describing how fire-fighters and ambulance teams must work closely to synchronise their efforts to achieve their objective of saving lives. Similarly, all stakeholders at the school level should be primarily concerned with enhancing the quality of education, by focusing on the primary stakeholder that being the learner.

3.4.2   Walton's theory of lateral relationships

Walton's theory of lateral relationships (2000) provides a description of effective intergroup relations. The theory distinguishes integrative **(effective)** from distributive **(ineffective)** intergroup relations. Integrative group relations he says are characterized by a problem-solving decision-making mode that are usually characterized by: positive attitudes namely trust, friendliness, flexibility, openness, and inclusion of the 'other'. **Distributive** intergroup relations on the other hand he asserts are characterized by a deliberate distortion of information, rigidly negative attitudes, suspicion, hostility, dissociation from the other and which usually graduates a conflict situation to 'chronic conflict' as is prevalent at the school level. It is for this reason therefore that the problem-solving approach is considered most constructive as it considers the goals of both parties (Mouton, 2001; De Dreu, 1999).

3.4.3   Lawrence and Lorch's Negotiation

In contrast to Walton's framework, Lawrence and Lorch's (1996) literature considers negotiations as a more effective tool to manage conflict. The endurance of the negotiated settlement is cited as an important justification. There appears to be however growing evidence that the negative interdependence between groups increases hostile intergroup behaviour (Schopler et al., 2001). Research based on realistic conflict theory (Crozier, 1975) as well as the

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theory of competition and co-operation (Tjosvold, 1998) stress that effective intergroup relations are rooted in the cooperative rather than competitive interdependence between groups suggesting that positive interdependence between individuals or groups result in effective intergroup relations. While relationships between groups may bear considerable conflict potential (Thomas, 2015), they do not necessarily have to be rich in conflicts, or may on the other hand be conflicting in some respects, but harmonious in others. Intergroup conflict does not have to be detrimental for organisations as suggested by Putnam (2008). Likewise, Rahim (2001, p.12) asserts that little or no conflict may even result in stagnation, poor decisions and ineffectiveness.

3.4.4   The five A's technique

An acclaimed study in the management of conflicts is that of Borisoff and Victor (1998) who have identified and established five steps in the conflict management process and referred to this as the "five A's technique" of conflict management. These have come to gain much prominence and are frequently advanced by many during coping with conflicts. Borisoff and Victor (1998) suggest that these five techniques facilitates a sustained and on-going process of problem solving – oriented conflict management.

- **Assessment** – This technique is said to be the investigative phase of conflict situation. It is within this step that the following respective parties accumulate relevant information concerning the problem and then select the most appropriate conflict handling mode for this situation. This then lends to joint decision or what is the conflict, and what is of consequence to the problem, who is responsible for the conflict. Areas in which they are willing to compromise and what each party wants. This phase also includes examining the history of the conflict, if any with the individual or organisation.

- **Acknowledgement** –This step allows each party to be heard and develops the empathy needed for a synergised solution to the issue at hand. Acknowledgement facilitates an understanding of the other's position, despite differences. It encourages open communication using listening skills and non –verbal encouragement.

- **Attitude** – this step attempts to remove the foundation for 'pseudo – conflict'. It implies therefore that an attitude of wanting to resolve the issue and move forward must exist. It allows for the uncovering of stereotypical assumptions about different culturally – based

behaviours. Often such misinterpretation of communication variations of persons they say may have little to do with the content of the messages, but rather reflect culturally learned approaches. Within this attitude step one recognises problematic variations in patterns of writing, speaking and non-verbal mannerisms which may obscure meanings. It therefore becomes incumbent on the conflictive individual to keep an open mind towards all parties that are involved in the conflict.

- **Action-** This technique calls for the presence of two active steps namely: acting and providing feedback if the resolution is to be effective. It sees the active implementation of the chosen conflict- handling mode. If such a mode is the problem - solving approach, then the opportunity for a conflict resolution based on trust and ongoing feedback is established. Parties evaluate the behaviour of the other and identify the possibility of trouble spots, at the same time remaining aware of their own communication style and behaviour. Parties must hence remain alert to contemporary issues and productive solutions.

- **Analysis** –it is necessary to analyse and understand what caused the conflict to begin with. This last step requires participants to decide on what they will do, consolidate and review what has been agreed on. This analysis step must further assess whether every participant's requirements was addressed and possibly met. It also prepares for on-going conflict management as a process and allows participants to monitor both short and long-term results of the conflict resolution.

Borisoff and Victor (1998) conclude that in reducing or avoiding conflict a sound an effective system of communication is vital, and the absence thereof can lead to a conflict embroiled organisation or institution, a scenario described in the analysis chapter of this study.

3.4.5   Quantum Skills Approach

My use of Quantum Skills Approach is from a management perspective since my thesis is written from a management point of view. In keeping with the view that the traditional skills of planning, organising, directing and controlling are inadequate in a rapid, highly challenging world of sophisticated 21st century organisations, Shenton (2004) interestingly offered a more

contemporary approach to conflict management. This new and different approach presented a unique set of management skills more suited to the changing, conflict- ridden organisations. They referred to these skills as quantum skills derived from the field of quantum physics.

Recent research on psychology, biology and neurophysiology suggested that human beings are indeed quantum beings (Shenton, 2004). This holistic quantum approach advocates that it is "good for managers and employees to bring their whole persons to work, their bodies, minds and spirits" (Daft & Lengel, 2000).

These skills as suggested are as follows:

3.3.5.1   Quantum Seeing-Perceptions are shaped by internal assumptions and beliefs (Wheatley & Rodgers, 1996, p.49), which influence assumptions and   intentions. Leaders must consider this subjective nature of external reality and how it impinges upon conflict. How Parties must recognise the relationship between individual thought, processes and perceptions and establish clear intentions for resolving the problem.

3.3.5.2   Quantum thinking –logical, linear thinking skills are inadequate in the 21st century world of changing organisations that do not exist as logical entities. Paradoxical, unconventional thinking is required, since effective conflict resolution is a paradoxical process As Shenton (2004, p.30) states: "Win-win solutions require paradoxical thinking. They require the ability to find a fully acceptable solution to divergent points of view"

3.3.5.3 Quantum feeling - this skill is defined as the ability to feel alive. It is informed by the assumption that organisational conflict is influenced by negative emotions especially in the corporate world. Managers identifying with this quantum feeling technique must skill themselves

to view even negative events positively. They must challenge parties to utilise creative, brainstorming techniques to seek win-win solutions.

3.3.5.4   Quantum knowing – this skill involves the ability to know intuitively; it requires integrating, relaxation and reflection times into work schedules. It focuses on being aware of the organisational environment, guiding parties towards a centred response to the negative emotions.

3.3.5.5   Quantum acting – this skill is based on being able to act responsibly. Quantum acting is informed by the premise that everything in the universe is a part of a complex whole with each part being influenced by the other. As such the manager's thoughts affect the entire organisation and must therefore encourage positive behaviour by modelling the same.

3.3.5.6   Quantum thinking – this skill it is asserted is the ability to trust life's process and derives from the chaos theory which suggests that without chaos organisations will stagnate. It suggests that managers must simply, "ride the rapids of conflict, fully participating in the dance without attempting to actively manage the course of the resolution" (Shenton, 2004, p.37).

3.3.5.7   Quantum being – this skill is the ability to be in relationships specifically, "the ability to literally be so connected to another that one can see the world through the other's eyes" (Shenton, 2004, p.38).   It is a skill or a technique that allows all parties to learn from and understand each other.

This set of skills as established by Shelton (2004), is grounded in a new science, a world view and provides a 'whole –brained', alternative for managing people and conflict. Other studies subsequently show that in managing an effective, value-driven organisation one must display courage and the mastery of new and innovative skills with one such approach being that of quantum skills, which does indeed present new ways and a better understanding of how to reach organisational excellence.   Albert Einstein stated that it is impossible to assess new theories with the same tools that created the old ones (Einstein, 1977).

Shenton's explanation allows for the intense connectivity of individuals such that they can see the 'world through the other's eyes'. The focus of the interpersonal relationship is strongly

advocated by most of the conflict theorists through their respective models. There are many theories of managing conflict as there are of types of conflicts, ranging from former models to simple problem-solving skills. Despite this conflict continues to emerge, increasing in frequency and complexity in various settings, and as projected in the chosen schools of this study. The possible solution to the unanswered question of 'Why?' maybe attributed to the challenge in selecting the most appropriate resolution or model for the conflict at hand.

In the instance of 'chronic conflict' as in a chronic ailment, the incorrect treatment or medication may result in aggravating the condition and worse still incur fruitless and wasteful expenditure. It is hoped therefore that in presenting a few appropriate models of conflict my research study would shed some insight into the management or resolution of typical and persistent conflicts as experienced at the level of schools.

3.4.6   The circle of conflict

The Circle of conflict is a model adapted by Gary Furlong (2005), which focuses on the causes and various catalysts or drivers of conflict. This model stipulates the six most common drivers of conflict which he briefly describes as being the following:

- Values – that is one's belief system, right versus wrong, good versus bad.
- Relationships – stereotypes, poor or failed communications, negative repetitive behaviour
- Externals/ Moods – factors unrelated to the conflict, physiological or psychological issues of parties in conflict.
- Data – lack of information, misinformation, too much information, data collection problems.
- Interest – each party's wants, needs, desires, fears or concerns
- Structure – limitations or resources like time and money, geographical constraints, organisational structure, authority issues.

Furlong asserts that in analysing the conflict, it is important to use all components. He further states that the model can be used as a tool for diagnosing the various components of the conflict

as well as a process – directing the tool in the resolution of a dispute (2005). Furlong's Circle of Conflict resembles a pie graph, divided into six equal parts in which the first three drivers (above) that is values, relationships, externals, moods appear in the top half of the circle with data, interests and structures in the bottom half. However, Furlong is clear when advocating for conflict resolution in that he says that one should focus on the conflict's data, structure and interests as opposed to values, relationships and external moods.

Figure 3.4.6 Model 1: Circle of Conflict (Furlong, 2005)
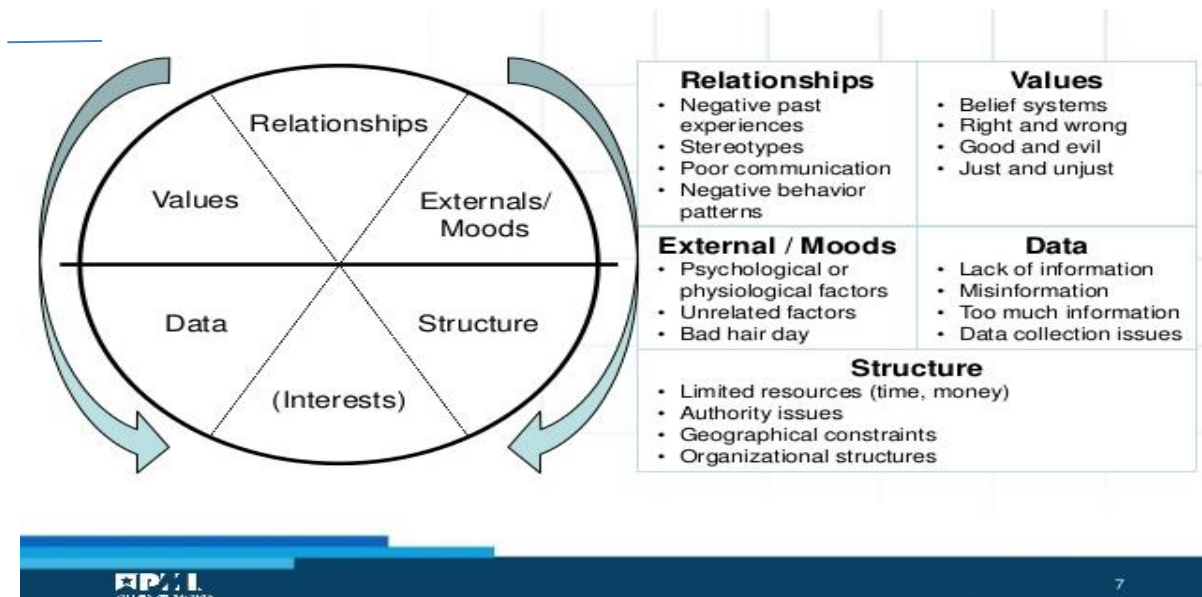
3.4.7   The Thomas Kilman Conflict Resolution Model (TKI-2015)

The Thomas Kilman Conflict Mode Instrument (TKI) is probably one of the better-known models that is more commonly known and generally utilised in most organisations daily, including schools. As a leading model in conflict resolution for over thirty years, it is a relatively uncomplicated and friendly instrument implemented in the resolution of conflicts and is continually updated. The TKI reflects that no two individuals have the same expectations and desires hence conflict becomes a natural aspect of individuals interactions with each other. It is designed to measure a person's behaviour in conflict situations. Kilman, like other researchers

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states that conflict situations are those in which the concerns of individuals appear to be incompatible in such situations (2015) this behaviour the proponents of this model indicate can be explained along two dimensions. These are five conflict management styles based on the following two dimensions:

- Assertiveness – that is the extent to which the individual attempts to satisfy his or her own concerns
- Cooperativeness – that is the extent to which the individual attempts to satisfy the other person's concerns

The above two dimensions according to TKI elucidate 5 different modes for responding to conflict situations.

Figure 3.4.7 The Thomas Kilman Conflict Resolution: Model 2 (TKI-2015)
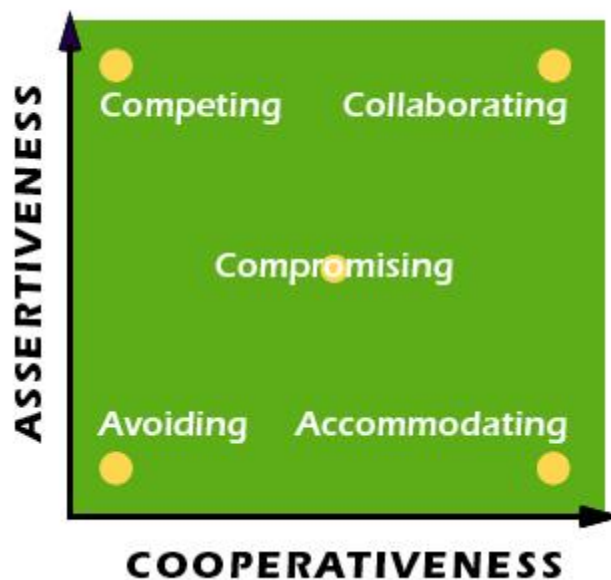
According to Thomas Kilman (2015), the 5 conflict management styles are the following:

1. **Accommodating**- when there is a high degree of cooperation which may work against the individual's goals and objectives. It is effective when recognising the more appropriate structure of the party or when strengthening future relationships with them.

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2. **Avoiding** – this simply means avoiding the issue. It does not assist the other party in attaining their goals; neither does one assertively pursue one's own goals. This is usually when issues are minor, one recognises a minimum chance of being successful and due to intense emotions, there's a need to create some space. However, it is cautioned that, "hope is not a strategy", and avoiding is not recommended as a long-term strategy.

3. **Collaborating** – this is when both parties team up to achieve goals of both, commonly seen as breaking free from the, "win- lose" paradigm in pursuit of the, "win-win". It can be more effective for complex situations with the challenge being creating greater space for the ideas of all. However, it calls for greater trust and consumes more time and effort to consolidate all the ideas.

4. **Competing** – this is a straight forward, "win – lose" approach. One is personally driven, acting in a very assertive way to achieve one's own goal without attempting to cooperate with the other party and maybe at the expense of the other party. This approach may be appropriate when there are time constraints and quick decisive decisions need to be taken and people involved are aware of the approach.

5. **Compromising** – this is the, "lose –lose" situation where neither party attains that which they want and requires a moderate degree of assertiveness and cooperation. It is appropriate where both parties have equally important goals and where a temporary solution is needed. Thomas Kilman states that the trap is using compromising as an effortless way out when collaboration could be more effective.

Thomas Kilman (2015) indicates that all of us can use all five conflict handling styles and that no individual can be characterised by one specific mode in dealing with conflicts. Some people however use certain modes better and frequently, be this because of habit or subsequent temperament. Hence, they indicate that the individual's conflict behaviour in the work place is a result of both one's personal tendency and the dynamics of the conflict situation one is in. The TKI is thus designed to measure the blend of conflict – handling modes. Given the varying characteristics of individuals in this study, this mix of conflict handling techniques appear to best suit the numerous conflict situations at the different schools as will be seen in the ensuing chapters. Thomas and Kilman further assert that in understanding the above one will be more aware of one's own default patterns and in so doing you will improve your self-awareness. In

knowing this you will learn whether they are working for you and you can therefore seek other alternatives.

3.4   Conclusion

In this chapter, the reader was oriented to the broad theoretical framework used in the study to understand the dynamics of 'chronic conflict' at the school level, namely Complexity Theory. This theory, which is transdisciplinary in nature, asserts that changes in any system are non-linear, unpredictable and the product of complex processes and multi-systems, which necessitates original strategy development and intervention for each conflict scenario. Given its transdisciplinary nature, Complexity Theory allows other theoretical frameworks to be collaboratively used to understand conflicts, and several other theories which are aligned have been described above, namely, Attribution theory (Heider, 1983). Equity theory (Adams & Butterfield, 1965), Field theory, Lewin (2009), Interactionist theory (Coleman, 2003, Social Exchange Theory (SET), Phase Theory Chomsky (2005), Systems Theory, Emerson (2007) and Transformation theory (Galtung et al., 1995).

In the next chapter, the research methodology employed in the study will be explained.

Chapter 4:

Research Methodology

4.1   Introduction

Methodology is the "analysis of the assumptions, principles, and procedures in a particular approach to inquiry" (Schwandt, 2003, p.161), and conveys how the research will unfold, as well as justifies the use of methods to collect data (Schwandt, 2003).

In this study, *Exploring the dynamics of chronic conflict in schools,* the research is a response to the critical questions asked in the study, namely, *what* is the nature of 'chronic conflict' at schools; *how* is 'chronic conflict' manifested at schools, and *why* does 'chronic conflict' manifest in the way it does at these schools?

The following will be discussed in this chapter: the choice of an interpretivist, qualitative methodology; the research design; my positionality as researcher; the research instruments used to gather data, ethical compliance and considerations, and how the data was analysed. A physical and historical description of each of the four selected schools for the study is also provided, and the criteria for selecting each of the schools are given.

4.2   The philosophical underpinnings of the research

4.2.1   The Interpretivist paradigm

This study underpinned by an interpretivist paradigm, uses a qualitative case study approach to make sense of, and interpret the meaning participants bring with them in the context of interpersonal interaction and conflict in four schools that were sampled in Durban, South Africa. Guba & Lincoln (2005) suggest that prior to deciding on research methodology, attention should be paid to the critical issue of paradigm. This study is underpinned by an interpretivist paradigm. Cohen et al. (2007, p.38) define paradigm as the philosophical intent or motivation for undertaking a study. Guba & Lincoln (2005, p.38) define paradigm as a basic belief system or world view that guides the investigator not only on choices of method but in ontologically and epistemologically fundamental ways. Sapsford (2006, p.175) describes methodology as "a philosophical stance of worldview that underlies and informs a style of research". Whilst research methodology embraces skills in respect of data collection and analysis, epistemology is what is regarded as knowledge and ontology constitutes what is real and what entities exist (Packer, 2000). This research in located within the interpretative paradigm which attempts to explain the world of human experience (Cohen et al., 2000). As such, a study rooted within the interpretative paradigm explores the rationale of peoples' worldviews and how such views are influenced by social interaction and experience, interpreting phenomenon in terms of meanings people bring to them (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Interpretivism is suited to uncovering

participants' relativist and phenomenological meanings by analysing their words and actions (Coleman, 2006), in their natural settings (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005), allowing the researcher insight into the subjective world of the participants, their meanings and experiences (Cohen et al., 2000; Merriam, 2008).

4.2.2 The qualitative study

The purpose of qualitative research is to understand the meaning people construct about the world, or as Merriam (2008, p.13) asserts "how people make sense of their world and the experiences they have". Therefore, qualitative researchers study phenomena in their natural settings, with an attempt to "make sense of, or understand phenomena with respect to their meaning as interpreted by individuals. (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). Qualitative researchers reject positivistic methods, or quantification (Corbin & Strauss, 2008) and use methods that generate narrative, descriptive accounts of different settings and phenomena (Parkinson & Drislane, 2001), and analyse data from interviews, text, audio, video, photographs and artefacts, not bound to numerical data (Schwandt, 2003).

Qualitative research is characterized by a diverse range of data collection and analysis methods, as well as theoretical positions. Understanding meanings as they unfold social contexts is more important than determining cause and effect, prediction or generalization. In this study, coupled with my autoethnographic stance, I attempt to understand the dynamics and nuances of conflict that escalated to a chronic situation in four schools, or cases.

In Chapter 1, Section 1.2. I described a*utoethnography* as a method of research that employs a systematic self-reflective analysis in exploring one's own life story within a sociocultural and historical context in which it occurred (Ellis, 2003). My stance does challenges conventional ways of doing research and presents research as a socially conscious activity, the reflexive nature of which makes it both a process and product (Adams & Holman, 2008). In this study, writing and story forms (narratives) of the participants form a substantial part of the data collection.

While autoethnography appears as a divergent style of research in both its form and art, yet it is not meant to undermine academic rigour; the reader will recognize normative considerations within its structure and output. However, the latitude available allows for a more flexible

presentation, and the consideration that as a researcher my own subjectivity is entwined with the research, particularly so as the research is situated in my work context, and as I am an insider, my positionality which will be elaborated in section 4.4.4 below. As an autoethnographer I embed in my research and writing my personal social and cultural beliefs, practices and experience to write about realizations and reflections that have left indelible impressions upon me, fully aware of the theoretical and methodological rigour of the social sciences.

4.3   Research design and methodology

Research design is the whole methodical plan of how the research will be accomplished, which includes explaining the purpose of the research, stating the research questions, and describing how the data will be collected and analysed. In other words, it is the systematic, logical plan of the inquiry (Jalil, 2013). The research design also includes an elaboration of the philosophical underpinnings of the research. As a qualitative researcher my research is underpinned by an interpretivist stance, which allows me to explore the participants' perceptions of the world and experience, as well as permits my own autoethnographic stance.

The design responds to the key questions of the study, namely:

1.   What is the nature of chronic conflict at selected schools;
2.   How is chronic conflict manifested at selected schools, and
3.   Why does chronic conflict manifest in the way it does at these selected schools?

To do this I found a case study approach to be appropriate.

4.3.1   The Case Study

Case study research is an essential form of research enquiry and can be positivist (Yukl, 2010) or interpretivist (Waldrop, 2008: Stake, 2003). I consider the qualitative case study method appropriate for eliciting thick data, especially since I utilise complex, multivariate conditions as they present themselves within the selected schools of my study. The case study method is described as an empirical enquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-

life context, when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clear, and in which multiple sources of evidence are used (Yukl, 2010).

Similarly, Denzin and Lincoln (2018) contend that qualitative research encompasses an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world where qualitative researchers study items in their natural settings, making sense of or interpreting phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. Case study research method can be used successfully in carefully planned and crafted studies of real-life situations, issues and problems. In this research study, the in-depth "live" scenarios within the context of selected schools in KwaZulu-Natal, offers substantial data for interrogating and exploring the phenomenon of 'chronic conflict' and how and why it manifests in the way it does at the chosen schools.

As advocated by qualitative research, this study embraces the use of various data collection instruments. In the pursuit of a deeper understanding of the phenomenon 'chronic conflict' the instruments and techniques used for data collection included documentary analysis, semi-structured interviews and written narratives by participants.

Other researchers like Stake (2003) and Bromley (2001) state that the phenomena under investigation in case studies, is not necessarily restricted, and could embrace a wide terrain. Stake (2003) argues that though case studies have been useful in theory building, their best use appears to him for adding to existing experience and humanistic understanding. He distinguishes between intrinsic and instrumental case studies, explaining that the former is undertaken because one wants better understanding of a case and that the latter is used to provide insight into an issue or refinement of theory.

In seeking to deepen an understanding of the phenomenon of chronic crisis as experienced by each of the four selected schools both individually and collectively, as well explain the management and outcome of such processes, this study is both intrinsic and instrumental in its orientation. Mouton (2001) contends that case studies have immense potential for theory development but concedes that many researchers do not attempt to relate findings to previous theory and research, nor do they discuss the theoretical relevance of case studies. He believes that it is important to understand the interaction between the participant and his or her context

and as such a case study provides the space for understanding how a variety of perspectives influences the phenomenon being studied.

Therefore, the qualitatively oriented case-study method is an appropriate method of social enquiry to develop new and extend existing knowledge of the nature and manifestation of chronic conflict at the school level. As such it aligns itself with the autoethnographic method I have chosen - the research uses a series of "live" in-depth cases/scenarios (Cohen et al., 2007) from selected institutions within my work environment, cases that either gradually or rapidly evolved from conflict to chronic conflict situations, in which I was personally involved in terms of mediation and mitigation.

4.3.2 Context

Four schools within the Chatsworth West Ward of the Umlazi District in the Province of KwaZulu Natal, Durban, South Africa were sampled for this study. Conflict at these schools were reported to the Department of Education by external stakeholders like school governing body members, teacher organisations, local councillors, politicians, support agencies such as the South African Police Services, and welfare agencies for intervention. These schools were part of a larger percentage of schools that were also referred by the various internal stakeholders of the school for intervention. The conflicts in these schools were also reported in the media, and had a history of documented court cases, and documented grievance hearings at the level of the District and Provincial Department of Education.

The following map illustrates the positioning and location of the four selected schools in the greater Chatsworth and Welbedacht areas and gives an indication of their proximity to each other as well as to other schools, amenities and general infrastructure services.

Figure 4.3.2 Map illustrating location of the four selected schools
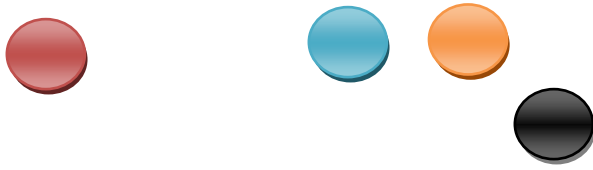
KEY TO FIGURE ABOVE:

 - PARKLANE SECONDARY SCHOOL   -AJANTA PRIMARY SCHOOL

 -BEACHWOOD SECONDARY SCHOOL   -KASHMIR PRIMARY SCHOOL

 -COLABA PRIMARY SCHOOL (N/A in study conducted)

Given the widespread recognition of conflict at these schools, and my being made aware of the situations as part of my management role function, I made telephone calls to the respective principals. After they agreed to meet me at their schools I approached each principal and explained my proposed research, and then followed up in writing with a Letter of Information, a declaration of confidentiality and anonymity, and a letter requesting consent. They were also informed that they could withdraw at any time without giving reasons. At the initial discussion, I attempted to gauge their feelings and understanding about conflict and how it manifested in their

schools. I conveyed my expectations to them that I wished to understand their responses to questions, for which I would hold an interview with each of them.

The names of the schools as well as individuals have been changed to maintain confidentiality and anonymity. In each case, a brief description of the nature of the conflict is provided. This has been ascertained by my engagement with these schools as an education manager who had to be involved in conflict resolution. A more comprehensive discussion as gathered from the interviews and principals' narratives will be provided in the next chapter where the data is reported.

Kashmir Primary – Long standing conflict between Principal and Educators. Educators allege that the Principal is arrogant, intimidatory, has "favourites" and pitches one against the other. A female educator is alleged to have sought relief through the equality court, based on alleged gender abuse and sexism. She believes that the Principal has had numerous unsuccessful relationships despite being financially well off and hence is not able to acknowledge females as equals. This they (females) believe translates into his "poor" treatment of them.

Ajanta Primary – Constant conflict between the Principal and the School Governing Body, more specifically with the Chairperson. The school clerk appears to be complicit in the conflict, constant reporting to the Chair of the SGB issues unfolding in the school, as well as presents himself to the public more authoritatively than his position stipulates, to parents and visitors. Recorded incidents indicate clerk's aggressive responses to correction, or apathy to duties and frequent absence from work. The staff has become divided into camps. A history of poor relationships between previous SGB members and current Chair of the SGB exists. The tensions are exacerbated by the appointment of the current principal based on the nominations by the previous SGB members, a nomination not supported by the current Chair, hence tensions between the current principal and current Chair, both of who are strong personalities, and whose interactions are based on establishing power.

Beachwood Secondary – is a high performing and academically effective institution. The environment in which the school occurs has been beset with poverty, high rate of unemployment, illicit drug use and presence of drug lords. Violence often overflows into school, requiring the

school management team to enforce tough discipline. The context appears to place both staff and learners in a highly strained environment and cases of suicides, and disturbed educators and learners have been documented in the last three years. A case of an educator with a history of violent outbursts and anger management issues who repeatedly administers corporal punishment on learners dominates the school conflict context. The Principal's attempt to address this issue through the Department of Education's discipline procedures resulted in the educator's vindictiveness, aggression and intimidation of staff, has divided the staff, and resulted in bad publicity of the school in the media.

Parklane Secondary

A large school besotted with poverty and social ills, boasted learner population of 1091, and an educator population of 43. Whilst the learner population represents the transformative nature of the country, that is African learners being in the majority, the staff does not, having inherited such educators from the former Department of Education, called the House of Delegates and which oversaw education for the Indian population prior to South Africa's democracy. The initial conflict at the school appears to have been precipitated by a Head of Department who exited the system and returned after approximately a year, having been replaced by a level one educator. The senior educator who happened to have been an African male regularly challenged instructions given by the Principal or other Heads of Department.   His personal ambition in respect of promotion appears to be the root cause of ongoing conflict at the school. His interaction was such that it rendered the school dysfunctional at a stage, using every opportunity to allege racism, details of which are described later in the narrative.

The frequency and seriousness of chronic conflict at these schools have been shown through a dependency for 'chronic care', from the Department of Education in the form of regular requests for interventions. Hence, given my work as Superintendent of Education, Management (SEM, now referred to as Circuit Manager (CM)). I found that a considerable amount of my time was consumed by these schools. These schools requested interventions from my office so frequently that they began monopolizing and jeopardizing my regular contact time with other schools. Even when at home, at odd hours of the evening or early morning, I would be badgered with telephone calls from various stakeholders of each of these schools requesting assistance, so that

for an enduring period it became almost an integral part of my life. This generates the question as to what my actual position was in these conflict situations. As a Superintendent-Management in the Department of Education involved in the conflict resolution, I am privy to much information, a position that may be categorized as a "deep insider".

4.3.3   My position as an insider

My research topic was essentially drawn from my work environment and as such it offered me the opportunity of being a deep insider with privy to much information. Based on this reality and consideration of the ethics of the context in which I found myself, I approached the heads of the selected schools to describe to me their understandings of the conflict situations at their schools, which are presented as cases or cameos (Grant, 2009) of chronic conflict at their specific schools. Principals had further opportunity to involve others to clarify, elaborate or add value to the cases. I clarify further:

A *deep-insider* is an observer/researcher who has been a member for at least five years of the organization that is being researched. In this case the "organization" is the Department of Education and the cases are the schools under my management. Denzin and Lincoln (2000) and Cohen et al (2000) describe the degree to which the researcher is involved as participant; this ranges from complete neutrality to complete participation, viz. *complete observer, observer as participant, participant as observer,* and *complete participant*. In exploring the case studies of the schools sampled, my position as researcher can be categorized as *participant observer*. Denzin and Lincoln (2018, p.111) explain that this occurs when the researcher is also an established participant "in the scene to be studied". By situating oneself in the context, an "advanced form of understanding" happens (Flyvbjerg et al., 2002, p.83) as the researcher has direct access to the perspectives opinions and attitudes of those being studied. This is aligned with the autoethnographic stance that I took in this study – my immersion in the context allowed my own observation, enquiry and deep reflection and introspection.

During my intervention as my role function as Superintendent of Education, I was involved in the actual dynamics of interaction between the various parties involved. A typical scenario would be: at a pre-arranged meeting, I would go to the school concerned. I would meet each of

the individuals involved separately and attempt to determine their perspectives on the matter. Then I would call other members as witnesses to get another perspective on what transpired. Eventually I would have the conflicting parties meet with each other to develop some resolution to the issue. During all these meetings I would record my observations and salient points to be able to reconstruct the issue to make decisions and give feedback.

It must be clearly understood that these "observations" were not part of an intentional research methodology for my doctoral studies but transpired during my intervention in my work role function. Later when I formalized my interest into this doctoral study, these observations allowed me to have a retrospectively deeper understanding of the dynamics of the conflict that transpired.

It may appear that as an education manager involved in the issues of conflict in the various schools, my deep-insider position may have introduced bias in certain ways. However, I write as a researcher and not education manager and I am sufficiently cognizant that as researcher I must maintain sufficient distance and academic rigour. Thus, while I use an autoethnographic stance, I adopted the position as *participant as observer* to balance my involvement with detachment, and yet keep sufficiently close to avoid the limits of complete detachment (Cohen et al., 2000).

My position therefore appears threefold: firstly, I consciously choose to use my insider position to gain access to data otherwise unavailable; secondly, I remain detached in the reporting and analysis of data, and, thirdly, I use my autoethnographic stance to reflect upon what I observe. My insider position does allow me to understand the history and the trials and tribulations of what transpires within the cases selected (Edwards, 1999). While I suggest that the insider and autoethnographic stance bode well together, I do not suggest however, that the outsider position has no merit, nor do I minimize it. The autoethnographic stance allowed me then to explain what I observed, and how my own feelings, activities and attitudes were affected, and simultaneously adopt a more distant position to reflect upon what I experienced.

The deep insider position assumes that the researcher will be more vigilant of the ethics of reporting contentious issues, as well as a great possibility of researcher bias. In my case as an insider researcher, I had to be able to stand apart from the experience even whilst embroiled in it.

4.3.4 Ethics

Research ethics, according to Ramson (2015, p.71) refers to "a set of standards that govern the authenticity of research, as well as establishes the ethical (moral code), legal and professional ambit of researchers". It is a set of considerations that are necessary to protect the participants from physical and psychological harm, as well as protect their rights to privacy. Voluntary participation, informed consent, and confidentiality and anonymity of participants are central ethical considerations (Trochim, 2016). To this end, the university at which my study was registered (like many others) has an ethical policy delineating researcher responsibilities and professional conduct which is meant to protect the research enterprise, the researcher, and most importantly the safety of the participants.

My first step was to obtain the ethical permission from the university (Annexure A). Thereafter I made an initial telephonic presentation to potential participants. Having made an initial approach, I met with interested participants, verbally explained the research study, and outlined the ethical considerations, about not putting them at risk physically, outlining the conditions of confidentiality and anonymity, including their willingness to participate (Annexure B). In my communication with participants, I was cautious not to see them as objects of my study, but peers in a research process knowing that they had participated voluntarily. This is underpinned by the concept of relational ethics in which the tenets of mutual respect and engagement is central (Pollard, 2015). I explained to the participants that they should alert me if they felt uncomfortable with any part of the process, or that they could withdraw at any stage if they wished without any obligation to explain such a decision to me. Having subsequently set up an initial interview at their convenience, at the commencement I again reiterated their consent to participate in the study and confidentiality declaration and obtained their signed participation (Annexure B). I also requested permission for follow up meetings which participants agreed to.

Ellis and Bochner (2003) also describe *relational ethics* specifically related to autoethnographic research – that, it is inevitable that some readers within the social context of the researcher may identify themselves in the stories described in the study, or other readers may recognize who the researcher is speaking about. To minimize this, I changed the names and gender preferences of participants, and removed details that may identify them. Where participants referred to others

by name, these were changed to pseudonyms. School names and geographical references were also changed.

As an Education Manager, I was cognizant of the power embedded in the position I held and hence aware of the full co-operation of my research participants. Being fully aware of this made me increasingly conscious of how I conducted myself always and throughout the research; trust and rapport was fundamental to our interaction. The way I attempted to overcome the power dynamics was as follows: firstly, my demeanour towards Heads of Schools was to consider them colleagues in a common objective of improving education delivery with staff to learners – my long-standing relationships with them also assisted (Edwards, 1999). I requested the participants to use my first name. Whilst I accept this was a simple attempt, it certainly created a better rapport and improved the freedom of participants' expressions. The meetings were also informal and conversational, and allowed the participants to ask questions for clarity. Being aware of this and communicating it to the heads of schools helped to remove the top-down approach characteristic of many management relationships. I was also guided by Mertens (2005) and Cresswell (2003) who assert the importance of participants' views, own background and experiences on the research. Thus, one of the sources data, was a request to the Principals to present their own unfettered narratives in their own space and time, and thus they rendered into writing their own understandings of chronic conflict as it unfolded in their contexts (Cohen et al., 2000).

I suggest there is a nexus between the insider and autoethnographic stance, which allows me the opportunity as a researcher to engage in the cameos or case studies/chronicles developed by the actual Principals. These selected case studies / chronicles emphasize several events or conditions and their relationships. These narratives which are presented in Chapter Five, allows me to interrogate the experiences of school principals who repeatedly attempt to manage and resolve conflict situations at their schools. Thus, the study of these cases, in which I adopt a self-autoethnographic stance as an insider provides me with an effective method to examine real-life situations, in this case of "chronic conflict" situations at the school level.

4.3.5   Research population and sampling

A research population is a large group of persons who have the type of attributes or traits that the researcher wishes to study (Best & Kahn, 2003). My focus population includes all Heads of Schools that have constant conflict in their schools. Since population size is often quite large, it is very expensive and time-consuming to include the entire population (Flick, 2008). Therefore, a sample was drawn from the population; in this case the heads of four schools under my jurisdiction as an Education Manager. Purposive non-probability sampling was used to identify participants for the study. According to Oliver (2010) participants to be included are based on relevancy and those likely to provide most depth. Using this rationale, four heads of schools within my geographical and administrative jurisdiction were approached. This choice was also underpinned by the assertion by Palys (2008) that one well-informed participant will be more easily able to provide valuable information needed than having several randomly selected ones. Since my study is not seeking generalizability, but understanding in the local context, it is suggested that the few well informed samples (Marshall, 2009) chosen are able to provide the depth and richness of information about the phenomenon of chronic conflict being studied.

Thus, participants were chosen on their typicality (Cohen et al., 2001), that is Heads of Schools who themselves were immersed in chronic conflict situations. As indicated earlier, the four selected schools were those that constantly sought my intervention in respect of on-going and frequent conflicts emerging at their schools. Such conflicts were of varying intensity, with a few even rendering the institution dysfunctional. What further precipitated a decision to have them included in this study was a glaring inability of the school management to manage or contain the conflicts by themselves. This gave impetus to this doctoral study for deeper understanding of the phenomenon *chronic conflict*, as well as measures for its effective management. A summary of the biographical details of the participants is given in the following table:

Table 4.3.5 Biographical Data of Participants

Name of Principal[4]	Name of School [5]	Age	Gender M / F	Qualification	Years of Experience
S Singh	Parklane Secondary	56	F	B. Paed, B. Ed, FDE, B. Com	Deputy Principal 10 years
Ben	Beachwood Secondary	51	M	JSED, FDE, B. Com	Principal 11 years
William Gerald	Ajanta Primary	52	M	UDE, B. Ed, M. Ed	Principal 12 years
MJ Ngidi	Kashmir Primary	53	M	UDE, B. Ed., M. Ed	Principal 14 years

4.3.6   Research Instruments

Three data collection methods were used in this study, viz., documentary analysis, semi-structured interviews, and participant narratives. The variety of methods, referred to as triangulation (Cohen et al., 2007), allows increased credibility and transferability (Shenton. 2004; Guba & Lincoln, 2000). Triangulation does not only allow cross- validating data and establishing regularities across data (O'Donoghue & Punch, 2003), but also allows the understanding of diverse facets of the same phenomenon which provides depth and richness of data (Cohen et al., 2007).

4.4.6.1.   Documentary Analysis

Documents are written texts. Payne and Payne (2004) assert that many documents are not intentionally created for research purposes but arise from events within time and context that allow us to understand the social milieu of those involved. They are produced by people, groups and organizations for their specific purposes and contexts. The researcher who engages with these documents must be fully aware of the nature and purpose of these texts (Mogalakwe, 2006), and must also have a purpose for examining these documents.

Cohen et al. (2007, p. 201) provide a comprehensive list of what may be regarded as documents, namely: field notes, diaries and journals, biographies, autobiographies, formal records, technical documents, minutes of meetings, correspondence, stories, policy documents, primary and secondary sources, newspaper articles, and other written records. In this study, there are several official documents that record the nature of the conflicts in each of the participant schools– these consist of principals' reports to the department of Education and their responses, media reports of issues, police reports and letters by those alleged to have perpetrated the conflict. Due to my involvement as Superintendent of Education, Management these reports formed part of the evidence needed for my investigation into the conflict situations at the different schools.

For my research I was able to access these primary sources to help me understand further the history and process of how the conflict unfolded, the parties involved and their actions, the prolonged (chronic) nature of these conflicts, and why such actions occurred. While the issues may be known to the public, these documents concern correspondence between the department and teachers or principals, and legal entities, and therefore they are private and confidential. Therefore, the documents themselves cannot be included in the appendices for reader reference as they contain actual names of persons involved. Newspaper articles may not always carry the established facts that often only come to light after exhaustive investigation by the educational authorities and therefore cannot be relied upon as bona fide sources.   What is provided however is a description or summary of correspondence or documents as a list pertaining to each case. This allows the *confidentiality* of the evidence to be established. The documents assisted me as a researcher to understand what the issues were, as well as confirm the validity of statements made by participants in their interviews and their narratives, as well as gain a more nuanced view of what transpired.

4.4.6.2   The Semi- Structural Interview

According to Briggs et al. (2007) the fundamental objective of qualitative interviewing is to provide a framework within which participants can express their views in their own unique way. A qualitative interview consists of open-ended questions that a researcher will personally pose to participants in a study (Johnson & Vene, 2006). Generally, these are face-to-face situations, but interviews may also be conducted telephonically or by e-mail or skype. The advantage of using

the semi- structured interview is that of allowing ease of data analysis. However, a key disadvantage is that the dynamics and outcomes may be influenced by the researcher's thinking and bias. According to Cohen et al. (2007) semi-structured interviews however, allow for flexibility, giving the researcher the freedom to modify questions; or add to as the interview progresses which resonates with the type of data I wish to attain, hence semi- structured interviews.

An initial meeting was held with the participants to inform them of the process and ethical requirements for the study. There were two parts to the semi-structured interview. The first part required certain biographical details like name of participant, name of School, participant's age, gender, qualifications and years of experience. None of the participants minded this as they were assured that their names would not be used. These details were used for administrative and tracking purposes. The following questions were asked in the semi-structured interview:

- What is your understanding of conflict at the level of schools?
- How is 'chronic conflict' different from conflict at school?
- What are your challenges in managing conflict at your school?
- What are the consequences of such conflict at your school?

The above questions for the semi- structured interviews were precipitated by my observations, experiences and public knowledge of chronic conflict at the selected schools.   After the interviews, principals were requested to present a narrative in writing a description of conflict at their schools.

Principals did not wish to have their interviews recorded, so I relied on note taking in response to the questions.   Note-taking can be regarded as any written record of answers given by participants, or observations made about salient verbal or non-verbal responses from participants as what scenarios are happening in the interview context.   The notes could be handwritten, or digital on a laptop or electronic notepad. However, note taking is not about writing an essay, or taking down verbatim what was said, nor is it like taking notes in lectures (Muswazi & Nhamo, 2013). It is about making a "strategic selection of information" that can be used to recall salient points and other aspects of the scenario that may impact upon the interpretation of the

participant's responses (Muswazi & Nhamo, 2013, p. 13). There were several challenges with this method: note-taking interrupted the smooth flow of the conversation between the participants and I, as they had had to slow down their responses and allow me to write down my notes. I also felt that my attention was divided between listening and writing.

4.4.6.3 Written Narratives

Narrative research involves the use of written, spoken or visual data (Atlas.ti, 2017). They focus on the stories told by individuals where they elucidate their own lives or instances in their lives. They are most appropriate in the study of real life issues and allow a linear understanding of events as they transpired in the life of the individual.

In my attempt to gain more depth about the chronic conflict in schools, the participants were requested to construct a narrative of the incidents that occurred. It can be argued that these narratives can be regarded as an autobiographical text, a type of annotated chronicle of an incident and context. Atlas.ti (2017) asserts that a weakness of narrative research is its linguistically subjective nature. Thus, while the written narrative (in this study) is accepted on its own merit as a personal experience of the participant, as researcher I am also aware of the need for accuracy of the detail – as opinion must be separated from fact. To overcome this, more than one data collection methods has been used; I refer again to the triangulation of methods used in the study, namely, documentary analysis, and semi-structured interviews that are used to cross-validate the presentations by participants. As an 'insider', I have been privy to much of this information. Therefore, I decided to include the narratives of the participants in this study which would allow them to describe their perspectives without my interference as they wrote these in my absence and in their own spaces

Thus, I present three types of data collection, namely, documents, semi-structured interviews, and written narratives. Furthermore, the interview questions were validated by discussion with my supervisor and an academic consultant.

At an initial meeting important administrative and logistical issues were taken care of. The meeting served to introduce the proposed study to the participants and to explain the rationale for having selected them as participants. Participants were presented with a Letter of Information, and Letter of Consent to participate. Further they were given the assurance of anonymity and confidentiality.

At a second meeting, the semi structured interview was conducted, and at the end, principals were asked to provide a written narrative of their understanding of chronic conflict as it unfolded at their schools. I did not feel it necessary to suggest any format as I wanted the Principals to write spontaneously about their understanding of the issues. They could do this in their own time wherever they felt comfortable to do so.

4. 3.7 Data Analysis

Quality research enables researches to analyse, interpret and make sense of their data and ultimately establish theory (Cohen et al, 2007). Radford (2016) suggests that analysis is the researcher's equivalent of alchemy, metaphorically comparing it to the ancient alchemic practice of transforming certain basic metals into gold. He asserts however that modern day alchemy is more than just finding the right combination of chemicals, or merely seeking to transform metal, it involves a philosophical and religious pursuit of hidden wisdom (Radford, 2016). The analysis of qualitative data is a similar process of transmitting raw data into wisdom by making sense of it. The analysis thus forms an iterative and integral part of my research.

The analysis of qualitative data is described by Cohen et al. (2007, p.461), as involving "organizing, accounting for and explaining the data". The analysis of data is the creation or construction of meaning or sense of the obtained data. In other words, it refers to an array of purposeful, critical choices in respect of the meanings and values of the data acquired and ensuring that such decisions can be justified in terms of the research, the context in which it was conducted and the individuals that were involved in it (Briggs et al., 2012). Yet the qualitative researcher is expected to also be flexible, creative, and intuitive (Denzin & Lincoln 2018)

The data analysis progressed on various levels and is related to each of the data sources included in the study (See section 4.4.7 above). Firstly, the documentary evidence pertaining to the cases

in question was again scrutinized to establish the issues concerned. The list of the relevant documents for each case is provided in the Appendices at the end of the thesis. The task was simply to identify the issue at hand and determine who the respective parties were, as well verify the authenticity of the conflicts. The synopsis of the key issues as gleaned from the documents will be described in the data analysis, Chapter 4.

Secondly, the semi-structured interviews were conducted. As audio recording was not encouraged by the principals, in its absence I made notes of the discussion writing down only salient points, which are summarized in response to the questions, and provided in the data analysis chapter under specific themes.

Thirdly, the narratives provided by the participants were analysed in the following way: a first reading of all four narratives to acquire an overview of the main thread/s of the stories, the context and conditions within which the prevailing circumstances unfold at each of the four schools; a second reading of all four stories to gain an understanding of each participant's response, their comprehension of the phenomenon of chronic conflict At this level, I explored the participants' understandings of 'chronic conflict' through a process of content analysis of their narratives. The second reading also allowed for categorization of salient issues, for example; frequency of conflicts, participants in the conflicts, types of conflicts, durations of conflicts and consequences of conflicts; a third reading of all the narratives was conducted to ascertain common and recurring issues of conflict.

After readings of their stories, I focussed on the emerging common, overlapping themes. This led me to categorize the more prominent and dominant themes of certain narratives and those of a lesser presence. These are discussed in greater detail in the Chapter 6, chapter in the study.

Hodkinson & Powell (2008) describes a theme as a key or broad idea that pulls together the major categories and their characteristics. I was able to identify the following as the more prominent themes that emerged from the analysis of the narratives, many of which appeared to cut across all four of the stories:

- **Processes and Procedures** – a common theme emerging from all four of the narratives and giving rise to various less prominent sub-themes as will be detailed later in this study.

- **Gender –** another common theme that emerged prominently at three of the selected schools, consequently resulting in recurring and protracted conflicts at these schools.

- **Racism –** a prominent theme at one of the selected schools with severe consequences including a temporary dysfunctionality of the school.

- **Leadership** – a theme of prominence cutting across all four schools and alluding to the cause of conflict chronicity at some of these schools.

In the data analysis, I also attempted to use the theoretical lens provided by Complexity Theory and other theories of Conflict management as detailed in Chapter Three to understand the dynamics of the conflicts that emerged in the data

4.4 Trustworthiness of the study

The techniques used to evaluate qualitative are often different from those used for quantitative research (Cohen et al, 2000; Shenton, 2004) since quantitative and qualitative research differ in terms of their nature and purpose. While terms like *reliability* and *validity* are more frequently applicable to quantitative or positivist research, the term *trustworthiness* applies to qualitative research. Qualitative research does not seek generalization, but to understand truth in context. Guba & Lincoln (2000) describe certain criteria that which loosely parallel reliability, validity and objectivity in conventional quantitative research, listed as *credibility* (instead of internal validity), *transferability* (instead of external validity/generalisability), *dependability* (instead of reliability), and *confirmability* (instead of objectivity).

Morrow (2005) asserts however, that these do not accomplish the same thing however, since the type of knowledge generated is different; qualitative research is idiographic and emic (using small samples and creative ways of determining meaning from the individuals studied) as compared to nomothetic and etic (using standard methods of eliciting knowledge from much larger samples of individuals, and reliant on existing theoretical concepts) [Morrow, 2005]. In the following paragraphs I will describe how I attempted to ensure that these criteria were met in my study.

Credibilty concerns the congruency of research findings with reality (Shenton, 2004), and is also determined using well-established research methods. Gasson (2004) also asserts that credibility can be achieved by extended observation and engagement with participants in the field, use of peer researchers, and co-analysis. Credibility is also achieved through the voluntary participation of those in the study and the condition that the participant has a right to withdraw from the research. As an Education Manager I have had sustained interaction with participants, having been immersed in the attempted resolution of conflict situations and therefore understand more closely the dynamics of the context. I also consider myself a deep insider, a position that I will discuss in greater detail later in this chapter. Triangulation of methods, namely, documentary analysis, semi-structured interviews and participants' written narratives provided further sources of cross-validation (although not the only reason) of data gathered in the research.

Transferability parallels the idea of *generalizability* – the external validity of the findings, in other words, to what extent findings may be generalized to a broader population (Bush, 2010). My study, which was conducted with four Heads of schools, is a small-scale study in local contexts and by design it does not seek to generalize findings but to understand the truth as emerging in the local context. A key characteristic of transferability is also for the researcher to provide detail about herself as part of the study. My self-autoethnographic stance and detailed prologue provides the reader with sufficient data in this regard. However, it would be interesting to apply this study to similar contexts to determine what patterns emerge.

Thus, the study attempted to meet the criteria for credibility (internal and external validity). Another important aspect relating to credibility refers to the participants themselves. One may question only the use of the principals' perspectives on the chronic conflict in schools. However, since they are professionals, in trying to establish the veracity of their accounts, I trusted the responses of the participants, just as I expected them to trust me. The numerous visits and re-visits to the schools to clarify information received provided the clarity required for improving credibility. The participants were given time to compose their thoughts and respond in writing to a set of guiding questions. Credibility is also improved by informed explanation and interpretation of the phenomena under study – in this research I have reviewed the work of previous and current researchers in the arena of conflict with a view to extending the knowledge by the actual qualitative study.

Systematic record keeping, monitoring of data and repeatability of the process is a feature of reliability. The parallel feature in qualitative studies is termed *dependability* (Shenton, 2004; Gasson, 2004). This does not mean that qualitative studies do not keep a strict check and appraisal of what is being done; it means that social researchers are simultaneously aware that social phenomena are malleable and fluid, and can change, and therefore the application of the same research process may need adaptation to the new context. Therefore, *dependability* is a more applicable term to qualitative studies. The qualitative researcher is also bound to make available the process in which s/he conducted the study for other researchers who wish to conduct similar explorations as well as inform the current reader of the systematized, organized method of research. Ramson (2015) asserts that the very purpose of the research methodology chapter is to make explicit the methods employed, which is served by the detail I present in this chapter.

Another feature, c*onfirmability* (parallel to objectivity), refers to the concern of the qualitative researcher that the findings of the study arise from the participants' experiences and ideas, and not from the researcher's biases. Qualitative researchers prefer to use the term "understanding" to describe this. The objectivity as sought in positivist studies is not possible as researcher bias is inevitably part of the research process. Ezzy (2003: p. 45) asserts that both the participants' and researcher's perspectives are equally valid. However, confirmability is increased by the researcher not simply assuming meanings but trying to discover exactly what is meant. Further the researcher needs to inform the reader of his or her own perspectives. Thus, in my study, I have provided my ontological stance right at the outset in my *Prologue* to allow the reader to understand the specific viewpoint from which I approached the research. In this study I also did not aim for quantity of understanding, but more for "honesty, depth, richness" of the data (Cohen et al., 2001). To do this, I found using a case study approach appropriate to gather rich data.

4.5 Limitations of the study

Being immersed in the conflict context as an insider may produce familiarity with participants that could cause me to miss indications and evidences, both verbal and non-verbal. As an Education Manager to whom such conflicts are reported for resolution, my position produces its own power dynamics. Therefore, I had to be constantly aware of how this impinged upon

the research situation. This was evident where participants were sometimes reluctant to openly discuss their experiences.

A further limitation about using only principals' narratives about conflicts may produce a one-sided view. I detected that some Heads of Schools did not see themselves as part of the problem or spoke of the conflicts in a rather detached or distant way. This possibly led to the withholding of some crucial information in respect of their 'story-telling'.

Nonetheless I attempted to overcome the limitations in the following ways: Although I am an Education Manager and insider, who hierarchically within the education system may be regarded as higher than the school's heads under my jurisdiction, I suggest that the autoethnographic stance allowed me to chronicle self to understand self and other (Keefer, 2008; Starr, 2010). Much of my reflective exposition was exhumed through memory work. While memory-work is broadly recognised as a profoundly felt emotional experience, it is first and foremost a research tool (Cadman & Ingleton, 2002).

Memory work demanded chronicling past events in as much detail as possible, which balances the descriptions of the participants in my study and provides a journalized reporting of the data (Ellis and Bochner, 2003) which forms a valid type of data capture (Wall, 2006; Denzin, 2005; Reed–Danahay, 2004). The iterative nature of the data collection was initially unsettling, but as I was assured by Ellis and Bochner (2003), who assert that such vulnerability can cause uneasiness, but is also a source of growth and insight. Thus, I assert that because of my field work, and being an "insider", I was favourably situated to offer a detailed and intimate account of the chronic conflict situations, interventions or lack thereof by the Department as requested by the schools. This offered me the opportunity to present thick descriptions (Ponterotto, 2006) of first-hand experiences within the context of the schools, as well present opportunities for deep reflection on my own leadership.

4.6   Conclusion

This chapter presented the philosophical underpinnings of the study, that is, the interpretivist paradigm, informed by a qualitative case study approach. The research participants and their

contexts were introduced. The research design and methodology employed in the data acquisition was presented, namely, documentary analysis, semi-structured interviews and narrative analysis as well as the justification for these methods. The reader was also made aware of how the research topic was derived from my work environment, and my position as a deep insider, which functioned well together with an autoethnographic stance adopted for the study.

In the next chapter, the data derived from the documentary analysis, semi-structured interviews and narratives is presented and analysed thematically.

Chapter Five:

Narratives of Conflict

5.1   Introduction

The preceding chapters provided a review of the relevant research on conflict, the main theories explaining conflict, and the description of the research methodology used. In this chapter the data derived from the three sources of data collection are presented and analysed thematically. The narratives in this chapter inform the reader of the unfolding of events at these schools that produced the chronicity of conflict. The stories are told by the Principals of Beachwood Secondary, Ajanta Primary and Kashmir Primary, who are male, while the story of Parklane Secondary is described by the Deputy Principal who is female.

The following is a brief synopsis of each of the schools, which is expected to enable the reader to contextualise the unfolding of circumstances within each of the school environments.

5.2   Synopses

The Schools

5.1.1   Ajanta Primary School

Ajanta Primary is situated in the heart of Chatsworth and has a population of approximately 450 learners, a teaching staff of 11 and 2 support staff, viz. an administrative staff and a cleaning staff member. Ajanta Primary, like the other schools, serve a disadvantaged community. The degree of poverty at this school however, is not as high as that of the other 3 schools sampled. Consequently, the level of unemployment is lower, approximately fifteen percent. This area like those of the other schools was established to cater for largely the Indian community during the apartheid era. Although the vestiges of original semi-detached homes provided by the apartheid government still exist, many of these have been refurbished, and one observes extended homes on minute pieces of land, virtually clinging to each other, a clear indication of pride and joy depicted in its simple but creative beauty. School functions and parent meetings are well attended as informed by the Principal. Due to the proximity of homes to the school and its physical layout in the middle of the residential area, as indicated by the Principal, some parents

overlooking the school seem to be "watching the school like a hawk" and "want to be involved in everything", which boarders on, "interference". Several staff members come from the local community and hence have strong ties with the locals as indicated by the Principal, for example the school clerk has spent more than 25 years at Ajanta Primary, far more years than the Principal, the significance of which is revealed in the unfolding of this cameo.

The school generally is one of the top academically performing primary schools in Chatsworth and actively engages learners in extra and co-curricular activities, a pattern which existed prior to the current Principal's arrival. Prior to the current Principal's appointment, the school had an Acting Principal for fourteen months.

5.1.2   Kashmir Primary School

Unlike the other three schools that were provided for the Indian community, Kashmir primary was built for African children and located between the former townships of Mariannhill and Klaarwater, which lies alongside the Higginson Highway on the way to Pinetown. It is a new school, in comparison to most other schools in this circuit, approximately 20 years old. Kashmir Primary is constructed with a beautiful face-brick structure set on three levels with adequate classrooms, some specialist rooms e.g. for Science and Drama and good school playing fields. Like Parklane Secondary, Kashmir Primary is inundated with daily requests for learner admissions at the various levels due to the influx of new residents in the growing housing developments surrounding Kashmir Primary School. However, the school serves a very poor community.

The school has a population of 920 and a staff of 24 teaching staff and 2 non-teaching staff. The staff comprises some 17 female and 7 male members, many of whom have been at this school more than 15 years. The school is highly unionised and finds itself in a community which is strongly politicised. Learners and educators are largely African. Faction fighting in the community often spills into the school with educators frequently being divided in respect of their affiliations, as reported by the Principal during his interview. Unemployment, low levels of literacy, poverty and health issues largely characterizes this community.

Until recently, the learners and parents struggled with the nutrition needs of learners, however currently learners are being fed daily through the State's, Schools' Nutrition Programme for learners. The school despite its financial constraints and general poverty issues functions at an above average level and engages learners in both the curricular and extra-curricular activities. Learners at this school generally come from areas such as Klaarwater, Shallcross, Savannah Park, Welbedacht and Mariannhill, a few teachers are residents, and the majority come from the surrounding and outside areas. The Principal himself is a local resident and has very strong ties with the local community. Like Ajanta Primary and Parklane Secondary schools, some of the local educators enjoy a very good relationship with the school community, which unfortunately does not seem to be the experience of all educators. This clear distinction in relationships often results in emerging conflicts which according to the Principal tends to divide the staff.

5.1.3 Parklane Secondary School

Parklane Secondary was founded in 1996 as a co-educational school for previously disadvantaged pupils. Unlike the other schools that initially belonged to the former House of Delegates, under the apartheid system of Education which largely serviced Indians schools, this school was born out of the new and singular Kwa-Zulu Natal Department of Education, post-apartheid. It currently accommodates approximately 1188 learners from grades 8 to 12 and has a staff of 40. The school has one male Principal, and two Deputy Principals, one male and one female. It has three Heads of Department, 2 male and 1 female and two support staff, one administrative and one cleaning staff. Due to its huge learner population, the school despite its financial constraints employs an additional part-time school clerk to alleviate some of its administrative responsibilities.

The school is in an environment that adjoins the upper end of Chatsworth, a suburb created under the apartheid regime to accommodate the predominantly South African Indian community known as Welbedacht. Welbedacht is a rapidly growing housing development for people on the lower end of the socio-economic scale and is understandably accompanied by various social disadvantages, all of which continues to swiftly escalate, the consequences of which impact strongly on the local community and the school. As an early institution of democracy, it was one of the first schools to have attracted learners of all race groups, with a rapidly growing integrated school community. Welbedacht, like most new housing developments in South Africa, projects

the face of the typically disadvantaged, at the same time bringing people from various strife torn communities to be housed together in a common space, notwithstanding their own personal challenges, be it unemployed, illiteracy, poverty and various other social ills.

Parklane Secondary thus largely accommodates learners of this community. Several educators come from this local area and as such are relatively familiar with the parent community. Others come from the surrounding areas of Mariannhill, Nagina, Klaarwater, Demat and Savannah Park, suburbs that were originally developed to cater for people on the lower end of the economic ladder. Approximately 60 percent of the educators come from outside areas, from as far afield as Durban North, Phoenix, Reservoir Hills, 15 to 30 kilometres away. Despite all its challenges, including its financial constraints, Parklane Secondary still manages to achieve over eighty percent annually in its Senior Certificate that is Grade 12 examination results. Like Beachwood Secondary, one continues to question the absence of the 100 percent pass rate and hopes this study will point in a direction that will make it less illusive and obscure.

5.1.4. Beachwood Secondary

Beachwood Secondary is found in the heart of the large Chatsworth suburb created in the 1960's to accommodate the predominantly South African Indian population in the apartheid era. It is situated in the South Durban basin and is bordered by the Umhlatuzana River in the North and Umlaas River in the South. Under the Group Areas Act of June 1950, like African and Coloureds, South African Indians were moved from areas such as Mayville, Cato Manor, Clairwood, Bluff, Riverside, and so on to establish the two large Indian suburbs of Phoenix in the North and Chatsworth in the South. Chatsworth was specifically established to act as a buffer between various White residential areas and the large African township of Umlazi. Despite various social and economic constraints, suburbs such as Chatsworth and Umlazi continued to strive and today serve as fully fledged townships, contributing positively to the academic capital of Durban and Kwa-Zulu Natal, notwithstanding all its challenges (Census, 2011).

Despite its immense challenges of unemployment, poverty and social ills of drug and substance abuse, Beachwood Secondary has continued to produce a pass rate of over eighty five percent over the years, attesting to the high levels of educator and learner commitment. One cannot help

wondering about the absence of the one hundred percent pass rate which appears attainable, yet illusive. An explanation could be that the on-going relationship strains at this school and resultant conflict, is negatively affecting this achievement.

The school's physical structure is in a relatively good condition with the School Management Team frequently addressing areas of upgrade. Beachwood Secondary has a learner population of 810 learners and 29 staff, which includes two support staff. The school has one Principal; one Deputy Principal; three Heads of Departments; and twenty-two level one educators. Most educators travel between four to fifteen kilometers to reach the school, with two of travelling more than twenty-five kilometers. The School Governing Body has also employed an additional two educators to avoid an overload of teaching allocations to staff. It may be expected then that a fair degree of job satisfaction in the work place would be found; the narration by the Principal indicates otherwise.

In the data analysis, I will examine in more detail these conflict events in my sample as described below for each of the selected school:

i)   Ajanta Primary – power and positional struggles between Principal, school clerk and Acting Deputy Principal

ii)   Beachwood Secondary – the repeated acts of corporal punishment by an educator and harassment of female educator

iii)   Kashmir Primary – alleged chauvinism of Principal

iv)   Parklane Secondary – search and seizure issue in respect of learners leading to allegations of racism

5.2   The Framework for understanding the data

To understand the data, I use the salient aspects of typology described by Mitchell (1981), and Complexity Theory (Hendrick, 2009; Davis, 2004) described in Chapter 4. A detailed narrative

for each of these institutions is chronicled by the selected research participants. These narratives written by the various participants provide a description of the chronic conflict as they understand it in their contexts. The salient aspects of each narrative are extracted and presented in the next section. The entire original transcripts narrated by the four participants are presented in the next section of this chapter. In each of the cases, an attempt is made to understand the conflict through the lenses of the theoretical frameworks of Mitchell (1981) and that of Complexity Theory.

5.3 Narrative 1: Principal of Ajanta Primary school

In the following narrative the background to the issues of conflict are being suggested by the Principal.

I assumed the position of Principal at Ajanta Primary in January 2000. I needed to have some knowledge of the history of this school because I was immediately entrusted to unravel issues that had hindered effective education. So, I began to question and interrogate some of the issues and the best way I felt to do this was to read the available minutes, log book entries and other documents that were available. I later realised that the various issues that confronted me were a repetition of events of the past, the modus operandi was always the same, where the Principal would find the safe key missing, documents missing, crucial information and various documents disappearing. As the Principal I began experiencing a lack of trust in key individuals, these included the senior head of department, senior management members, acting managers and the administrative clerk, but these were not very clear. In other words, I had to read between the lines and assess actions and reactions of staff to determine how they perceived programmes of the school. As Principal invariably I often see obstacles to progress by some of the individuals that I have already mentioned, such that a specific individual will shoot down any suggested programme but will not be able to offer any solutions or alternatives.

The principal feels he already entered a situation of conflict and mistrust, and deliberate obstruction to any initiatives to improve. He describes several issues that undermined such trust and cooperation:

- **Deliberate lack of support from management:** a senior manager supported a decision at a school management meeting to change school times, only to back pedal on it when confronted by the school governing body, which created an impression with the SGB that the principal had made unilateral decisions and hence was subject to a complaint by the SGB to the Department of education. This principal believed that this was intentionally done to show him up as "being incompetent and lacking transparency, of not promoting quality education and not being able to be effective.

- **Intentional undermining**: The principal explains that his activities and decisions were constantly scrutinized, and he found himself "operating under a microscope, a situation in which was "deliberately used to create instability and tension by senior management" to make the "school as untenable and ungovernable as possible and to show the Principal up as being incompetent and incapable". He attributes this to the fact that he "came in from another school and was seen as an outsider being appointed as Principal of Ajanta Primary."

The intentional undermining also occurred in the principal's questioning of a missing television set from the school stock. Evidence pointed to its removal by the school clerk and upon enquiry

"A member of the SGB, Mr RM, who was close friends with Mr VJ gave an affidavit stating that he had sent the television set for repairs.

This was a crucial letter in that it aided and abetted the bad conduct of the school clerk. Mr VJ. This strengthened the belief of the school clerk that he could do as he pleased. This serious issue was reported to the Department of Education and the then Chief Superintendent of Education who responded by saying that we did not have any evidence against Mr VJ. Again, the clerk became braver and braver knowing that his actions were not being addressed by the Department. In the meantime, tensions were increasing amongst staff, especially by supporters of VJ who felt that I was interfering with their otherwise 'smooth school'"

There are several other issues in which VJ was implicated – like missing school funds, missing school fund receipts, missing video player, nepotism in appointment of VJs spouse, corporal punishment, intimidation and frequent absence. The details of the issues can be read in the various documents of the school, for example Log book, Minutes book. At this point it would be

sufficient to describe that investigation into such misconduct was not easy as such individuals had garnered much community support over the years to the extent that it was difficult for the community to believer otherwise.

Individual ambition: The appointment of a principal from outside the school meant that those who applied for the post from within the school were unsuccessful, which, had ramifications for the upward mobility of existing staff members. Thus, a resentment towards the principal ensued, manifesting in the senior HOD (who was unsuccessful) having and "over assertive and over ambitious" attitude. Dealing with this staff member led the principal to "experience serious challenges and adversity at its worst so much so that I had to use all my resources, and strength to survive at Ajanta Primary." He found it exhausting and challenging" to the extent he had to visit a psychiatrist several times to be able to cope and "function in a way that would not make me appear ineffective".

Lack of Professionalism: The principal found that his staff was composed of teachers who had come from various institutions, and "different schools with different experiences, backgrounds and their own challenges and uniqueness". He found that several members, although qualified as teachers had a "value system that was averse to that of a teacher, a professional" Some teachers had been transferred to this school as a "punitive measure. Instead of dealing with the transgressions of these teachers or developing them at their previous schools, they were sent to Ajanta Primary, being a new school". Thus, he found he had to deal with issues like teacher alcoholism in two cases, and staff anger management issues.

No support from Department officials: The principal feels that the type of support he needed to improve his school was not forthcoming. He explains:

On one occasion when I said to a senior Department Official that I needed his support, he did not understand what I meant and blurted out quickly in front of others, "You will not get any kind of support", so that kind of talk from a Senior Department Official in itself sums up the kind of challenge that I was facing at the school. I also found the School Governance Unit (SGU) of the District of little assistance. Officials of this component I found were not properly trained to

deal with school issues nor did they have the necessary management experiences to deal with or assist with the problems I was experiencing.

When I requested the intervention of an Official of this component, his response shocked me when he said, "you, I'm coming to sort you out". Such officials I discovered were seconded from the previous teacher training colleges with little experience of the school classroom or Principal ship.

He felt that these officials were actually increasing the powers of the parent component and in that way diminishing the authority of the principal. The issues of the parental component were emphasized to the extent that he feels that "much credit to the wrong doers where the Principal was being the problem. I therefore did not have too much trust or confidence in the Department."

5.3.1   Analysis

This story is narrated by the Principal Mr William Gerald who in daily school educational terminology is an, "outside promotee," which simply refers to an individual being promoted to a school-based post, having come from another school, district or perhaps even region. Generally, most staff members aspire to promotional posts internally as well as externally, so naturally when such posts arise at a school, especially when individuals hold such posts in an acting capacity, there is a climate of expectations. Hence when external candidates are promoted, an almost immediate atmosphere of tension begins brewing. Such was the case with Mr William Gerald.

- **Assumptions**

In narrating his story, a story embedded in conflict, Mr Gerald abounds in assumptions. In the very second paragraph of his story, Mr Gerald concedes that he had come to Ajanta Primary with a pre- conceived knowledge of the problems at the school, "that I was aware of the common talk …. for the challenge". Further Mr Gerald based his ability to "handle most challenges" on the basis that he was promoted three times in three years. He goes on to speak of an, 'Education Management Development Course' that he had completed through the University of South Africa which he believed afforded him the necessary theoretical knowledge to "address and

handle challenges". Here again is the assumption that the acquisition of relevant knowledge is a panacea to problem solving. Whilst this assumption might have been useful in providing some sort of basis for action and assisting in creating the, "what if" scenarios to project possible realities, assumptions can be dangerous when accepted as realities. Generally, qualitative inquiry believes that reality is subjective and that social environments are personal constructs created by individual interpretations that are not generalizable (Gall, Gall and Borg, 2007).

The narrator continues in paragraph three to speak of his active involvement as the various levels with the South African Democratic Teachers Union (SADTU), with a keen sense of pride at being able to rub shoulders with individuals who are now high-profile members even at Parliamentary level, almost insinuating that he had something to contribute to their upward mobility. Mr William Gerald entered Ajanta Primary with a pre-conceived notion that his competent, confident and experienced self was the answer to all of Ajanta's ills, yet ironically in the last line of paragraph three, he states that, "I did not have any pre-conceptions, nor did I prejudge any individual. I felt I should just experience things for myself.

- **Interrogation**

Interrogation is an important concept that finds prominence in Mr Gerald's narration. For all intent and general purpose, interrogation is a practice commonly used by officers of any police force. A common dictionary definition would lead one to the notion that, an interrogation is an intense questioning session usually with suspects of one or the other sort. In the fourth paragraph of Mr Gerald's narration, he speaks of his initial modus operandi as the new Principal of Ajanta Primary, whereby he states, "So in taking this school forward, I needed to have some knowledge of the history … education. So, I began to question and interrogate some…… that were available". He further states that as Principal, he began experiencing a lack of trust in key individuals" etc. The question then is, would such individuals not have realised what the Principal was embarking on considering his probing and interrogation and would their mistrust not be resonance in his manner of operations.

He further states that the mistrust that he was experiencing, (line 12, paragraph 4) "were not very clear in other words, I had to read between the lines and assess actions and reactions of staff",

clearly a fertile ground for suspicion, mistrust and dangerous assumption. Will this then not justifiably, "shoot down" Principal's consequential programmes. As a new Principal, Mr Gerald ought to have been more cautious against drawing premature conclusions regarding both specific individuals and situations. It was imperative that any analysis or conclusion be consistent with all available data of his own experiences rather that rely solely on that of his predecessors or records.

- **Irregular Practice**

In paragraph 5 of Mr Gerald's story, he speaks of his concern at not being supported by senior members of staff in specific joint decision making concerning school times that is when questioned by the School's Governing Body. Yet the South African School's Act, Act 84 of 1996, Section ----- speaks clearly of this being the responsibility of the School Governing Body of which the school Principal is a member. An experienced Principal as professed by himself earlier would know this as a basic tenet. Further, being let down by a certain senior member of staff should not come as a surprise, particularly when the Principal in his story mentions that this very individual was a strong contender for the principal ship.

5.4   Kashmir Primary

Unlike the other three schools that were provided for the Indian community, Kashmir primary was built for African children and located between the former townships of Mariannhill and Klaarwater, which lies alongside the Higginson Highway on the way to Pinetown. It is a new school, in comparison to most other schools in this circuit, approximately 20 years old. Kashmir Primary is constructed with a beautiful face-brick structure set on three levels with adequate classrooms, some specialist rooms e.g. for Science and Drama and good school playing fields. Like Parklane Secondary, Kashmir Primary is inundated with daily requests for learner admissions at the various levels due to the influx of new residents in the growing housing developments surrounding Kashmir Primary School. However, the school serves a very poor community.

The school has a population of 920 and a staff of 24 teaching staff and 2 non-teaching staff. The staff comprises some 17 female and 7 male members, many of whom have been at this school more than 15 years. The school is highly unionised and finds itself in a community which is strongly politicised. Learners and educators are largely African. Faction fighting in the community often spills into the school with educators frequently being divided in respect of their affiliations, as reported by the Principal during his interview. Unemployment, low levels of literacy, poverty and health issues largely characterizes this community.

Until recently, the learners and parents struggled with the nutrition needs of learners, however currently learners are being fed daily through the State's, Schools' Nutrition Programme for learners. The school despite its financial constraints and general poverty issues functions at an above average level and engages learners in both the curricular and extra-curricular activities. Learners at this school generally come from areas such as Klaarwater, Shallcross, Savannah Park, Welbedacht and Mariannhill, a few teachers are residents, and the majority come from the surrounding and outside areas. The Principal himself is a local resident and has very strong ties with the local community. Like Ajanta Primary and Parklane Secondary schools, some of the local educators enjoy a very good relationship with the school community, which unfortunately does not seem to be the experience of all educators. This clear distinction in relationships often results in emerging conflicts which according to the Principal tends to divide the staff.

5.4.1   Narrative 2: Principal of Kashmir Primary School

My name is Mr J Ngidi and I am the Principal of Kashmir Primary School. I was appointed in 2002 after spending ten years as Deputy Principal at a school in Hammarsdale, Kwa-Zulu Natal. Being brought up in the Kashmir school community, it was good to come back as Principal. Kashmir Primary has a population of 895 learners and a staff of 23 educators (16 females and 7 males), with 2 non- teaching, (1 male and 1 female) members. The School Management Team was made up of the Principal, one Deputy Principal and three Heads of Department. When I first arrived at this school, I learnt that at least 13 staff members were from the local community and

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seemed to know everybody. Of these 13 members, 2 were members of the school's management team, another one was the Deputy Principal and the other, a Head of Department. The Deputy Principal had acted as Principal of Kashmir Primary for almost a year. It took some members, including the Deputy Principal, Mrs Zungu, almost two years to accept me as the Principal of the school, being an outsider, I realised this was because the Deputy Principal was expecting to be the Principal of the school she also had many friends on the staff who expected her to be promoted and therefore did not pretend to accept me.

Coming from a conservative community and being a stickler for rules, I wanted to get on with my job and so after approximately two months, I did not hide my impatience. I noticed that the staff enjoyed having staff meetings during school time and would get restless if meetings went past three thirty in the afternoon. The females would largely have excuses i.e. fetching children, household chores, other appointments, etc. After the first two staff meetings, I would make sure staff notices went out early and insisted that staff members make prior arrangements. They were not always happy with this and often showed me their dissatisfaction through their body language in the meetings, e.g. they would display impatience, sometimes chat whilst the meeting is in progress. I usually informed them that we were having one meeting.

Fortunately, after my third year, things eased off a bit and the harder working teachers soon began supporting most of the programmes, whether during the weekends or after school. There were two females, Ms J and Mrs CT who never let go and would often have an excuse for wanting to leave early. I soon stopped accepting their excuses and insisted they remain since this was becoming a habit. On 6 June 2005, another educator, PC requested a week's leave since there was a wedding in her family (one of her siblings). Being during examinations period, I indicated that she could apply for two days and not the five that she had wanted. She was unhappy and discussed this in the staff room. Ms J and Mrs CT then ganged up with her, stating that the Principal was discriminating against the females. PC on the other hand is a hardworking and committed educator who was often called by the Department to assist in workshops, etc. Although she was made to understand that her request for leave was unreasonable, two days later she brought her union representative to meet with me and after a lengthy meeting and debate, it was made clear to the union that the decision not to allow her a full week's leave still stood. Of course, the team of unhappy females then expanded their group

to three. It also came to my ear that they were being encouraged by my Deputy Principal, Mrs Zungu, although this was not too obvious, and she did things slyly.

Being the person that I was for getting work done quickly and efficiently, I moved forward with the June examination programme and insisted that everybody meets due dates, with no excuses. In the meantime, a few stragglers joined in the staff room gossip, complaining about their unhappiness and my "stubbornness". By the end of 2005, I realised there was approximately 40 percent of the staff that were showing signs of unhappiness, all, except one, were females. At management and staff meetings I would emphasize the need to put the learner first and indicated that it was difficult to please everybody. Staff would generally agree at the meeting but would complain to each other afterwards.

At the beginning of 2006, and after we returned from the December vacation, I noticed individuals had put on a lot of weight; I put this down to overeating in the holidays. At our first staff meeting and after a circuit meeting whereby the circuit manager emphasized the importance of wellness and exercise, I did the same. Initially this went down well, and everybody contributed to the discussion, accepting the importance of physical fitness. Two weeks later, the Deputy Principal came into my office and indicated that certain staff members were very unhappy about the meeting, since I had spoken of "broad hips" and "tyres" and indicated that I was discriminating against the females. That afternoon, 24 January 2006, I called an emergency staff meeting and explained to staff the reasoning behind the fitness discussion. Also, that the "affected individuals" should have raised their concerns at the meeting and not been "cowards" to take it to the staff room. Further, I saw this to gather support and instigate others. I reminded staff that our core business was teaching and learning and that we should not get side stepped with unnecessary issues.

Certain educators namely, Paula and Miriam then began nervously asking why I was concerned about educators' weights and them needing to lose weight respectively. I explained that if they heard me correctly at that staff meeting, I did at length speak of the wellness and the need for physical and mental fitness as was discussed in the Circuit meeting. Why has it now become a matter for discussion? Incidentally both these educators are very over weight, and Paula Blose is known to be an agitator. I also learnt that Paula, a level one educator was very disappointed

some two years ago before my arrival since a Head of Department post for the Senior Primary phase was filled by a Mr Shivambu, a male candidate who came in from a school in the ILembe District, that is the Kwadukuza area (that is formerly Stanger), on the north coast. Paula also accused the previous male Principal, Mr Sithole, of being a male chauvinist since the school management team of five members had only one female educator. This was Paula's trump card and she often used this female issue to win the support of others, largely female staff members, needless to mention that PC, J and CT were automatic members of her support group. After much discussion at the staff meeting, we eventually concluded with everybody appearing to be satisfied with my explanations.

However, one of the female educators, a very mature and senior lady, Mrs Thomas came to see me the next afternoon while I was waiting for some parent members who were to accompany educators on a school excursion to the Strawberry Farm, in Shongweni, in about two weeks' time, asking if she could speak to me. Then I replied that she could, she began by saying she did not believe my comments about overweight were offensive and that she appreciated my concern. I explained why I thought it was necessary for educators to take care of their physical being and that I am not sexist. She also informed me of the numerous conflict situations at school that Paula had in the past been responsible for. She spoke of a specific situation in the year 2001, a year before I had arrived at the school whereby an educator had to be nominated to be the gender focal person at a school level and who would then be involved in the various programmes and workshops organised by the Department of Education.

Paula who is usually loud and argumentative expected to be nominated but the school's management team had selected a certain Mrs Gugu Molefe. Mrs Blose then began mobilising staff members to believe that Molefe was a relative of the male Head of Department, Mr Makhanya, and as a result Mrs Molefe's programmes didn't get much support at school. This continued for about two years until Mrs Molefe was transferred at the end of 2002 to another school in Pietermaritzburg. However, the cracks Blose caused in relationships amongst staff didn't quite heal. I thanked Mrs Thomas and told her I will heed what she had said.

A few days later whilst paging the school's log book, I read that in 2002, prior to my arrival a team of three officials investigated on the then Principal, because an anonymous letter was sent

to the District Director alleging that the school Principal, Mr Sithole was a sexist who marginalised certain female educators when it came to any form of power or position. Two incidents were mentioned, one being that of the case concerning Mrs Paula Blose and the second concern was the selection of that of a co-curricular co-ordinator to serve on the Department's sports committee. In the case of the latter the school's sports co-ordinator was naturally selected. This obviously did not go down well with Blose and her supporters.

From studying subsequent entries in the log book, I learnt that Mrs Blose would often call the union to represent her on any issue of disagreement she had with the Principal, Mr Sithole, or any member of the school's management team. It seemed that the situation became so tense between the then Principal, Mr Sithole, and the Union, that out of sheer frustration, he took early retirement in 2002. This is when the post was advertised, and I was then appointed as the new Principal. What Mrs Blose and a few of her supporting colleagues didn't realise was that I was a stickler for rules and nobody was going to force me into retirement or resignation. I had a job to do and was going to do it at any cost.

Although everything appeared to be fine for the next few years, on February 18, 2006 a petition signed by nine female members and two males found its way onto my office table. Of the two males, one was the Deputy Principal, the other being the staff site steward and amongst the females, the first four signatures were those of Paula Blose, PC, CT and J all of whom I had already some form of disagreement or conflict with, as mentioned earlier. So, what was the nature of the petition? On 28 March 2006 I had a very irate parent call at school, a Mr Joseph Shabalala. His complaint was that Mrs CT often leaves her class unattended to chat with other female teachers in their classes. It so happened on 26 March 2006 when CT was out her class, that is grade 3B, a learner Marcus refused to return Jennifer's ruler. When Jennifer, who is Shabalala's daughter forcefully, took her ruler, Marcus pulled it out of her hand and then struck her with it, breaking the ruler on her and hurting Jennifer on the arm. Jennifer began crying and waited for Mrs CT to return to class, when she and the other learners tried informing CT about what had happened, she simply responded by saying, "Jennifer cries for everything". This led to Marcus and his friends laughing at her, Mrs CT did not even bother to look at the bruise caused when Marcus struck Jennifer with the ruler. The parent insisted on wanting to confront Mrs CT and to report her to the Department of Education. After much discussion I convinced

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him that I would investigate the matter and that I will report back to him, I also told him that no educator has, "any business to leave their classrooms unattended".

The same afternoon I sent for Mrs CT and asked for an explanation. Of course, she immediately denied leaving her classroom, she also denied telling Jennifer that she cried for everything as well as denied showing little or no interest in Jennifer. Asked why she did not report the incident to the office, she simply responded with, "I would like my Union present". I responded by saying that it was not an investigation and that when it will be she was welcome to bring her Union in. Needless to say, that this matter was investigated, CT was found to be irresponsible and was given a written warning. Whilst her site member tried to defend her initially, he did concede that learners cannot be left unattended.

It must be mentioned that the above issue gave rise to CT strengthening the support of her female colleagues, four of whom were grossly guilty of visiting each other's classes for occasional chats. This issue was on my agenda for the next staff meeting as a general issue on the seriousness of leaving learners unattended. It led to a very heated discussion with the Paula Blose group of females believing that they were being targeted. The matter ended with me informing the staff that this specific item was not for discussion but was rather an instruction and I then referred them to the Employment of Educator's Act, Act 76 of 1998 by which I reminded staff that they were bound. The meeting ended on a tense note, with clearly certain staff members being very dissatisfied. I did not allow this to trouble me since I had long ago informed staff that I was not at Kashmir Primary or any other school to make friends. Members of the School Governing Body were very pleased, I was told later, since they knew that the interests of learners were being placed first.

At a School Governing Body meeting on 21 April 2006, the Chairperson, Mr Josiah expressed his appreciation and thanked me in because the Jennifer issue was dealt with. He also informed the committee that Mr Shabalala accompanied by another member of the School Governing Body, Mr Cele had come to see him and told him of what had happened. He also spoke of the concern of the SGB in respect of certain educators leaving their classrooms during teaching time but was pleased that the matter was immediately dealt with by the Principal. Ms PC, an educator representative on the SGB, but also an active member of the Blose support group tried to defend

educators but was curtly told by the Chairperson that no explanation for leaving a classroom will be entertained. As the Principal of Kashmir Primary, I informed the school Governing Body of this specific issue on the agenda and of my last staff meeting and the instruction given to staff of this being a non-negotiable.

Three days later, Ms PC without my knowledge gave a feedback of the School Governing Body meeting to her colleagues at a staff meeting during lunch break. I believe the Deputy Principal, Mrs Zungu was also present. From reports given to me the next day by Mrs Thomas and another educator, Mrs Jali, the report back was very biased, that is indicating that the SGB members were, "out to get the teachers", that, "were getting involved in professional matters, which is not their business" and that, "the Principal did not stop them". Further PC informed staff that Mr Shabalala is the neighbour of a member of the SGB, hence the, "special treatment", something which I was not aware of nor was going to concern myself with.

What I did do the same afternoon was call an emergency staff meeting. At the meeting I reminded staff of the dangers of attending illegitimate meetings that is those that do not have the knowledge or approval of the Principal's office. I also questioned the biasedness of the feedback and then gave an objective report. I requested input from the two staff representatives that is PC and Zama, both of whom remained silent. Staff was again reminded of their responsibilities as educators and the rightful concern of parents, when these responsibilities are neglected. I then cautioned staff and dismissed them. This last staff meeting unfortunately gave rise to a situation where one of two things began happening at school. The first was, where certain members of staff, approximately 40 percent chose to simply conduct their duties quietly, without questioning or getting involved in any external issues. These appeared to be the conservative, sometimes fearful ones. The second was the other group approximately 45 percent, which was made up of 90 percent females that would largely question everything; this was the Paula, Blose and friends group. This group would want to make every issue, an issue to contest and should things not go their way, they would want to scream sexism, gender discrimination etc.

For example, at the end of the year staff members were given the opportunity to serve on a 'schedules committee', one that checked internal promotions before finalising learner marks and reports. None of these staff members volunteered, and so when members of the first group that is

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the conservative group, and School's Management team were selected they cried foul, accused School Management Team members of nepotism and gender discrimination because the committee had one female and three males.

In the months that followed in the following years, the Principal and members of the SMT that is besides the Deputy Principal were often visited by Union members, including that of the branch executive members whereby constant allegations of harassment and intimidation were being levelled against us by certain educator members, largely of the Blose group. In March 2011, a serious issue at school occurred. Educator, Ms J was found by her Head of Department, Mr Sandile, to have assessed learners in grade 4B for two stipulated pieces of written tasks without having given the learners the set tasks. This led to requesting a visit by the specific subject advisor of the Department of Education and the subsequent investigation followed. Ms J was found guilty despite her protests of innocence and her representation by the Union. She was given a written warning, which was placed in her personal file and was also given a stipulated period in which to teach and assess the learners on the respective aspects of the curriculum. Ms J has never forgiven her Head of Department or the Principal for this and she constantly looks for opportunities to instigate conflict amongst staff members. This together with the Blose and PC issues has given rise to chronic conflicts at school, and so yes, we became a "chronic conflict school"

In February 2012, six weeks into the new school year, a parent Mr M. Zondi from the Welbedacht area, an area known for its poverty and other social ills visited our school to seek admission for his son, Mandla, a grade 6 learner. We have two grade six units and both were full. Mr Zondi had spoken to the school clerk, Thobile, who had explained the situation to him, also informed him that other grade 6 learners were turned away and telling him that the grade six units were filled in the first week of January 2012.She also referred him to other schools whom she felt might be able to assist. When Mr Zondi asked to see the Principal, she indicated that I was busy and unable to see him at that time. He left agitated, shouting as he exited. We later learned that Blose who was walking towards the staff room, stopped to speak to Zondi and had a lengthy discussion with him, lasting some fifteen minutes. That same afternoon, I received a call from a reporter of the local newspaper, 'the Rising Sun ', alleging that I was selective in my admissions and that I had taken learners from other areas who did not live in Welbedacht

and that Kashmir Primary demanded, "full school fees in advance or else, no admission". I denied the allegations and then referred the reporter to the Department's Communication Officer based at Head Office, in Pietermaritzburg, stating that I was not allowed to speak to the media. Three days later a full article with the title, 'No schooling for local Welbedacht boy 'appeared in the Rising Sun, with a sad looking learner holding a school bag and clinging onto his father.

The next afternoon Blose's friend, Mrs J, the grade 6 form teacher appeared in my office, stating that she could accommodate Mandla. I reminded her that she had 44 learners in her class, and that other similar learners were turned away. Her response was that, "those learners must have found a school by now". I also reminded her that she was very unhappy at the beginning of the year and accused the school management team of deliberately giving her a large class, and that on principle we couldn't take anymore learners in the grade 6 units. The SMT was also convinced that the conversation Blose had with Zondi on that day had something to do with the article in the newspaper. Unfortunately, what followed was a further spiralling of conflicts and crises at Kashmir Primary, a good school turned into a hive of chronic conflict with most of the school management team members together with 'that 40% of the staff and most of the School Governing Body members fending and resolving conflicts daily.

On the 3rd of March 2012, I was confronted by a group of approximately fifteen unruly parents from the Welbedacht area waving placards and chanting slogans such as, "Snob Principal, "" Snob SMT", "Snob SGB", "We will take you out", "School is ours". Other placards read, "Kashmir hates poor people", "Get out Principal, get out SMT", "Get out SGB", "New South Africa, school is for the poor, leave NOW". With these protestors being abusive and aggressive, the experience was somewhat intimidating although we managed to drive into the school. Educators too indicated that they felt threatened, however it was learnt later that the Blose group were readily welcomed in with loud and happy cheers. As I got into my office, I instructed the security guard to close the school gate. This of-course presented endless problems as many teachers and parents with their children were still coming in, I then called the local police for assistance. Some twenty minutes later, they arrived and after some thirty minutes managed to disperse the parents, however, not before the media had arrived, taking strategic photos and interviewing certain parents, including Mr Zondi.

In all the mayhem, teachers and learners were directed by the SMT to their classroom, however, some educators did so reluctantly with some senior learner that is grade 6 and 7 showing similar hesitation. Other parents were also calling and phoning school, showing great fear and dissatisfaction, many did not know what was happening and were even more anxious. After some struggle the day proceeded but after lunch break most staff members gathered in the staff room and seemed to have held a meeting. After break, some fifty five percent refused to go to their classes and as reported by the Deputy Principal, Mrs Zungu, wanted an urgent meeting with the Principal. I reluctantly went to see them and as expected, their regular spokespersons that is Blose, PC, J and the Deputy Principal asked for an assurance of their safety for them to return to school the next morning. I had to remind them of their unlawful behaviour, firstly in terms of the Educator's Employment Act, Act 76 of 1998 that is of them not being in the classrooms. Also, that I could not hold any meeting with them at that time which was teaching time and reminded them that we were all in the same situation. I also hinted that much of the issue we knew was stemming from inside. This resulted in an uproar, coming from Blose and gang. I then issued an instruction for them to return to class immediately and informed them that I was going to report to the Department of Education.

I did call the Department of Education and report to the Superintendent of Education Management of the school who indicated she will visit the next day and that I should inform her of the status the next morning. The following morning, some ten parents gathered around the school gate with the same placards but less vociferous, I had however also ensured the presence of the police. During the day, I received a petition from the staff, threatening to, "chalk down", if their demands were not met. Firstly, they wanted an assurance from the Department, concerning their safety and referring to threats and insults from parents, secondly, they accused the school management of being 'high handed'. Thirdly, they wanted an explanation and an apology from the Principal in respect of the Principal's utterance that is, "much of the issue was stemming from the inside". I then called the SEM who said she would be at school the next day which she did. A lengthy meeting between the SEM and the SMT followed, with SEM requesting a written report from the Principal but also making no bones about procedures in respect of educators' "obligations to teaching and learning, being the core business of schools". She also emphasised, the "no work, no pay rule irrespective of issues". All of this happened on a Friday

and when staff was reported to on Monday, they did not take too kindly to what they called, "threats". A visit by the Union branch executive member followed the next day and although attempting to be objective, was very sympathetic to the teachers, but less so to the SMT. When an office bearer of the School's Governing Body tried to reason with the Union representative, Mr Fanele, he became aggressive and told the SGB member that professional matters was not his concern.

The member then responded angrily with, "if your teachers don't like Kashmir Primary, they should find another school". This then agitated Mr Fanele who then told me he wished to urgently meet with his members to which I said he was welcomed to do so, but after school hours. As expected he could not respond immediately but did so three afternoons later.

In the meantime, parents I suspect of the 'placard group', had also written to the Head of the Department of Education in the Province, Dr G.M. Bhengu, complaining about the Principal and certain members of the SMT, whom they accused of treating parents badly; of selective admission of learners and of favouring certain educators. My report had subsequently also gone to the Circuit Office, and so did that of the Union. In mid- 2012, the Department of Education had sent a task team and so various investigations into the affairs of Kashmir Primary commenced, these being the following:

- *Principal's report in respect of: the Welbedacht admission issue; the gathering and protests of certain parents outside the school gate; and the withdrawal of teaching by certain staff members.*

- *The allegations by the Union representative, Mr Fanele, against Principal and certain School Management Team members.*

- *Complaint by Mr Zondi of Welbedacht and support by his small group of other parents.*

Of course, whilst the above investigations proceeded relationships amongst certain staff members and the SMT were at an all-time low. Those educators that did not agree with the petitioners but were too scared to speak up were at the constant receiving end of criticisms and insults. These would result in daily conflicts of different degrees, some becoming quite intense.

So, by the end of 2012 and the beginning of 2013 several teachers were even speaking of wanting transfers. The School's Governing Body members too were not enjoying much co-operation or cordial relations with certain staff members, however, they the SGB made it known that their interest was the children and not relationships with such teachers, of course this message was received by the Department who supported it, but which also aggravated conflicts at school.

Members of the larger Blose group were regularly called in for questioning during the investigations. Judging from their reactions after each one's session, it was easy to determine whether things went smoothly or not. Whilst these investigations continued, tensions heightened at school, several staff members would merely conduct their classroom affairs and cut themselves of all other activities of the school. These included birthday lunches which was high up on the school's calendar, and which usually involved the birthday person or persons providing lunch for the staff, whereby gifts and other formalities would be shared. In the meantime, certain staff members chose to eat their lunches in their classrooms and people would then continue to regard each other very suspiciously. This did not make the school a happy place.

It must also be mentioned that on 25 October 2012, I received a telephone call from the SEM who indicated that I should make all financial records of Kashmir Primary available since the Department would be visiting us in this respect. I tried getting more information from the SEM but was not very successful. The following week, the Circuit Manager and two other officials apparently from Head Office, Mr Ken and Mr Msomi came to school. The Circuit Manager presented me with a letter from a supposedly concerned community member who made serious allegations of financial mismanagement at school. One claim stated that the school was receiving regular donations from certain sponsors and the Principal and the SGB Chairperson were using these for themselves.

Another indicated that the school's outsourced tuck shop funds were being mismanaged, students were being overcharged, profits were being skewed and sponsored items were being sold. Further, it was alleged that the person running the tuck shop was a sister-in-law to staff member, Ms Thomas. And so, towards the end of October 2013, a financial audit by the Department of Education also commenced. Staffroom and ground whispers began pointing fingers towards JT,

particularly because a week prior to the telephone call from the Circuit Manager she and her Head of Department, Mr Sibisi had had a major altercation resulting in JT reporting her Head of Department to the Deputy Principal, Mrs Zungu, and accusing Mr Sibisi of victimisation. The altercation was due to a disagreement in respect of the assessment JT had awarded herself and which Mr Sibisi felt was overrated based on her level of performance. Mr Sibisi had therefore lowered her score, in accordance with her level of service delivery and after discussions with her.

Of-course JT refused to accept the lowered score and of signing the agreement document, resulting in an impasse between them. It therefore as informed by the Head of Department resulted in JT's subtle withdrawal of participation in the various school activities e.g. the school's cultural evening in which she always showed a keen interest. JT immediately attracted support from her regular colleagues and I'm sure, you can imagine the ensuing conflicts between members of this group and other staff members, particularly from her Department who believed her assessment was fair. This further intensified conflicts at school, whilst the suspicions and tensions grew at Kashmir Primary until the end of 2012. Fortunately, the preoccupation with examinations at the end of the year allowed for people to go about their school business undisturbed but in a rather anti-social, stressful environment, so much so, that the usual end of year annual school social function survey showed a distinct lack of interest and therefore did not materialise.

January 2013 saw the return of all staff and learners and for a brief while, that is the first two weeks, there was almost a much better, less tense environment until Mrs Zama, a parent, visited school and accused Mrs J of failing her daughter, Futhi, a grade 4B learner. This was the same class that had had the earlier issue with Mrs J. I then instructed Head of Department, Mr Sandile, to investigate the matter, although parent was explained by myself of the procedures concerning internal promotions. However, J has a knack of garnering support from her less committed friends and so instead of allowing the investigation to proceed, she began discussing the issue with certain staff members and so once again conflicts and suspicions returned with less mercy. The site member would forever question the nature of school visits by Department Officials are outside our control. These however heightened work unhappiness.

Presently, the Department's investigations are ongoing and so is the chronicity of conflicts. I also at some stage suggested in a staff meeting, I believe on 16 May 2013, that unhappy teachers should consider a change of environment as their unhappiness was spreading and affecting the ethos of the school. The site member accused me of wanting to, "get rid of certain staff members". I'm also very aware that if certain staff members, already mentioned, remain at Kashmir Primary, this school will remain a breeding ground for conflicts as we are already experiencing, especially whilst these prolonged investigations by the Department of Education continue. Not that I believe they will disappear should the investigations be over since members of the Blose, CT, J, etc. group will find a new bone to chew on, hence my mention of transfers.

5.4.2   Analysis

- **Outsider promotees**

This issue of "outside promotees" appears to also be a root cause of much conflict at this school, first the case of the Deputy Principal who constantly appears to be biased toward the level one educator and at the same time often alienating herself from the school's management of which she is not just an integral part but the second in charge as Manager and Leader of this institution. What then is of paramount importance here is the utterance by this Principal that "Paula also accused the previous Principal, Mr Sithole of being a male chauvinist, since the School Management Team of five members had only one female educator, a possible justifiable accusation.

However, the narrator's following sentence casts some doubt on this allegation but certainly highlights that of opportunism, when he states," This was Paula's trump card and she often used her support group". The current Principal, Mr Ngidi's use of, "appearing to be satisfied", referring to the staff at the end of his staff meeting also creates the theme of appearance and reality or perhaps even hypocrisy. In the case of the former, perhaps it's the end of day and staffs usually want staff meetings to be expedited or the latter that is the Principal's use of intimidation.

- **Poor practice**

Of paramount importance is what happens next in this story as narrated by Principal Ngidi and that is that a, "very mature and senior lady, Mrs Thomas next afternoon while I was waiting for Parents". She went on to tell the Principal as narrated by him that she did not believe the Principal's comments in respect of overweight were offensive and that she appreciated his concern. The question arises as to why Mrs Thomas did not say this at the respective staff meeting, could it be fear of reprisal from colleagues or whether she was gaining favour with the Principal. The Principal too saw it fit to explain to Thomas that he was not a sexist, also appearing to seek a confidante, possibly loneliness or opportunism. Thomas went on to inform Ngidi of the numerous previous conflict situations at school for which Paula was responsible and spoke of a specific situation in 2001, a year prior to Ngidi's arrival, "whereby an educator had to be nominated to be a gender focal person…..Education". "Paula who is usually loud…selected a certain Mrs Gugu Molefe". She went on to inform the Principal as stated by him that Paula's disappointment resulted in Paula's mobilising staff against Mrs Molefe, not supporting her programme and ultimately causing her to seek transfer. The last line of this paragraph in Ngidi's narration is very telling, "I thanked Mrs Thomas…….I will heed…….said", confirming his earlier need for a confidante and revealing his value of her since he does not often, "heed" input or advice from staff generally. Further it must be noted that this action by the Principal as a leader also compromises the position of a staff member in respect of her relationships with colleagues and sadly it is not being discouraged as would be expected of a leader in respect of his subordinates about poor and unprofessional practise.

- **Gender discrimination**

The Principal continues by narrating that, "whilst paging through the school's log book, I read that in 2002…….sexist….…who……..marginalised….…power or position", implying that despite Mr Ngidi's experiences at that time of dissension by certain staff members and its consequential conflicts, his timing of the 'log book probe,' was inappropriate. The log book is an official book prescribed by the Department of Education and used for the purpose of recording daily but significant occurrences at each school. To be making a deliberate attempt at this sensitive stage to find 'something' was poor practice and fuelling the already tense situation. However, of significance in the log book, is the capturing of the allegation of sexism and

marginalisation of females with regard to, "any form of power and position", against the former Principal, Mr Sithole. This clearly points to the history of alleged discriminatory behaviour by the school's former leaders against females. The second log book entry concerns the school's selection of, a co-curricular co-ordinator whereby it would appear Mrs Blose's non-selection gave rise to her continued agitation and further points to the possibility of gender discrimination. Mr Ngidi goes on to say, "It seemed that the situation…….retirement in 2002", qualifying the extent of unhappiness and frustration at the school at that time and which ultimately resulted in the then Principal, Mr Sithole's unplanned early retirement. The follow-up statement by Mr Ngidi, i.e., "What Mrs Blose and a few of her supporting colleagues…….stickler for rules and nobody……..resignation, I had a job to do……..at any cost", emphasises his non-flexibility approach, his almost autocratic leadership style of 'my way or the highway', which clearly appears too intertwined with the sexist allegations.

- **Work Ethics**

Another serious moment of 'work ethics' is seen when the Principal speaks of the visit by an irate parent, Mr Joseph Shabalala on 28 February 2006, and who complained of educator, C T's frequent visits to her female colleagues' classes, leaving her class unattended. More seriously was the consequential injury of Shabalala's daughter, Jennifer by fellow learner, Marcus on 26 February 2006. Aggravating this situation was C T's response when Jennifer and other learners complained to her about what had happened, and that is, "Jennifer cries for everything", as reported by Mr Shabalala. In this incident, the reader is presented with C T's poor work ethics, not only when she violates a serious condition of her employment, that is; leaving her class unattended, but also her attitude and lack of pastoral care when informed of the incident. Teachers are for all intent and purpose at school level in 'loco prentices' (parents in loco). Of question becomes the work ethics of fellow educators' petition, received by myself on March 18, 2006, these being the two males, "one was the Deputy Principal, the other……Paula Blose, TC, CT, and J……or conflict with ", all of whom were in support of C T and as stated by the Principal had themselves had some disagreement with the Principal at some stage. A telling moment of questionable work ethics is when the Principal mentions the strengthening of support C T secures from her female colleagues, "four of whom were grossly guilty of visiting each other's classes for occasional chats". Clearly there appears to be a unifying force of those who

appear to be less committed in respect of service delivery, a show of strength in numbers should individuals have to account for their poor performance.

- **Leadership style**

The Principal throughout his narration displays immense pride in his own management experience, his assumed high levels of competence and excellence in his work performance as a leader and manager. He often sets himself apart from the rest of the staff and sometimes appears to be boastful of his assumed expertise. He often comes across as being aloof and sometimes high-handed, this is illustrated at the very onset of his narration, second paragraph when he states, "I did not hide my impatience", and again in the fourth paragraph, when he discusses the examination programme and indicates that, he will not allow for any excuse by teachers. Another instance of this high-handed, rigid authoritarian style of leadership is seen when the Principal says that Blose and her supporting colleagues did not realise that he, "was a stickler for rules and…resignation. I had a job to do and was going to do it at any cost". The Principal repeatedly gives insight into his, finality of decisions, his lack of tolerance for the opinions and views of others especially once a decision has been made or an instruction issued by himself.

When later in the story, Mr Ngidi speaks of the uproar that ensued after he informed staff that he was aware that much of the issues were, "stemming from inside", his response to their reaction affirms his high-handed style by issuing both an instruction and a threat, threat by informing staff that he was going to report to the Department of Education. Even in the final paragraph of Mr Ngidi, the Principal's narration he enhances the reader's knowledge of his, 'quick-fix', non-consultative approach to resolving conflicts at Kashmir Primary. This is indicative when he states that at a staff meeting on 16 May 2013, he suggested that, "unhappy teachers should consider a change in environment as their unhappiness…ethos of the school". Exasperating the situation is the Principal's accusation of holding certain staff members responsible for the unhappiness of others. It is not surprising therefore that the site members hasten to accuse the Principal of wanting to, "get rid of certain staff members".

- **Union involvement**

At the school level, the staff is represented by a site member. Failure to resolve issues at this level is then taken to the branch executive followed by the Region and then the Provincial level which are the next levels within the Union's structures. From the onset of the story as narrated by the Principal, one gets a strong sense of the presence of the Union, however the narrator has never mentioned whether there might be a second or third Union at this school to which the teachers are affiliated. One can therefore only assume that there exists just one, being a strong and influential Union. We see this immediately at the beginning of the story, when despite the Principal believing that he had made educator, PC understand why she could not be granted the one week's leave, that she had requested, two days later she complained to her Union, a representative of which came to meet him. However, unlike the previous Principal, Mr Sithole's experiences with constant conflicted staff members and regular Union involvement resulting in his ultimate retirement, as indicated by the current Principal, Mr Ngidi, this Principal was no, 'push-over' and stood his ground on issues, for example, his decision with respect to PC's leave. The pervading presence and continued influence of the Union is affirmed when later in the story, Mr Ngidi states that, "In the months followed. Principal and members of the School Management Team…allegations of...and intimidation…..against us". Even when educator Mr J was found guilty of misconduct after an investigation by the relevant subject advisor in respect of her work, her Union's strong presence was felt.

Another significant moment of Union influence and presence is realised when Mr Ngidi speaks of the visit by the Union branch executive member, after educators threatened to, 'chalk-down', soon after a protest action by a group of parents. Both Principal and SEM had warned of the consequences of such action in terms of legislation governing educators' conditions of service, which resulted in the visit by the Union official who according to the Principal attempted to be objective but was very sympathetic to teachers. The role of the Union in such an instance is highly questionable, particularly when as stated by the Principal became aggressive towards the School Governing Body member who, "tried to reason with", him.

Later in the story both the Principal and the Union had written to the Department making allegations against each other as stated by the Principal. It must be noted that the Union enjoys the same access to channels of communication as does a school's management team who usually

communicates via the Principal. At the school level, where the staff is represented by their site member, the local site member would frequently question the nature of the school visits by Department officials as stated by the Principal, particularly at the beginning of January 2013 when the investigations by the Department of Education proceeded. The reader is again reminded of the conspicuous presence and involvement of the Union. In the Principal's concluding paragraph, this phenomenon is frequently entrenched and that is when the site member hastily accuses the Principal of wanting to, "get rid of certain staff members", that is when he suggests a change of environment for some. It must be noted that the ombudsman for the teacher is never far off.

5.5   Parklane Secondary School

Parklane Secondary was founded in 1996 as a co-educational school for previously disadvantaged pupils. Unlike the other schools that initially belonged to the former House Of Delegates, under the apartheid system of Education which largely serviced Indians schools, this school was born out of the new and singular KwaZulu-Natal Department Of Education, post-apartheid. It currently accommodates approximately 1188 learners from grades 8 to 12 and has a staff of 40. The school has one male Principal, and two Deputy Principals, one male and one female. It has three Heads of Department, 2 male and 1 female and two support staff, one administrative and one cleaning staff. Due to its huge learner population, the school despite its financial constraints employs an additional part-time school clerk so as to alleviate some of its administrative responsibilities.

The school is located in an environment that adjoins the upper end of Chatsworth, a suburb created under the apartheid regime to accommodate the predominantly South African Indian community known as Welbedacht. Welbedacht is a rapidly growing housing development for people on the lower end of the socio-economic scale and is understandably accompanied by various social disadvantages, all of which continues to swiftly escalate, the consequences of

which impact strongly on the local community and the school. As an early institution of democracy, it was one of the first schools to have attracted learners of all race groups, with a rapidly growing integrated school community. Welbedacht, like most new housing developments in South Africa, projects the face of the typically disadvantaged, at the same time bringing people from various strife torn communities to be housed together in a common space, notwithstanding their own personal challenges, be it unemployed, illiteracy, poverty and various other social ills.

Parklane Secondary thus largely accommodates learners of this community. Several educators come from this local area and as such are relatively familiar with the parent community. Others come from the surrounding areas of Mariannhill, Nagina, Klaarwater, Demat and Savannah Park, suburbs that were originally developed to cater for people on the lower end of the economic ladder. Approximately 60 percent of the educators come from outside areas, from as far afield as Durban North, Phoenix, Reservoir Hills, and 15 to 30 kilometres away. Despite all its challenges, including its financial constraints, Parklane Secondary still manages to achieve over eighty percent annually in its Senior Certificate, that is Grade 12 examination results. Like Beachwood Secondary, one continues to question the absence of the 100 percent pass rate and hopes this study will point in a direction that will make it less illusive and obscure.

5.5.1 Narrative 3: Principal of Parklane Secondary

Parklane Secondary has been experiencing all types of conflict since the year 2009. It all began when a few community members wanted to be elected on the School's Governing Body and after failing to do so, sent a memorandum to the Department of Education with some twenty-five signatures. Their demand was the immediate removal of the School's Management Team that is the Principal, the two Deputy Principals and the one Head of Department, all of whom were Indians, claiming that the school's management team was too Indian and needed to be replaced by African educators since the school has such a large African population. They failed to accept that the school was a former House of Delegates school, and that the management members were already there when the school's doors opened to all.

With a staff of forty and a learner population of approximately twelve hundred, conflicts would spring up every now and then. Of the forty teachers, six were Africans and the rest Indians. One had to be very guarded in dealing with conflicts, since every opportunity was being used to create situations of racism. For example, if an educator was spoken to by her Head of Department in respect of her work, she would immediately complain to her union or a community member, usually one of the earlier signatories to garner support in wanting to show the situation as one of racism. This happened so often that the school almost became used to it. None such incidents proved to be substantive, but would rather lead to unnecessary conflict amongst colleagues, often resulting in tension, suspicion and causing strain on relationships.

At this stage a member of the school's management team, Mr Mkhize of the Social Sciences' Department, had resigned from education to get into business. However, it was reported that he was struggling with his business and began regretting leaving the education field. Ten months later, through much persuasion and sympathy, the Principal got him re-instated, but then as a junior educator. At that stage, another senior educator, Mr Shaik was already holding the position of Acting Head of Department for Social Science. After a short period of time, there were constant issues of conflict between Mkhize and Jakes. It was clear to all, besides a small group of five to six educators, i.e. Mkhize's friends, that Mkhize could not accept the fact that he was no longer Head of Department, and had to like others, follow instructions. Poor Jakes, he had to watch over his shoulder all the time and sometimes, turned a blind eye to Mkhize's short comings, which became often. Mkhize succeeded in dividing the staff and creating a lot of bitterness. Everybody blamed the Principal for being short-sighted. Some of us would joke and tell the Principal that Mkhize would never rest until he got his seat that is of the Principal. However, none of this could have prepared us for what followed in the year 2011.

This is my personal account to the best of my recollection of the circumstances around an incident that took place at Parklane Secondary in June of 2011, and which gave rise in my opinion to constant conflicts and made our school a haven of chronic conflict. My name is Mrs S Singh and I've been a Senior Deputy Principal at Parklane Secondary for the past nine years and often deputised for the Principal. As the School's Management Team, we have enjoyed good working relationships and often consulted on most matters. On Monday 8 June 2011, it was

during the fifth period when I was busy teaching in room 44, when the Head of Department, Mrs. Naidu interrupted my lesson. She had with her two class lists and said as the senior grade supervisor, she wanted me to conduct a cell phone search in the grade 11 class. I told her that I could not do it and that she should find someone else, also being in a senior class i.e. grade 12's, I could not afford to lose time. I was in the middle of my lesson at that time, and time was of the essence. However, she insisted saying that the grade 9's had already been searched and it would be unfair not to search the grade 11's. I reluctantly then went to the office and asked the Principal to allow someone to accompany me, preferably a male educator. A non-educator, Mrs Jabu who was in the foyer, overheard the conversation and quickly stated that she had assisted with the grade 9 search and volunteered herself.

We proceeded to the first class where an English lesson was in progress, I informed the educator in the class that I needed to speak to the learners. I was alone in class with the learners while Mrs Jabu spoke to a senior member of staff outside the room. I explained to the class that I wasn't there to do a search but will rather call out the names of learners that have already been identified by senior grade 12 learners. They must then hand over their cell phones and claim them later. The learners remained silent, I appealed to their good sense, urging them to hand over their phones. Whilst I was talking to them, Mrs. Jabu walked in and began searching the pockets of the girls, some picked up their hands quickly to indicate they did not have any cell phones. She then moved to the back of the class where a few learners were standing. I saw her slip her hands into the pants of one of the girls and remove a cell phone. I was taken aback and requested she leave the room and wait outside. While she was going outside, another senior learner rushed in to say that another learner had a cell phone in his pants. I then told the specific learner to go to a quiet place, even the toilet, remove the cell phone and bring it in. He did so and returned after a few minutes and handed the phone to Mrs Jabu who was still waiting outside.

It was then lunch break and I went to the office to inform the Principal of what had happened. He indicated that I should keep quiet. He also said that Mrs Jabu had told him that she was Going to get the cell phones for him. The next day, a group of learners came to the office and complained about the way they were searched. The Principal addressed the learners and after

some discussion, the matter appeared resolved. However, later that afternoon, the local tabloid phoned the Principal and indicated their concern about the inappropriate search on learners that was conducted by teachers and wanted the Principal's comments. For my part, I did not conduct any search, although the perception created was that teachers did. I knew for a fact that the non-educator staff, Mrs Jabu was employed by the School Governing Body and that she had conducted the search. This began creating much tension and suspicion amongst staff members, many believing that learners were searched by teachers.

The following day the Chairperson came to school and made his concerns known. One educator, Mrs Zulu stated her resentment about the search, she was also a close friend of Mr Mkhize the educator who had returned after resigning. At this stage, rumours were rife that learners were taken to the local newspaper offices, some even stated that learners were paid to give statements to the press. One learner that had gone to the press was someone I had dealt with quite severely previously for often failing to complete her class tasks and projects. Her step-mother on one occasion reprimanded her in my presence and threatened to punish her, which I believe she might have done at home. During the breaks learners were seen forming groups and whispering when seen by teachers. In the staffroom, teachers were doing the same and people were constantly 'watching' over their shoulders since a lot of suspicion and mistrust was being created.

What happened next was that the School Governing Body came to school and supported by a few teachers informed the Principal that they wanted to investigate the matter. They immediately set up a hearing for the three of us that is myself, the Head of Department Mrs. Naidu, and the other Deputy Principal, Mr Persad. We refused to be subjected to any discipline hearing by the School Governing Body, since it was a professional matter and not the responsibility of the School Governing Body. Prior to my involvement, the other Deputy Principal and Head of Department, together with Mrs Jabu and a few learners had already conducted the search in the junior class. The Principal appeared very reluctant to get involved. In my opinion, had he got in at that stage and played an active role in resolving the conflict, it would not have initiated the onset of what became chronic conflict at Parklane Secondary. Also, the problem would never have escalated to the level that it did. As a result, learners formed groups, began getting rowdy, displaying arrogance, showing no respect for authority and discipline generally declined. Learners were

sometimes seen in the company of certain educators who would behave suspiciously, and rumours were circulating that certain educators were inciting the learners to cause disruptions and make the school chaotic.

On 1 June 2011, a group of parents again called at school and informed the Principal that they wished to meet the three of us to discuss the incident. They told the Principal that we should join them in the library and proceeded there to wait for us. We instead decided to meet with our Teacher Union. In the meantime, parents began demanding that we leave the school. Our union representative then telephoned the Chief Superintendent of Education, telling him about the rumblings at school, especially since many learners began "toy-toying ", and protesting us. It became clear that parents were inciting the learners and some learners were seen talking to a few teachers. One group of parents moved to the Principal's office, knowing that we were in that area. The situation had become volatile and we were advised by our union representative to leave school. Learners and parents jeered as we left, especially because it is what parents and some teachers wanted in the first instance.

We then reported to the circuit office and remained there for the next two weeks. During this time, we were told by some of our colleagues that parents and learners made it clear that they did not want us at Parklane Secondary. At the end of the two weeks the District Director addressed us and told us to return to school since the Department did not ask us to leave school. So, on hearing this, the two of us Deputy Principals decided to return to school on the 17th of June. Our colleague, the Head of Department was on sick leave at the same time. We attempted to settle in and went to classes, thinking that things would normalise. We then observed that many learners were moving around and going to other classes during teaching time, these were largely African learners, a few teachers too were going to the learners and they did not make any effort to send them back to classes, instead the numbers were increasing. The learners then began chanting and creating chaos outside our rooms. I had to close my classroom door. My own class learners noticed my concern. Realising what was happening, my colleague, the other Deputy Principal and I hurriedly moved towards the office, followed by some of my learners who quickly assisted me with my books and escorted us to the office area and for which I must thank them. Both of us went to one office and locked ourselves in, some parents and learners rushed to

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our office and began chanting and banging on our door, asking us to come out. Neither the Principal nor any other educator made any attempt to assist, many of whom had observed what was happening.

One parent whose child I taught reported to me that he overheard an educator, Mr Mkhize saying that the parent should pull me out by my hair. Parents threatened to remove us if we did not leave, it was one of the most humiliating and embarrassing experience that we have had in our teaching lives. Parents and learners were chanting and clapping as they watched us being ridiculed. The Principal very worried, then called the police and asked us to leave school. The police then escorted us out of the office and out of the school, all the time being mocked at by unruly learners and parents. It is a day I shall never forget, all this whilst the Principal and colleagues stood helpless. We then went to the District Office, but not being able to meet the Director, we proceeded to the Circuit Office and remained there for almost a week. After the intervention by the Superintendent of Education Management, all three of us were placed at three other schools as a temporary measure.

In the meantime, the same parents were continuously writing to the Provincial Head Office, specifically to the Head of Education for Kwa-Zulu Natal, Mr Bhengu and even to the Minister of Education for Kwa-Zulu Natal, making serious allegations against us. Some of the main allegations included the search issue which they saw as a racist issue; the discipline issues of learners which again they regarded as racial issues; and mismanagement by the school management team, once again they felt the issues were too "Indian" and that the Principal was not capable of making his own decisions.

Parents continued to write to the District and Circuit Offices and demanded a meeting with officials. A Senior District Official then, Mr Nkosi, together with Circuit Officials then met the parents on the following Saturday afternoon at school. The Principal was also present and although educators were not allowed, it was later learnt that Educator, Mrs Zulu was in the audience and did much of the talking and questioning. She also prompted parents to ask questions that were deliberately leaning towards racism and further influenced parents to question Principal's handling of discipline, making him appear incompetent. Mr Mkhize too,

although not in the audience, was seen on the school premises and was continuously on his cell phone. It was obvious to those watching him that he was talking to people in the audience. At times the meeting became very rowdy. Had the police not been present inside and outside   the hall, it seemed quite possible that the meeting would have become violent.

The Senior Official, Mr Nkosi addressed the parents, listening to them repeatedly calling for the investigation to be completed urgently and at the same time demanding the permanent removal of the 'three' staff members, emphasizing the race issue. Mr Nkosi immediately supported the parents on the race issue and promised to have the three Indian staff members replaced with three African educators the next week. He also told them that racism will not be tolerated and the parents, I was later told, became very excited. He also promised to charge individuals for racism, mismanagement and not caring for the African child; all this before any investigation. Off course most of the parents were very excited and hearing this calmed their anger. Some of the other parents that were present, a few of them later informed staff that the Senior Official did not ask for the educator to leave but instead supported her and although the group of educators did not agree with what was being said, they were too few to be heard. It must also be mentioned that although the hall was full many individuals present were neither parents nor guardians but were just brought off the street, all this we were later told by certain parents who were present but unhappy about the conflict and chaos at school.

It must not be forgotten that what started as a sexual harassment issue, now became a racial issue because parents continued to say that only Black learners were searched, and this was readily believed by the senior officials. However, this was not true, since the original list given to the Principal had names of Indian and Black learners and most of them were identified by a Black learner. Also, one Indian learner did say that he had a cell phone but hands it to the office every morning for the day. This is because he travels from Pinetown and must speak to his parents in the afternoons to inform them about his pick-up time which changes because of extension classes. This explanation I confirmed with the school office staff

In the meantime, a week went past and no 'replacement' educators had arrived and so the word was out that the parents were becoming restless and were repeatedly contacting the District

Office. Earlier in the week, there was much excitement as the Mkhize's and Mrs Zulu spread the word about us three never returning. This also caused unnecessary tension amongst staff as suspicions and staffroom gossips developed. In the meantime, Mr Mkhize's Head of Department, Mr Shaik was becoming very impatient with his, i.e. Mr Mkhize's poor work ethic and his shoddy work. It was when Mr Shaik examined learners' books and discovered that Mr Mkhize had not completed much of his work as compared to other teachers in the same Department, that Mr Mkhize called on his union and together they accused Mr Shaik of harassing Mr Mkhize. This then lent itself to a 'Shaik', 'Mkhize 'camp with the harder working teachers supporting Shaik and the less committed ones supporting Mkhize. Of course, those that did not show much respect for authority also leaned towards Mkhize and so the daily tension and conflicts at Parklane Secondary began escalating. This to me was the ripening and onset of chronic conflict at our school that had long been born.

And so, in July of the same year, during the July vacation, the Head of Education in Kwa-Zulu Natal, Mr Bhengu, together with District and Circuit Officials met with the parents of our school, a large group, some thirty to forty of them that had called themselves 'concerned parents'. This took place after these parents persistently wrote to the Head Office in Pietermaritzburg, insisting on being heard. Mr Bhengu gave the concerned parents an opportunity to air their issues. Several of them made the same allegations, that is, the issue of the cell phone search which they believed was conducted unfairly. They informed Mr Bhengu that only the African learners were searched, also that they were searched by Indian educators. This was untrue since the member of the support staff, Mrs Jabu had in fact searched the learners and Indian learners were also involved. They continued to claim racism as a key factor in our conflicts. They further informed the Head of Education, that the Principal when dealing with any discipline issues would immediately call the male Deputy Principal who was a disciplinarian and that the learners were afraid of him. They also accused him that is the Deputy Principal of being very hard on the learners and said that the Principal was useless and had poor control and was a poor manager. They went on to inform Mr Bhengu that the school's management team was made up of Indians only and that they wished to have African educators replace some of them.

Mr Bhengu spent several hours listening to the concerned parents although in their midst was educator, Mrs Zulu, who repeated all the allegations that she had made to the Senior District Official, Mr Nkosi, when he addressed the parents on a Saturday. Mr Bhengu, assured parents, that their concerns will be investigated. However, he also informed them that South Africa was a beautiful country with different race groups, many of whom played important roles in us getting our democracy. He therefore warned parents about their allegations of racism which he said must first be investigated, he also said that it was our apartheid past that made us often shout racism. He said we should be living side-by-side and building our country, but if individuals practised racism, then they must be dealt with according to our constitution. He immediately then appointed the Senior District Official, Mr Nkosi whom he said will conduct the necessary investigation and report to his office within a period of four to five weeks. He also informed the parents that they did not have the right to chase teachers away from school and that teachers too had the right to be defended. All this information concerning Mr Bhengu's meeting was obtained by the school's management team from the Principal who was present at the meeting.

On the first day of the new term, that is 16 July 2011 the Principal after his initial meeting with the school management team later held a staff meeting in which he gave a report of Mr Bhengu's meeting and the expected investigation by the District Official.

When the Principal reported that Mr Bhengu suggested that the "three" teachers should be back at school, whilst the investigation would go on, the Mkhize/Zulu camp broke out in protest, making it known that they did not want these people back because they are racists. The Principal after a while managed to calm them and assured them that an investigation by the District was forthcoming. It was clear at that stage who the instigators were. All this, I learnt from my colleague a fellow member of the management team. In the meantime, 'Mkhize' and 'Zulu' were positioning themselves as members of management and were often leading discussions in the staffroom and with the school's management team. If for example, the timetable was being redone in view of our absence, they would want to play a lead role in decision making. Whenever members of staff disagreed, a conflict would erupt, and they would state that such members were spoilt, these were usually the Indian teachers. The school's management team too was often

influenced by these two, especially the Principal who was often intimidated by them and afraid of being labelled a racist.

In the meantime, Mr Mkhize continued to build his camp, with members of staff that were the less committed ones and those that often-had gaps in their work, ones that would be absent or take leave frequently. When questioned, the individual would offer feeble excuses and gather the support of other members of the same camp, claiming to be harassed by management. Often their union members would come in to question the Principal citing harassment. Mr Shaik, Mr Mkhize's Head of Department was in the meantime experiencing much difficulty to get Mkhize to co-operate, so much so that they were barely on talking terms. Conflicts between the camps became the order of the day, with the harder working staff on the side of management and Mkhize's group being anti-management. Complaining to the Principal did not help much since he was clearly being intimidated by Mkhize and Zulu. Once when Shaik requested the Principal to call in the Department's subject advisor for Mr Mkhize, he the Principal kept offering excuses about the non-availability of the official. Staff members were working under much strain and sometimes when one of us three would meet the Principal or any remaining member of the school management team, we would be told how much better off we were for not being at Parklane Secondary and how the school had become a haven for individuals' ambitions and ongoing conflicts.

Three months after we were virtually chased away, educators were so frustrated with daily conflicts, that a few of them even tried seeking transfers. The intensity of conflicts then spread to the community with members of the community then also taking sides with the camps. Strangely enough a group of Indian and African parents then wrote to the Minister of Education, Honourable Makhoba requesting his urgent presence. In a space of two weeks, members of the Kwa-Zulu Natal Parliament visited the school and set up a meeting with members of the 'concerned 'group. Once again, a lengthy meeting was held between the concerned group, District and Circuit Officials and members of the school's management team, somehow Mr Mkhize and Mrs Zulu sneaked into the meeting. As expected the Principal did not correct the situation with the result that they did much of the talking, ridiculing staff members, especially the three of us that were removed. They even stated that the Principal relied on the male Deputy

Principal to discipline learners because he could not do so himself and that the Deputy Principal was a racist because he was only rigid with the African learners. This was untrue because it depended on whoever was amongst the learners that were breaking the school rules.

After a further two weeks, the Minister of Education for Kwa-Zulu Natal, Honourable Makhoba called for a mass meeting of parents, and all the relevant stake holders, that is Parklane's staff, the three of us included members of the Kwa-Zulu Natal Education Portfolio Committee, Circuit and District Officials and the local community leaders. The meeting was held in the evening and at a neutral venue in the Shallcross area. The Minister spoke to the house at length and gave people an opportunity to air their views. He assured everyone that all relevant investigations will be conducted and that the school will be a safe place for all with all conflicts attended to. Parents and community members felt very pleased and readily began airing their concerns. Even the Principal and members of the staff spoke out. The Principal gave a synopsis of the cell phone issue, very similar to what I have indicated earlier, however, leaving out key facts about his poor handling of matters. He also did not implicate the two culprit educators, Zulu and Mkhize.

It must be noted though that both, Mr Mkhize and Mrs Zulu gave detailed accounts of issues at school, starting with the cell phone search but rushing to the Principal's poor handling of matters, emphasising racism and the role of the male Deputy Principal, who dealt with discipline issues. They even accused me of not searching the learners because they felt that I did not want to touch the learners whom they said I considered to be dirty. This was not the first time Mrs Zulu used this term when she spoke of certain Indian teachers disciplining African learners. As far as I was concerned, she used such terms deliberately to stir up emotions of the parents who were largely African. Once again, the Principal as head of the school and being fully aware of all the facts did little to correct the inaccurate comments and statements. It was so obvious to many of us staff members and parents that he was afraid to speak out, especially against Mkhize and Mrs Zulu.

However, there were at least twenty percent of the audience who stated that the three of us were very competent educators and that they wanted us back at the school. The Minister was pleased to hear this but others in the audience including educators, Mkhize, Zulu and others immediately

began laughing. The Minister called them to order and stressed the importance of following educational procedures in conducting investigations and resolving conflicts. He also stated the importance of respecting the rights of all in terms of our democracy. The meeting which commenced at half past six in the evening, went on until midnight and continued the next evening with the same audience and again went on until midnight. At the end of the sessions, the Minister with the assistance of Department Officials separated issues into the following three categories:

- *The academic progress and status of teaching and learning(curriculum)at Parklane Secondary*
- *school governance and management issues*
- *human rights issues*

The Minister indicated that within the next two to three days panels will be set up to conduct the necessary investigations, however issues of racism to be referred to the Human Rights Commission. The Minister tried to convince parents that we, the three affected educators should be back during the investigations, but they would not have it, so he eventually settled for rigid time frames and indicated that all investigations must be completed within one month. And so, the investigations directed by the Minister of Education began and daily, people were summoned to the different venues to answer questions and give evidence. At the same time one of us, that is the Head of Department, was promoted as Deputy Principal at a neighbouring school and so she was immediately relieved of the ongoing conflicts and trauma at Parklane Secondary. She was happy to have been rid of the Parklane Secondary baggage, although she expressed her concern for us. She was told however that she will still be part of the investigation which continued; in the meanwhile, the HOD post became vacant at Parklane Secondary.

After some six weeks, all investigations were completed besides that of the Human Rights Commission. The investigation concerning the School Governing Body clearly indicated the urgent need for members to be trained and work-shopped in respect of their roles. Whilst school governance training was being scheduled, many members left, due to no longer being parents or guardians of Parklane Secondary and because they did not agree with all the issues of the investigation. Unfortunately, new members were elected and Mkhize and Zulu had

already set their claws on them. The investigation around teaching and learning spelt out serious shortcomings on the part of certain educators and the need for the Department's subject advisors to work closely with the relevant Heads of Department at Parklane Secondary School to monitor the work of certain educators and, Mkhize being one of them. This had not gone down well with him and already it is said that he has developed a close relationship with certain new members of the School Governing Body, one of whom was refused permission to run the school's tuck shop previously. He then began monitoring the Principal's movements and that of certain School Management Team members, complaining about them to the new School Governing Body members. The Chairperson who is a member of the old committee and who refused to entertain him has also been targeted by members of the Mkhize camp. And so, the conflicts at Parklane Secondary began a whole new wave, only this time the victims are new. I am happy to say at this time, my colleague, the male Deputy Principal has also been promoted to Principal, but it does scare me that I am the only one left of the three of us.

I am told by colleagues that the report of the Human Rights Commission is awaited, although most of us were called in to be interrogated and provide evidence. Meanwhile rumour has it that a group of "concerned parents" has been newly formed with the assistance of educator, Mr Mkhize and a few of his colleagues especially after he had been repeatedly visited by subject advisors in respect of his poor work. It is being said that they are now working towards removing the Principal and School Governing Body Chairperson, Mrs Mthembu, strangely enough Mrs Zulu has moved away from this camp due to her close association with Mrs Mthembu who will be a member of the selection committee for any promotion processes at the school. The conflicts at Parklane Secondary have begun another cycle, with more teachers becoming disillusioned especially now that a second attractive post of Deputy Principal has become vacant. I must also mention that I have also recently attended several interviews for principalship and I pray that I too can soon leave this conflict-ridden school. This is already known by the Mkhize's and his friends who I am told are preparing themselves for promotions. Whilst I feel for my colleagues, the Principal, I believe can do much more to address the issues or should I say deal with specific individuals who it is well known are responsible for the serious ongoing conflicts at Parklane Secondary.

5.5.2 Analysis

The story of Parklane Secondary is narrated by the Deputy Principal, Mrs S. Singh a female of Indian origin, and who has occupied this post for the past nine years. Unlike the other three cameos that are narrated by the Principal, the narration of this story has been specifically selected to be told by the Deputy Principal. This is largely because she appears to be a significant role player in many of the school issues with reference to a specific era in the life of the school that according to her rendered the school virtually dysfunctional. Further, the Principal appears to be directly involved in some of the major conflicts at Parklane Secondary, especially the one just mentioned and so in my research wisdom I believed it would be challenging for the Principal, Mr Jadoo to remain constantly objective, hence the absence of his voice.

The narrator presents a large school with a learner population of one thousand and two hundred, and a teacher population of forty signifying the complexity of dealing with issues within this magnitude. Of importance is the initial statement of the narrator that is, "Whilst my learners have always appreciated, elsewhere," immediately informing the reader of the competence of the narrator as an educator and the appreciation of her by her learners. However, one is immediately jolted to the realisation of Mrs Singh's passion and enjoyment of her profession as well as her being a senior educator, this being in the past, that is when Mrs Singh speaks of the past respect that she enjoyed and her wish of being elsewhere, signifying her current frustration. This is reaffirmed by her when she focuses on the school's recent, "constant conflicts" and disruptions.

- **Racism**

Racism is generally defined as behaviour towards an individual or group belonging to another race, religion or culture that has malicious tones, undertones and or intentions behind it. Simply, saying or doing something negative purposefully towards another or group because of race, religion or culture. This cameo is fraught with allegations of racism and perceived racism. In the very second paragraph of this story, the narrator speaks of a memorandum that was sent by a few community members to the Department, demanding the immediate removal of the entire school's management team, on the basis that all five members that is Principal, Deputy Principal and three Heads of Department were all Indian. The issue of racism is entrenched when the narrator states that the demand included the replacement of all by that of three African educators.

Of further significance, as stated by her is when such members "failed ", to accept that Parklane Secondary had inherited an already existing School Management Team from the past apartheid system being that of a race, in this instance, 'Indian'. Even as early as 2001, seven years into South Africa's democracy, Adrian Lackay had this to say of racism, "Racism is no longer restricted to issues of skin colour and has become 'globalised' to include the unequal international division of power and prosperity, legalised and institutionalised practices, ethnicity religious intolerance and tribal identity". (Adrian Lackay in Die Burger, August 16, 2001, p11".

Of significance however, is the fact that eighteen years after the dismantling of an apartheid structured Government and a no longer fledgling democracy, racism remains a talking point in most organisations and institutions today, schools being a prominent one. This is seen at Parklane Secondary repeatedly, so much so that the Deputy Principal states that although Parklane Secondary had a majority of Indian Educators, that is, thirty four of forty and six African, the issue of racism had become so sensitive that,'' one had to be very......... create situation of racism". This particularly so when educators were asked to account for their work or lack thereof, the race card was always flashed to create conflict and subsequent suspicion and tension amongst colleagues.

The most prominent issue of racism reared its ugly head in 2011, that is when the long and drawn out issue of learners with cell-phones occurred at Parklane Secondary and as stated by the narrator, "none of this could have prepared us for what followed". The subsequent search and seizure procedure that was conducted in respect of the cell-phones was labelled a racist act, since learners, according to the narrator stated that only African learners were searched. Secondly, the search was alleged to have been conducted by Indian educators only. The narrator indicates that the search was however solely conducted by a non-teaching staff member, a Mrs Jabu of African origin and one who was appointed by the School's Governing Body. Further, the affected class list had names of both African and Indian learners. It is not surprising therefore when the narrator speaks of the subsequent increase in tension and suspicion amongst staff giving rise to unnecessary and recurring conflicts.

Another conspicuous, moment of racism or ongoing racism according to the Deputy Principal, Singh, occurred when certain parents perceived that the issue of learner discipline was being

mismanaged by specific members of the School Management Team. This they felt was dealt with, with an" Indian" bias that is that members of the only "Indian ", School Management Team were dealing with discipline issues of African learners. Reference was made to the male Deputy Principal who largely dealt with learner discipline and who was accused by parents and learners of being racist due to his strictness and 'no-nonsense' attitude. Still on the cell-phone issue and the subsequent protest and disruptions at Parklane Secondary, as narrated by Deputy Principal Singh was the follow-up mass meeting of parents on a Saturday afternoon. This meeting that was chaired by a senior District Official, Mr Nkosi and attended by other Department Officials propelled the issue of racism. My rationale for saying this is based on the utterances by the narrator in respect of Mr Nkosi's appeasement to parents. For example, the demand by parents for the removal of, "three ", staff members were not just supported by Senior Official, Zama but also followed by a promise to have them replaced by three African educators without so much as an investigation, as stated by Singh, "Mr Nkosi immediately supported……….next week". He also excited parents by telling them, that individuals will, "be charged for racism, mismanagement and not...African child, all…any investigation".

Another moment of racism is when the Deputy Principal is accused of being a racist and that is when she was reluctant to conduct the search for cell-phones, it is alleged that she stated, 'not wanting to dirty her hands'. Of further interest and consequence to the notion of racism is the utterance by the narrator that, "what started as a sexual harassment, become a racial issue", because it was alleged that Black learners were searched by senior educators. Of greater significance is the fact that the narrator states that the list of learner names with cell-phones that was handed to the Principal included both Black and Indians learners and who strangely, were identified a Black learner. The narrator continues to elaborate that one Indian learner from the same class and who does carry a cell-phone travels daily from Pinetown since he uses his phone to communicate with his parents for transport, after extension classes. However, he hands this to the office and fetches the same in the afternoons. This explanation, she states was confirmed by office staff.

The narrator repeatedly speaks of the two "main instigators" on the staff, that is Mr Mkhize and Mrs Zulu whom she believes were positioning themselves for promotions and who often influenced, "the Principal who was often intimidated by them and afraid of being labelled a

racist". It therefore implies that the Principal would knowingly allow himself to be misguided rather than being regarded a racist, as inaccurate as this might be. The issue of 'racism' had become Parklane's, 'Damocles Sword'

- **Promotions**

From the very beginning of the story of Parklane Secondary, the narrator provides the reader with insight into the very significant but damaging role the issue of promotions has and continues to cause at this school. Mrs Singh speaks of the relinquished, Head of Department post of educator, Mr B Mkhize who chose to pursue a business option after resigning from the Education fraternity, but who within a year chose to return to education because of his failing business. It must at this stage be noted that the Principal was not obliged to recommend his reappointment, but who did so on compassionate grounds, a decision according to the narrator, the staff constantly haunted him with.

Mr Mkhize's return to school initiated and spiralled conflicts until the school became a haven of conflict chronicity. Firstly, as stated by the narrator, Mr Mkhize, "could not accept the fact……….like others, follow instructions". The Acting Head of Department for Social Sciences at that time, "had to watch………which became often". This profound statement immediately conjures visions of Mkhize's poor work ethics. What follows is the dangerous dividing of staff and general bitterness according to the narrator. It is also ironical that at this stage certain staff members perceived the ambitious nature of Mkhize especially when they joked about Mkhize not resting until he usurped the Principal's seat.

Later in the story, Mrs Singh speaks of (p.9) the cell-phone issue in the year 2011 which virtually crippled the school. After numerous meetings and various levels of intervention including those by the Circuit, District and ultimately the Province of the Department of Education, the Head of Education in the Department, Dr Bhengu called for a high level of investigation by a Senior Department Official. However, his mention of the return of the 'three' educators during the investigation, saw an uprising by educators as stated by the narrator who then speaks of the obviousness of the identity of the instigators and those being largely Mr Mkhize and Mrs Zulu. She goes further to say that they were, "positioning themselves………management teams",

implying that they were preparing themselves for the imminent promotion vacancies, because of the, 'three' educators being chased away. According to the narrator, the pre and post conflicts at the school appear to be very promotions driven and so once more, the damaging influence of expectation is felt at this institution.

A startling irony of the issue of promotions in this story is when the narrator later relays the successful promotion of one of the 'three' implicated educators from Head of Department to Deputy Principal at a neighbouring school. The irony is that her being chased away resulted in her upward mobility. Secondly, being promoted to a neighbouring school by implication serving a similar community gives rise to the authenticity of the earlier allegations against these teachers by learners and parents, since one would expect the neighbouring community to be aware of the allegations and therefore be negatively influenced in respect of these educators. Further, at the tail end of the story is the news of the male Deputy Principal, the very one who was said to be a rigid disciplinarian and a, "racist", being promoted to Principal ship. Once again, the question of the authenticity of earlier allegations is raised. It is therefore not surprising at this stage when the narrator states her own anxiety at being the only one of the 'three' that has yet not been promoted.

Her consolation though, she says is that she has been called for various interviews and is hopeful to receive some positive news in this regard. Parklane's short sightedness and loss has resulted in the gain of other institutions who have clearly sought out these individuals. Even at the very end of Singh's narration, she alludes to the pervading presence of the promotion issue. She states that Mrs Zulu has since formed a close alliance with Mrs Mthembu, the incoming new School Governing Body Chairperson and who she says will be a member of the selection process for any promotion processes at Parklane Secondary.

- **Search and seizure**

"Law enforcement and education authorities as well as substance abuse researches agree that the nature and extent of illicit drug trafficking, consumption and associated problems have all increased dramatically since the 1990's. (Joubert et al., 2005). The current increase in drug abuse and general discipline issues as well as various other social ills at schools have become a

troubling phenomenon resulting in increasing the destabilisation of schools. The South African Government has because of largely the safety and security issues at schools amended the South African Schools' Act, Act 84 of 1996 to include the provision of search and seizure exercises and drug testing at schools. Further, the Ministry of Education has the implicit responsibility of providing successful education and can only do this in a safe and disciplined school environment, hence the amendment of the Act.

Parklane Secondary was thus implementing the above policy in dealing with the cell-phone issue at school. It must also be remembered that the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996, provides for the right to privacy for everyone, however this right is not absolute. It allows for the school, if it deems necessary to conduct random searches where it suspects learners of carrying dangerous weapons or engaging in drugs etc; provided the suspicion is fair and reasonable. Section 8A of the South African Schools' Act is aimed at safeguarding the interest of all learners in so far as their right to education is concerned, however, it limits the rights to search in that the search must be implemented with due respect to privacy and the right to property of the learners concerned.

Considering the above, Parklane Secondary was therefore within its rights when it chose to implement the search and seizure act when it believed that learners have contravened the school's cell-phone policy by having cell-phones in their possession. However, the crucial question that arises is whether they had done so in a manner that is guided by the Bill of Rights which is contained in Chapter 2 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa.

Of consequence is the narrator's reluctance to conduct the search, as stated by herself, "I told her I could not…….also being in a senior class……lose time". She continues by saying, "I reluctantly …..male educator". She attributes her reluctance to losing teaching time, especially in a Grade 12 class, yet someone later accuses her of being racist, in that she is alleged to have stated, 'not wanting to dirty her hands'.

Of paramount importance is the consent by the Principal to have a member of the support staff i.e., a non-educator, a Mrs Jabu who was employed by the School Governing Body to conduct the search. What intensifies the seriousness of this issue is the knowledge that Mrs Jabu had

already done so with the Grade 9 learners, offering herself in both instances as a volunteer. The narrator continues to explain the approach she used and that is, "will call out the names of learners that have already been identified….. They must then…..later". For all intent and purpose, this appears to be an acceptable and mature approach, with a clear, "non-search" element, the effectiveness of which may be questionable. However, the ensuing action by, Mrs Jabu, poses several questions in terms of roles and responsibilities at Parklane Secondary. Mrs Singh states that whilst she was urging learners to hand over their cellular phones, "Mrs Jabu moved to the back of the class and, I saw her slip her hands…cell-phone. I was taken aback …..wait outside". What is glaring being firstly the inappropriateness of the search and secondly the individual being a member of the non-professional staff. Of significance is the authority that this member clearly enjoys, hence her confidence in volunteering to conduct the search, highlighting again the issue of roles and responsibilities at this school.

- **Work ethics**

According to narrator, Mrs Singh, educator, Mr Mkhize's Head of Department, Mr Shaik had become impatient and intolerant of, "Mkhize's, poor work ethics and shoddy work". Shaik on examining learner books, had discovered much incomplete work. Addressing him on this resulted in Shaik calling in his Union who then accused the Head of Department of harassing their member, i.e., Mkhize. It is not surprising therefore that the daily tensions and conflicts at the school spiralled.

The narrator takes great pains in continuously highlighting the poor ethics of Mkhize and a few other members of staff. She states that as the conflicts intensified at Parklane Secondary, Mkhize continued to build his camp with colleagues that were, "less committed ones…….gaps in their work, ones……leave frequently". She further states that the presence of union representatives became a common feature at the school, particularly when questioned about their work, citing harassment by management. Although narrator Singh states that the harder working educators appeared to be aligned with management and the less co-operative and committed with Mkhize.

The narrator repeatedly refers to the poor work ethics of Mr Mkhize and a startling fact here is the identity of the Principal, a core member of the SMT, yet as indicated by Singh, appears to be non-committed at most times. The Principal's identity in terms of leadership will be discussed separately. In the later investigations commissioned by the MEC, that of teaching and learning revealed serious shortcomings on the part of certain educators, as stated by Mrs Singh. In contrast to the 'poor ethics' of Mkhize and members of his camp, the researcher is presented with the high levels of competence and commitment of others. For example, the narrator herself is seen clearly in this light when she explains her refusal to leave her Grade 12 class during the cell-phone search period, citing loss of teaching and learning time.

Another moment of this high level of commitment is seen when several parents at a mass meeting, with the Minister of Education spoke of the high level of competence of the "three" educators that they wanted back at the school and which was appreciated by the Minister as stated by the narrator. At least twenty percent of the audience spoke of the high levels of competence of the three educators. The Minister of Education in summarising the issues of Parklane Secondary, focused on the academic programme and the status of teaching and learning at the school that is issues of curriculum which is prioritized as the number one concern of the ensuing investigation. It is interesting to note that the later commission by the MEC to investigate the various categories did reveal the shortcomings around teaching and learning citing certain educators, Mkhize being one of them. Of course, this only led to greater animosity between him and certain members of staff as established from Mrs Singh.

- **Leadership style**

I can therefore categorically have based on my own experiences of field work state that effective and efficient leadership are essential pre-requisites in the provision of quality teaching and learning. Whilst the concept of school management through teams, i.e.; the School Management Team (SMT) was entrenched and formalized post democracy in 1994 that is; with the restructuring and reorganising of the education system into a single, uniform system, it must be remembered that the Head of a school, i.e. the Principal remains the accounting officer and is singly accountable for all school activities. He or she may not be solely responsible for the leadership and management of the school but he or she remains singly accountable. Although

transformational leadership (Avoliv & Bass, 2004) still appeared to be supporting the power of the individual against that of the many, the post – transformational approach emphasises teamwork and participation. One of the most prominent of these types of approach is that of distributed leadership (MacBeath, 2005; Bauer & Bogotch, 2006). However, based on my own experiences, I've observed that distributed leadership works best in schools where there is mutual respect, trust and a willingness to put the interests of the school before that of the individual, where there is successful teamwork and co-operation, the glaring absence of which is at Parklane Secondary. However, research suggests that the "most significant ingredient of effective team leadership is the ability to manage human interaction". "Understanding the needs of people for connection and belonging is a critical principle of effective high performing team leadership".

In the case of the Parklane Secondary Principal, there is repeated evidence of the Principal's conspicuous lack of managing his human resources, his indecisiveness and his dependency on members of his management team to take unpopular decisions. For example, the narrator repeatedly speaks of the Principal calling on the male Deputy Principal to discipline learners which made learners adopt an aversion for the male Deputy Principal to the extent where they called him a racist. Similarly, in the instance when the female Deputy Principal, Mrs Singh attempted to inform the Principal of the inappropriate search conducted by Mrs Jabu, he hurriedly silenced her, a clear indication of pushing the issue under the carpet. Likewise, his failure to take prompt action against Mr Mkhize about his poor service delivery, not only offered Mkhize a false sense of confidence but prompted him to continue in the same vain.

Oduro & Geogina (2006: p.362) note that throughout Africa, there is no formal requirement for Principals to be trained as School managers. They go on to state that such individuals are appointed based on being skilful educators. Van der Westhuizen et al. (2003) reached a similar conclusion, based on their research in the Mpumalanga province, "Many of these serving Principals lack basic management training prior to and after their entry into headship (p.1)". In recent years this realisation has grown in intensity, largely because the role of Principal ship has extended to larger school's community and various other significant and prominent role players, e.g.; the Unions. In the case of Parklane Secondary, the role of Unions and its prominent

presence is strongly felt, at the same time highlighting the Principal's ineffectiveness in dealing with the Union. His own insecurities and intimidation is repeatedly articulated by the narrator.

The Department of Education's introduction of the Advanced Certificate of Education (ACE) as a pilot programme between 2007-2009 in six provinces was based on the realisation that whilst several school Principals held various university qualifications in management, their ability to apply such knowledge to their work environments was sadly lacking.

A clear example of this is the Principal of Parklane Secondary who is highly academically qualified, a strong classroom practitioner, but glaringly lacks the required skills to effectively engage with and manage people. This is evidenced when the SGB visited school after the cell-phone issue and set up a hearing for the 'three' educators, informing the Principal that they wished to investigate the matter. The Principal failed to inform the SGB that this issue was a professional matter and outside their jurisdiction. Ironically it was the educators who refused to be subjected to this irregular practice, as stated by the narrator of immense importance is the statement by Mrs Singh, "The Principal appeared very reluctant to get involved. In my opinion, had he got in at that stage and played an active role in resolving the conflict, it would not have been initiated from the onset of what eventually became chronic conflict at Parklane Secondary. Also, the problem would never have escalated to the level that it did". The narrator is holding the Principal largely responsible for the chronicity of conflict at Parklane Secondary. She reaffirms this when she repeatedly speaks of the Principal's lack of response when learners and parents marched them out of school, "Neither the Principal nor any other educator made any attempt to assist, many of whom had observed what was happening". Instead she stated that the Principal ask them to leave the school.

- **Opportunism**

The very first instance of opportunism is projected by Head of Department, Mr Mkhize, who at the beginning of this story exits the education system to pursue a career in business as indicated by the narrator which he would obviously have considered more lucrative. A failing business soon saw the return of Mr Mkhize who was fortunate to have been reinstated as a junior educator at the same school, not a widespread practice in education. Another instance of opportunism, as

narrated by Mrs Singh is when we hear of the resentment of educator Mrs Zulu concerning the search of learners for cell phones and Mr Mkhize's immediate alliance to her, his close friend, both as repeatedly stated by the narrator in pursuit of their own promotions. Later in the story, Mrs Singh speaks of the day on which the three educators, she is being one of them were being 'chased' away from school and as reported to her by a parent who overheard Mkhize telling another parent, "to pull her out by her hair", clearly capitalising on the unfortunate events of the day.

Another educator Mrs Zulu as reported by Singh also repeatedly projects opportunistic behaviour, for example, when Senior Departmental Officer, Mr Nkosi addressed parents in a mass meeting, she sat amongst them and prompted parents to ask specific questions "that were deliberately leaning towards racism……appear incompetent". Having instigated much of the unrest at Parklane Secondary, Mkhize and Zulu positioned themselves as members of management as narrated realising that the Principal was often intimidated and labelled a racist. This is further evidenced when Mkhize's HOD's request to call in Mkhize's subject advisor was never met. Principal's repeated excuses and response of the non-availability of the subject advisor and Zulu's and Mkhize's opportunistic behaviour continues throughout the narration and is again illustrated when a new SGB is established, the narrator states that she developed a close relationship with the members.

- **Tardiness of the Department**

The lack of prompt and effective action by the Department of Education is seen throughout this story as stated by narrator, Mrs Singh. For example, when the three educators were forced to leave Parklane Secondary, they remained at the Circuit office for two weeks, far too long a period to have allowed competent educators, as stated to have been left idle, although we learn that only after the second session of being 'chased out' were they placed by the Superintendent of Education Management at alternate schools in the interim. The addressing of parents by a Senior Department Official in a mass gathering at a very sensitive time also questions the Department's effectiveness in trying to resolve the school's serious conflict issues. Exacerbating

the situation by the very official was the promise of replacing the three Indian educators by three African educators as narrated.

The narrator does not mention any investigation by the Department at this stage, so it is to be assumed that this occurred in the absence of an investigation, hence the Department's handling of a serious and sensitive issue such as this becomes highly questionable. The narrator also states that many in the crowd were neither parents nor guardians, but seemingly a 'rent-a-mob', crowd further questioning the ineptness of the Department. The narrator continues to state that the week's promise of replacement educators did not materialise, once again pointing fingers at the tardiness of the Department. As stated by Mrs Singh, effective investigations by the Department only commenced after the interventions by the Head of Department and the MEC for Education. Unlike the District's intervention, the HOD and the MEC as indicated by the narrator proceeded to investigate before judgement and resolution as in the earlier case.

5.6   Beachwood Secondary

Beachwood Secondary is found in the heart of the large Chatsworth suburb created in the 1960's to accommodate the predominantly South African Indian population in the apartheid era. It is situated in the South Durban basin and is bordered by the Umhlatuzana River in the North and Umlaas River in the South. Under the Group Areas Act of June 1950, like African and Coloureds, South African Indians were moved from areas such as Mayville, Cato Manor, Clairwood, Bluff, Riverside, and so on to establish the two large Indian suburbs of Phoenix in the North and Chatsworth in the South. Chatsworth was specifically established to act as a buffer between various White residential areas and the large African township of Umlazi. Despite various social and economic constraints, suburbs such as Chatsworth and Umlazi continued to strive and today serve as fully fledged townships, contributing positively to the academic capital of Durban and Kwa-Zulu Natal, notwithstanding all its challenges (Census, 2011).

Despite its immense challenges of unemployment, poverty and social ills of drug and substance abuse, Beachwood Secondary has continued to produce a pass rate of over eighty five percent over the years, attesting to the high levels of educator and learner commitment. One cannot help

wondering about the absence of the one hundred percent pass rate which appears attainable, yet illusive. An explanation could be that the on-going relationship strains at this school and resultant conflict, is negatively affecting this achievement.

The school's physical structure is in a relatively good condition with the School Management Team frequently addressing areas of upgrade. Beachwood Secondary has a learner population of 810 learners and 29 staff, which includes two support staff. The school has one Principal; one Deputy Principal; three Heads of Departments; and twenty-two level one educators. Most educators travel between four to fifteen kilometers to reach the school, with two of travelling more than twenty-five kilometers. The School Governing Body has also employed an additional two educators to avoid an overload of teaching allocations to staff. It may be expected then that a fair degree of job satisfaction in the work place would be found; the narration by the Principal indicates otherwise.

5.6.1　Narrative 4: Principal of Beachwood Secondary School

My name is Mr. Lee Ben and I am the Principal of Beachwood Secondary. I was appointed on May 15, 2004. When I first arrived at Beachwood Secondary, I did feel some tension, but realized that it was because there was an Acting Principal, Mr. Brian Chetty, and that I had come from the outside. I also observed that the Acting Principal had a group of friends that were close to him, however, this did not disturb me too greatly, since I knew that this was common at many schools, besides it did not seem to be too serious. Generally, everything appeared to be fine, although a few educators that did not belong to the Brian Chetty group seemed to be extra friendly and would want to chat every now and then; one or two I observed even tried to hint at some issues at the school, but I discouraged this.

I have always believed that especially as a new person at this organisation, I must formulate my own opinion on issues and people at the school. I did not wish to listen to the opinions of others and then become negative towards certain individuals. I believed in giving everyone a fair chance to start from fresh which I felt was healthy for the individual, the plant and all the staff members. This is something I always practice.

However, in a short space of time I came to realize that there was much conflict amongst staff and various stakeholders at Beachwood Secondary, so much so that I realized that it was chronic and that my initial experiences of 'niceness' and cordiality in the first two weeks or so was just a facade. One educator, Mr. Lenny Styles appeared to be the kingpin through his attitude and character to stir trouble; he had the ability to frequently cause conflict at our school. Using his bad temper and aggressive nature, he would regularly instill fear in learners, even in staff and often cause the school to receive negative publicity, which I will indicate later in my various experiences. He even succeeded in dividing staff and causing serious conflict with the School Governing Body Members. In my narration of this story, one will be able to see the resultant serious issues which have caused immense   damage at Beachwood Secondary. Some of these are as follows:

- *Constant corporal punishment*
- *Power relations, personality clashes resulting in constant tension*
- *Gender issues and disrespect for the opposite sex.*
- *Insubordination and incitement of staff.*
- *"Game Blame" and use of outside organisations to bring down the school.*
- *Abuse of power and manipulation of little minds.*
- *Negatively influencing parents and community members.*
- *Agitation and inciting poor race relations.*

As my story continues one will be able to see with evidence, a systematic and continued conflict imposed by educator, Styles. What I came to learn was that prior to my arrival at Beachwood Secondary, educator, Mr. Styles was involved in violent abuse towards a learner. Medical reports as well as reports to all the relevant stakeholders were sent. I also learnt that an investigation in this regard was undertaken by the Department of Education, as well as the police case which was opened at the local police station by the respective parent. The school Principal at that time had referred Styles for counseling which he refused. His behaviour however became worse as he continued to abuse learners. The members of the School Management Team had become very frustrated since all their efforts to assist him through

counseling proved fruitless. The following are a series of some serious incidents that Styles was responsible for and which led to on-going conflicts at our school.

Incident 1

*Upon my arrival and within two to three weeks, similar problems concerning Mr. Styles started to manifest itself as the abuse of learners began to rear its ugly head again. On 15 April 2006, I was visited by a very angry parent, a Mrs. R. Moodley who stated that her son, Leon from Grade 8A was hit very badly on 14 April 2006 with a thick stick by the educator Mr. Lenny Styles. She also said that I should view the visible marks on him. She further informed me that she had visited the local newspaper offices in Chatsworth, that being of the local newspaper, 'The Rising Sun'. Mrs. Moodley stated that two other boys namely Wesley and Kyle from the same class were also assaulted by the same educator but not as badly. She said that she had then immediately taken her son for medical treatment and had opened a charge at the local police station. The mother thereafter handed me a written statement concerning the same incident. (**Annexure 1A**) This incident and the following incidents with the respective annexures will inform you of the seriousness and extent of Styles's negative conduct over the years at Beachwood Secondary which in my opinion resulted in the chronicity of conflict at our school, not forgetting the negative publicity brought on the school.*

*On the departure of Mrs. Moodley, immediately wrote to our Circuit Superintendent of Education, Management, Ms. P. Hari, informing her of the above incident and my intended internal investigation. (**Annexure 1B**) In conducting the internal investigation I received a written statement from the affected learner, Leon Moodley confirming the incident of corporal punishment by Mr. Styles. This was also confirmed by the other two learners Wesley Sobrayen and Kyle Joseph, the other two learners but from whom I did not request statements since I did not get their parental consent. (**Annexure1C**)*

Soon after my internal investigation and submission of the respective report to the

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Department, an external investigation was conducted by the Department of Education, the outcome of which was as follows:

Mr. Styles was given a written warning and cautioned after a disciplinary hearing by the Department of Education. {Annexure 1D}

5.6.2   Analysis

As indicated in my research design and methodology, this study makes use of a series of "life in-depth case/scenarios from selected institutions within my work environment that either gradually or rapidly evolved from conflict to chronic conflict situations. The selected case studies/chronicles emphasize detailed contextual analysis of a limited number of events or conditions and their relationships at each of the chosen institutions.

This story is narrated by the school Principal, Mr. Ben who over a period experienced severe challenges due to ongoing conflict that continued to interrupt his attempts at effectively and optimally managing and leading his school. The central figure and catalyst to practically every instance of conflict is an educator, Mr. Styles who blatantly violates legal and profession protocol as will be revealed as the story unfolds through supportive documentation. In this instance, we see chronic conflict emerging because of a lit any of issues as evidenced by the accompanying documents from interviews conducted with the Principal, what appears apparent is the unyielding negative influence of a specific individual who displays scant regard for authority, particularly at the school level as would be revealed. This is evidenced by the attached, abundant correspondence from the Principal by way of letters from himself, from various affected educators; parents and learners. Also attached is the numerous written sanctions from the Department of Education, citing the relevant regulations and educational Jaws that Mr. Styles persistently falls foul of.

Whilst this protagonist has a history of provocative and insightful behaviour, for this study, I will confine this story to the period of the current Principal's appointment which is since, 15 May 2004. The rationale for this is twofold: the story is narrated by the current Principal, Mr. Ben and secondly since the conduct of the educator, Mr. Styles, seems to have peaked during this period. I will further attempt to offer a possible explanation for

this trend later in the cameo.

- **Corporal Punishment**

All schools, both public and independent are subjected to legislative mandates which govern the day-to-day operations of all school principals or managers. It is expected that the proper implementation of such legislation, policies and procedures will contribute in making schools highly functional, promote peace and enhance the quality of education.

The overarching legislation by which all schools' daily practices is informed is that of the South African Schools' Act, Act 84 of 1996 (SASA), which is largely based on the premise of redressing past injustices and providing an education system of progressively high quality for all learners. At the same time, the implementation of the Act is expected to advance democracy, combat racism, sexism and all forms of discrimination and intolerance by protecting the rights of all learners, parents and educators.

Chapter1, section 10, sub-sections (1) and (2) of the South African Schools' Act deals with the prohibition of corporal punishment as follows:

- No person may administer corporal punishment at a school to a learner
- Any person who contravenes subsection (1) is guilty of an offence and liable on conviction to a sentence which could be imposed for assault

In recent times the Minister of Education has repeatedly stated a zero tolerance for the administering of corporal punishment at school level. Despite this, ongoing practice of offender Mr. Styles is that of corporal punishment which meanders through to debilitating conflict situations at school, as will be seen.

Incident 1 – Corporal Punishment: A non-teaching tool

This blatant flagrance of educational policy, i.e. The South African Schools' Act, Act 84 of 1996, Chapter 2 of The Bill of Rights, Act 108 of 1996 of the Republic of South Africa and the

constitution of South Africa ranks amongst his most frequent contravention. Early in April 2006, 'Styles' was alleged to have inflicted corporal punishment on a learner, Moodley Leon. A parent, Mrs. R. Moodley had called at school on 15 April 2006 about an incident of corporal punishment having been inflicted on her son Leon of Grade 8A **Annexure 1A**. She indicated that Mr. Styles had hit her son badly using a thick stick and leaving visible marks on him. She indicated that her son had informed her that they had a free period during which her son and two boys walked out of the classroom and began screaming. Mr. Styles, after questioning them hit Leon's friends with his hand and hit Leon with a thick stick, "in a very bad way and that makes me very angry" **Annexure1B**. She also stated that she is a single parent and does not hit her son and does not expect any one else to do so. She further informed the Principal that she had taken Leon to the hospital, police station and the press. A statement from Moodley Leon confirms the above (**Annexure1 C).**

This incident was investigated by the Department of Education and the outcome of which proved the educator guilty. A warning was given to him commencing on 31 October 2006. The outcome of the disciplinary enquiry resulted in the following letter of sanction being addressed to Mr. Styles by the Department of Education and specifically signed by the Presiding Officer of the disciplinary hearing (**Annexure 1D)**.

1. This is a written warning in terms of the disciplinary procedure. Should you engage in further misconduct, this written warning maybe considered in determining a more serious sanction

2. This written warning will be placed in your personal file and will remain valid for a period of six months from the date of receipt of the notice. Should you object to the warning or wish to furnish additional information, you may lodge a written objection or provide additional information which will be filed together with warning.

3. You may appeal against the sanction to the Minister within five(S) working days of receipt of this sanction in terms of the Employment of Educators Act 76 of 1998 as amended.

Mr. Styles was found guilty of corporal punishment after an investigation by the Department of Education and the above sanction was to be imposed by the Department of Education for corporal punishment.

Incident 2 – Corporal Punishment: After math

It must be noted that soon after the first investigation was completed and Mr. Styles was convicted, he was alleged to have assaulted and inflicted corporal punishment on a second learner, Sbo Cele of grade 9C. This incident is in direct contravention of the sanction imposed in incident 1 where Mr. Styles was cautioned of a more serious sanction should he repeat a similar offence.

As reported by the Principal, on 20 September 2006, the father and uncle of Sbo Cele of grade 9C called at school to complain about corporal punishment having been inflicted on him by educator, Mr. Styles **Annexure 2A(1).** It is alleged that Mr. Styles went to the class of another educator whereby he saw Sbo playing with a coin and slapped him across the face. He then called Sbo to the front of the class and slapped him again. The learner sustained injury to his jaw and upper pallet **Annexure 2A (2)**. An internal investigation was subsequently conducted by the Principal and the Deputy Principal, Mr. Jones. The educator was represented by his union, SADTU (South African Democratic Teachers' Union)[4].

Mr. Styles did not deny the allegations and accepted the fact that he did in fact administer corporal punishment on Sbo. The parent had further opened a charge against Mr. Styles at the local police station, **Case 124/09/2006** and reported the matter to the school's governing body after seeking medical assistance for Sbo. The Principal indicated that Sbo is a timid and quiet learner who has a serious medical condition with his co-ordination skills being slow and not coherent. A subsequent external disciplinary enquiry was conducted by the Department of Education and Mr. Styles was once again found guilty. A letter with the following sanction was subsequently served on Mr. Styles **(Annexure 2B)**

    1. This letter serves to inform you that as per disciplinary hearing held between yourself

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[4] SADTU is the largest non-racial teacher union formed in 1990 after the unbanning of then ANC

and the Department of Education, the Chairperson has considered your mitigating factors that you are a breadwinner and that your wife is very sick.

2.   I have also considered the aggravating factors submitted by the Employer Representative that you have no remorse and that you've increased the statistics of Educators who are still using corporal punishment as a form of discipline which is against the law.

3.   Therefore, the Chairperson is giving you a suspension without pay for a period of one {l} month coupled with a final written warning which is attached. You are therefore warned that the employer considers corporal punishment as a very serious offence should you continue to conduct yourself in this manner there is nothing that will prevent the Employer from issuing a very harsh sanction.

4.   Please note that your final written warning will be placed in your personal file for a period of six {6} months.

5.   You have the right to appeal against the finding that was pronounced. You may lodge your appeal within five working days after receiving this letter, failing which it will be implemented.

6.   You may direct your written appeal to the MEC at the following address.

As seen in the above letter, should he object to the warning or wish to furnish additional information, he may do so in written form which will be filed together with the warning in his personal file. He was also granted the right to appeal against this sanction, within the stipulated period of five working days of receipt of the said sanction, in terms of the Employment Educators' Act 76 of 1998 as amended **Annexure 2C**

He was once again also cautioned of the serious consequences of committing similar offences. The written warning was to be placed in his personal file and remain valid for a period of six months from the date of receipt of the notice. Unfortunately, the lack of prompt action as well as the apparent tardiness by the Department of Education to act timeously appeared to give Styles a false sense of confidence.

He was served a sanction of one-month suspension without pay and coupled a final written warning. In serving this sanction, the Department informed the educator that it had considered the aggravating factors submitted by the Employer Representative and that he, Mr Styles, had no remorse and further, has increased the statistics of educators who are still using corporal punishment as a form of discipline, as indicated earlier is unlawful. He was cautioned that the employer considers corporal punishment as a very serious offence and should he continue to conduct himself in a similar manner, nothing would prevent the employer from issuing a very harsh sanction.

Mr Styles was also informed that his final written warning [will be placed in his. personal file for a period of six months as is procedure in the Departments' disciplinary processes. All educators have a personal file which comprises of a detailed account of their professional life. This employment history profiles all aspects of their teaching career which includes teaching qualifications; schools taught at; school attendance and leave taking; teacher achievements and accolades as well as issues of discipline in respect of unlawful behaviour as is in this case. This file is maintained in duplicate form, the original being at the Department's central office previously known as a service centre and a copy is maintained at the current school. Should an educator be transferred the school copy of the file is sent to the subsequent school. He was also given the right to appeal against the finding that was pronounced, the appeal must be lodged within 5 working days after receiving the sanction, failing which the sanction will be implemented. His appeal must be made to the Minister of Education and he was furnished with the relevant contact details **Annexure 2 C**.

Incident 3 – Corporal Punishment: Undeterred

Barely 7 months after the first and second incidents of corporal punishment, Mr Styles was alleged to have committed yet another incident of corporal punishment on learner, Jerome Nair of grade 10B **Annexure 3A (1)**. On 18 May 2007, parent Mr Nair called at school to discuss his son Jerome's behaviour and absconsion from school. According to the Principal, Mr Ben, he learner in question had his own history of serious misdemeanours, including aggressive

behaviour, fights and assaults. As reported it is known that Jerome had transferred from a previous school to Beachwood Secondary due to on-going behaviour issues **Annexure 3A(2).**

From both the Principals i.e. Principal of the previous school and Mr Ben of the current school, it was established that both of them together with the parent had decided that a change of environment might benefit Jerome. Unfortunately, within a short period of time, Jerome began getting himself into scrapes with the school's management and other learners e.g. school fights, playing truant, etc.

Further, during interviewing the Principal, he had informed that on 12 May 2007 Jerome had, had a serious altercation with another educator, Mr M.A. who it is alleged had administered corporal punishment on Jerome. Educator Styles who had no direct link to this incident, chose to slap the same learner that is Jerome, whilst walking past the class. It must be noted that this action as reported by the Principal, was observed by Jerome's father, who had come to school as mentioned earlier because of his son's misbehaviour.

As established from the father's written statement, **Annexure 3B**, on the very day i.e. 21 May 2007, Mr Nair whilst waiting at the office observed teacher, Mr M.A. administering corporal punishment on Jerome whilst calling him out of his class. This was followed by Mr Styles copycat behaviour of Mr M.A. whilst walking past the very classroom and with no provocation from Jerome. The father, Mr Nair then rushed to his son's assistance, only to be subjected to Styles's, rudeness and arrogance, after which Styles threatened him and asked him to leave the school. Mr Nair then left the school with his son. The father immediately visited the local police station and opened a charge of assault against educator, Styles, Case No 5238/08/ [0. He further sought medical assistance for his son **Annexure 3C,** J88 (81/805259).

The matter according to the Principal was reported to the Department's Labour Directorate, but due to the tardiness of the Department, no investigation ensued. The Principal did however conduct an internal investigation with the respective stakeholders. Mr M.A., that is the first educator who inflicted on Jerome admitted to having done so and apologised to the parent and learner. As he was a first-time offender, his apology was accepted, followed by a verbal warning

by the Principal. It must be noted that parent, Mr Nair made a serious allegation of alcohol consumption by educator, Mr G Naidu during school hours and who appears to have been caught up in this fracas of learner, Jerome, **Annexure 3B**. Yet Principal nor any other member of the school management seemed to have paid any attention to this serious allegation of misconduct, which according to the Education Law and Policy Handbook (1999) is a section 17 offence, thereby deeming it an act of serious misconduct, which if proven warrants dismissal.

Mr Styles on the other hand according to the Principal, indicated that he had no knowledge of what the parent was talking about and denied hitting Jerome. He also stated that the parent could not have seen him because he, the parent uses glasses. Mr Nair, the parent indicated• that those were his reading glasses and that he had in fact witnessed Styles hitting and slapping his son. At this point, Styles stated that he did not wish to talk to the parent and that the parent could whatever he wished to. He also stated that Jerome might not reach home safely but rather in a coffin, since many learners wanted to beat him up and that he had stopped it from happening.

Mr Nair informed him that his behaviour was not that of an educator but rather that of a gangster, to which he retorted that he will introduce Mr Nair to real gangsters. Informing Mr Nair that he nothing further to say to him and that he should take his son out of the school for his own safety, after which he left the office.

The Principal at this stage was acutely aware of the looming impatience of the local community, largely in view of Mr Styles's similar and repetitive acts of misdemeanour. It must be noted that at this stage Mr Ben was alerting the Department of Education to the possibility of the steady but increasing intensity of conflict from regular to chronic. He had also red flagged the inevitability of negative attention and disrepute being brought to bear on the school through negative reporting via the media, which parents were repeatedly threatening with **Annexure 3D** on 20 February 2012 a flyer according to the Principal, Mr Ben, was sent to parents, by a local low profile organization of which Mr Styles is a member encouraging them to participate in what they termed, 'Beachwood Protest' to be held on the forthcoming Saturday, 26 February 2012. The main item on the agenda as reported by the Principal was, 'Beachwood Falling'. Whilst the

protest did materialize it did not receive maximum support due to the timely intervention of the local police as reported by the Principal.

With 3 incidents of corporal punishment and having been found guilty by the Department of Education, Styles was subjected to a sanction of a two-month period of suspension with no pay. He was further referred to the Education Department's Psychological services for counselling, which he flatly refused indicating that he will seek the assistance of his personal Psychologist.

Incident 4 – Above the law

In August of the following year, the Principal, Mr Ben, is confronted by another irate parent, alleging that her son, Salim Badat, has been physically and verbally abused by Mr Styles, Annexure **4A (1)**. Mrs Badat (mother) after complaining to Principal, immediately sought medical assistance for her son **Annexure 4B (1) & 4B (2)** and subsequently opened a police case against 'Mr Styles', Case No 148/08/09.

Principal's letter dated 22 May 2007, **Annexure 4A (2),** once again reminded -the Department of Style's recurring acts of misconduct and the Department's lack of swift and prompt action which he alludes to as the possibility of Styles's repetitive acts misdemeanours. He also appeals for meaningful and effective action and reminds the Department that Mr Styles was also offered psychological assistance which he rejected and stated that he would seek assistance from his own psychologist. He also cautions that the attitude and professionalism of the educator has worsened and is having a detrimental effect on the good name of the school.

- **Power relations and tensions: Who's the boss?**

Each of the above incidents of misconduct elicited internal investigations by the Principal and external investigations by the Department of Education, the course of which resulted in 'Mr Styles' adopting a hostile relationship with the Principal and other members of the Management team. This hostility, as indicated by the Principal would extend to members of staff who were in

some way drawn into the investigation. 'Mr Styles' would thus utilise these instances to establish camps, thereby polarising the staff and giving rise to unnecessary tension. This, particularly in favour of educators who were themselves prone to either corporal punishment, anti-authority, or displayed poor work ethics like himself.

Further to the above, Principal alleges that 'Mr Styles' frequently uses harassment and bullying tactics to intimidate certain members. Educator Jakes as established by the Principal during the interview is a timid and fearful person who however enjoyed a good relationship with most, including the school's Management due to his positive work ethics. This did not sit well with Styles who would often threaten Jakes by telling him that he would get his 'buddies' to deal with him. Jakes was too afraid to go to the Police and instead as reported by Mr Ben the Principal suffered an emotional breakdown and absented himself for a considerable period (Annexure 4*E).

Styles then used this opportunity to let other colleagues know during breaks in the staffroom of the power he wielded over individuals should they not toe the line. This as expected was reported to the Principal by certain staff members who recognized the tension he was causing amongst colleagues and the instability he was encouraging at school.

- **Gender issue and disregard: Striking a woman….**

Educator, Styles displays scant regard or respect for females as is evidenced by **(Annexures 5A, 5B, 5C and 5D,** and does not fail to consider them as sexual objects. Mr Ben, the Principal reports of an incident of sexual harassment of an educator, Ms SP, 10 May 2011 by Mr Styles and which was reported to the Department's Labour Directorate. On 11April 2011, the Principal had held a meeting with the Senior Management in respect of complaints received from Ms SP of sexual harassment by Mr Styles. He has apparently been constantly approaching her and making advances to her. She also made available letters given to her by Mr Styles professing his feelings to her. He has been using learners to convey such letters to her on the pretext that they were being sent by fellow educators.

Ms SP, amongst others has been a victim of his constant harassment. Styles would often abandon his class and wander off to the class of SP, using feeble excuses and at the same time, reprimanding learners in her class, using vulgar languages in her presence. He would discuss irrelevant issues, merely finding excuses to be in her class. Her conversations and association with other male teachers was also targeted to the extent that he would verbally abuse her and them. Like many other teachers, she was afraid of his violent and aggressive outbursts and Principal informs that his reaction terrified her, especially since he had a violent temper. Principal further stated that he had made sexual advances to her on the afternoon of a staff function at the beginning of April and this too in full view of three other educators.

When Ms SP rejected his sexual advances, he was embarrassed and that very evening she received threatening calls from Mr Styles and his wife. Feeling unsafe from both the husband and wife, Ms SP sought legal action restraining Mr Styles and his wife from interfering, intimidating and harassing her. In the meantime, parents of children who were used as messengers were angered and contacted the Chairperson of the School Governing Body indicating that they would mobilise parents to, "kick Styles out" as reported by the Principal. This matter, Principal reported could not move any further on that day since Styles was absent on 11April 2011.

According to the Principal, it appeared that when he realised that his advances was to be exposed to his wife, he hurriedly informed his wife that SP was pursuing him. A month after the above incident, Mrs Styles set up an appointment with the Principal, wherein she confided in him of being terrified of her husband as established from the Principal. According to the Principal, Mr Ben, she informed him of Styles's frequent verbal and physical abuse of her and their two daughters. She further indicated that she was coerced into telephonically threatening Ms SP. Principal later offered to facilitate assistance for her which she agreed to but afterwards failed to take up. It was subsequently learnt from her that she was too afraid to do so. An investigation by the school's management team revealed all of this, **Annexure 5E.**

On 12 April 2011, the principle of *audi alteram partem*[5] (hear the other side) was implemented by the Principal giving Mr Styles together with his wife the opportunity of presenting their side of the story to the Senior Management. The Principal informed that most of the talking was done by Mrs Styles who felt very aggrieved. Styles then admitted to his wife that he had, had an affair with Ms SP and that he had received many letters from her. Mrs Styles revealed her surprise at not having heard of the letters previously and when asked by the Principal to produce them, he failed to do so. Mrs Styles subsequently left to return to work. Styles when called later in the day by the Principal to continue the probe, refused to enter any further discussion on the matter. The committee then resolved the following:

- No further communication between Mr Styles and Ms SP
- All professional matters to be dealt with via the Head of Department
- All documentations to be submitted via the Head of Department
- No comments of any nature to be made to either party
- No learners to be used to convey messages or letters from Styles to SP
- All telephonic abuse to stop with immediate effect. Both parties agreed to the above resolutions, **Annexure 5F.**

From interviewing the Principal, it was learnt that Mr Styles subsequently absented himself from school and began shirking his responsibilities as indicated by the Principal (Annexure 5D). According to the Principal, Styles has a total disregard for authority and his profession. He reports late for work without a valid reason and often departs early without authorization. Principal further indicates Styles's non-compliance of his basic conditions of service is fast spreading to certain other educators who have recognized the Department's lack of prompt action in disciplining Styles. This, he says has had a negative impact on the general ethos of the school and often contributes to the emerging instability.

On 15 April 2011, learners were to receive their report cards as per the school's management plan, but Styles failed to do so. All forms of communication were not responded to. Parents

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[5]*Audi alteram partem-* it embodies the concept in criminal law that no person should be condemned unheard, it is akin to due process i.e. hearing the other side's version of the matter. (West's Encyclopaedia of American Law, edition 2. Copyright 2008 The Gale Group, Inc) reference this properly

complained of learners not being taught and one even complained of having seen him driving around. They took their complaints to the School Governing Body and even threatened to take the matter up to the Minister of Education's office should they not receive an urgent response from the labour Directorate.

The community once again made the following suggestions, pending the outcome of Styles's labour cases, citing having had enough.

• immediate transfer of Mr Styles to another school
• his immediate suspension
• his dismissal from the profession

Styles disrespect of females is reinforced by statements and affidavits of other learners, **Annexure 6(A)** whereby he refers to females as 'bitches' and speaks to them in demeaning and derogatory terms. A further incident of gender insensitivity and disrespect of learners occurred on 30 May 2011 when learner, Jason Naidoo, Grade 9F stated that they were in educator Ms LM's class when some learners began misbehaving. LM then called Mr Styles to assist since everybody is afraid him. Styles walked in asking for the places of Jason Naidoo and Gina Pillay but to be changed. It is alleged that he began swearing them, calling Gina a 'bitch', and stating that if she wanted to have Jason's baby, "we must screw behind the woodwork block". Learners were humiliated and embarrassed. This is specially so when he saw girls in dose contact with boys, thereby belittling and humiliating them, **Annexure 6B (2)**. So traumatised were some learners that parents had to seek professional assistance and open a case with local police, case no: 142/8/2011 and further seek professional assistance. **Annexures 6C (1), 6C (2) and 6C (3).**

Chapter 6

Thematic Analysis

6.1   Introduction

The purpose of this section is to introduce the reader to the various themes that emerged from the selected narratives of each of the institutions. The first and predominant theme of Processes and Procedures, embraces several other sub-themes, namely the entire question of school-based promotions which appears to be the root cause of much dissension and conflict at schools Ajanta Primary, Kashmir Primary and Parklane Secondary. What emerges in respect of promotions and procedures is the whole focus of the promotion of 'outside' or external candidates as will be revealed particularly in the cases of Ajanta and Kashmir Primary Schools.

A second sub- theme of Processes and Procedures is the issue of Work Ethics, a justifiable basic tenet for any professional and the absence of which in this instance is glaring amongst certain staff members at each of the four schools, inevitably contributing substantively to staff conflict and the eventual development of conflict chronicity, again as seen in the encompassing data. The apparent manner of searching learners at Parklane Secondary in respect of cellular phones as a breach of the learner code of conduct highlights the notion of the Search and Seizure Procedure as a sub- theme of Processes, a contravention of which led to the intense and recurrence of conflict at this institution.

A second major theme is that of Corporal Punishment. It is argued that although corporal punishment has been legally abolished at schools, the findings suggest that it remains in practice at several institutions. Beachwood Secondary is a poignant example of how corporal punishment has been operationalised at schools. The issue of Communication emerges as another significant theme, particularly in respect of non - reciprocity and poor communication, stemming largely as appears, from the Department of Education in dealing with correspondence from schools, mainly those of a labour nature. This is observed at all four schools which are, Beachwood Secondary; Ajanta Primary; Kashmir Primary and Parklane Secondary.

A fourth and important theme of Racism emerges quite boldly at Parklane Secondary during the initial search and seizure process of cellular phones and which appears to be confined to this school only. It is argued that racism or perceived racism has led to on-going crises and conflicting situations at this school so much so that its emergent chronicity ultimately resulted in a complete shutdown of Parklane Secondary.

On the other hand, the theme of Gender occupies a predominant role conflicts at Beachwood Secondary and Kashmir Primary. What emanates quite strongly from this notion of gender is the sub-theme of Power Relations as evidenced in the case of Ajanta Primary. It is further argued that the issue of Power Relations embraces that of the Union involvement and which emerges as a further sub-theme of communication through its continued presence at each of the four selected schools.

A final theme of the data is that of Leadership, that is the Leadership style of each of the four Principals. It is argued that the peculiar leadership style of each of the selected schools has a strong bearing on the management of their respective staff and which invariably influences relationships at each of the institutions, as will be seen.

6.2   Emerging themes

Figure 6.1 An illustration of the emerging themes and sub-themes

THEMES

1. PROCESSES & PROCEDURES
2. CORPORAL PUNISHMENT
3. COMMUNICATON
4. GENDER
5. RACISM
6. LEADERSHIP

SUB-THEMES

1.3 WORK ETHICS

1.1.1 SCHOOL BASED PROMOTIONS
1.1.2 OUTSIDE/EXTERNAL PROMOTEES

1.2.1 SEARCH & SEIZURE
1.2.2 CODE OF CONDUCT

SUB-THEMES

3.1 POOR COMMUNICATION

3.2 NON-RECIPROCITY

3.3 UNION INVOLVEMENT

SUB-THEMES

4.1 POWER-RELATIONS

SUB-THEMES

6.2 IDENTITIES

6.1 LEADERSHIP STYLES

In exploring the primary research question of this study, that is the nature of 'chronic conflict' at the selected schools, it became incumbent upon the researcher to consider the essence or constitution of conflicts at these schools that have contributed to its frequency and recurrence. Whilst each of these cameos or stories specifically encapsulates 'chronic conflict' at its own location in terms of the role players, the manner or make-up of its chronicity, apparent in the stories is a very common thread of repeat behaviour drawing attention to emerging common themes.

6.2.1   Processes and Procedures

A theme of major significance emerging from all four narratives is that of the issue of, 'Processes and Procedures' or the lack thereof in attending to daily operational matters. Urgo (2012), states a common mistake by more than fifty five percent of organisations is not having a policies and procedures (P and P) content development process in place or one that is partially or inconsistently followed. He states that a Policies and Procedures Content Development process is "a systematic way by which members of any organisation participate together in planning, designing, communicating, publishing and maintaining their content about performing their organisational work practices" (Urgo, 2012). An absence of such a system could result in confusion over roles and responsibilities as we see in the following off-shoot or sub –theme.

6.2.1.1 School Based Promotions- Advertising and Filling of Posts

In terms of School based promotions, the data proposes that three of the four schools namely Ajanta Primary, Kashmir Primary as well as Parklane Secondary appear to hang heavily on the processes and procedures in respect of this sub-theme. Whilst processes and procedures were followed as established, the nature of the crisis at two of these schools, that is Ajanta Primary, and Kashmir Primary is because of an external incumbent or an, 'outside promotee.' About promotion processes, all vacancies in public schools once declared substantively vacant are advertised on an open market in a bulletin or circular for example, *HRM 15 of 2014- School Based promotion posts in Kwa-Zulu Natal*, specifically stipulating all processes and procedures

in respect of the advertised posts, from application to appointment. This is also advertised in the public media, both provincially and nationally. School based promotions in South Africa are governed by various legislative frameworks, an understanding of which is imperative if one must grasp an understanding of how individuals are promoted in public schools. In terms of the South Africans Schools Act, Act 84 of 1996, every public school is a juristic person with the legal capacity to perform its functions as described in the act. The professional management of a public school is the prerogative of the school management team under the leadership of the Principal and the authority of the Head of the Provincial Department of Education for Kwa-Zulu Natal. On the other hand, the governance of the public school is the responsibility of the School Governing Body and as prescribed in the Act.

In accordance with the South African Schools Act, a governing body must recommend to the Head of Department the appointment of educators to specific posts, subject to the Employment of Educators Act 76 of 1998, of which, chapter three deals specifically with appointments, promotions and transfers. The procedures to be followed when appointing an educator is clearly indicated in the personnel regulations to the Employment of Educators Act, also known as the 'Personnel Administrative Measures', 1999 (PAM) documents. This Personnel Administrative Measures (PAM) document stipulates the following:

> ➢ The minimum requirements in terms of qualifications and experiences for various positions in conjunction with Resolution 5 of 1998 of the Education Labour Relations Council (ELRC)[6]
> ➢ (PAM) also spells out a detailed procedure to be followed in promotions.

Chapter B, paragraph three sets out:

   i. Sifting- which is usually conducted by the Department of Education
  ii. Shortlisting and Interviews (SGB function)
 iii. Appointment (Department function)

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[6]ELRC – The Education Labour Relations Council is a bargaining council that serves the public and the Educator sector nationally and provincially, primary business to promote labour peace through dispute resolution.

From the data, it is established that in relation to the appointments of the candidates as Principals for schools Ajanta Primary, Kashmir Primary and Beachwood Secondary procedures and policies were followed. It is therefore assumed that the conflict crisis commenced with the appointment of the successful candidates from the outside, particularly so in the case of the two schools where in each instance, there existed an internal aspirant candidate, for example J.M. at Ajanta Primary and the Deputy Principal Mrs Zungu, of Kashmir Primary.
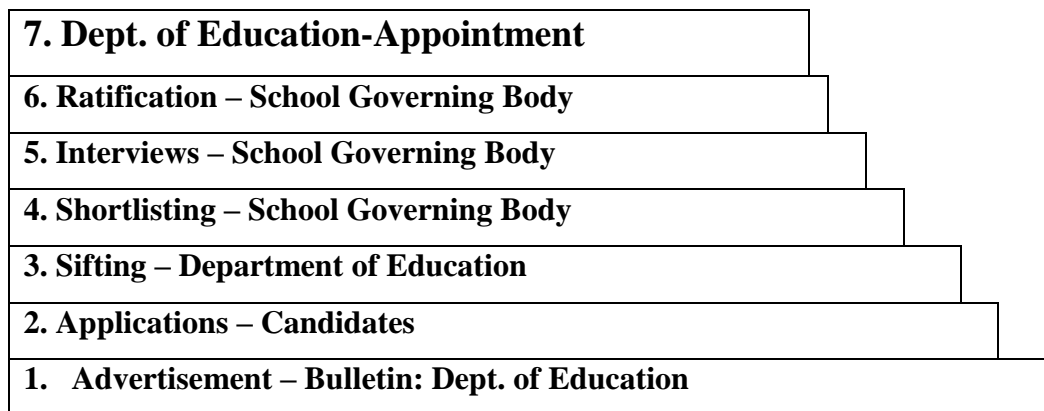
The Provincial Circular 49 of 2005 in accordance with above legal prescripts provides the necessary guidelines in dealing with the filling of vacant school-based posts and clearly stipulates the route to recourse, should such procedures not have been followed. The successful appointments of Principal Ben of Beachwood Secondary, Williams of Ajanta Primary and Ngidi of Kashmir Primary were a clear indication of the absence of grievances or disputes to the respective posts.

➢ Whilst the initial sifting process is conducted by the Department, applicants that failed to comply with the minimum requirements as stated in advertisements are eliminated.

➢ The School Governing Body subsequently has the responsibility of establishing a panel from its members which forms the selection panel of interview committee, frequently referred to as I.C. which takes ownership of the process, that is the shortlisting, interviews, and the ratification processes.

➢ As stipulated in the Provincial Circular and respective bulletin, the committee must also include a Departmental representative and representatives from the respective Unions, the latter serving as observers only, that is ensuring compliances of all legal prescripts and not being active members of the panel itself. Theirs is to ensure that stipulated processes and procedures are strictly adhered to. Once these processes are successfully concluded, a fully constituted School Governing Body meeting is held for the sole purpose of ratifying the nominated candidate for the relevant promotion post. All stipulated documents are then forwarded to the Human Resources Offices of the respective District for acknowledgement

and onward transmission to the Head of Department who will then make the necessary appointment, provided no grievances to the post have been lodged.

The following diagram illustrates the various stages in the selection and processes of school-based promotion posts, culminating in the appointment of the successful candidate by the Head of Department (HOD) for Education in the specific Province.

Figure 6.2 Stages of the selection processes in school based promotions

7. Dept. of Education-Appointment

6. Ratification – School Governing Body

5. Interviews – School Governing Body

4. Shortlisting – School Governing Body

3. Sifting – Department of Education

2. Applications – Candidates

1.   Advertisement – Bulletin: Dept. of Education

In consideration of the above diagram which provides an overview of the stipulated guidelines in filling vacant school-based promotion posts, the penultimate stage, that is step 6 is of paramount note in that it reaffirms the compliance of schools Ajanta, Kashmir Primary and Beachwood Secondary in so far as the ratification of the nominated candidate went. This significant stage which is fully representative of all stakeholders including staff members who represent their colleagues on the respective School Governing Bodies to intervene should they have had substantive procedural grounds to do so. The successful appointments of Principals Williams, Ngidi and Ben respectively are indicative of the absence of such intervention and confirmation of the compliance of stipulated processes and procedures.

Despite the stipulation of rigid policies and procedures in the processes of school-based promotion posts at schools generally the ongoing lodging of formal disputes and grievances by unsuccessful candidates as recorded by the Human Resources Directorate is a common phenomenon. On the other hand, animosity and dissatisfaction of unsuccessful candidates

continues to play itself out at schools in an informal and indirect manner resulting in much tension and conflict. This, as established from the data is especially so in instances where such individuals are external appointees and where local staff members of a school were unsuccessful applicants as will be revealed in the following stories:

A recurring factor of conflict throughout each of the four narratives is the issue of resistance or in the case of Ajanta Primary, the initial non-acceptance of the new incumbent into the post of Principal ship, giving rise to subsequent conflicts and turbulence at school and at community levels. The notion of external promotees extends itself and pushes into the issues of Leadership and Communication compounding the nature of conflicts to the extent where it manifests into conflict chronicity as established from the data. Hence, a prevailing and striking theme is that of school promotions which seems to rear its common presence at most of the selected schools as will be discussed.

The nature of chronic conflict as an apparent consequence of the promotion process and as narrated by the Principal, Mr Gerald William of Ajanta Primary appears to have been most intensely experienced at this school, although not peculiar to this institution as this study will hopefully expose. Mr William in daily school educational terminology is as already established an, "outside promotee," which simply refers to an individual being promoted to a school-based post, having come from another school, district or perhaps even region. Generally, most staff members aspire to promotional posts internally as well as externally, so naturally when such posts arise at a school, especially when individuals hold such posts in an acting capacity, there is a climate of expectations. Hence when external candidates are promoted to the various posts, an almost immediate atmosphere of tension begins brewing. Such was the case with Mr Gerald William as indicated by him in the fourth paragraph of his story, when he speaks of the school being made, "as untenable and ungovernable as possible and him being incompetent and incapable". The rationale he offers for this is that of him being, "seen as an outsider being appointed to Ajanta Primary." This justification by the Principal repeatedly rears its head in his story, sometimes very intensely especially when he speaks of his interactions   with the Head of Department, Mr JM whom he says had the raised expectation of Principal ship and who felt William, "had usurped his position".

The Principal goes on to explain the ripple effect his, "outside" appointment had caused in that he believed that there existed a succession plan of promotions at the school, should JM have been promoted. However, his promotion led to the dearth of such a plan since he was viewed as the obstructionist and hence the resistance and subsequent challenges he began experiencing. Ironically, years later when Mr William reflects on his experiences and challenges at Ajanta Primary, he is still of the opinion that it was, "a case of individuals being ambitious in respect of promotions and as expected", as narrated by him.

In the case of Kashmir Primary as narrated by the Principal, Mr M.N Ngidi and who, very much like the Ajanta Primary situation is also an, 'an outside promotee'. This implies that the principalship of Kashmir Primary School was awarded to a candidate from outside of the school whilst individuals from within the school might have been applicants as well. My stating this at the onset is very purposeful as would be revealed during the unfolding of this story. "The Deputy Principal had acted as Principal of Kashmir Primary for almost a year". "It took some members, including the Deputy Principal almost two years to accept me as the Principal of the school being an outsider". The Principal in these statements immediately offers a rationale for a route cause of the ensuing conflicts at Kashmir Primary clearly basing it on the Deputy Principal's raised expectation of Principal ship.

The Principal goes on to say, "had many friends on the staff who expected her to be promoted and therefore did not accept me, "implying support for the Deputy Principal and resistance towards him the new Principal. A similar situation of an "outsider promotee" was also experienced previously at Kashmir Primary that is according to the Principal who states that Paula, "a level one educator was disappointed some two years ago in respect of an HOD post which was filled by a Mr Shivambu who was from a school in the Ilembe District". So, the issue of, "outsider promotees" was not a new experience nor phenomenon at Kashmir Primary but rather according to the Principal appeared to be the root cause of tension and conflict at the school.

Similar to the experience of Mr William was that of the Principal, Mr Ben of Beachwood Secondary who in his narration states that when he first arrived at Beachwood Secondary, he did

feel some tension and goes on to attribute it to the presence of the Acting Principal, Mr Brian Chetty since he, similar to the Ajanta Principal "had come from the outside". He goes on to speak of the group of educators that were close to Mr Chetty but because of his own knowledge of resistance of, "outside promotees" at other schools, he did not allow the situation to unnecessarily disturb him but was very mindful of the broad resentment to his arrival.

From the very beginning in the case of Parklane Secondary, the narrator provides the reader with insight into the very significant but damaging role the issue of promotions had and continued to cause at this school. Mrs Singh speaks of the relinquished Head of Department post of educator, Mr B Mkhize who chose to pursue a business option after resigning from the Education fraternity, but who within a year chose to return to education because of his failing business. It must at this stage be noted that the Principal was not obliged to recommend his reappointment, but who did so on compassionate grounds, a decision according to the narrator, the staff constantly haunted him with.

Mr Mkhize's return to school initiated and spiralled conflicts until the school became a haven of conflict chronicity. Firstly, as stated by the narrator, Mr Mkhize, "could not accept the fact that he like others had to follow instructions". The Acting Head of Department for Social Sciences at that time, "had to watch…. which became often". This profound statement immediately conjures visions of Mkhize's poor work ethics. What follows is the dangerous dividing of staff and general bitterness according to the narrator. It is also ironical that at this state certain staff members perceived the ambitious nature of Mkhize especially when they joked about Mkhize not resting until he usurped the Principal's seat.

A startling irony of the issue of promotions in this story is when the narrator later relays the successful promotion of one of the 'three' implicated educators from Head of Department to Deputy Principal at a neighbouring school. The irony is that her being chased away resulted in her upward mobility. Secondly, being promoted to a neighbouring school gives rise to the authenticity of the earlier allegations against these teachers by learners and parents, since one would expect the neighbouring community serving a similar society to be aware of the allegations and therefore be negatively influenced in respect of these educators. Further, at the

tail end of the story is the news of the male Deputy Principal, the very one who was said to be a rigid disciplinarian and a, "racist", being promoted to Principal ship. Once again, the question of the authenticity of earlier allegations is raised. It is therefore not surprising at this stage when the narrator states her own anxiety at being the only one of the 'three' that has yet "not been promoted".

Her consolation though she says, is that she has been called for various interviews and is hopeful to receive some positive news in this regard. Parklane's short sightedness and loss had resulted in the gain of other institutions who have clearly sought out these individuals. Even at the very end of Singh's narration, she alludes to the pervading presence of the promotion issue. She states that Mrs Zulu has since formed a close alliance with Mrs Mthembu, the incoming new School Governing Body Chairperson and who she says will be a member of the selection process for any promotion processes at Parklane Secondary.

The entire notion of school-based promotion processes by the Department of Education in recent times has attracted immense attention. Unlike the past where such processes were conducted by the Department itself, since 1996 and after the establishment of the South African Schools' Act, Act 84 of 1996, such powers have been devolved to the selection committee of the School's Governing Body for recommendation of suitable candidates, (SASA, Act 84 of 1996). Whilst many of these processes follow stringent policies and procedures both in accordance with the South African Schools 'Act and the specific Provincial Promotion Bulletin, where the respective posts are advertised, there is an increasing outcry by the public in general and individuals specifically of the interference into such processes.

These are based on allegations of the incompetence and inexperience of members of certain School Governing Bodies, of nepotism and influence of the Unions. Leanne Jansen reveals the warning of a new study in the Natal Mercury (May 13, 2014) where she writes that the influence of the Unions in the appointment of teachers to top posts will create "anarchy" in schools and an exodus of dedicated professionals. The research published in the Africa Education Review Journal warned that teachers' unions "often" ignored their role as observers during the shortlisting process which led to their members being "unjustly" promoted, despite legislation

and approved guidelines (Balchin & Coetzer, 2014). These authors argue that the "uncontrolled involvement of Unions in the selection and promotion of teachers may lead to the infringement of educators' rights and poor performance during their execution of the duties". The study suggests that the interview process be outsourced to an employment agency.

6.2.1.2 Search and Seizure Procedures

An emerging sub-theme of processes and procedures that exerted enormous influence in the festering of conflicts at largely Parklane Secondary is that of the 'search and seizure' procedure that was implemented in the initial cellular phone issue at the school. The narrator, Mrs Singh painstakingly describes her involvement in the entire cellular phone saga at her school. As indicated by her it was apparently the fifth period on the 8 of June 2011 when her lesson was interrupted by fellow colleague Mrs Naidu who requested her to conduct the respective search in the grade 11 class, something which she immediately declined to do. Her rationale for the refusal was two-fold, firstly because she did not wish to do so for whatever reason which she did not elaborate on and secondly because she had been teaching a senior class and did not wish to lose teaching time. It was Mrs Naidu's insistence that ultimately drove Mrs Singh to the office requesting the Principal to allow her to be accompanied by a male educator. Of critical note here as established from the narrator is the Principal's indecisiveness and his inability to provide direction which becomes more apparent when exploring his leadership style later in the study. However, the narrator explains that it was the non-educator who accompanied her voluntarily after stating that she, Jabu had already assisted with the grade 9 search.

The entire notion of searching learners in schools is a very sensitive one. However, given the increase of drug and substance abuse at schools and the escalating criminal activity of learners resulting in untold dangers and insecurities at schools in general, law enforcement agencies and educational authorities have reached agreement in respect of random search and seizure procedures. This however is to be conducted under special conditions and circumstances. Hence, the South African Government subsequently amended the South African Schools Act to include the provision of random search and seizure exercises and drug testing in schools.* In an article on search and seizure of learners in schools in a constitutional democracy in De Jure(2014),

whereby associate Professor Joubert examines a comparative analysis between South Africa and the United States of America, this educationist investigated the right to privacy of the learners against unreasonable search and seizure exercises by exploring the legal framework that guides effective management of both search and seizure and of substance abuse in public schools in South Africa in comparison with the United States.

Whilst the search and seizure process of learners at Parklane Secondary about cellular phones was necessary as per their school's code of conduct, the way it was conducted points to a violation of the learners' personal rights as pointed out by the various pieces of legislation. The Criminal Procedure Act, Act 51 of 1977 (CPA), had long since provided, "the only legal basis for obtaining warrants to search and seizure or to perform such actions without a warrant in certain circumstance" (Basdeo, 2009). According to Basdeo, it is this Criminal Procedure Act which embodies the general provisions about searching. The enactment of the Constitution he says has brought to bear, "additional constraints of search and seizure powers".

In a similar vein, the Ministry of Education in South Africa considers, "a safe and disciplined learning environment one of the critical elements to the successful delivery of quality education" (Republic of South Africa, 1996). The South African Schools Act 84 of 1996 was thus amended by the South African Government in response to the escalating drug and substance abuse as well as the rapidly increasing levels of violence at schools which had continued to pose serious threats. Hence the amendment to the Act provided for the inclusion of random search and seizure exercises as well as drug testing at schools.

The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996) provides for the right to privacy for everyone which includes the right not to have:

- their person or home searched
- their property searched
- their possessions seized, or
- the privacy of their communication infringed

Whilst the right to privacy is greater in the sanctity of one's home that is largely during personal activities, the intensity of this protection is far less during public or state activities such as education (De Jure, 2014). The Constitution clearly indicates that the right to privacy like all other rights is not absolute (Chapter 2, Section 36(1)), but maybe limited in certain circumstances. The Principal or his or her delegate may therefore at random search any group of learners for dangerous weapons, illegal drugs if a, "fair and reasonable suspicion" has been established. However, the amendment is abundantly clear in procedures to be followed in conducting such searches. For example:

- searches should be made in the privacy of an office by a person of the same sex.
- the right to human dignity of the person or persons being searched must always be protected.

As established from the data and in consideration of the above legal prescripts, the respective staff members of Parklane Secondary were clearly in contravention of the stipulated procedures and therefore violated the personal rights of the learners whom they searched given the way the respective learners' personal space and privacy were invaded.

Educators at school level have a legal responsibility in terms of the common law principle 'in loco parentis' that is to ensure the safety of learners in their custody. They have the duty to uphold, protect, and promote "the rights of learners to effective education, equal educational opportunities, human dignity", in a safe school environment. Hence the two "co-extensive pillars" to the in loco parentis role of educators is that of duty and care and secondly to maintain order at a school. It is said that in the South African legal context, the term search and seizure is left to common sense and is determined on a case to case basis (Basdeo, 2009). Search may also be regarded as:

- *an act whereby a person, container or premises is visually or physically examined with the object of establishing whether an article is in, on or upon such person, container of premises.*

Considering that the above definition encroaches on the right to dignity and physical or bodily security, including degradation, it must be commensurate with basic human rights of respect, dignity and privacy. Considering what happened at Parklane Secondary in respect of the searching of learners for cellular phones and as narrated, this appears to be a clear violation of stipulated procedures has prescribed in the South Africans School Act, as amended within the frame work of the Constitution. Mrs Singh had offered the learners the option of handing over their cellular phones as she had no intention of searching them. During her communicating with the class, Mrs Jabu had walked in and began searched the learners.

She was therefore in direct contravention of the stipulated procedures based on the following factors:

- she was not a member of the teaching staff and was unauthorised to conduct the search
- learners were not searched in a private space but rather in full view of the class
- the prescribed regulations as indicated earlier requires the search to be conducted by a person of the same sex, however she had searched learners of both sexes
- she conducted the search in a degrading manner by, "slipping her hands into the pants of one of the learners"
- she undermined the Deputy Principal who had already informed learners that she had no intention of searching them

Section 36 (1) of the Constitution, "imported a requirement of objective reasonableness into the limitation of learners' rights", as in the case in conducting search and seizures at schools.

The implication of this at school level is that Principals may seize an item if on "reasonable grounds" they appear to have evidence of any contravention of the South African Schools' Act stipulations. Hence the search becomes permissible when the modus operandi is reasonable in relation to the objectives of the search and is not necessarily intrusive. The shock of the narrator in viewing the search by Mrs Jabu is clearly an indication of its inappropriateness and extremity.

The guidelines provided by the Department of Education spells out that searches conducted must be reasonable and proportional to the 'suspected illegal activity' (2002). In accordance with

South African Schools Act 84 of 1996 (SASA) and only after a 'fair and reasonable suspicion has been established, such searches are conducted after consideration of:

- the best interest of the learner in question or any other learner at the school
- the safety and health of the learner
- reasonable evidence of illegal activity and all relevant evidences received

In contrast to the above search conducted by Mrs Jabu, the narrator after learning that yet another learner had a cellular phone in his possession requested him to go out of the class, to a private place, remove his cellular phone and bring it back to her. As established from her, he did so with no protest. What is of greater concern is the utterance by the narrator that her attempt to later inform the Principal of what had happened was thwarted by the Principals' response of asking her, "to keep quiet". This irregularity was followed the next day by a group of learners' complaints to the Principal, "about the manner in which they were searched". What followed this incident was a series of spiralling conflicts amongst staff, parents, community, learners resulting in the onset and germination of conflict chronicity.

De Jure (2014), states that search and seizure, together with drug testing procedures are relatively new in South Africa and have not yet been tested in by the courts. Hence school and Department Officials according to De Jure (2014) are often interpreting and implementing legal provisions within SASA as they deem fit, this as we see in the case of Parklane Secondary may have had serious implications in respect of conflicts as they might have bordered on subjectivity rather that legislation.

In comparison, search and seizure practices in the United States of America Public Schools whilst permissible within specific guideline frameworks, are not generally favoured by the courts particularly if they are non-random searches (Beckham, 2008), states that suspicion of a learner should be informed by observation or a reliable source, for example a teacher. However, if a learner reports a school violation or infringement requiring a search, it should be investigated, particularly, "in the light of an intrusive search". School staff may not search a classroom of learners to find evidence of, "someone breaking a rule", the suspicion should rather first be

established. If this however had been a practice at our South African Public Schools, it might have obliterated the avalanche of conflict at Parklane Secondary bringing with it a host of irreversible incidents of dissension.

6.2.1.3 Work ethics

A third and important sub-theme of Processes and Procedures that emanates from the data is that of 'Work Ethics'. This controversial issue pivotal in the emergence of conflicts at each of the four selected schools as is seen in the case of Styles at Beachwood Secondary, VJ at Ajanta Primary, Mkhize at Parklane Secondary and CT at Kashmir Primary. The core business of schools in general is that of teaching and learning which is informed by a powerful sense of work ethics, the absence of which will necessarily lead to conflicting situations amongst staff as is seen at these schools.

"We all have an innate ethic sense that lets us know the right things to do but we don't always follow it" (Pastin, 1991). Employees may go along with something they think is unethical he says because they fear the consequences of raising the issues. Workplace ethics is arguably one of the most important responsibilities of leaders of organisations according to numerous studies. Simply put, it comes down to doing the right thing they say even when the wrong thing might also have some attraction, most often related to decision making processes. It is the option of choosing that which is considered morally or legally "right", even when alternative choices are more tempting and attractive and often more convenient.

Codes of conduct, business on work ethics exist to guide and direct the behaviour of employees in accordance with specific policies and procedures pertaining to the respective work environment. Employees through the conduct in their specific work environments can demonstrate who they are as people. Their behaviour, attitudes, values, beliefs, integrity, work ethics and in general their character is projected loudly through their behaviour in the workplace.

Ruth Mayhew (2014), a human resources consultant says that morality and values – based dilemmas in the workplace are, "at best, difficult to handle when employees have to choose,

between what's right and what's wrong according to their own principles". However, I am inclined to agree with her when she speaks of 'forward thinking' employees who implement workplace ethics polices as being well prepared for potential conflicts of interest that may occur due to the divergent   opinions, values and culture amongst its employees. Hence handling of work ethics is a challenging issue and requires managers to be cautious, consistent and procedural, the failure of which can produce disastrous consequences as will be revealed in specific instances of the selected stories, it is also important that employees are alerted to their responsibilities in respect of specific conducts of service this is to uphold professional standards and maintain compliance with prescribed regulatory controls.

All educators within the South African context are subjected to various forms of legal prescripts which specify and govern their professional obligations, the focus of which is, the Employment of Educators Act, Act 76 of 1998 as amended. This legislative mandate amongst others, including the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa governs the daily operations of all educators. Proper implementation of these polices are expected to assist in promoting access to education, labour peace and enhancing capacity and quality education.

Further, educators are expected to be registered with the South African Council of Educators (SACE, 2014) which binds its members like any other Professional Council to a 'Code of Professional Ethics'. In accordance with this Code, educators are expected to conform to a set code of conduct governing their service delivery.

In analysing the story of Beachwood Secondary, it becomes abundantly apparent that its chief protagonist in respect of ensuing conflicts, which is Mr Styles displays a poor sense of work ethics. In narrating the repeated offences of corporal punishment by Mr Styles, Principal Mr Ben speaks of him being absent from duty on 9 April 2011, an important day known to all staff members in respect of submitting subject marks or finalisation of report cards. The Principal continues to explain that Mr Styles was once again absent from duty on 19 April 2011, an important day, whereby all staff members were expected to have already submitted all subject marks and to be finalising report cards for learners. All correspondence to him in this respect was

ignored and no response received from him, he also failed to report his absence, a serious short coming in respect of his responsibility.

At this stage there were huge rumblings from staff and parents, complaining about his failure to have taught their children in his class. His very friends on the staff began bickering about who was going to carry his work load; this led to serious staff conflicts with some of his friends abandoning him. One parent phoned school to complain that he had observed Styles driving around whilst being absent and seeing him at the local tote office. The Principal then with the support of the school governing body wrote to the Department's Labour Section calling for Styles's immediate transfer, suspension and subsequent dismissal from the profession **(Annexure 4C).** Styles's attempts at fuelling staff conflicts at school are his retaliation to the exposure of his poor work ethic and his friends' reluctance to shoulder his work responsibilities. Somehow, he realised that the odds were being stacked against him, so he began unnecessarily pitching teachers against each other.

All educators within the South African context are subjected to various forms of legal prescripts which specify and govern their professional obligations, the focus of which is the Employment of Educators Act, Act 76 of 1998 as amended. The legislative mandate amongst others, including the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa governs the daily operations of all educators. Proper implementation of these policies is expected to assist in promoting access to education, labour peace and enhancing capacity and quality education.

Further educators are expected to be registered with the South African Council of Educators (SACE, 2014) which binds its members like any other Professional Council to a 'Code of Professional Ethics'. In accordance with this code, educators are expected to conform to a set code of conduct governing their service delivery. In analysing the story of Beachwood Secondary, it becomes abundantly apparent that its chief protagonist in respect of ensuing conflicts that is Mr Styles displays a poor sense of work ethics. In narrating the repeated offenses of corporal punishment by Mr Styles, Principal Mr Ben speaks of him being absent from duty on 9 April 2011, an important day known to all staff members in respect of submitting subject's marks or finalisation of report cards. The Principal continues to explain that Mr Styles was once

again absent from duty on 19 April 2011 an important day, whereby all staff members were expected to have already submitted all subject marks and to be finalising report cards for learners. All correspondence to him, in this respect was ignored and no response was received from him, he further failed to report his absence, a serious shortcoming in respect of his responsibility and work ethic. At this stage as secured from the data, there were huge rumblings from staff and parents, complaining about Styles's failure to have taught their children in his class. His very friends on the staff began bickering about who was going to carry his work load, which led to serious staff conflicts with some of his friends abandoning him. One parent according to the narrator phoned school to complain that he had observed Styles driving around whilst being absent and having seen him at the local tote office, "I then with the support of the SGB wrote to the Department's Labour section, calling for Styles's immediate transfer, suspension and subsequent later dismissal from the profession" **(Annexure 4C).** Styles's attempts at fuelling staff conflicts at school in his retaliation to the exposure of his poor work ethic and his friends' reluctance to shoulder his work responsibilities. Somehow Styles realised that the odds were being stacked against him, so he began unnecessarily pitching teachers against each other.

However, Styles was clearly in contravention of the following SACE prescripts and principles which prescribes that a registered educator must:

- acknowledge the noble calling of their profession to educators and train learners of our country
- acknowledge, uphold and promote basic human rights as embodied in the Constitution of South Africa.
- commit themselves therefore to do all within their power, in the exercising of their professional duties to act in accordance with the ideals of their profession
- acknowledges the uniqueness, individuality and specific needs of each learner guiding and encouraging each to realize his or her potentialities
- refrains from any form of sexual harassment (physical or otherwise) of learners
- educator is not negligent or indolent in the performance of his or her professional duties
- promotes gender equality and refrains from sexual harassment (physical or otherwise) of his or her colleagues.

- avoids any form of humiliation and refrains from any form of abuse (physical or otherwise) towards colleagues

From interviewing the Principal, it was learned that Mr Styles subsequently absented himself from school and began shirking his professional responsibilities. He reports late for work without a valid reason and often departs early without authorisation. Principal further indicates Styles's non- compliance of his basic conditions of service is fast spreading to certain other educators who have recognised the Department's lack of prompt action in disciplining Styles. This he says has had a negative impact on the general ethos of the school and often contributes to the emerging instability. On 15 April 2011 learners were to receive their report card as per the school's management plan, indicated earlier which Styles failed to do. All forms of communication from the school to him were not responded to according to the Principal. Parents complained of learners not being taught and some even complained of even seeing him driving in the area. They took their complaints to the School Governing Body and even threatened to take the matter up to the Minister of Education should they not receive an urgent response from the Labour Directorate.

Work ethics which undoubtedly determines the impact on the core business of each school, that being teaching, and learning is an issue that transgresses all four of the school stories. In the case of Ajanta Primary, the Principal Gerald Williams, narrates his encounter of this at the very beginning of his arrival at this school. He alerts the reader to the composition of the staff when he speaks of finding himself at a school where teachers were sent to Ajanta Primary from different schools, "with different experiences, backgrounds and their own challenges and uniqueness". He further stated that he had observed that some teachers had, "a value system that was averse to that of a teacher", even though they might have the necessary qualifications. He continued to explain that such teachers were sent to Ajanta Primary from various schools as a punitive measure for transgressions at their previous schools. He slates the Department of Education for failing to deal with their issues but was instead 'dumping' educators with their 'baggage' onto a new school.

Williams made an example of the teacher who had the alcohol and attendance problem and whom he worked with to assist him and develop his work culture, which invariably resulted in conflicts amongst his colleagues. Whilst his attempts to assist this teacher bore some fruit he failed to do with the same the senior Head of Department, Mr J.M, whose abuse of alcohol and his bitterness at not being promoted as school Principal repeatedly reared its ugly head at Ajanta Primary. The narrator explains that J.M and the school clerk, Mr V.J, were closely aligned, both being from the local community and as senior members of the staff would use the slightest opportunity to provoke conflict situations amongst the staff. He confidently states that, "most of the issues at this school have had to do with the deficiency and inefficiencies with certain staff members, particularly so far as not providing appropriate service delivery". These he stated amongst others included the school clerk, who he says in his opinion, "has been responsible for much of the serious conflicts at Ajanta Primary".

The Principal of Ajanta spoke boldly of the incident on the 29 June 1998, "during the school vacation at approximately eight o' clock in the evening it was reported that the school clerk with the assistance of an acquaintance had removed the school's television set", this he learnt of from the school's records, something he indicated that the previous Acting Principal had no knowledge of and which Williams learnt of in the course of his completion of a stock inventory. William's subsequent opening of a charge of theft against the school clerk at the local police station was soon doused when a certain member of the school governing body, Mr R.M whom VJ alleged to have been close friends with produced an affidavit to the extent that he had sent the television set for repairs. Principal Williams narrated that this crucial incident strengthened V. J's belief of "doing as he pleased", boosting his "bravery" and increased tension amongst staff, "especially supporters of V.J who felt that I was interfering with their otherwise, smooth school".

In 2011 V.J continued to display his poor work ethics which led to Mr Williams's investigation of his frequent absence and his mismanagement of the school's finances and assets as stated by the Principal. William continued by indicating that as the Department became involved, "things at school really became unbearable for myself and a few members of staff'. These he said were. "very hardworking and passionate about their work, usually going the extra mile and showing up those that were the less dedicated ones many of whom were friends of J.M and V.J". The

narrator explains that the situation became so serious that one early morning in February 2011; he was threatened with assault by a stranger as he entered the school premises. Fearful and intimidated he immediately open a charge at the local police station, citing certain members of staff including the clerk as the alleged cause. All such incidents as stated by Williams aggravated poor relationships at Ajanta Primary School with V.J further threatening the Principal and Principal retaliating by opening another charge. This as narrated by William's led to V. J's court appearance and a subsequent fine as an admission of guilt was imposed on him. As established from the narrator, tensions heightened at school, daily conflicts ensued amongst staff, as well as those parents who accused staff members including V.J of victimising their children. V.J continued with his poor attendance and persistent attempts at leave taking, all of which often met with Principal's resistance, inevitably leading to recurring conflicts according to William's.

Fajomjoch (1995) observed that the work attitude of a teacher depends on how the teachers perceive their Principal an authoritarian, dictator or a democrat. This will be further discussed under leadership styles. He also points out that our attitude to work is most times our attitude to life. The community once again made the following suggestions to the Department, pending the outcome of Styles's labour cases, citing having had enough.

- immediate transfer of Mr Styles to another school
- his immediate suspension
- his dismissal from the profession

As established from the Principal, and as stated earlier Mr Styles would often neglect or fail to attend to his basic role functions as an educator. He would often continue to abscond from his duties and come late to school or fail to sign the school's attendance register or time book which is a basic requirement for all school staff members **Annexure 4.** Further to this, the educator would, as reported by the Principal fail to honour other extremely important responsibilities e.g. examination invigilation, handing in of record books and learners' assessments. What exacerbated the situation as explained by the Principal, is Mr Styles's indifferent attitude in that he would not consider it necessary to inform the school of his late coming or absence, as is expected of all educators. This basic requirement usually enables the school management team to

make contingency plans in the way of a relief roster or otherwise, so that learners are in no way disadvantaged. In one instance and as indicated in Principal's reporting dated 22 November 2011 **Annexure 4,** Mr Styles upon being questioned by management about his late coming, displayed blatant arrogance and then informed the Principal that he will be taking the rest of the term off. Upon being questioned as to the nature of his illness, he had rudely informed the Principal that he was not willing to offer any reasons and that he was not a doctor. The Principal retorted by indicating that he will not approve such leave to which Styles responded that the Principal must do whatever he wished to. This blatant disregard not just for school rules and regulations but also for his Principal as Head of school is a clear indication of Mr Styles's arrogance, which Principal has repeatedly been complaining of and having to tolerate.

Like Beachwood Secondary and Ajanta Primary, the issue of work ethics is of notable significance in the story of Kashmir Primary whereby the narrator repeatedly draws attention to his strong work ethics and takes pride in reminding the reader of his 'time-on-task' principle, for example, "Being the person that I was… efficiently, I moved due dates, … no excuses". The, 'no excuses' yet again reaffirms his inflexibility irrespective of circumstances and so does his, "stubbornness", that he states that some staff accuse him of. As stated by the Principal, by the end of 2005, 40 percent of the staff, all females barring one showed signs of unhappiness. Being almost half the staff, one might have expected the Principal to be concerned, but instead and as stated by him, he chose to resolve through management and staff meetings, he would also, "emphasise the need to put the learner first" and indicated that it was difficult to please everybody. Staff would agree … meeting but … complain afterwards", this would imply that staff was not comfortable enough to speak out at meetings, whether for fear of intimidation or reprisals was hard to say.

Another serious moment of 'work ethics' is seen when the Principal speaks of the visit by an irate parent, Mr Josh Shabalala on 28 February 2006, and who complained of educator, C T's frequent visits to her female colleagues' classes, leaving her class unattended. More seriously was the consequential injury of Shabalala's daughter, Jennifer by fellow learner, Marcus on 26 February 2006.

Aggravating the above situation was C T's response when Jennifer and other learners complained to her about what had happened, and that is, "Jennifer cries for everything", as reported by Mr Shabalala. In this incident, the reader is presented with C T's poor work ethics, not only when she violates a serious condition of her employment, that is; leaving her class unattended, but also her attitude and lack of pastoral care when informed of the incident. Teachers are for all intent and purpose at school level in [7]'loco parentisis'. Of question becomes the work ethics of fellow educators' petition, received by myself on March 18, 2006, these being the two males, "one was the Deputy Principal, the other……Paula Blose, TC, CT, and J……or conflict with ", all of whom were in support of C T and as stated by the Principal had themselves had some disagreement with the Principal at some stage. A telling moment of questionable work ethics is when the Principal mentions the strengthening of support C T secures from her female colleagues, "four of whom were grossly guilty of visiting each other's classes for occasional chats". Clearly there appears to be a unifying force of those who appear to be less committed in respect of service delivery, a show of strength in numbers should individuals have to account for their poor performance.

In comparison to the first two schools, that is Beachwood Secondary and Ajanta Primary where the respective members of staff appear to project a low level of accountability in terms of their service delivery, the situation at Kashmir Primary appears to be somewhat different in that there is an almost deliberate attempt by some to rebel against the Principal's overtures of his, "strong work ethics". This could be due to his constant, 'lime-lighting' of himself in this regard. The question then is, are all those educators the Principal frequently refers to guilty of a poor sense of work ethics or are some of them simply making a statement. Giving possible credence to this is educator C. T's response when having to account for learner Jennifer's injury whilst the class was unattended by her. A mere, "Jennifer cries for everything", strengthens her lack of pastoral care and indifferent attitude to her work obligations and responsibilities. As indicated already teachers are for all intent and purpose at school in, "loco-parentisis". Weis (2002) states that although job satisfaction is an attitude, researchers should be warned to clearly identify the objectives of cognitive evaluation which are affected by emotions, beliefs and behaviours. Similarly, Mullins (1999) asserts that job satisfaction is an attitude and an, "internal state that can

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[7]Loco-parentisis – parents on site, in this case the educator concerned.

be associated with personal feelings of achievement. In considering the work ethics of some of these educators at Kashmir Primary it is therefore important to provide a framework for their understanding, one that is pitched against a collection of attitudes, emotions and behaviour towards one's job which appears to befit their situation.

In the case of Parklane Secondary, the fourth and final story of this study, educator Mkhize appears to epitomise an example of substandard work ethics. According to narrator Mrs Singh, educator, Mr Mkhize's Head of Department Mr Shaik, had become impatient and intolerant of, "Mkhize's, poor work ethics and shoddy work". Shaik on examining learner books, had discovered much incomplete work. Addressing him on this resulted in Shaik calling in his Union who then accused the Head of Department of harassing their member, i.e., Mkhize. It is not surprising therefore that the daily tensions and conflicts at the school spiralled.

The narrator takes great pains in continuously highlighting the poor ethics of Mkhize and a few other members of staff. She states that as the conflicts intensified at Parklane Secondary, Mkhize continued to build his camp with colleagues that were, "less committed ones……. gaps in their work, ones……leave frequently". She further states the presence of union representatives became a common feature at the school, particularly when questioned about their work, often citing harassment by management. Although narrator Singh states that the harder working educators appeared to be aligned with management and the less co-operative and committed with Mkhize, a startling fact here is the identity of the Principal, a core member of the SMT, yet as indicated by Singh, appears to be non-committed at most times. The Principal's identity in terms of leadership will be discussed separately.

In the later investigations commissioned by the MEC, that of teaching and learning revealed serious shortcomings on the part of certain educators, as stated by Mrs Singh. In contrast to the 'poor ethics' of Mkhize and members of his camp, the researcher is presented with the high levels of competence and commitment of others. For example, the narrator herself is seen clearly in this light when she explains her refusal to leave her Grade 12 class during the cell-phone search period, citing loss of teaching and learning time. Another moment of this high level of commitment is seen when several parents at a mass meeting with the Minister of

Education, spoke of the high level of competence of the "three" educators that they wanted back at the school and which was appreciated by the Minister as stated by the narrator.

The narrator goes on to state that, "In the meantime, Mr Mkhize's Head of Department, Mr Shaik was becoming very impatient with his, i.e. Mr Mkhize's poor work ethic and his shoddy work. It was when Mr Shaik examined learners' books and discovered that Mr Mkhize had not completed much of his work as compared to other teachers in the same Department, that Mr Mkhize called on his union and together they accused Mr Shaik of harassing Mr Mkhize. This then lent itself to a 'Shaik', 'Mkhize' camp with the harder working teachers supporting Shaik and the less committed ones supporting Mkhize. Of course, those that did not show much respect for authority also leaned towards Mkhize and so the daily tension and conflicts at Parklane Secondary began escalating. "This to me was the ripening and onset of chronic conflict at our school that had long been born", as narrated affirmed the chronicity of conflict at this institution, Parklane Secondary.

And so, in July of the same year during the July vacation, the Head of Education in Kwa-Zulu Natal, Mr G Bhengu, together with District and Circuit Officials met with the parents of our school, a large group, some thirty to forty of them that had called themselves 'concerned parents'. This took place after these parents persistently wrote to the Head Office in Pietermaritzburg, insisting on being heard. Mr Bhengu gave the concerned parents an opportunity to air their issues. Several of them made the same allegation that is the issue of the cell phone search which they believed was conducted unfairly. They informed him that only the African learners were searched, also that they were searched by Indian educators. This was untrue since the member of the support staff, Mrs Jabu had in fact searched the learners and Indian learners were also involved. They continued to claim racism as a key factor in their conflicts. They further informed the Head of Education, that the Principal when dealing with any discipline issues would immediately call the male Deputy Principal who was a disciplinarian and that the learners were afraid of him. They also accused him that is the Deputy Principal of being very hard on the learners and said that the Principal was useless, had poor control and was a poor manager. They went on to inform Mr Bhengu that the school's management team was made up of Indians only and that they wished to have African educators replace some of them.

Mr Bhengu spent several hours listening to the concerned parents although in their midst was educator Mrs Zulu, who repeated all the allegations that she had made to the Senior District Official when he addressed the parents on a Saturday. Mr Bhengu, assured parents, that their concerns would be investigated. However, he also informed them that South Africa was a beautiful country with different race groups, many of whom played important roles in us getting our democracy. He therefore warned parents about their allegations of racism which he said must first be investigated; he also said that it was our apartheid past that made us often shout racism. He said we should be living side-by-side and building our country, but if individuals practised racism, then they must be dealt with according to our constitution. He immediately then appointed the Senior District Official, whom he said will conduct the necessary investigation and report to his office within a period of four to five weeks. He further informed the parents that they did not have the right to chase teachers away from school and that teachers too had the right to be defended. All this information concerning Mr Bhengu's meeting was obtained by the school's management team from the Principal who was present at the meeting.

On the first day of the new term, that is 16 July 2011 the Principal after his initial meeting with the school management team later held a staff meeting in which he gave a report of Mr Bhengu's meeting and the envisaged investigation by the District Official. When the Principal reported that Mr Bhengu suggested that the "three" teachers should be back at school whilst the investigation would go on, the Mkhize/Zulu camp broke out in protest, making it known that they did not want, "these people back because they are racists". The Principal after a while managed to calm them and assured them that an investigation by the District was forthcoming. It was clear at that stage who the instigators were. All this, I learnt from my colleague a fellow member of the management team as narrated. In the meantime, Mkhize and Zulu were positioning themselves as members of management and were often leading discussions in the staffroom as well as with the school's management team. If for example the timetable was being redone in view of our absence, they would want to play a lead role in decision making. Whenever members of staff disagreed, a conflict would erupt, and they would state that such members were spoilt, these were usually the Indian teachers. The school management team too was often influenced by these two, especially the Principal who was often intimidated by them and afraid of being labelled a racist, all of this is deduced as per Mrs Singh's narration.

Meanwhile Mkhize continued to build his camp, with members of staff that were less committed and those that often-had gaps in their work as indicated earlier. She Mrs Singh further explains that this educator when questioned offered feeble excuses and would often rush off to garner the support of other members of the same camp citing harassment by management. The union representatives would subsequently intervene accusing Principal of harassment whilst Mkhize's Head of Department Mr Shaik, continued to experience much difficulty in getting him to co-operate to the extent that they were barely on talking terms. As established from the narrator, Mrs Singh, conflicts between the camps became the order of the day, with the harder working staff on the side of management and Mkhize's group displaying "anti-management" sentiments.

Of immense significance at this point is the utterances by the narrator Mrs Singh that is when she states, "Complaining to the Principal did not help much since he was being intimidated by Mkhize and Zulu. Once when Shaik requested the Principal to call in the Department's subject advisor for Mkhize, he the Principal kept offering excuses about the non-availability of the official. Such statements from the narrator alerts the reader to both the Principal's leadership as well as his management status which will be explored further at a later stage. It would appear at this stage that staff members were working under much strain as elaborated by Mrs Singh so much so that the three affected individuals were being coaxed by the Principal and members of the school management team to seek transfers since the school had, "become a haven for individuals' ambitions and ongoing conflicts". Mrs Singh goes further to explain that a few other educators too began seeking transfers out of sheer frustration.

Educators generally are public servants and as such are expected to serve learners, their general school community and manage their resources. This therefore implies that there is an expectation from their respective school communities and that is that during their teaching obligations, they will practice fairness, openness, equality and practice that which is perceived as "right" and morally correct, that being work ethics. And in considering each of the above cameos, it becomes apparently clear that educator Styles of Beachwood Secondary; school clerk VJ of Ajanta Primary; educator CT and others of Kashmir Primary as well as Mkhize amongst others of

Parklane Secondary bring the entire notion of work ethics into question since clearly all of them fall foul of such public expectations and job obligations.

6.2.1.4   Corporal Punishment

Another major theme ascertained from the data is that of corporal punishment, one which impacted immensely on staff relationships leading to ongoing conflicts amongst colleagues at Beachwood Secondary. This theme found immense prominence conflict at largely Beachwood Secondary as cited in the numerous instances by the Principal. It is argued that this controversial issue of corporal punishment although legally abolished at schools remains in practice at several institutions. Beachwood Secondary is a poignant example of how corporal punishment has been operationalised and managed at schools. Corporal punishment in this context as explained in the South African Schools' Act (84 of 1996), is not confined to canning but also refers to an assault on a person in any manner whatsoever. It also refers to "violent shaking, torture, kicking, pinching, pulling of ears, poking with a finger, using a stick, cane, belt or any object designed to threaten learners or any other physical act which may cause discomfort to the learner".

Section 10(1) of the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996 states:

> *"No person may administer corporal punishment at a school to a learner"*

The democratization of South Africa in 1994 is underpinned by the preservation of human rights, respect and dignity of all. In upholding the rights of children and as a signatory to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, discipline practices such as corporal punishment was abolished. Section 12, chapter of the South African Constitution Act 108 of 1996 that is the Bill of Rights states that, "every person has the right not to be treated or punished in a cruel, inhuman or degrading way". In keeping with the Constitution, the National Education Policy Act of 1996 (Republic of South Africa, 1996 a: A-47) states that "no person shall administer corporal punishment or subject a student to psychological or physical abuse at any educational institution". However, discipline continues to pose a major challenge for teachers and students alike (Mabeba & Prinsloo, 2000). Chisholm (2007) thus speaks of the dilemma facing schools in trying to honour children's rights and at the same time having to deal appropriately with learner indiscipline.

The term corpus is derived from the Latin term corpus, which means body, hence punishment to the body. Corporal punishment means to inflict punishment on the body (UNICEF, 2011). Corporal punishment is thus defined by the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child as: "any punishment in which physical force is used and intended to cause some degree of pain or discomfort, however light". Corporal punishment is further seen as, "physical punishment as distinguished from pecuniary punishment or a fine, any kind of punishment of or inflicted on the body," or "the infliction of pain by a teacher or other educational official upon the body of the student as a penalty for doing something which has been disapproved of by the punisher (Maree, 1995: p.68).

Several researchers have demonstrated a relationship between physical punishment and negative developmental outcomes for children such as physical injury, increased aggression, anti-social behaviour, poorer adult adjustment and a greater tolerance for violence (National Association of Social Workers, 2012). Generally corporal punishment at the level of schools is implemented in a dual context, the first being that of discipline and the second as a form of punishment believed to be a deterrent. It usually involves administering physical punishment to learners with a specific instrument or implement such as a cane, a stick, a belt etc. kept for such purposes. It could also be done with an open hand across the face, open palms, buttocks (UNICEF, 2011). Punishment includes hitting children, isolating them, locking them in the toilet, public humiliation and forcing them to clean floors and toilets (UNICEF, 2011). This fear and intimidation is classically what the Principal of Beachwood Secondary repeatedly speaks of in his projection of educator Styles, who subjects both learners and colleagues to constant fear and submissiveness.

Research shows that corporal punishment is not an effective way to ensure change of behaviour and discipline among children. If corporal punishment worked as a deterrent, "it should stop unwanted behaviour among difficult children". However, "it has been established that in schools where corporal punishment is used, the same learners are being beaten for the same offences over and over again", (Soneson, 2005). Social scientists are virtually unanimous in arguing that corporal punishment has more negative than positive effects. It does not produce long term changes in behaviour, instead it negatively affects the social, psychological and educational

development of students, contributing to the cycle of child abuse, and prompting pro-violent attitudes of youth (Owen, 2005).

Corporal punishment formed an integral part of schooling in most South African Schools prior to the country's democracy. It was used excessively in white, single – sex boy's schools and liberally used in all other schools except in single – sex girl's schools where its use was limited. (Morrell, 2001). The effects of corporal punishment were hotly debated in the 1970s and 1980s (Newell, 1972). Corporal punishment is common in many families in South Africa where it is part of a complex where violence is often the 'first-line tactic' in resolving conflict (Jewkes, 2006 p. 331). Since most African parents themselves received strong corporal punishment as children from their own parents, there is a tendency to continue with this type of disciplining (Mposula, 2004: p.4) The dearth of apartheid in South Africa in 1994 and the establishment of a human rights culture informed the ending of corporal punishment. Whilst in South Africa pre-democracy, several advocates believed it to be effective and to provide an immediate response to indiscipline, however in present post-apartheid, apart from it being outlawed, it is regarded by most as abusive and violence. Psychologists argued that it did serious emotional damage, affected the self- esteem of learners and impacted adversely on academic performance (Cherian, 1990; Holdstock, 1990; Murray, 1985).

In analysing the use of corporal punishment at Beachwood Secondary by educator Styles, we focus on the following repeat incidents, which gave rise to the ongoing manifestation on 'chronic conflict' at the school.

Regarding the above first incident, already discussed on Page 161, Chapter 5. This incident was investigated by the Department of Education and the outcome of which proved the educator guilty **Annexure 1D (1**). A warning was given to him commencing on 31 October 2006.Of critical concern is the lapse of time from the occurrence of the incident to the issuing of the sanction and that being 31 October 2006 as commencement date. Clearly a prolonged period of non-action by the Department such as this can only underscore the extent of the Educator's actions. The outcome of the disciplinary enquiry resulted in the following letter of sanction being

addressed to Mr Styles by the Department of Education and specifically signed by the Presiding Officer of the disciplinary hearing **Annexure 1D(2)**.

1. This is a written warning in terms of the disciplinary procedure. Should you engage in further misconduct, this written warning may be considered in determining a more serious sanction

2. This written warning will be placed in your personal file and will remain valid for a period of six months from the date of receipt of the notice. Should you object to the warning or wish to furnish additional information, you may lodge a written objection or provide additional information which will be filed together with warning.

3. You may appeal against the sanction to the Minister within five (5) working days of receipt of this sanction in terms of the Employment of Educators Act 76 of 1998 as amended.

Mr Styles was hence found guilty of corporal punishment after an investigation by the Department of Education, however delayed, and the subsequent sanction above was to be imposed by the Department of Education for corporal punishment.

It must be noted that soon after the first investigation was completed, and Mr Styles was convicted, he was alleged to have assaulted and inflicted corporal punishment on a second learner, Sbo Cele of grade 9C, **Annexures 2A (1) and 2A (2).** This repetitive incident of corporal punishment is in direct contravention of the sanction imposed in incident 1 where Mr Styles was cautioned of a more serious sanction should he repeat a similar offence. Yet despite this, he persisted in implementing corporal punishment. An attempt to understand this could possibly be found in the explanation that firstly, 'justice delayed is justice denied', as we have observed in the first instance of corporal punishment against learner, Leon Moodley. Secondly, "throughout the education system there has been an apparent reluctance to prosecute teachers and it was only in late 2000 that the National Department of Education moved beyond public condemnation of teachers who continued to use corporal punishment to elaborate alternatives (Department of Education, 2000).

As reported by the Principal, on 20 September 2006, the father and uncle of Sbo Cele of grade 9C called at school to complain about corporal punishment having been inflicted on him by the same educator, Mr Styles **Annexure 2B.** It is alleged that Mr Styles went to the class of another educator whereby he saw Sbo playing with a coin and slapped him across the face. He then called Sbo to the front of the class and slapped him again. Unlike the first instance whereby the educator inflicted corporal punishment using his hand as well as a thick stick on the two boys leaving visible marks on Leon, both on his back and "bruises on his thigh", in the second instance Styles chose to do so with his hands only. One cannot help pondering whether a quick reflection the visible marks caused by the stick could have led the educator to choose a softer option or perhaps his thoughtless action and his seemingly poor temperament didn't allow him the time to secure a weapon or instrument. Perhaps his repetitive administering of corporal punishment will offer a clearer insight into his mental disposition and subsequent conduct. The learner thus sustained injury to his jaw and upper pallet, **Annexure 2A (2)**.

 An internal investigation was subsequently conducted by the Principal and the Deputy Principal, Mr Jones. The educator was represented by his union, SADTU (South African Democratic Teachers' Union). SADTU is a union[8] of organizing teachers, irrespective of race, creed or gender, nationally throughout South Africa.

It ranks amongst the largest union affiliated to the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU). SADTU was launched in Johannesburg on 6 October 1990 after the unbanning of the African National Congress (ANC). SADTU challenged the legitimacy of ethnic education departments and made an important contribution to the struggle for non-racialism in South Africa. Today, the Union is the largest teachers' union in the country and boasts a membership of 240, 000 members spread across the nine provinces in South Africa.

Mr Styles did not deny the allegations and accepted the fact that he did in fact administer corporal punishment on Sbo. The parent had further opened a charge against Mr Styles at the

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[8]In this part, unless otherwise stated representative of the trade **union** means a registered trade union. Every employer has the right to join an employees' organisation subject to its constitution and to subsequently participate in its lawful instructions. Presently in South Africa, the two registered and recognised unions for teachers are the Congress of Teachers' Union i.e. The South African Democratic Teachers' Union (CTU-SADTU) and the Congress of Teachers' Union i.e. The African Teachers' Union (CTU – ATU).

local police station, **Case 124/09/2006** and reported the matter to the school's governing body after seeking medical assistance for Sbo. The Principal indicated that Sbo is a timid and quiet learner who has a serious medical condition, with his co-ordination skills being slow and not coherent. A subsequent external disciplinary enquiry was conducted by the Department of Education and Mr Styles was once again found guilty. A letter with the following sanction was subsequently served on Mr Styles (**Annexure 2C**).

1. *This letter serves to inform you that as per disciplinary hearing held between yourself and the Department of Education, the Chairperson has considered your mitigating factors that you are a breadwinner and that your wife is very sick.*
2. *I have also considered the aggravating factors submitted by the Employer Representative that you have no remorse and that you've increased the statistics of Educators who are still using corporal punishment as a form of discipline which is against the law.*

3. *Therefore, the Chairperson is giving you a suspension without pay for a period of one (1) month coupled with a final written warning which is attached. You are therefore warned that the employer considers corporal punishment as a very serious offence should you continue to conduct yourself in this manner there is nothing that will prevent the Employer from issuing a very harsh sanction.*
4. *Please note that your final written warning will be placed in your personal file for a period of six (6) months.*
5. *You have the right to appeal against the finding that was pronounced. You may lodge your appeal within five working days after receiving this letter, failing which it will be implemented.*
6. *You may direct your written appeal to the MEC at the following address.*

As seen in the above letter, should he object to the warning or wish to furnish additional information, he may do so in written form which will be filed together with the warning in his personal file. He was also granted the right to appeal against this sanction, within the stipulated

period of five working days of receipt of the said sanction, in terms of the Employment Educators' Act 76 of 1998 as amended.

He was once again also cautioned of the serious consequences of committing similar offences. The written warning was to be placed in his personal file and remain valid for a period of six months from the date of receipt of the notice. Unfortunately, the lack of prompt action as well as the apparent tardiness by the Department of Education to act timeously appeared to give Styles a false sense of confidence. Further it must be noted that whilst the Department's consideration of Educator Styles's mitigating circumstances is acknowledged, it appears evident that the learner's serious medical condition as disclosed by the parent and the Principal, is not weighted equally.

He was served a sanction of one-month suspension without pay and coupled a final written warning. In serving this sanction, the Department informed the educator that it had considered the aggravating factors submitted by the Employer Representative and that he, Mr Styles, had no remorse and further, has increased the statistics of educators who are still using corporal punishment as a form of discipline as indicated earlier is unlawful. He was cautioned that the employer considers corporal punishment as a very serious offence in terms of the South African Schools Act, 84 of 1996 (section 10(i)) and should he continue to conduct himself in a similar manner, nothing would prevent the employer from issuing a very harsh sanction, **Annexure 2C**

Mr Styles was also informed that his final written warning will be placed in his personal file for a period of six months in terms of the Labour Relations Act, 66 of 1995. All educators have a personal file which comprises of a detailed account of their professional life. This employment history profiles all aspects of their teaching career which includes teaching qualifications; schools taught at; school attendance and leave taking; teacher achievements and accolades as well as issues of discipline in respect of unlawful behaviour as is in this case. This file is maintained in duplicate form, the original being lodged at the Department's central office previously known as a service centre and a copy is maintained at the current school. Should an educator be transferred the school copy of the file is sent to the subsequent school. He was also given the right to appeal against the finding that was pronounced, the appeal must be lodged within 5 working days after receiving the sanction, failing which the sanction will be

implemented. His appeal must be made to the Minister of Education and he was furnished with the relevant contact details **Annexure 2C.**

Barely 7 months after the first and second incidents of corporal punishment, Mr Styles was alleged to have committed yet another incident of corporal punishment on learner, Jerome Nair of grade 10B **Annexure 3A (1)**. On 18 May 2007, parent Mr Nair called at school to discuss his son Jerome's behaviour and absconsion from school. According to the Principal, Mr Ben, the learner in question had his own history of serious misdemeanours, including aggressive behaviour, fights and assaults. As reported it is known that Jerome had transferred from a previous school to Beachwood Secondary due to ongoing behaviour issues **Annexure 3A(2).**

From both the Principals i.e. Principal of the previous school and Mr Ben of the current school, it was established that both together with the parent had decided that a change of environment might benefit Jerome. Unfortunately, within a brief period, Jerome began getting himself into scrapes with the school's management and other learners e.g. school fights, playing truant, etc. Further, during the interview the Principal had informed the parent that on 12 May 2007, Jerome had, had a serious altercation with another educator, Mr M.A (**Annexure 3B**) who it is alleged had administered corporal punishment on Jerome. Educator Styles who had no direct link to this incident, chose to slap the same learner that is Jerome, whilst walking past his class. It must be noted that this action as reported by the Principal, was observed by Jerome's father, who had come to school as mentioned earlier because of his son's misbehaviour**.**

As established from the father's written statement, **Annexure 3B**, on the very day i.e. 12 May 2007, Mr Nair whilst waiting at the office observed teacher, Mr M.A. administering corporal punishment on Jerome whilst calling him out of his class. This was followed by Mr Styles copycat behaviour of Mr M.A. whilst walking past the very classroom and with no provocation from Jerome. The father, Mr Nair then rushed to his son's assistance, only to be subjected to Styles's, rudeness and arrogance, after which Styles threatened him and asked him to leave the school. Mr Nair then left the school with his son. The father immediately visited the local police station and opened a charge of assault commonly known as GBH that grievous bodily harm

against educator, Styles, Case No 5238/08/07. He further sought medical assistance for his son **(Annexure 3C): J88(81/805 259)**.

The matter according to the Principal was reported to the Department's Labour Directorate, but due to the tardiness of the Department once again, no investigation ensued. The Principal did however conduct an internal investigation with the respective stakeholders. Mr M.A., that is the first educator who inflicted corporal punishment on Jerome admitted to having done so and apologised to the parent and learner. Notwithstanding the seriousness of administering corporal punishment, Mr M. A's response is in stark contrast to that of Mr Styles's who appears to have repeatedly displayed arrogance and a lack of remorse. As he was a first-time offender, his apology was accepted, followed by a verbal warning by the Principal. It must be noted that parent Mr Nair also made a serious allegation at this stage of alcohol consumption by educator, Mr G Naidu during school hours and who appears to have been caught up in this fracas of learner, Jerome, **Annexure 3B**.

Yet neither the Principal nor any other member of the school management seemed to have paid any attention to this serious allegation of misconduct, which according to the Education Law and Policy. Handbook (1999) is a section 17 offence, thereby deeming it an act of serious misconduct, which if proven warrants dismissal. This draws immediate attention to what might seem like the Principal's selective application of regulations governing educators' conduct, which could possibly also cause anxiety amongst teachers, leading to suspicion and subsequent conflicts

Mr Styles on the other hand according to the Principal, indicated that he had no knowledge of what the parent was talking about and denied hitting Jerome. He also stated that the parent could not have seen him because he, the parent uses glasses. Mr Nair, the parent indicated that those were his reading glasses and that he had in fact witnessed Styles hitting and slapping his son. At this point, Styles stated as reflected in parents' statement, **Annexure**? He did not wish to talk to the parent and that the parent could do whatever he wished to. He also stated that Jerome might not reach home safely but rather in a coffin, since many learners wanted to beat him up and that he had stopped it from happening. Mr Nair informed him that his behaviour was not that of an

educator but rather that of a gangster, to which he retorted that he will introduce Mr Nair to real gangsters. Informing Mr Nair that he had nothing further to say to him and that he should take his son out of the school for his own safety, after which he left the office.

The Principal at this stage was acutely aware of the looming impatience of the local community, largely in view of Mr Styles's similar and repetitive acts of misdemeanour. It must be noted that at this stage Mr Ben was alerting the Department of Education to the possibility of the steady but increasing intensity of conflict from regular to chronic. He had also red flagged the inevitability of negative attention and disrepute being brought to bear on the school through negative reporting via the media, which parents were repeatedly threatening with.**(Annexure 3D)** On 20 February 2012 a flyer according to the Principal, Mr Ben, was sent to parents, by a local low profile organization of which Mr Styles is a member encouraging them to participate in what they termed, *'Beachwood Protest'* to be held on the forthcoming Saturday, 26 February 2012. The main item on the agenda as reported by the Principal was, *'Beachwood Falling'*. Whilst the protest did materialize it did not receive maximum support due to the timely intervention of the local police as reported by the Principal.

In analysing each of the above incidents of corporal punishment as administered by the perpetrator, Mr Style's immediate attention is focused on the nature and mannerisms of the ensuing conflicts, contextualised by the circumstances of each. The homogeneity of all the incidents is represented by what the educator perceived as ill-discipline of learners, for example, in the case of Leon Moodley Styles reacted to Leon and his friends screaming as they walked out of the classroom. Similarly, he responded to Sbo Cele playing with a coin in the classroom, again perceived by him as ill-discipline. Ironically in the case of Sbo Cele, it was educator Styles who entered the classroom of another educator, the learners of which were not his responsibility.

Likewise, in incident three, disciplining of Jerome Nair was not his responsibility since he was walking past as narrated when he chose to slap Jerome. In the latter two incidents, Styles creates the impression of wanting to project a picture of him being the 'big bully', the saviour to educators discipline issues by instilling fear and irregular means such as corporal punishment. The fact that Leon Moodley required medical attention did not deter Styles since in incident four

Salim's mother reports that she too had to secure medical services for her son. Whilst the incidents are in some ways peculiar to their own contexts, there are glaring similarities amongst them for example, Styles is quick in using his hand that is harshly slapping the learners perhaps if not quick enough to secure an instrument as already discussed.

In August of the following year, the Principal, Mr Ben, is confronted by another irate parent, alleging that her son, Salim Badat, has been physically and verbally abused by Mr Styles, *Annexure 4A (1) and 4A (2)*. Mrs Badat (mother) after complaining to Principal, immediately sought medical assistance for her son *(Annexure 4B)* and subsequently opened a police case against 'Mr Styles', Case No 106/08/09 *(Annexure 4C)*.

With 4 incidents of corporal punishment and having been found guilty by the Department of Education, Styles was subjected to a sanction of a two-month period of suspension with no pay. He was further referred to the Education Department's Psychological services for counselling, which he flatly refused indicating that he will seek the assistance of his personal Psychologist. From the narration by the Principal outlining detailed accounts of Mr Styles's ongoing administering of corporal punishment and his almost nonchalant attitude, the entire focus on the Department of Education's **procedures and policies** become questionable. This is clearly demonstrated by both the impatience of the local community and the repeated references by the Principal of the tardiness of the Department in failing to act swiftly and decisively.

Principal's letter dated 22 May 2007, once again reminded the Department of Styles's recurring acts of misconduct and the Department's lack of swift and prompt action which he alludes to as the possibility of Styles's repetitive acts misdemeanours. He also appeals for meaningful and effective action and reminds the Department that Mr Styles was also offered psychological assistance which he rejected and stated that he would seek assistance from his own psychologist. He also cautions that the attitude and professionalism of the educator has worsened and is having a detrimental effect on the good name of the school.

The earliest recorded attempt to prohibit corporal punishment of children by a state dates to Poland in 1783 (**Jump up** UN 2007 A/Res/62/141)?? "Children are entitled to care, security and

a good upbringing. Children are to be treated with respect for their person and individuality and may not be subjected to corporal punishment or any other humiliating treatment" (**Jump up** Council of Europe, 2007). In South Africa criticism of the use of corporal punishment as a method to maintain discipline, was effectively abolishment in 1999 (**Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996**). However, the introduction of this legislation did not cease the use of corporal punishment by teachers in many South African schools as evidenced by educator, Styles of Beachwood Secondary.

Years of experience more than thirty at the field level has led me to the assertion that children are only guided and led by positive reinforcement, that is through encouragement, motivation, and reasoning and seldom through fear, intimidation and degradation.

All schools, both public and independent are subjected to legislative mandates which govern the day- to -day operations of all school Principals or Managers. Implementation of such legislation, policies and procedures will contribute in making schools highly functional, promote labour peace and enhance the quality of education. The overarching legislation by which all schools' daily practices is informed is that of the South African Schools' Act, Act 84 of 1996 (SASA), which is largely based on the premise of redressing past injustices and providing an education system of progressively high quality for all learners. At the same time, the implementation of the Act is expected to advance democracy, combat racism, sexism and all forms of discrimination and intolerance by protecting the rights of all learners, parents and educators.

As indicated earlier, chapter 1, section 10, sub-sections (1) and (2) of the South African Schools' Act deals with the prohibition of corporal punishment as follows:
- No person may administer corporal punishment at a school to a learner
- Any person who contravenes subsection (1) is guilty of an offence and liable on conviction to a sentence which could be imposed for assault

In recent times the Minister of Education has repeatedly stated a zero tolerance for the administering of corporal punishment at school level. Despite this, ongoing practice of offender Mr Styles is that of corporal punishment which meanders through the manifestation of

debilitating conflict situations at school, as will be seen. So, then the question asked is... where does Styles get his confidence from in blatantly disregarding all the stipulated legislation? Whilst this may not be abundantly nor crisply clear at this juncture, there appears to be a distinct leaning towards the lack of implementation and administration of legislation, of prescribed policies, processes and procedures.

Whilst until a few years back countries such as the United States of America, the United Kingdom, and generally in the English-speaking world largely, the use of corporal punishment by schools had historically been embraced by the common-law doctrine of in loco-parentis, meaning the school or teachers share the same rights over student as parents, this practice has rapidly spread to a large number of countries across the globe, including South Africa. It must be noted that the first country in the world to prohibit corporal punishment was Poland, in 1783 as shown by numerous studies. Whilst many countries have abolished the use of corporal punishment totally that is both in the home and at school, others have prohibited its use at schools but not in the home. Studies reveal that 100 nations have banned corporal punishment in schools, whilst 31 have banned it totally.

The following diagram represents the more recent countries that have declared a full abolition of corporal punishment implying both the schools and the parents, including the year of total abolition (Gershoff & Bitensky, 2007).

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Table 6.2.1.5 Recent countries that have declared abolition of corporal punishment

2014	2013	2011	2010	2008	2007	2006	2005	2004	2003	2000
Brazil	Honduras	South Sudan	Albania	Costa Rica	Portugal	Greece	Hungary	Romania	Ukraine	Bulgaria
Bolivia			Congo Rep.	Luxemburg	Netherlands					Germany
Motla			Kenya	Rep. Of Moldova	New Zealand					Israel
			Poland		Spain					
			Tunisia		Uruguay					
					Venezuela					

Sweden became the first country in the world to abolish corporal punishment totally whilst Poland was the first to abolish corporal punishment that is as early as 1783 in schools only. It must be noted that whilst corporal punishment is abolished in schools in over 100 countries, it continues to plague many homes, homes in which parents are also teachers, and so as revealed in the above statistics such practices will continue to be prevalent in schools, whether prohibited or not until such time that the respective authorities through its Government explores the feasibility of its ban in locations or sites such as the home.

6.3   Communication: To share or not

Communication is a valuable tool for the development of work alliance and positive interaction amongst staff. Fajomjoch (2000) observed that the attitude of teachers on the work front was determined by how teachers perceived their Principal whether as an authoritarian, dictator or a democrat, as is similarly revealed by the data of the four narrators of Beachwood Secondary, Parklane Secondary, Kashmir Primary and Ajanta Primary. Studies further indicate that one's attitude to work often reflects one's attitude to life and that ineffective communication often develops negative attitudes to work.

6.3.1 Non-Reciprocity

Communication because of non-reciprocity as well as a frequent lack thereof as gathered from the data appears to be a salient feature of all the four schools as a sub-theme of processes and procedures. This became clearly apparent in the repeated communiqué from Beachwood Secondary, resulting in a series of crises from the Department's tardiness and lack of prompt action which subsequently led to recurring incidents of conflict at this school. This absence of regular and often lack of communication is also strongly felt by Ajanta Primary, Kashmir Primary and Parklane Secondary Schools. The notion of ineffective communication was not only experienced with the Department of Education but also at the level of the school itself, that is

between the Principals and their subordinates as was seen in the case of Ajanta and Kashmir style whilst Jadoo of Parklane a misleading one as exposed by the data. Primary Schools where Principal Williams of Kashmir adopted an interrogative, communicative

According to the Oxford dictionary, communication can be described as, the imparting or exchanging of information by speaking, writing or using some other medium:

'television is an effective means of communication'

Merriam–Webster dictionary (2014), explains that communication is referred to as a verbal or written message or a process through which information is exchanged between individuals using a common system of symbols, signs or behaviour. The word communication is derived from Latin *communicare*, meaning, 'to share', it is the activity of transmitting information through the exchange of ideas, feelings, intentions, attitudes, expectations, perceptions or instructions and commands through "speech non-verbal gestures, writings, behaviour and possibly other means such as electromagnetic and chemical".

All the above sources, as well as others are abundantly clear as to the understanding of communication as the meaningful exchanges of information between two or more participants. Communication thus asserts that the communicating parties share an idea or thought on commonality and that the process requires a sender and a receiver.

In any organisation therefore, particularly schools' communication is essential for its effective functionality. In the first instance the core business of schools is teaching and learning, and this can only be optimized through effective communication between teacher and learner. In a cycle of events, the teacher's effective delivery of the curriculum is based upon ongoing, prompt and efficient information from Heads of Department who depend on the senior school management and the so the cycle continues, likewise the Principal is reliant upon the effective transmission of information from the Department concerning changes in curriculum, policy etc. All these levels are engaged in communication through a two-way process.

The communication process thus consists of two phases:

- ➢ the transmission phase
- ➢ the feedback phase

In the transmission phase, information is sent from the individual or group which is the sender to another individual or group which is the receiver. In the feedback phase a common understanding is assured and is initiated by the receiver who subsequently becomes the new sender. The message might contain a confirmation of the original message as received and understood or a rewording of the original message to confirm understanding or a request for further information. This understanding and insight into the concept of communication is essential in organisations where there is a hierarchical structure of line functions to allow for an undisturbed flow of information for effective functionality of the organisation.

6.3.2 Poor communication

Whilst communication is a key component in each of the cameos, its presence is very distinctly experienced at the different schools. At Beachwood Secondary for example the Principal, Mr Ben, speaks of the extra friendly group of educators who at his early arrival at Beachwood Secondary attempted to communicate to him some existing issues at the school which he states he discouraged. "I did not wish to listen to the opinion of others and then become negative towards certain individuals. I believed in giving everyone a fair chance…… This is something I always practice". He believed he needed to form his own opinion on such matters. Strangely enough he curbed the communication however, in a short space of time he learnt of the strong presence of conflict at the school and concluded as stated by him that his initial experiences of "niceness" was just a "façade".

Mr Ben's recurring experiences of educator Styles's repetitive practice of corporal punishment is according to the Principal attributed to the Department's poor and delayed responses to the various incidences of corporal punishment at his school. He believes as stated by him that it is this tardiness and lack of expeditious communication or action by the Department which had fuelled Styles's confidence and arrogance and prompted him to continue with his offensive conduct. When Styles was cautioned and sanctioned with letters of warning and later a month's suspension with no salary, the Principal Mr Ben appeals for meaningful and effective action

from the Department of Education, which he alludes to as the possibility of Styles's repetitive acts of misdemeanours.

Further and ironically the ongoing and recurring unwanted communication in verbal, non-verbal and written forms from Styles to educator Ms A. Jacobs whom he pursues relentlessly is what also contributes to the chronicity of conflict at his school and in his home. Ms Jacobs cites his behaviour as harassment and abuse. According to the Principal his accountability in areas of his professional responsibility is not met with the same fervour as that of his diligent communication in attempting to pursue Ms Jacobs. An example of this is when he absents himself from duty on 19 April 2011, an important day on which all staff members were expected to have submitted subject marks for learners, in respect of finalising report cards for learners as indicated by the Principal who states that all communication to Styles in this regard was merely ignored, a clear indication of selective communication. An important feature of this poor communication by Styles is inherent in the fact that his friends on the staff had dissensions on who was to carry his work load manifesting in intense staff conflicts as indicated by the Principal. Acknowledging his predicament, Styles began pitching teachers against each other as stated by the Principal thereby increasing the animosity amongst them which resulted in greater conflict.

The concluding paragraph of Beachwood Principal's narration reinforces the poor communication that the Principal and his School Governing Body had experienced with the Department of Education in respect of 'disciplining' educator Styles, projecting their apparent anger and the resultant chronicity of conflicts amongst staff at Beachwood Secondary.

On the other hand, in the narration of Ajanta Primary by Principal Mr Gerald William, one is confronted in the very early stages of his story with a scenario of poor communication between himself and his senior management for example "in paragraph five on page 2 of Mr Gerald's story, he speaks of his concern at not being supported by senior members of staff in specific joint decision making concerning school times, that is when questioned by the School's Governing Body. Yet the South African School's Act, Act 84 of 1996, speaks clearly of this being the responsibility of the School Governing Body of which the school Principal is a member. Whilst it is appreciated that this change of school times was of a minor deviation due to sporting

activities as indicated by the Principal and might not have been a major issue at most schools, the Principal as an experienced individual, as proclaimed by him, ought to have known better than not to have consulted, hence poor communication on his part which he appears oblivious of. This is especially so since by his own admission, "at Ajanta Primary, I found myself operating under a microscope".

Studies have shown that 'open climate schools' tended to have confident, cheerful, sociable and resourceful Principals, while Principals in 'closed climate schools' tended to be evasive, traditional and frustrated. Dukess (2001) asserted that Principals needed very strong interpersonal skills; they should be good listeners and effective communicators. A critical factor therefore for a highly effective school is the ability to create a collaborative environment where there exists open and honest communication. Effective communication influences student achievement, including cognitive behaviour through the mediating influence of school climate (Kidwell, 2000).

An experienced Principal would know that consultation with relevant stakeholders on important decisions is a basic tenet of effective management. Further, being let down by a certain senior member of staff should not come as a surprise, particularly when the Principal in his narration mentions that this very individual was a strong contender for the Principal ship post, a preconceived idea in his own management style, which is really based on his personal belief and not informed by any evidence, a dangerous phenomenon. Studies have shown that for years many people have accepted the "assumption that if people in positions of power and authority can learn not to be biased, they will be able to treat everyone with a greater sense of equity and inclusion" (Ross, 2000). However, it is not possible to eliminate all bias since people go out into the world daily and make decisions about what is safe, what is appropriate and moreover we generally provide justification for our thoughts and actions. Studies show that most of our decisions are based on emotions, on what feels safe, valuable, including our reactions to people we work with (DeFilippo, 2016).

Experts in communication rate poor listening as the number-one problem in human relationships. Of significance in respect of communication are relationships and support which is the justifiable

concern of the Principal when he mentions the absence of such from a certain senior Department Official. An example of this is when the narrator speaks of an occasion when he requested the support of the same senior official and the response he received was, "You will **not** get any kind of support". The cornerstone of mentoring support is based on the foundation of effective communication (Eney et al., 1990). This communication needs to be constant and ongoing. This traditional type of communication remains a means of interaction that bring individuals together. Hence it is expected of seniors, supervisors and mentors to provide the necessary support and comfort through communication.

However, the experience of Principal William with the Senior Department Official widened the bridge leaving him more alienated in his quest for support. The feeling of caring that is gained from "two-way communications" is particularly important (Wallin, 2004). This the narrator states to highlight the intensity of the challenges that he was experiencing. His further request for assistance from another sector of the Department, that being the School Governance Unit (SGU), which is responsible for all issues pertaining to the Schools' Governing Bodies was met with a further, "shocking" rebut and according to the Principal is when the official responded by saying, "you, I 'm coming to sort you out". The Principal attributes this to the incompetence and lack of expertise of such individuals whom he states were simply seconded from the various colleges upon their closure to the Department of Education.

Of greater consequence is the utterance by the Principal, that such officials were increasing the powers and authority of the parents on the School Governing Body whilst eliminating that of the Principal. He goes on to state that the aggressors were being given greater attention as the wrong doers whilst the Principal was viewed as the problem. A rather powerful statement is made by William when he says, "I therefore have no confidence in the Department", rebutting the poor communication and tardiness of the Department, as similar to that already highlighted by the Principal of Beachwood. Much like the experiences of the former Principal Mr Ben, who speaks of the Department's poor communication and tardiness attributing to Styles's misplaced confidence, so too is the belief of Principal Mr William who attributes this to the school clerk V. J's recurring misdemeanours and his indifference to his professional conduct which is revealed in the advancement of his story.

Communication appears to be a key factor in contributing to the chronicity of conflicts at Kashmir Primary. Numerous instances of poor and lack of communication largely between Principal and specific members of staff appear to have gripped the school in a web of conflicts. For example, this is lucidly illustrated when the Principal speaks of his 'conservative' background and his, 'impatience' when staff members fail to view rules and regulations in the same vain that he did yet would appear that he failed to communicate this to them as perceived by his silence on this subject matter. He later speaks repeatedly of, 'hearsay' information, again highlighting his inept level of communication which borders on rumours and gossip, questioning his professional conduct. Communication skill is an essential tool for developing strong relationships in the workplace. It according to Akubue (2011) is not only what is said but how it is said that matters in any relationship.

The epitome of the Principals' questionable channel of communication is when as stated by himself, Mr Ngidi, he comments on the overweight of certain staff members, attributing his questioning to concern and wellness at the same time being oblivious to their irritation and the epitome of the Principals' questionable channel of communication is when as stated by himself, Mr Ngidi, he comments on the overweight of certain staff members, attributing his unhappiness. This poor communication at Kashmir Primary is reinforced when the Principal speaks of the nervousness displayed by educators Paula and Miriam in questioning him about the overweight issue, suggesting a lack of freedom of speech.

He goes on to say that poor relationships between Principals and teachers, ineffective communication, frustration, neglect can cause teachers to develop a negative attitude to their work. On the other hand, Richardson (2007), speaks of the research done by National Staff Development Council which he says showed that appropriate communication skills build relationships and foster school improvement, the antithesis of this we see in the poor relationships between the Principal of Kashmir Primary and some of his staff members, specifically certain females.

Like the three schools already discussed, Parklane Secondary had its own history of inadequate and poor communication which at this institution played itself out with greater severity and subsequent conflicts. At the very early stages of her narration, the Deputy Principal draws attention to her reluctance in conducting a search of learners, in respect of cellular phones. She indicates that she had already informed the class in question that she had no intention of searching them and had given them the option to hand over their phones if they had had them. She further states that whilst communicating with them, and administrative member of staff walked in and began searching the learners. She reported the incident to the Principal during the lunch break, but he had told her that she, "should keep quiet". This fallacious communicating resulted in much tension and suspicion amongst staff members following on an inaccurate representation in the media concerning the search by "teachers". The parents of the affected learners were then according to the narrator, communicating regularly with the Head office of the Department of Education, often marginalising the local channels of communication.

The narrator goes on to explain the impact of the Principal's lack of communication to staff and learners which severely influenced an uprising of parents and learners, resulting in untold conflicts at school to the extent that some of them were ostracized and literally driven out of the school. This extreme consequence of poor and ineffective communication at Parklane Secondary is what the narrator indicates had offset an issue deemed as sexual harassment to an issue of racism. According to Kaye (2011), miscommunication or poor communication can lead to employee conflict, a drop-in morale and turnover, which has been the case at Parklane Secondary and which literally brought the school to a standstill after a series of protests actions.

6.3.3   Union involvement: Stakeholder participation

An important sub-theme of communication is that of the pervading presence and involvement of the teacher union. Whilst this study establishes the non-reciprocity and poor communication by the Department of Education with the four selected schools on matters of urgency in general as will be revealed, the constant and ongoing communication with the teacher union is glaring as is experienced by schools Beachwood Secondary, Parklane Secondary, as well as Ajanta and Kashmir Primary.

In understanding the dynamics of conflicts as they manifest in each of these selected cameos, one is alerted to the pervasive presence and involvement of teacher unions. It becomes increasingly apparent that in many instances as is revealed by the various narrators that educators frequently dangle the threat of union involvement to intimidate their Principals. In the South African context with the abolishment of separatist education and its apartheid system of governance, subsequently heralding in, the dawn of an enviable and much awaited democratic order, saw the mushrooming of numerous progressive structures across all Government structures. Hence, came in the establishment of teacher unions lending a voice of equality to all its constituents that is largely its teacher members.

Prior to the birth of the South African Teachers' Union (SADTU), the largest union was the Teachers' Association of South Africa (TASA) which comprised of Indian teachers due to the apartheid system which divided people along racial and ethnic lines. Although TASA's constitution stipulated openness to all, the South African apartheid system of governance did not allow others to join. Similarly, the African Peoples' Organisation (APO) was formed to represent the Coloured teachers. Hence TASA was amongst that formation that united teachers to form SADTU and as such brought to SADTU its resources including a fifteen-storey building in the heart of Durban which formed its foundation. Subsequently the largest Teacher Union called SADTU that is, the South African Democratic Teachers' Union was launched in Johannesburg on 6 October 1990, approximately eight months after the release of Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela who was imprisoned for twenty-seven years and who later went on to become South Africa's first President of colour in 1994.

The birth of SADTU was an historic occasion for South Africa as it not only unified various teacher organisations but as a progressive organisation it went on to challenge the legitimacy of the various racially divided Education Departments and subsequently contributed widely to South Africa's struggle for freedom. Presently SADTU as the largest union in South Africa represents over 240,000 members in all nine provinces of the country and is aligned to the principles of South Africa's, 'Freedom Charter of 1955', which called for the "opening of the doors of learning and culture to all".

Whilst the need for teacher unions to lend a voice of expression and freedom of speech cannot be argued, in many instances however, over the years, many educators have come to rely on this structure as a means of threat and intimidation to Principals and others in various situations of conflict and disagreement in the workplace. In the instance of Kashmir Primary School, the presence and involvement of the teacher union is strongly felt. At most schools the staff is represented by a site member from its teacher component. Failure to resolve issues at this level is then taken to the Branch Executive level followed by the Region and then to the Provincial level which are the next levels within the Union's structures.

From the onset of the story as narrated by the Principal of Kashmir Primary, Mr Ngidi, one gets a strong sense of the presence of the Union which is SADTU, however the narrator has not mentioned whether there existed a second or third Union at this school to which the teachers were affiliated. One can therefore only assume that there existed just one union, being a strong and influential one. We see this immediately at the beginning of the story, when despite the Principal believing that he had made educator PC understand why she could not be granted the one week's leave, that she had requested, two days later she complained to her Union, a representative of which came to meet him. However, unlike the previous Principal, Mr Sithole's experiences with constant conflicted staff members and regular Union involvement resulting in his ultimate retirement, as indicated by the current Principal, Mr Ngidi, this Principal was no, 'push-over' and stood his ground on specific issues, for example, his decision with respect to PC's leave.

The pervading presence and continued influence of the Union is affirmed when later in the story, Principal Ngidi stated that, "In the months that followed the Principal and members of the School Management Team were faced allegations of threat and intimidation against us". Even when educator Mr J was found guilty of misconduct after an investigation by the relevant subject advisor in respect of her work, her Union's strong presence was felt. Another significant moment of Union influence and presence is realised when Mr Ngidi speaks of the visit by the Union branch executive member, after educators threatened to, 'chalk-down', this established soon after a protest action by a group of parents. Both Principal and SEM had warned of the

consequences of such action in terms of legislation governing educator conditions of service, which resulted in the visit by the Union official who according to the Principal attempted to be objective but was clearly very sympathetic towards the teachers. The role of the Union in such an instance is highly questionable, particularly when as stated by the Principal he became aggressive towards the School Governing Body member who, "tried to reason with", him.

Later in the story both the Principal and the Union representative had written to the Department making allegations against each other as stated by the Principal. It must be noted that the Union enjoys the same access to channels of communication as does a school's management team who usually communicates via the Principal. At the school level, where the staff is represented by their site member, the local site member would frequently question the nature of the school visits by Department officials as stated by the Principal, particularly at the beginning of January 2013 when the investigations by the Department of Education had proceeded. The reader is again reminded of the conspicuous presence and involvement of the Union. In the Principal's concluding paragraph, this practice is frequently mentioned and that is when the site member hastily accuses the Principal of wanting to, "get rid of certain staff members", particularly when he suggested a change of environment for some. It must be noted that the, 'ombudsman'*, that is the union representative for the teacher is never far off.

It became apparent that in the instance of Parklane Secondary, the union offered a life line to the three educators who were marginalised by most and who came to depend on the union for support and direction as narrated. Similarly, in the Parklane Secondary story, the three affected educators as well as other members of the staff constantly resorted to seeking representation from their teacher union that is SADTU especially in instances where the 'three' felt undermined and ostracised. As narrated by Mrs Singh, on 1 June 2011, a group of parents again called at school and informed the Principal that they wished to meet the three of us to discuss the incident. "They told the Principal that we should join them in the library and proceeded there to wait for us. We instead decided to meet with our Teacher Union. In the meantime, parents began demanding that we leave the school. Our union representative then telephoned the Chief Superintendent of Education, telling him about the rumblings at school, especially since many learners began "toy-toying, and protesting against us". The narrator continues by saying that it

had become clear that the parents were inciting the learners and whilst some learners were also seen talking to a few teachers, Mkhize and Zulu featured amongst these.

As established from Mrs Singh one group of parents then moved to the Principal's office, knowing that they were in that area. Unlike many other instances which will be revealed as the study proceeds the union is generally in control of the situation, however, in this situation at Parklane Secondary where the protestors became unwieldy and as stated by Mrs Singh the union very much like the 'three' educators and the Principal appeared to be overwhelmed. "The situation had become volatile and we were advised by our union representative to leave school", again it is the union who advised its members whilst the Principal's silence in all such sensitive moments was remained conspicuous. "Learners and parents jeered as we left, especially because it is what parents and some teachers wanted in the first instance", as proclaimed by the narrator.

In each of these narratives the involvement of the Union whilst similar in certain aspects is distinctly different in others. The general perception of the intimidatory and disruptive nature of Unions particularly SADTU is thwarted by the utterances of the Principal of Ajanta, Mr Gerald William who appears to be in awe of the Union and speaks highly of the organisation. At the very onset of his narration he speaks of his Education Management and Development Studies which he couples with his work and the various positions he held in SADTU, which designations he is clearly proud of. He goes on to relay his appointments of Vice-Chairperson and Treasurer of a branch, which he stated afforded him the opportunity to, "mix and interact with numerous people of various backgrounds and levels" many of whom he indicates that is "SADTU officials today hold high profile positions including those of Cabinet Ministers and Government officials". Mr Williams stated with much grandiose that the confidence he acquired is in fact through his interaction with senior SADTU officials as well as his own experiences of management in general". His indebtedness to the Union is in stark contrast to the experiences of Principal, Ngidi of Kashmir Primary who like most Principals regard the Union as being aggressive, intimidating and sometimes destabilising.

Ironically later in his narration, William speaks of the increased tensions and ongoing conflict amongst staff because of the investigations into VJ's poor service delivery, frequent absenteeism

and alleged financial mismanagement. As stated by him there is a frequent request of the Union's presence by its members for representation during conflicts. Of consequence here is the statement by the Principal that, 'Even when they are glaringly in the wrong in the case of Mr and Mrs VJ, their independent Unions have represented them and blindly defended them". This in his opinion complicated simple conflicts.

In the story of Beachwood Secondary, protagonist Styles is tried and tested in several instances about his unprofessional conduct and one would therefore have expected to have his Union be at his beck and call. Strangely enough, this is not the case. In Styles's second that is his repeat offence of corporal punishment, the Principal Mr Ben speaks of the internal investigation conducted by himself and the Deputy Principal, Mr Jones. As established from him, Styles was represented by his Union, this is SADTU when subsequently he admitted to having administered corporal punishment on learner Sbo which led to the Department of Education sanctioning him and the parent opening a charge of assault against him at the local police station. The researcher thus attributes the subsequent absence of the Union in the numerous incidents against Styles to his admission of guilt.

Based on the experiences of the four selected managers, is the assertion that Unions have a pivotal role to play in the effective functionality of schools, however, for many they may often be perceived to cause mayhem and the destabilisation of schools. The professional attitude of teacher unions as well as the perspective of teaching as a profession, can also play an important role towards effective school management (Heystek & Lethoko, 2001). It therefore becomes imperative for school management teams and Unions to work in close collaboration to advance the effectiveness, efficiency and cohesiveness of the organisation.

6.4 Gender and disregard/disrespect of the opposite sex/sexual harassment

A further theme that has emerged from the case study and which appears to be of notable attention is that of the issue of gender. The study through the stories, largely that of Beachwood Secondary and Kashmir Primary suggests that the issue of gender had played a contributory role in the resultant conflicts at these schools as will be discussed.

In the case of Beachwood Secondary, educator Styles once again features prominently as a catalyst to gender abuse and disrespect of the opposite sex. This blatant disregard is not merely confined to his work environment that is Beachwood Secondary but also extends to his own home as established from the narration. Immediately after the narrator highlights the numerous incidents of corporal punishment inflicted by Styles on various learners, it is further established that this educator embraces other forms of abuse with the second being that of gender.

The narrator relays Styles's persistent pursuit of educator Ms Jacobs who concertedly rejects him. His relentless efforts of embarrassing and humiliating her publicly at times and met with her continued rebuff of him which has established results in his outbursts of aggressive and abusive behaviour. Jacobs's association with other male teachers fuels Styles's aggression leading to intense intention and ongoing conflict amongst staff members as indicated by the narrator. What is of immense significance here is Jacobs's declaration of her fear of him but more so her admission of, "like so many teachers are", clearly indicating the terror and intimidatory tactics this individual can exert on so many. Mr Ben, the Principal indicates the extent of Styles's abuse on females when he later speaks of similar experiences of Styles's wife and his daughters.

In consideration of the light sanctions and sometimes no sanctions that Styles received in respect of earlier contraventions of school regulations largely with respect to corporal punishment, and now in this instance his relentless abuse of members of the opposite sex despite being made aware of educator Jacobs's disinterest in him, the focus turns to Styles's increased and misplaced confidence and apparent abrasive behaviour.

Similar to the story of Beachwood Secondary, the apparent practice of gender biasedness appears to feature quiet prominently in the manifestation of ongoing conflicts in the leadership style of the Head of School, of Kashmir Primary, that is Mr M.N Ngidi. This is evident when he speaks of regular staff meetings in the afternoons and specifically when he stated that, "the females would largely have excuses" citing their own personal commitments in the afternoons, suggesting a possible gender biasedness on the part of the Principal. As recovering victims of a former apartheid and largely patriarchal society, most South African women are still largely and solely responsible for domestic chores, which Principal, Ngidi appears either oblivious of or chooses to ignore, projecting a typical South African male chauvinist reaction. It becomes of

concern that only in the Principal's third year at Kashmir Primary did he begin to experience greater co-operation as narrated, but even so as mentioned two female educators namely Mrs J and Mrs CT, "who would never let go", suggesting the possibility of these two being stronger females and who might have sensed the Principal's gender biasedness.

The Principal's refusal to grant educator PC a week's leave for the wedding of a sibling as narrated during the examination period is understandable. However, the Principal's inflexibility comes into question since by his own admission, he states that, "PC on the other hand is a hard-working educator and is often called by the Department to assist in workshops, etc." It is therefore argued that such a committed educator would have made contingency plans for her classes. This refusal by the Principal clearly provided a 'team-up' platform for Mrs J and Mrs CT citing gender discrimination as stated by the Principal. "It also came to my ear that they were being encouraged by my Deputy Principal, Mrs Zungu, although was not too obvious did things slyly", this statement by the Principal revealed his acceptance and reliance on hearsay information which as is known can be a dangerous and often misleading source.

In the case of Jacobs of Beachwood Secondary, there is a clear indication of sexual harassment by a fellow colleague that is Styles. Sexual harassment is generally understood as unwanted conduct of a sexual nature which may include unwanted physical contact as well as verbal and non-verbal forms, and which tends to create a hostile or offensive environment as we observe in the case of Beachwood Secondary. According to Street et al. (2007), sexual harassment maybe described as the making of unwanted and offensive sexual advances or of sexually offensive remarks or acts, especially by one in a superior or supervisory position or when acquiescence to such behaviour is a condition of continued employment, promotion or satisfactory evaluation. Sexual harassment according to Boland (2002) is bullying or coercion of a sexual nature, or the unwelcomed or inappropriate promise of rewards in exchange for sexual favours. Sexual harassment as observed by most researches is one of the most common forms of harassment in the workplace. As a result, most countries, have legislated against the practice of sexual harassment which generally results in the violation of a woman's rights to live and work with dignity in a safe and secure environment.

Gender and sex are closely related terms, intertwined and often posing challenges in their precise understanding but are distinctly different. According to Chan (2010), gender and sex are defined as follows:

- **"Sex"** refers to the biological and physiological characteristics that define men and women.
- **"Gender"** refers to the socially constructed roles, behaviours, activities and attributes that a given society considers appropriate for men and women.

Put differently "male" and "female" are sex categories, while "masculine" and "feminine" are gender categories (Chan, 2010).

Most studies contend that sexual harassment and violence in schools is a barrier to learning and deprives learners of their inherent capital Constitutional right to equality and dignity, leads to poor self- esteem and confidence, emotional withdrawal and may contribute to low achievement and poor performance. Sexual harassment and violence affects learning environments negatively, creating an atmosphere of fear and aggression. This is clearly demonstrated at Beachwood Secondary with the frequent outbursts and aggressive behaviour of educator, Styles. In the South African context an educator maybe disciplined in terms of the Code of Good Conduct of the South African Council of Educators (SACE), No.31 of 2014 and maybe deregistered from the council if found guilty. Section 17 of the Education Laws Amendment Act, No. 53 of 2000, provides that a teacher must be dismissed if he or she is found guilty of, among other things, committing an act of sexual assault on a learner, or other employee, or having a sexual relationship with a learner of a school where he or she is employed or being found guilty of serious assault regardless of the age of the learner.

Whilst South Africa has one of the most progressive and liberal constitutions in the world largely due to the Bill of Rights and its promotion of the equality of all citizens the practise however is often far removed from the theory. "South Africa is full of contradictions and one of these is, the gap between the progressive legislation put in place to promote women and girls and the reality of the daily experience of violence and harassment of many women," wrote the researches at the UNGEI Conference (United Nations Girls' Education Initiative, 2002). Behind the gender-parity

policies, school girls were still negatively affected by discrimination, they wrote. This could be attributed to among other things, long-held patriarchal attitudes, the violent legacy of apartheid, society's attitudes to women and girls, and a lack of education about equality and human rights. "The biggest challenge in addressing gender-based violence in and around schools will be made only when the political world is in place to address deep-seated gender prejudices in all aspects of South Africa life", the UNGEI. "We will not be able to transform schools unless we transform our wider society" (United Nations Girls' Education Initiative, 2002).

Similarly, most countries including the United States of America, the United Kingdom and those under the African Union, for example South Africa, have prohibited against the practise of sexual harassment. The United Nations and regional treaty systems have recognised sexual harassment as a form of discrimination and violence against women. Subsequently the *General Assembly Resolution 48/104on the Declaration of the Elimination of Violence Against Women* defines violence against women to include sexual harassment which is prohibited at work; in educational institutions and elsewhere and encourages penal, civil or other administrative sanctions. Further, in the United States, the *Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women* (Penny, 2010), direct States Parties to take appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against all women in all fields.

Moreover, the Beijing Platform for Action, (September 1995), recognised sexual harassment as a form of violence against women and as a form of discrimination and called on all stakeholders including government, employers, unions and civil society to develop anti-harassment policies and prevention strategies. The objective of the Platform for Action which is in full conformity of the Charter of the United Nations is the empowerment of women. Likewise, the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa obligates State Parties to take appropriate measure to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women and protect women from all forms of abuse (African Union, July 2003).

Locally within the South African context, we lay claim to one of the most progressive Constitutions of the world which was passed in 1996, the cornerstone of which is Chapter 2, its Bill of Rights which, "enshrines the rights of all people of our country and affirms the

democratic values of human dignity, equality and freedom" (1996). As the supreme law of the land, the Constitution was founded on the core values of human dignity, the advancement of human rights and freedom, non-racialism and non-sexism (Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996).

As impressive as the above National and International policies and respective legislation concerning the prohibition of gender discrimination is, the reality is that there exists a very strong presence of this undesirable behaviour in the workplace. Sexual harassment is one such phenomenon as is clearly seen in the behaviour pattern of educator, Mr Styles of Beachwood Secondary. Despite repeated sanctions by the labour component of the Department of Education, he persists in his negative conduct. Not only does he show scant regard and respect for educator, Ms SP but so too does he towards his wife and both his daughters, all of whom display immense fear of his 'violent and aggressive' outbursts. By SP's own admission to the Principal, she is terrified of him.

Styles clearly flaunts his self-created power, a projection of his own sexuality. Philosopher Michael Foucault claims that as sexual subjects, humans are the objects of power, which is not an institution or structure, rather it is a signifier or name attributed to "complex strategical situation". Because of this, "power" is what determines individual attributes, behaviours etc. and "people are a part of an ontologically and epistemologically constructed set of names and labels" (Foucault, 1984: p.42). He challenges the idea that power is wielded by people or groups by way of 'episodic' or 'sovereign' acts of domination or coercion, instead he sees it as dispersed and pervasive. "Power is everywhere" and "comes from everywhere", and so in this sense is neither an agency nor a structure (Foucault, 1984: p.63). A key issue about Foucault's approach to power is that it goes beyond politics and sees it as an everyday socialised and embodied phenomenon as we see in the sporadic outbursts of Styles. Styles reinforces his disrespect of females when he calls learners for example, Gina a "bitch".

According to Merriam-Webster (2014), the word "bitch" literally means a female dog. However, it is often used as a denigrating term applied to a person, usually a woman. This latter definition is malicious and derogatory and sometimes used as a generalised term of abuse, as in the case of Styles. Today the music industry especially the rap culture is increasingly using such

terminology to sell their records, for example, O' Shea "Ice Cube" and others as stated by women's' rights advocate, Shanelle Matthews in her article, 'The B Word' (Matthews, 2016).

Examining the gender proportion of females to males at Beachwood Secondary, I established an overwhelming presence of females that is two thirds of thirty-six, yet ironically the overbearing presence of Styles as one of twelve males against twenty-four females wielded an uncanny intimidatory influence on numerous staff members, particularly females such as Ms SP. This study sets to examine other factors beyond gender for example, power and bullying that appear to precipitate his behaviour.

6.4.1 Power Relationships in the Workplace: The Mightier of Us

The issue of gender and power, specifically power relations appear to be inextricably intertwined in the various stories as projected by the data, thus reflecting it as an offshoot or sub-theme of the theme of gender, which becomes apparent in the behaviour patterns of educator Styles of Beachwood Secondary and Ngidi of Kashmir Primary. Similarly, that of Principal Williams and school clerk VJ of Ajanta Primary as well as Mkhize of Parklane Secondary seems to display other forms of structural and positional power as established from the data. In the case of the former, it is proposed that their behaviour that seems to be gender-based appears to be rooted in power, for example, a critical dimension to Styles's behaviour is that of aggression and intimidation. This appears to be based on the accumulation of excessive power that he seemed to have bestowed upon himself in the absence of being halted by the Department of Education about his unlawful and unprofessional conduct specifically, in respect of female educator, Jacobs and learner, Gina of Beachwood Secondary. Likewise, Ngidi of Kashmir Primary utilised his positional power by being Head of School to emphasize the need for staff to comply or face the consequences.

A similar break down in relations emanated at school Ajanta Primary where Principal, Williams and school clerk, VJ appear to be on a collision course of conflicts from the onset. Like Ngidi of Kashmir, Williams too as Principal of Ajanta, expected subordinates like VJ to comply without questioning. On the other hand, Mkhize of Parklane Secondary, like Styles uses the practice of 'divide and rule', thereby fostering stronger relationships with educators like himself that were

less committed to service delivery and more inclined to clique formations, consequently strengthening their course of collision against authority which was the School Management Team (SMT). This ultimately led to ongoing conflicts with the SMT.

Given South Africa's Institutionalised apartheid past, which has been punctuated with its various forms of inequalities be they race, gender or class and shrouded in relationships of position and power, continue to remain a challenge in the workplace despite having reached 20 years of democratic governance. As such power relationships between men and women are a common phenomenon in South African workplaces including schools, since most of these are still characterised by uneven playing fields. Whilst South Africa's democracy heralded the equality of males and females, the reality is that power relationships between men and women continue to exist in the workplace as we clearly see in the instance of educator Styles in his relationship with female educators at Beachwood Secondary.

Not only do these power relationships pertain to gender but so too does it to the various ranks and positions. This is repeatedly illustrated in the relationship between Principal Mr Ngidi of Kashmir Primary and his subordinates at the school, many of whom ironically are females. In this instance the issue of power is informed by both position and gender. Studies have shown that unequal power relationships are largely evident in workplace where men hold higher or supervisory positions more frequently than women. According to the non-profit organisation, *Catalyst,* women held only 14% of leadership positions in the Fortune 500 companies in 2012. As such men more frequently exercise legitimate or positional power over women, often projecting this as leverage or control measure as is depicted by Mr Ngidi against female educators at his school Kashmir Primary, both by his attitude and their weight issues and their requests for leave.

A further type of power which is *personal power* as explained by Professor Amanda Sinclair of the University of Melbourne is often responsible for problems and conflicts between men and women in the workplace. She states that personal power is derived from charisma, reputation, toughness, judgment, confidence, endurance and physical stamina. Similarly, other studies indicate that the workplace is a, 'great breeding ground' for the development and the abuse of

power. This pursuit or abuse of power they say is often the root cause of many a problem, resulting in overt conflict, harassment and bullying. Each of the four stories in this study depicts this notion. At Beachwood Secondary, Styles appears to cast a wall of power and aggression around him. He uses this to manipulate his male colleagues and instil fear into his female colleagues and learners as derived from the data.

*Kohr's power theory of aggression (*1957), regarded as a masterpiece of social and political analysis speaks of the, "principal cause of aggression and wars is excessive size leading to excessive power". According to this theory, "given a critical dimension (amount of size power) the (almost) inevitable consequence is violence". Kohr calls it, *the power theory of aggression or the power theory of social misery. Educator* Styles's aggressive and violent outbursts resulting in the subsequent misery and unhappiness of many, including colleagues, learners as well as on the domestic front extending to his wife and children, lends credence to this theory.

Researcher Fast (2015), found that leaders, "who cannot handle the implications of power, can create a toxic culture of fear and blame through aggressive applications of their positional power". This is projected by both the Principals of Ajanta and Kashmir Primary schools who by their own frequent utterances constantly remind their subordinates of their legitimate power that is power through their positions of Principal ship and the compelling need for such staff members to thus comply. In focussing on their positional power, these Principals convert their legitimate power to coercive power that is commanding leadership through force and threats. Unfortunately, studies have shown that much harassment and bullying in the workplace goes unreported, mostly for fear of reprisal or victimisation. This type of coerced compliance usually has a short lifespan since it does not win the respect and loyalty of employees for long.

"Unfortunately, you cannot build credibility with coercive influence- you can think it like bullying in the workplace" (Lipkin et al., 1995). However, it must be remembered that not everyone holding power necessarily misuses it. Kohr repeatedly reminds us that the vital element is not so much power, but the "*size* of power which in turn depends on the *size* of the social group by which it is generated", simply stating that it is the volume of power that ensure immunity from retaliation. This largely occurs when the perpetrator is of the belief that he or she

cannot be held accountable to any higher office and becomes a law to themselves projecting a since of pride in their accomplishments as we see in the cases of Styles of Beachwood Secondary, VJ of Ajanta Primary and Mkhize of Parklane Secondary. These individuals appear to be seduced by power and oblivious to the barriers it has created to the fostering of good working relationships.

6.5   Racism: Apartheid's abhorrent imprint

The issue of racism, a degrading consequence of South Africa's apartheid past emerges as an important theme in one of the selected schools of this study, namely Parklane Secondary. Arguably the most painful and sensitive characteristic of any system of discrimination, racism remains a constant reminder to all of us of the enormous work we still must do in building a truly non-racial Nation. South Africa's constitution was borne through the outcry and abhorrence of its unequal, unjust and non-democratic past. It came into effect on 4 February 1997 as the supreme law of the land and is one of the most progressive constitutions of the world with a widely acclaimed Bill of Rights ensuring social justice and basic human rights for all its citizens. Amongst such fundamental rights are those of, "equality, freedom of expression and association, political and property rights, housing, health care, education, access to information and access to courts (Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996).

South Africa has reached its second decade since its first democratic elections which successfully saw the extinction of institutionalised racism. However, in the face of such an ideal and promising system of governance the ongoing cases of reported racist acts within and outside South African institutions brings into question the aspiration of South Africa's "Rainbow Nation", that is, of peaceful and harmonious co-existence of all its diverse and heterogeneous communities. History has taught that racism assumes various forms, each influenced by the society in which it emanates. In its simplest but crudest form, racism involves a straightforward rejection of and hostility towards, a minority group, sometimes referred to as 'old-fashioned racism' (Sears, 1997). In more subtle forms, it involves rejection which is based upon values and

ideologies rather than on straightforward dislike, "sometimes referred to as modern or symbolic racism" (Jones, 2005).

Whilst South Africa's constitution persisted in ensuring that it is illegal and socially unacceptable to express views or engage in practices that are discriminatory and reflect prejudice, there is growing evidence of modern and subtle forms of racism at various levels, given the country's background of deeply entrenched racist practices rooted in apartheid.

It is common knowledge that there appears to be recurring incidents of racism at several institutions in South Africa as is frequently published in the media. It is a phenomenon whose destructive and inhumane consequence become a stark reality of our segregated past and as such continues to pose a challenge to our democracy. However, of paramount importance is the enormous responsibility and adeptness at distinguishing between racism and perceived racism as we shall see in the case of one of the selected schools, namely Parklane Secondary of this study, a school which had become fraught with conflict and thus provided the necessary fertile ground for that which was categorised as racism.

Racism is generally defined as behaviour towards an individual or group belonging to another race, religion or culture that has malicious tones, undertones and or intentions behind it. Simply, saying or doing something negative purposefully towards another or group because of race, religion or culture. This cameo is fraught with allegations of racism and perceived racism. In the very second paragraph of this story, the narrator speaks of a memorandum that was sent by a few community members to the Department, demanding the immediate removal of the entire school's management team, on the basis that all five members that is, the Principal, Deputy Principal and three Heads of Department were the entire Indian race group. This issue of racism is affirmed when the narrator states that the demand included the replacement of all such management members by that of three African educators.

Of further significance as stated by narrator Mrs Singh is when such members "failed ", to acknowledge and accept that Parklane Secondary had inherited an already existing School Management Team from the past apartheid system being that of a race, in this instance, 'Indian'.

Even as early as 2001, seven years into South Africa's democracy, Adrian Lackay had this to say of racism, "Racism is no longer restricted to issues of skin colour and has become 'globalised' to include the unequal international division of power and prosperity, legalised and institutionalised practices, ethnicity religious intolerance and tribal identity" (Lackay, 2001: p11).

Of significance however, is the fact that eighteen years after the dismantling of apartheid structured Government and a no longer fledgling democracy, racism remains a talking point in most organisations and institutions today, schools being a prominent one. This is seen at Parklane Secondary repeatedly, so much so that the Deputy Principal states that although Parklane Secondary had a majority of Indian Educators, that is, thirty four of forty and six African, the issue of racism had become so sensitive that,'' one had to be very careful not to create situations of racism". As established this is particularly so when educators were asked to account for their work or lack thereof, the race card was always flashed to create conflict and subsequent suspicion and tension amongst colleagues.

The most prominent instance of racism reared its ugly head in 2011, that is, when the long and drawn out issue of learners with cellular phones occurred at Parklane Secondary and as stated by the narrator, "none of this could have prepared us for what followed". The subsequent search and seizure procedure that was conducted in respect of the cellular phones was labelled a **racist** act, since learners, according to the narrator stated that only African learners were searched. Secondly, the search was alleged to have been conducted by Indian educators only. The narrator indicates that the search was however solely conducted by a non-teaching staff member, a Mrs Jabu of African origin and one who was appointed by the School's Governing Body. Further, as narrated the affected class list had names of both African and Indian learners. It was not surprising therefore when the narrator spoke of the subsequent increase in tension and suspicion amongst staff giving rise to persistent and recurring conflicts.

Another conspicuous moment of racism or ongoing racism according to the Deputy Principal, Singh, occurred when certain parents perceived that the issue of learner discipline was being mismanaged by specific members of the School Management Team. This, they felt was dealt with, with an" Indian" bias that is that members of the only "Indian ", School Management Team

were dealing with discipline issues of African learners. Reference was made to the male Deputy Principal who largely dealt with learner discipline and who was accused by parents and learners of being racist due to his strictness and 'no-nonsense' attitude. Still on the cell-phone issue and the subsequent protest and disruptions at Parklane Secondary as narrated by Deputy Principal Singh, was the follow-up mass meeting of parents on a Saturday afternoon. This meeting that was chaired by a senior District Official, Mr Zama and attended by other Department Officials propelled the issue of racism to untold proportions. My rationale for saying this is based on the statements by the narrator in respect of Mr Zama's utterances of appeasement to parents. For example, the demand by parents for the removal of the "three "staff members, was not just supported by Senior Official Zama, but was also followed by a promise to have them replaced by three African educators without so much as an investigation, as stated by Singh, "Mr Zama immediately supported the parents on the race issue and promised to have the three Indian staff members replaced with three African educators next week". He also excited parents by telling them, that individuals will, "be charged for racism, mismanagement and not caring for the African child; all this before any investigation".

Another moment of racism is when the Deputy Principal is accused of being a racist and that is when she was reluctant to conduct the search for cell-phones, it is alleged that she stated, 'not wanting to dirty her hands'. Of further interest and consequence to the notion of racism is the utterance by the narrator that, "what started as a sexual harassment now became a racial issue because parents continued to say that only Black learners were searched, and this was readily believed by senior officials". Of greater significance is the fact that the narrator stated that the list of learner names with cell-phones that were given to the Principal included both Black and Indians learners and who strangely, were identified by a Black learner. The narrator continues to elaborate that one Indian learner from the same class and who did carry a cell-phone travelled daily from Pinetown since he used his phone to communicate with his parents for transport after extension classes. However, he handed this to the office and fetched the same in the afternoons. This explanation, she stated was confirmed by office staff.

The narrator repeatedly speaks of the two "main instigators" on the staff, that is Mr Mkhize and Mrs Zulu whom she believes were positioning themselves for promotions and who often

influenced, "the Principal who was often intimidated by them and afraid of being labelled a racist". It therefore implies she stated that the Principal would knowingly allow himself to be misguided rather than being regarded a racist, as inaccurate as this might be. The issue of 'racism' had become Parklane's, 'Damocles Sword' [9]

From the very beginning of the story of Parklane Secondary, the narrator provides the reader with insight into the very significant but damaging role the issue of promotions had and continued to cause at this school. Mrs Singh goes on to speak of the relinquished, Head of Department post of educator, Mr B Mkhize who chose to pursue a business option after resigning from the Education fraternity, but who within a year chose to return to education because of his failing business. It must at this stage be noted that the Principal was not obliged to recommend his reappointment, but who did so on compassionate grounds, a decision according to the narrator, the staff constantly haunted him with.

Mr Mkhize's return to school initiated and spiralled conflicts until the school became a haven of conflict chronicity. Firstly, as stated by the narrator, Mr Mkhize "could not accept the fact that like others he had to follow instructions". The Acting Head of Department for Social Sciences at that time, "had to watch his arrogance and indifference towards his work which became often". This profound statement immediately conjures visions of Mkhize's poor work ethics. What follows is the dangerous dividing of staff and general bitterness according to the narrator. It is also ironical that at this state certain staff members were fully aware of the ambitious nature of Mkhize especially when they joked about Mkhize not resting until he usurped the Principal's seat.

Later in the story, Mrs Singh speaks in detail of (p. 9) the cell-phone issue in the year 2011 which virtually crippled the school and severely disrupted staff relationships because of perceived racism. After numerous meetings and various levels of intervention including those by the Circuit, District and ultimately the Province of the Department of Education, the Head of Education in the Department, Dr Bhengu called for a high level of investigation by a Senior Department Official. However, Mr Bhengu's mention of the return of the 'three' educators

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[9] In ancient classical history Damocles Sword refers to a sword literally hanging over one's head.... A sense of foreboding.

during the investigation, saw an uprising by educators as stated by the narrator who then spoke of the obviousness of the identity of the instigators and those being largely Mr Mkhize and Mrs Zulu. She goes further to say that they were, "positioning themselves for promotions as members of the school's management team", implying that they were preparing themselves for the imminent promotion vacancies, created because of the, 'three' educators being chased away. According to the narrator, the pre and post conflicts at the school appear to be very promotions driven and so once more, the damaging influence of raised expectation is felt at this institution.

A startling irony of the issue of promotions in this story is when the narrator later relays the successful promotion of one of the 'three' implicated educators from Head of Department to Deputy Principal at a neighbouring school. The irony is that her being chased away resulted in her upward mobility. Secondly, and more significantly is being promoted to a neighbouring school servicing the same community which gives rise to the authenticity of the earlier allegations against these teachers by learners and parents, since one would expect the neighbouring community to be aware of the allegations and therefore be negatively influenced in respect of these educators. Further, at the tail end of the story is the news of the male Deputy Principal, the very one who was said to be a rigid disciplinarian and a "racist", being promoted to Principal ship. Once again, the question of the authenticity of earlier allegations particularly in respect of racism, is raised. It is therefore not surprising at this stage when the narrator states her own anxiety at being the only one of the 'three' that has yet not been promoted.

The issue of racism continued to rear its ugly head once more at Parklane Secondary that is when the narrator stated her reluctance to conduct the cellular phone search and as stated by herself, "I told her I could not search the learners and also being in a senior class I could not lose time". She continued by saying, "I reluctantly requested to be accompanied by a male educator". She attributed her reluctance to losing teaching time, especially in a Grade 12 class, yet someone later accused her of being racist, in that she is alleged to have stated, 'not wanting to dirty her hands'. The issue of dirtying hands as stated by the narrator but as opposed by the learners to be that of racism will remain unproven by both sides yet in contrast the impact of it perceived or real was a certainty. The question to eradicate racism or notions of it must therefore remain in the South African public domain for a long time affording all, particularly young minds at the school

level, the opportunity and responsibility to fight the scourge that invariably opposes co-existence, integration and healthy Nation building.

For any meaningful change to occur in schools, structured or institutional and personal changes are critical (Richardson, 2007). However, Richardson goes on to state that whilst personal changes in attitude and behaviour are necessary they are not adequate to eliminate racism.

Eliminating racism would mean restructuring power relationships and creating new conditions for inter-personal inter-actions (Lee et al., 1998: p.6). In this context it becomes imperative for schools to examine and revisit the general ethos of their schools which is largely projected by its predominant policies of language, religion and culture. These must reflect and embrace the ethnic, cultural and religious differences of all they represent to encourage a sense of belonging and common identity. The question to eradicate racism or notions of it must therefore remain in the South African public domain affording all, particularly young minds at the school level, the opportunity and responsibility to fight the scourge that invariably opposes co-existence, integration and healthy Nation building.

6.6   Leadership: Comrade, Co-Worker, Confederate

It is proposed that although each of the four Principal leaders namely Williams of Ajanta Primary; Ben of Beachwood Secondary; Ngidi of Kashmir Primary and Jadoo of Parklane Secondary Schools adopted a different and peculiar leader-ship style, the sameness and similarities in some of their practices as school managers provides an over-view of their identities and professional conduct, for example that of self-absorption and misplaced confidence as is evidenced in the case of Mr Williams of Ajanta Primary, similar to that of Mr Ngidi of Kashmir Primary. On the other hand, Mr Jadoo of Parklane Secondary appeared to be indecisive and largely dependent on his Deputy Principals whilst Mr Ben of Beachwood Secondary although having followed processes and procedures rigidly ironically remained facing constant conflict challenges, the rationale of which is examined by this chapter.

In interrogating each of the four selected narratives, namely Beachwood Secondary, Parklane Secondary, Ajanta Primary and Kashmir Primary with specific focus on the fertility of conflicts

into chronicity, the strong presence of leadership as a theme is unavoidable. The importance of strong and competent leadership and management for highly effective schools cannot be overemphasised and has of recent years become increasingly acknowledged and acclaimed. The advent of democracy in South Africa saw a rapid paradigm shift towards self-managing and self-reliant schools. Whilst many studies have debated that distinction between management and leadership, others have argued for the interchange ability of these two concepts, giving rise to global debate on this phenomenon and which shall continue. Despite the inability of researchers to reach consensus on this issue, most have favoured similar understanding of each of these concepts.

Bush (2010) has consistently argued that educational management is centrally concerned, "with the aims of education, it is directed at the achievements of certain educational objectives, agreed on by the relevant stakeholders. Similarly, John Kotter (1987), speaks of 'good management', which he says is responsible for order and consistency by," drawing up plans, designing organisational structures and monitoring results". This view is shared by Trewatha & Newport (1977: p.22), who define management as, "th3e process of planning, organising, actuating, and controlling an organisation's operations in order to achieve a co-ordination of human and material resources essential in the effective and efficient attainment of objectives". Management thus in pursuit of its objectives generally utilises the relevant persons as well as material resources and means to realise its educational goals.

6.6.1   Leadership styles

In aligning this general understanding of management at the school level with the practice of the various Heads of each of the four selected schools, it is quite apparent that in broad terms, each of them displays a relatively good understanding and implementation of effective management, however the same cannot be said of the leadership styles which shall be explored further.

The issue of leadership unlike management carries a strong element of influence which is purposeful and intended for specific outcomes, according to most researchers and is therefore subjective. According to Yukl (2010: p.4-5), 'the definition of leadership is arbitrary and very

subjective', based on its varying conceptualizations. In analysing the various leadership types in each of the four stories, it has been observed that the nature and manifestation of chronic conflicts in each of the narratives is a projection of the specific leadership style at the specific institution. Whilst there is a commonality of influence in these stories, that being of the manner of leadership, there are innate differences in the actual manifestation of conflicts and its subsequent maturity into chronicity which shall be revealed in this section. This is in keeping with Hersey and Blanchard's situational theory (1994), which assumes:

- people behave according to the different leadership styles
- people behave differently depending on contextual circumstances, consequently behaviour changes.
- an organisation functions best when it capitalises on the strengths and encourages their recognition.

6.6.2 Identities

Bearing credence to the above assumptions is the leadership practises of some of the Principals in the chosen stories. In the case of the Parklane Secondary Principal, Mr Jadoo there is repeated evidence of his conspicuous lack of managing his human resources, his indecisiveness and his dependency on members of his management team to take unpopular decisions. For example, the narrator repeatedly speaks of the Principal calling on the male Deputy Principal to discipline learners which made learners adopt an aversion for the male Deputy Principal to the extent where they called him a racist. Similarly, in the instance when the female Deputy Principal, Mrs Singh attempted to inform the Principal of the inappropriate search conducted by Mrs Jabu, he hurriedly silenced her, a clear indication of pushing the issue under the carpet. Likewise, his failure to take prompt action against Mr Mkhize about his poor service delivery, not only offered Mkhize a false sense of confidence but prompted him to continue in the same vain.

Oduro (2006: p.362) note that throughout Africa, there is no formal requirement for Principals to be trained as School managers. They go on to state that such individuals are appointed based on being skilful educators. Van der Westhuizen et al. (2003: p.1) reached a similar conclusion,

based on their research in the Mpumalanga province, "Many of these serving Principals lack basic management training prior to and after their entry into headship". In recent years this realisation has grown in intensity, largely because the role of Principal ship has extended to larger school's community and various other significant and prominent role players, e.g. the Unions. In the case of Parklane Secondary, the role of Unions and its prominent presence is strongly felt, at the same time highlighting the Principal's ineffectiveness in dealing with the Union. His own insecurities and intimidation is repeatedly articulated by the narrator.

The Department of Education's introduction of the Advanced Certificate of Education (ACE) as a pilot programme between 2007-2009 in six provinces was based on the realisation that whilst several school Principals held various university qualifications in management, their ability to apply such knowledge to their work environments was sadly lacking. A clear example of this is the Principal of Parklane Secondary who is highly academically qualified, a strong classroom practitioner, but glaringly lacks the required skills to effectively engage with and manage people. This is evidenced when the SGB visited school after the cell-phone issue and set up a hearing for the 'three' educators, informing the Principal that they wished to investigate the matter. The Principal failed to inform the SGB that this issue was a professional matter and outside their jurisdiction. Ironically it was the educators who refused to be subjected to this irregular practice, as stated by the narrator of immense importance is the statement by Mrs Singh, "The Principal appeared very reluctant to get involved. In my opinion, had he got in at that stage and played an active role in resolving the conflict, it would not have not have initiated the onset of what became chronic conflict at Parklane Secondary. Also, the problem would never had escalated to the level it did".

The narrator is holding the Principal largely responsible for the chronicity of conflict at Parklane Secondary. She reaffirms this when she repeatedly speaks of the Principal's lack of response when learners and parents marched them out of school, "Neither the Principal nor any other educator made any attempt to assist, many of whom had observed what was happening". Instead she stated that the Principal ask them to leave the school.

The Jadoo's leadership strength is again highlighted when Mrs Singh speaks of the ongoing conflicts between the two camps becoming "the order of the day", that is the camp of the harder working members of staff and the less committed ones, that being the Mkhize's, "anti-management group". She goes on to state that "complaining to the Principal did not help much since he was clearly intimated by Mkhize and Zulu". It was further established from the narrator that once when Shaik, the Head of Department requested the Principal to call in the Department's subject advisor for Mr Mkhize, the Principal kept offering excuses about the non-availability of the official which resulted in them working under continued stressful conditions. When occasionally one of the three of them would meet the Principal he would go to the extent of informing them, "how much better off we were for not being at Parklane Secondary and how the school had become a haven for individuals' ambitions and ongoing conflicts, suggesting that as the Head of the School, he seemed to have lost his locus of 'control and authority', which is legitimate power invested in him by virtue of his position as Principal, these being important requisites for effective leadership. According to Bush (1999), school heads have substantial authority by their formal leadership position.

I can therefore categorically state (on the basis of my own experiences of field work) that effective and efficient leadership are essential pre-requisites in the provision of quality teaching and learning. Whilst the concept of school management through teams, i.e. the School Management Team (SMT) was entrenched and formalized post democracy in 1994 that is with the restructuring and reorganising of the education system into a single, uniform system, it must be remembered that the Head of a school, i.e. the Principal remains the accounting officer and is singly accountable for all school activities. Whilst he or she may not be solely responsible for the leadership and management of the school but he or she remains singly accountable. Although transformational leadership (Avoliv and Bass, 2004) still appeared to be supporting the power of the individual against that of the many, the post – transformational approach emphasises teamwork and participation. One of the most prominent of these types of approach is that of distributed leadership (MacBeath, 2005; Bauer & Bogotch, 2006). However, based on my own experiences, I've observed that distributed leadership works best in schools where there is mutual respect, trust and a willingness to put the interests of the school before that of the

individual, where there is successful teamwork and co-operation, the glaring absence of which is at Parklane Secondary.

In contrast to the leaderships style of Mr Jadoo of Parklane Secondary which is boldly submissive and non-confrontational is that of Mr Ngidi, Principal of Kashmir Primary who from the onset of his narration brazenly states that he is a 'no-nonsense' leader. In the first line of the second paragraph of his narration, Mr Ngidi gives a very clear and unambiguous insight into his own leadership style when he states, "coming from a conservative community and being a stickler for rules, I wanted to get on with my job and so after approximately two months I did not hide my impatience". His use of the word 'conservative' immediately indicate his own biasedness and inflexibility, thereby reaffirming as stated by himself his rigidness for rules as well as his lack of tolerance as stated by him. Mr Ngidi also gives insight into the existing poor operational practises at school when he says, "staff enjoyed having staff meetings during school time, and would get restless if these continued in the afternoon", as implying a clear distinction between his expectations as the new Principal and that of the old Principal.

It became apparent that the Principal of Kashmir Primary resorted to a form of coercive power and control, in his leadership style to evoke compliance by his members of staff. This implies the ability to enforce compliance by the threat of sanctions according to Bush (1999). "Coercive power rests on the ability to constrain, to block, to interfere or to punish" (Bolman, 1990: p.196). Bush states that in certain circumstances coercion may be used in the conjunction with the control of rewards to manipulate the behaviour of others. This 'carrot and stick' combination he states may have a powerful double effect on staff and maybe a latent factor in schools and as was the case at Kashmir Primary. This type of leadership influence is viewed by some as manipulative, "where it is a conscious attempt, covertly, to influence events through means or ends which are not made explicit; or where it is illegitimate, whether overt or not" (Walby, 2003).

The Principal, Mr Ngidi of Kashmir Primary throughout his narration displays immense pride in his own management experience, his assumed high levels of competence and excellence in his work performance as a leader and manager. He often sets himself apart from the rest of the staff

and sometimes appears to be boastful of his assumed expertise. He often comes across as being aloof and sometimes high-handed, this is illustrated at the very onset of his narration, second paragraph when he stated," I did not hide my impatience", and again in the fourth paragraph, when he discusses the examination programme and indicates that, he will not allow for any excuse by teachers. Another instance of this high-handed, rigid authoritarian style of leadership is seen when the Principal says that Blose and her supporting colleagues didn't realise that he, "was a stickler for rules and nobody was going to force me into retirement or resignation. I had a job to do and was going to do it at any cost". The Principal repeatedly gives insight into his, finality of decisions, his lack of tolerance for the opinions and views of others especially once a decision has been made or an instruction issued by himself.

Later in the story of Kashmir Primary, Mr Ngidi speaks of the uproar that ensued after he informed staff that he was aware that much of the issues were, "stemming from inside", his response to their reaction affirms his high-handed style by issuing both an instruction and a threat. Threat by informing staff that he was going to report to the Department of Education. Even in the final paragraph of Mr Ngidi, the Principal's narration he enhances the reader's knowledge of his, 'quick-fix', non-consultative approach to resolving conflicts at Kashmir Primary. This is indicative when he states that at a staff meeting on 16 May 2013, he suggested that, "unhappy teachers should consider a change in environment as their unhappiness was spreading and affecting the ethos of the school". Exasperating the situation is the Principal's accusation of holding certain staff members responsible for the unhappiness of others. It is not surprising therefore that the site members hasten to accuse the Principal of wanting to, "get rid of certain staff members".

Ironically in both these scenarios that is of Parklane Secondary and Kashmir Primary where each of these Principals adopt an almost opposing and divergent leadership style that is, Mr Jadoo of Parklane Secondary with his submissive, avoidance and non-confrontational style to Mr Ngidi of Kashmir Primary with his authoritarian, coercive and confrontational style, the ultimate consequence at both these institutions is their stark sameness that is in unrest and protest action by learners, educators and the community. Whilst at Kashmir Primary it was less severe and of a shorter duration as compared to Parklane Secondary, both schools were ultimately disrupted in

respect of their functionality, and general service delivery of teaching and learning, that being the core business of education.

In examining the leadership style of the Principal, Mr Gerald Williams of Ajanta Primary, one is immediately presented with an initial confident, somewhat arrogant individual who presents himself at the school with a "preconceived knowledge of the problems at the school", as stated by him and a repertoire of quick-fix solutions based on his vast educational management and development experiences, his professional qualifications and his Union involvement, all of which he indicated equipped him with the necessary skills to, "address and handle challenges". His narration abounds in assumptions and as again established when he assumes that his rapid consecutive promotions within three years prepared him to "handle most challenges". Here again is the assumption that the acquisition of relevant knowledge is a panacea to problem solving. Whilst this assumption might have been useful in providing some sort of basis for action and assisting in creating the, "what if" scenarios to project possible realities, assumptions can be dangerous when accepted as realities. Generally, qualitative inquiry believes that reality is subjective and that social environments are personal constructs created by individual interpretations that are not generalizable (Gall et al., 2007).

Another prominent feature of Williams's leadership style is that of interrogation, interrogation of documents and records, particularly those of the past that were created prior to his arrival. Interrogation is an important concept that finds prominence in Mr William's narration. For all intent and general purpose, interrogation is a practice commonly used by officers of any police force. A common dictionary definition would lead one to the notion that, an interrogation is an intense questioning session usually with suspects of one or the other sort. In the fourth paragraph of Mr William's narration, he speaks of his initial modus operandi as the new Principal of Ajanta Primary, whereby he states, "So in taking this school forward, I needed to have some knowledge of the history of the school's level of education. So, I began to question and interrogate some of the records that were available". He further states that as Principal, he began experiencing a lack of trust in key individuals". The question then is, would such individuals not have realised what the Principal was embarking on considering his probing and interrogation and would their mistrust not be resonance in his manner of operations. He further stated that the mistrust that he

was experiencing, (line 12, paragraph 4) "were not very clear in other words, I had to read between the lines and assess actions and reactions of staff", clearly a fertile ground for suspicion, mistrust and dangerous assumption. Will this then not justifiably, "shoot down" Principal's consequential programmes.

As a new Principal, Mr William ought to have been more cautious against drawing premature conclusions regarding both specific individuals and situations. It was imperative that any analysis or conclusion be consistent with all available data of his own experiences rather that rely solely on that of his predecessors or records as has been the case with him.

6.7   Conclusion

This chapter introduces the reader to the emerging themes of this study. The theme of process and procedures or lack thereof appears to give rise to much of the conflict around this issue of school-based promotions, a common experience at three of the selected schools. This is largely due to the successful candidate being an 'outside' promotee and the subsequent dissension at these schools which was precipitated largely by unsuccessful, internal candidates.

A second sub-theme of processes and procedures, that is the issue of work ethics or again the absence thereof is another root cause of constant conflict amongst educators of high work ethics and those of less so. The process of searching learners for cellular phones at Parklane Secondary projects an invasion of privacy and basic human rights, again highlighting the notion of search and seizure procedures as a further sub-theme of processes and procedures.

In arguing the abolishment of corporal punishment at schools through legal and constitutional prescripts, findings denote its strong presence at several institutions. Beachwood Secondary is a distressing example of this as another major theme that is of Corporal Punishment.

Poor communication at various levels within the schools as well as with significant stakeholders, including the Department of Education emerges as an important theme. The inadequate or unsatisfactory manner of dealing with school correspondence timeously as narrated appears to

give credence to the endurance and prolonged conflicts as is observed at all four of the selected schools.

The search and seizure process at Parklane Secondary appears to give rise to the fourth and important theme of racism or perceived racism, at this institution. Emerging from a very segregated and discriminatory past issues of racism or allegations thereof within the South African context is generally acceptable as the truth initially and which as seen at Parklane Secondary avalanches into dissension and conflict, ongoing crisis and ultimate chronicity. Similarly, the arising theme of gender plays an influential role conflicts at Beachwood Secondary and Kashmir Primary. Emanating from this major theme is the sub-theme of power relations, typically at Ajanta Primary which extends itself to embrace the issue of power- relations, a sub-theme which makes its strong presence felt at all schools.

The ultimate theme is that of leadership, attributing the presence, severity and persistence of conflicts at school to the leadership style of the School Principal.

In the narratives of Ajanta Primary, Beachwood Secondary and Parklane Secondary given in this thesis, the conflicts primarily arose out the promotion's issue, specifically about 'outside' promotees. In view of this, I would recommend an overhaul of the entire process, beginning with researching the entire status quo of school-based promotion processes, from advertising to appointment date. Secondly, the role of the School Governing Body in this respect must in terms of legislation be aligned should there be a deviation from prescribed policy. Thirdly, whatever the revised policy is, the responsibility panel should be fully represented by all relevant stakeholders, including a member of an independent structure and [10]ombudsman.

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[10]A Government Official appointed to investigate individuals' complaints against a company or organisation especially a public authority.

Chapter 7: Reflections –

A journey of revelations and learning

7.1 Introduction

At the very onset of this study, as Carroll's (1998) bespectacled, White Rabbit, I did not know where to begin and seized the advice of His Majesty, the King to begin at the beginning. As I approach the end of this thesis, I once again look to the King who indicated that the rabbit should go on until the end, only this time, I wear an uneasy crown of not knowing what may-be deemed the end. Unlike the White Rabbit, in dealing with experiences of daily living, occurrences such as conflict must be acknowledged as an integral and pervasive part of life.

In writing this thesis, I reflect upon the thirty-eight years of my professional life in the education fraternity, my trajectory from a student to an Official of the Department of Education, that being a Superintendent of Education (Management). As an Official, a supervisor, my journey embeds itself in a sea of conflicts from trivial to persistent and of enduring and recurring duration. To understand the dynamics of such continuous and unwavering conflicts at schools, a reflection of my journey of life from childhood to adulthood became inevitable Hence the use of reflexive narrative and autoethnography in exploring the nature and manifestation of 'chronic conflict' in schools.

In adopting this autoethnographic approach I was able to enlist a systematic self-analysis in exploring my own life story from childhood within the social cultural and historically context in which it occurred, contiguous to those of my colleagues, the participants of my study.   This reflective process not only deepened my insight and understanding of the chronicity of conflict but also served as a compass as I engaged with schools in such issues of conflict.

This ultimate chapter of my study comprises of a compendium of my thesis, my journey through a self -study approach of my personal and professional experiences as indicated in understanding the phenomenon and the dynamics of the chronicity of conflict as it comes to bear on schools. The challenge of using self-study as a deliberate and appropriate research course initially stalled me for a while in that I came to understand through Vygotsky (1978) and other later researchers that in adopting this approach much of one's personal history becomes exposed. This posed a dilemma for a short while.

However, through increased reading on self-study as an appropriate vehicle to deepen my understanding; improve my practice and sharpened my insight into my very own identity is what lured me into accepting and embarking on a reflective voyage. Walby (2003: p.307) wrote that self-study allows practitioners to engage in enquiry that contributes to their own capacity for expert and caring professional practice whilst also contributing to the growth of their professions. Because of my deep self- reflection, I found myself in a better position to understand conflicts particularly those of a persistent and recurring nature and which ultimately manifested into chronicity.

At this juncture it is necessary to make known that I oscillated amongst the various research methodologies desperately searching for that which most suited my personal experiences and those of my professional life.   Hence the destination of self-study was only arrived at through quandary and conundrum and via in-depth readings of conflict in general. It is also worth mentioning yet again that my first encounter of a philosophical notion of conflict emerged from my readings of a text from my personal library on the history of the Israeli-Palestine conflict and which dated as early as 1949 as discussed in Chapter 2. The ensuing conflict between the Jews and Arabs positioned over initially attaining sovereignty for their people respectively continued

for decades. Whilst these conflicts might have over specific periods of time temporarily simmered through the interventions of various countries, negotiations or peace treaties, they were never conclusively resolved.

Similar readings indicated that most conflicts particularly across States and various territories seldom achieve finality in their resolutions. A deeper historical probe and coming closer home was the enormous reality that conflict had become a way of life, both pre and post South Africa's democracy which then drew me to reflect on my Dad's early literature on the country's painful history. Probing his literature was a deliberate and concerted effort to understand possible commonalities of conflict within the different contexts, despite knowing his forbiddance of such meddling. In the literature review chapter, Chapter 2, I present in detail the view by numerous researches and studies that conflict as part of human existence and not necessarily negative. For example, Jordaan (2012) asserts that "conflict is an inevitable and potential valuable part of human existence. Yet most of us are ill – equipped to deal constructively with differences, whether in the personally, political of organisational context"
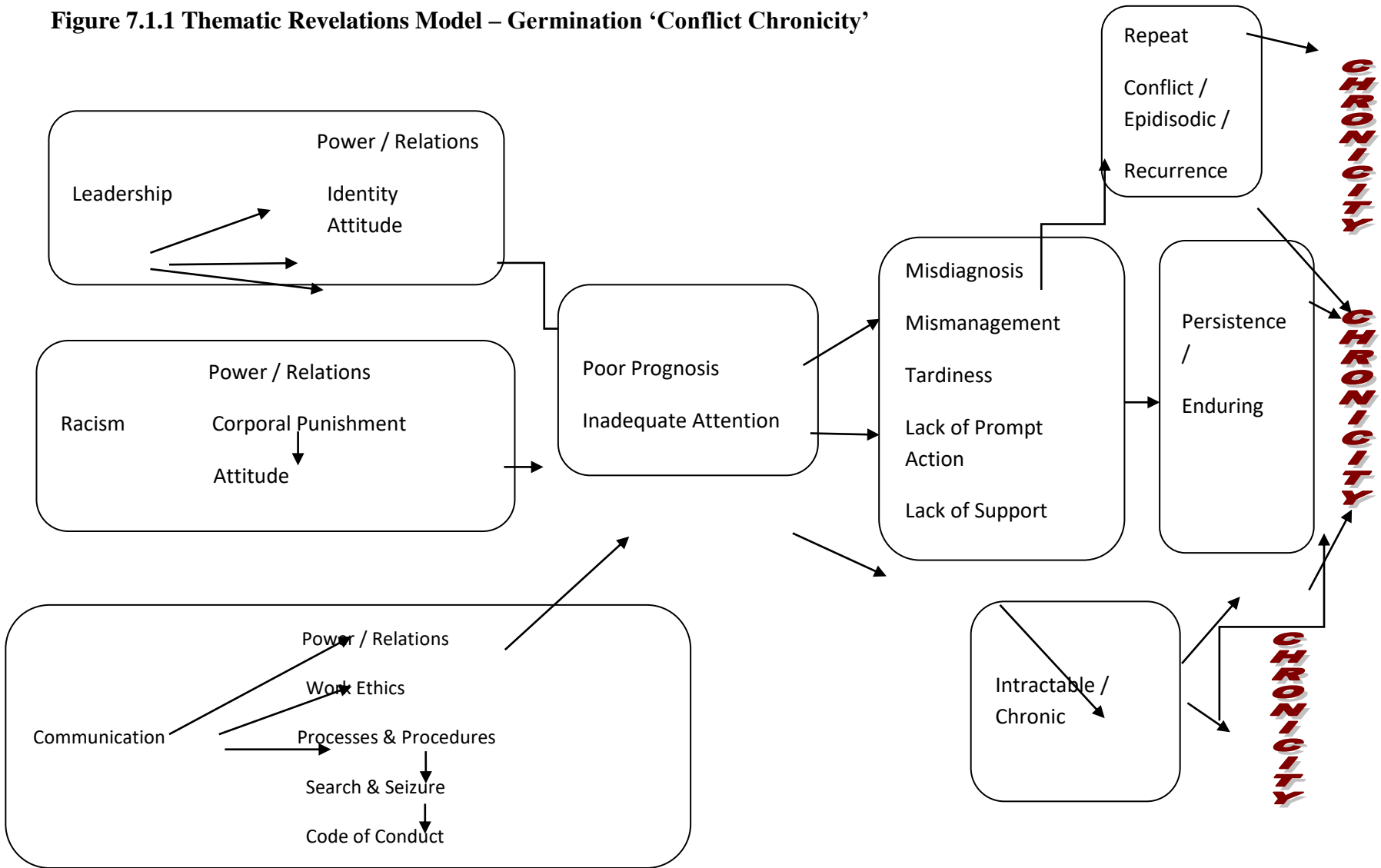
As indicated earlier in the study, during my professional experiences, I have constantly observed schools that repeatedly and persistently experience conflict which unattended or poorly managed transformed from simple to complex situations, increasing both in intensity and duration and which have come to bear negatively on the general functionality of the institution. Hence it seemed appropriate to draw on the medical term chronic as an analogy that I felt befits the description of the type of school conflicts that I dealt with regularly.

Stedman (2005) uses the term "chronic" to describe a persistent disease, or illness, prolonged or long term (sometimes also of low intensity). Stedman refers to 'chronic disease' of long duration whilst 'chronic care' refers to care provided for long term health problems. Such illness generally requires constant and on-going care and position themselves in a vicious cycle of, 'bubbling over 'as treatment, remission and relapse, as mentioned early. Correspondingly at the school level, my experiences have revealed that daily short-term interventions provide temporary reprieve to the parties in the conflict and they likewise slip into a state of 'chronic care' when not managed effectively. Further a lack of prompt action or intervention allows the conflict like and

ailment, abscess or tumour to fester, contaminating the surrounding areas and mastasizing into cancer. Similarly, at the school level, as indicated in the narratives, other staff members become afflicted when conflicts are not promptly intercepted or intervened on.

I use the following model to give credence to my assertion of the consequence of delayed or inappropriate intervention into conflict and the resultant of the germination of chronicity of conflict.

Figure 7.1.1 Thematic Revelations Model – Germination 'Conflict Chronicity'

Power / Relations

Leadership   Identity
                    Attitude

Power / Relations

Racism   Corporal Punishment

          Attitude

Poor Prognosis

Inadequate Attention

Power / Relations

Work Ethics

Communication   Processes & Procedures

          Search & Seizure

          Code of Conduct

Misdiagnosis

Mismanagement

Tardiness

Lack of Prompt Action

Lack of Support

Repeat

Conflict / Epidisodic / Recurrence

Persistence / Enduring

Intractable / Chronic

CHRONICITY

CHRONICITY

CHRONICITY

Apart from the rationale of using this medical parallel which has been explained in detail in Chapter 1 of this study, I have been further cajoled by the article written by the Medical Director of Yale University (Rolland, 1987) whereby he states that in instances of physical illness, particularly chronic disease, "the focus of concern is the system created by the interaction of a disease with an individual, family or other biopsycho-social system". "He goes on to emphasize the importance of understanding the interconnectedness of the three evolving aspects that is the illness, individual and the family life. Likening this to the school situation, the illness would be represented by the conflict, the individual, the main person or perpetrator perpetrators of the conflict and the family to the school.

Drawing on Roland's conceptual framework of chronic illnesses where he indicates that chronic diseases can assume three general forms which are progressive, constant or relapsing/episodic, this likeness of chronicity at the level of the school can be compared to those conflicts that increase in intensity/complexity, those that remain entrenched and those that simmer but recur at regular intervals, respectively. Strain on the family system, he states is due to the frequency of transitions between the crisis and non-crisis as well as the apprehension about recurrence. Correspondingly the school as the family experiences a similar dilemma which ultimately impacts on the entire organisation's effective functioning. This ineffectual status of the school can be compared to Rolland's incapacitation experienced by the patient and the strain of which comes to bear on the family.

Just as the typology of illness and time phrases are important concepts in the family's evaluation of the situation as alluded by him, so too are the types of conflict, their frequency and duration at school level. A parallel can be further drawn by his emphasis of the varying way a family responds to different illnesses to that of a school responding differently to conflicts. Noting such facts will likewise attract attention to the schools' strength and challenges in managing or coping with conflicts which then brings me to the reality of schools with conflict and those with chronic conflict, an emerging notion of leadership and conflict management in the context of this study.

In this last chapter, I examine the data through the lenses of mainly Complex theory and Conflict theory. There are several theories that enable us to acquire an understanding of conflict

chronicity and whilst certain scholars may just use one or two theories, I find that the theories that I use provides a deeper understanding and insight into the phenomenon of conflict and more specifically conflict chronicity. Given its trans-disciplinary nature, Complex theory allows for the collaborative use of other theoretical frameworks and others which are aligned and in pursuit of a deeper insight into conflicts. Hence in so doing I use the salient features of theories such as, Attribution; Equity; Field; Interactionist; Social theory (SET); Phas; Systems and Transformation theories. Thus in-order to understand the various theories about the causes of conflict in relation to education, I deemed it necessary in Chapter 3 to summarize the essence of some of the more prominent theories.

These theories I found align themselves to the emerging characteristics of ongoing conflicts at the selected schools.

According to **Complex** theory, which is trans-disciplinary nature changes in any system are non-linear, unpredictable and the product of complex processes and multi-systems which makes it necessary for strategic development and appropriate intervention. My data therefore supports the assumptions of conflict theory as is evidenced in the unfolding of conflicts between various individuals at each of the schools.

However Complex theory does not explain nor is it able to account for subtle differences in the way people culturally react to each other as the data reveals in the initial instance of conflict around the cellular phone issue at Parklane Secondary. It also harkens to the idea the parties involved in the conflict reveal that the escalating consequences are because of not heeding to such cultural and diverse differences.

In considering the following predominant features of Complex theory as drawn from the studies of Hendrick (2009) and Davis (2004), one is reminded of the degrees of variations amongst individuals and situations as revealed by this study:

Self-Organisation: – Is an accepted central figure of a complex situation. Whilst Maturana and Francisco (1980) on biological systems explains that each part within the internal processes of a

complex system produces transformation of another through which the entire system is transformed. This view is shared by others who states that self-organisation is in a constant state of satisfying mutual needs and organise themselves such. This contrasts with the school systems as indicated by the data whereby there is a general expectation of explicit instructions all the time. However, unlike biological systems which have a more stable system of operations, the laws that govern human interaction as revealed in this study is very diverse and in a constant state of flux, often influenced by the position that the respective parties assume, whether subjectivist or objectivist (Jacoby, 2013). Hence as an open system, such systems often adjust itself in accordance with the prevailing conflict situations.

Emergence: - A second characteristic of a conflict system is that of Emergence as explained by Mittleton-Kelly (2003) as resultant properties or attributes emanating from the interaction of individual components often resulting in a larger entity or a new order which is boldly reflected in the narratives. An example of this would be the issue of learners in the position of cellular phones at Parklane Secondary, which began as a, 'Search and Seizure' matter but through the interaction of various individual components resulted in a build-up of ongoing and serious chronic conflict, finally being labelled as, 'Racism'.

Non-linearity: - Which is a predominant characteristic of Complex theory and a profound feature of this study as revealed by the data is unlike conventional science which suggests that outputs of a system are not necessarily proportional to the inputs. In the chapter on theory, I spoke of the linear system as being an independent system, however the data reveals that conflicts emerge in a non-linear way. Non-linearity is a highly dynamic system within a conflict system and is very congruent with that which the data reveals. Each of the narratives indicate how small perturbations results in serious ramifications with catastrophic consequence, for example the issues of learners with cellular phones at Parklane Secondary rolled into allegations of discrimination and racism rendering the school dysfunctional.

Similarly, the data reveals that within a conflict system, relationships are non-linear, where they are interdependent. Hence a conflict affecting one or two staff members encroaches on others as is seen as Beachwood Secondary and other schools wherein Styles's repeated misdemeanours

and his administering of corporal punishment results in strange relationships with educators, Mr MA; Ms SP; Principal Ben and other members of management. This ultimately divided staff and encouraged the formation of camps and cliques, as is also seen at Kashmir Primary.

Davis's butterfly effect (2004) appears to engulf such situations of conflict at these schools whereby an issue of cellular schools at Parklane Secondary or promotions as seen at Ajanta Primary and others continue to spiral into increased and persistent conflict situations ultimately germinating or magnifying into conflict chronicity.

Attractors: - The feature of Attractors is another befitting characteristic of conflicts as revealed in the data. However, in contrast to the conventional understanding of 'Attractors', which is the variable that pulls, and influences change in a system with its adaptation and ultimate settling down within complex systems as in the case of the schools which are open systems, such attractors can become 'Strange' Attractors (Rickles et al., 2007). This implies that 'Strange' Attractors are not always in a stable state, neither do they produce predicable behaviour. Further, studies reveal as already indicated in Chapter 2 that if the prevailing attractor is too strong, change will not occur. This is also revealed by the data in the conduct of Styles of Beachwood Secondary whose fixed thinking and emotions are so deep that he repeatedly produces the same behaviour patterns, resulting in disruptive staff relationships and a continued perpetuation of conflictive behaviour developing into conflict chronicity. Such behaviour as projected by the data lends itself to what the literature calls, 'Intractable' conflicts, implying that they cannot be withdrawn or are indomitable.

Conflicts range from mild disagreements to violent hatred and intolerance since it is closely associated with human feelings, which include being ignored, being neglected, unappreciated and sometime abandoned. These feelings often lead to bitterness, frustration and often anger, resulting in varying consequences which may include affecting the person's carrying out of tasks and duties. Such situations may reduce the productivity of the organisation whereby such individuals may repeatedly make mistakes, intentionally because of unhappiness or unintentionally by being preoccupied with the existing conflict. As is clearly illustrated in all the narratives.

In my experience with schools as organizations, it is often likely that conflict may arise through changes in technology, systems and structures, workloads, cultural differences and value systems, professional jealousy and varying personalities. Van Schaik (2004) avers that conflict can be avoided by interdependence or cooperation amongst the various parties or individuals, in terms of decision making, and sharing of resources and facilities. However, it is common knowledge that people are different and as such have diverse styles, tastes and opinions undermine consensus, thereby producing conflict.

Given the persistence of conflicts at the level of the schools, conflicts that otherwise managed might have reduced in intensity or diminished but instead persisted, prolonged and recurred, ultimately mastasizing into a cancerous state of chronicity. I thus deemed it necessary to shift my focus from a conservative, traditional skills of planning, organising, directing and controlling and in keeping with the demands and sophistication of the 21st century. Shenton (2004) refers to this as the, 'Quantum Skills Approach', derived from quantum physics. Contemporary research suggests that human beings are indeed quantum beings (Shenton, 2004). In the same vein, Daft & Lengel (2000) suggests as already indicated that it is wise for both Managers and Employees to bring the whole persons that is body, mind and spirit to work. This current or extant approach offered a novel and distinctive set of management skills more congruous to changing conflict-ridden organisations such as schools as is elucidated by the data, hence my advocacy of the Quantum Skills Approach which necessitates the acquisition of the following skills:

My use of the Quantum Skills Approach is from a management point of view since my thesis is written from a management perspective.

Quantum seeing: - This skill necessitates the awareness of perceptions based on internal assumptions and beliefs. Therefore, becomes incumbent on leaders to consider the pervading subjective nature of external reality and its impact on conflict. Data reveals that it is necessary for parties to recognise the relationship between thoughts, processes and perceptions to effectively resolve conflictive situations. A clear example of this as revealed by the data is the notion of racism versus perceived racism at Parklane Secondary which manifested in chronic conflicts at the school.

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Quantum thinking: - The data reveals a clear alignment to the Quantum thinking approach which calls from a shift from logical, linear thinking skills as indicated earlier. Shenton (2004) indicates that 'win-win' solutions require paradoxical thinking and the various power relationship issues as stipulated in the narratives, for example between Principal and school clerk at Ajanta Primary amongst others evidences this in the attempts towards effective conflict management.

Quantum feeling: - This skill as discussed earlier requires the ability of feeling alive. Managers or school leaders of the 21st century, particularly at the level of schools need to be skilled to view negative events positively as studies show. This skill would have necessitated the selected managers, of Ajanta Primary to have built positively on the relationship with the school clerk in contrast to constantly adopting a defensive approach which exacerbated each conflict and gave rise to the chronicity of conflict.

Quantum knowing: - Another necessary skill of Quantum approach which involves the ability to know intuitively and which requires school managers to be fully aware of their school environment. This would necessitate them to be able to integrate relaxation and reflection times into their daily routines allowing for a centred approach to negative emotions of repeated conflicts within their school environments. This would take the edge of the conflicts at school and possibly diminish the potentiality of conflict chronicity. An adaptation and application of this skill within, for example the Parklane or the Beachwood environments would probably have assisted in the alleged race issue at the former and corporal punishment issue at the latter schools.

Quantum acting: - A necessary skill for principals to act responsibly and as such to encourage positive behaviour for emulation by employees. This thinking is built on the premise that everything within the school system is part of the school as an organisation and influences each other. Hence in consideration of the power struggle relationships of, for example the Principals of Kashmir and Ajanta, this skill would possibly have reduced or tempered their pursuits of positional power which only aggravated the ongoing school conflicts as evidenced by the data, thereby diminishing the possibility of conflict chronicity.

Quantum believing:- This skill of the Quantum approach which takes its routes from the chaos theory as indicated earlier, suggests that without chaos, organisations will stagnate whilst I share this view of positive thinking and dynamism my data subscribes to such thinking with certain reservations in the 'chaos' has to be managed with appropriate intervention, the absence of which could result in the schools being submerged in a rapidly filling pool of conflict as has been the case at all four selected schools.

Quantum being: - This skill requires of the managers or leaders to be in relationships specifically or as Shenton (2004) indicates to be so connected to each other that they view the world through the other's eyes. This approach allows parties to understand and learn from each other and which if implemented fully would call for mutual respect, the glaring absence was felt by the participants of this research, as evidenced in the narratives. The obsession of power and position appeared to have blinded the leaders of, for example Kashmir and Ajanta Primary Schools which led to the cancerous consequences of the conflicts experienced at their schools respectively.

This Quantum skills unconventional approach is grounded in a divergent world view and provides an alternative approach to manage people (Shenton, 2004). It also encourages courage and innovation in relation to a changing world given the experiences which persist of conflicts which persist at schools and the ensuing chronicity of conflicts I share the view and observe that a sharp focus on interpersonal relationships is necessary in managing conflictive behaviour.

As I position myself towards the virtual conclusion of this study, my understanding and insight into the phenomenon of 'chronic conflict' is not only deeper and esoteric but, also as an autoethnographer afforded me the opportunity of indulgence into my personal history. It also allows me to reflect on what Starr (2010) says of autoethnography which is "where the individual's study of one's self within a culture replaces the researcher as observer stance present in more traditional ethnographic forms" (p.4), a research method which granted are the licence to include my views, opinions and experiences as integral to this thesis. Being in a favourable position of 'insider', provides me the opportunity to present intricate or "thick description" of schools' experience of conflict, I "thick" description as described by Ponterotto (2006). This

view is advocated by Kleinknecht (2007) who explains that "the auto-ethnographer's intimate knowledge of the cultural and social setting in which he/she is situated can help the audience to understand human group life through the lens of one individual's experience" (p.243). I am fully aware of my predisposition through his method to exposure and vulnerability but accepting of the fact that it may also be a fountainhead or determinant of growth and development.

7.3 The emergence of common themes in school based "chronic conflict"

A qualitative and rigorous analysis of the four narratives as presented by the four participants revealed specific themes, some of which appeared to be common and highly prominent across most of these schools, providing a deeper understanding in exploring the dynamics of the phenomenon. A fundamental task of qualitative research is to identify emerging themes which studies indicate can be both mysterious and a challenge. However, in discovering or identifying the themes of this study through a qualitative analysis of the four narratives, important, overlapping and commonality of prevailing issues which were elaborated on were highlighted. Studies indicate that there are no precise descriptions of theme identification, although some techniques are shared by some social scientists; hence there was no single technique or ready recipe for theme identification.

In this study, I have attempted to group themes into the most prominent followed by other less eminent ones as sub-themes. I further explained how the notion of these themes have impacted on the self or invaded the self, which is the chronic self as conceptualised in this study.

7.3.1 Processes and Procedures

In the preceding chapter, I have indicated this to be a prominent theme emerging from all four of the narratives. So strong is its presence or lack thereof that many subsequent themes have arisen as a result thereof and which has been explained. Urgo (2012) states that a processes and procedures content development process is essential for organisations to effectively participate in their daily operations or work practices. It is quite apparent that these selected schools do not

have a clearly defined process and procedures system resulting in blurred lines of roles and responsibilities as is depicted in the following off-shoot or sub-theme.

7.3.2 School Based Promotions – Advertising and Filling of Posts

This emergent theme is discussed as a process in detail in the preceding chapter. However, a striking feature of this process in three of the selected schools that appear to give rise to much of the ensuing and enduring conflicts at these schools is that of the external incumbent or an, "outside promotee". One may argue that a clearly stipulated procedures manual is offered by the Department of Education for rigid implementation. However, from observation, experiences and largely the narratives of the participants, one can garner the inherent resistance and reluctance to accept a successful, external incumbent, largely due to raised expectations of internal candidates who occupy such promotion posts in an acting capacity. Upon reflection, one can question, the supposedly water tight process offered by the Department of Education as published in its advertised, promotions bulletin, glaringly depicting a conspicuous absence of the issue of acting personnel. It also highlights another glaring gap in respect of the promotions process and that is the readiness and appropriateness of Governing Body members to execute such a significant task. The issue of skilling or training them also comes to the fore, as is highlighted by the considerable number of arising disputes by aggrieved candidates as indicated by the narrators.

7.3.3 Communication

In utilizing a model of a Thematic revelations (Figure 7.1.1), it becomes abundantly apparent that the core issue of communication transcends all the sub-themes of power relations; work ethics; processes and procedures; search and seizure; code of conduct and promotion processes. The Model ultimately reveals that Communication cuts across all themes and sub-themes and is considered an essential tool for the development of effective and positive interaction amongst staff. As an imperative mechanism for sharing ideas, instructions and transmitting information, its role as indicated in the preceding chapter cannot be underestimated. Hence its presence or inadequate presence appears to be a key factor in contributing the chronicity of conflict as seen at

Kashmir Primary, Beachwood Secondary and the other schools. Not only what is said, but how it is said matters, according to Akubue (2011).

7.2　　In summary

In *Chapter One* I described the idea of conflict and delimit the context in which the research is located. I then discuss the rationale for my study which has been described in detail in *my Prologue.* Therefore, I provide an explanation of autoethnography as my main research frameworks. I use an autoethnographic stance which allows me to focus on my leadership practice reflexively, on the varied and continuous experiences of conflict at selected schools. This reflexivity as already indicated vacillates between the external conflict as observed, and the internal conflict as observer - in other words, as a central character in dealing with work conflict, I look at the conflict and try to understand what is occurring, and at the same time I stand apart from myself as an external observer and look at what I am thinking, and how I am viewing the conflict situation that is presenting itself before me. I clarify key concepts, explain the key questions which forms the bases of understanding the 'what', 'how' and 'why' of the phenomenon of this study, focusing on the dynamics of 'chronic conflict'. An annotated explanation of the generation of the data followed by an overview of the literature review to obtain the historical and definitional aspects of conflict by researchers in the field is subsequently presented. In conclusion the chapter provides an outline of the thesis.

In *Chapter Two,* I provided a discussion of 'chronic conflict'. The chapter begins by a reflection on the nature of global, national and local conflict in corporate contexts and at the level of the school. Conflict at the various levels of social interaction is discussed for introducing the reader to some important components of conflict at its dynamics. The idea or concept of conflict from my own experiences is also discussed. A wide range of conflict perspectives, models and theories are also provided in this chapter to understand why people indulge in conflictive behaviour.

In *Chapter Three*, I orientated the reader to the broad theoretical framework used in this study to understand the dynamics of 'chronic conflict' at the school level. This framework provides the

relevant conceptual tools to offer a deeper understanding and insight into the phenomenon of 'chronic conflict'. I further present important and influential theories such as the Complexity Theory which is used to underpin both my observations and analysis of conflict in my study. In this chapter, the main concepts of Complexity Theory and as well as the salient characteristics of other aligned theories are also described.

In *Chapter Four,* I engaged with the critical questions of the study that is, what is the nature of 'chronic conflict' at schools, of how does it manifest itself and why does it manifest in the way it does at the school level? I describe the research design and methodology used in the study and further provide a physical and historical description of each of the four selected schools for the study and the criteria used for selecting each of the schools. The research design also includes an elaborate, philosophical underpinning of the study. As a quantitative researcher, my study is underpinned by an interpretivist stance, thereby allowing me to explore the participants' perceptions of the world and experience, as well as permits my own autoethnographic stance.

In *Chapter Five*, I described the context of each of the selected schools and the stories of conflict in each one as narrated by the participants. The preceding chapters provide a review of the relevant research on conflict, the main theories explaining conflict as well as a description of the research methodology used. The narratives in this chapter apprise the reader of the unfolding of events at these schools that produced the chronicity of conflict. The stories are narrated by the Principals of Beachwood Secondary, Ajanta Primary and Kashmir Primary who are male while the story of Parklane Secondary is relayed by the Deputy Principal who is female. I thereafter present my interpretation of the situation which allows me to identity critical emerging themes form the relayed stories.

In *Chapter Six*, I orientated the reader to the various themes that emerge from the selected narratives of each of the institutions. It commences with the first and prominent theme of Processes and Procedures, a theme which largely embraces several other sub-themes, including the dominant issue of school-based promotions which appear to be the root cause of much dissension and conflicts at, at least three of the four selected schools. Another important theme of corporal punishment followed by Racism and Gender occupy significant dominance at some

of these schools. Outside these major themes, I further present other sub-themes which are less prevalent and conclude with a final conspicuous theme of Leadership at each of the schools which is argued to have a strong bearing on the management and administration of each of the four selected schools.

In *Chapter Seven*, I provided a landscape of all the chapters as they weave to provide an overview of enduring conflict trends at certain schools, projecting distinctive characteristics in the burgeoning and sometimes overlapping themes. The chapter commences by introducing a personal reflection that encapsulates my journey from childhood to adulthood and through to be an Official in the Department of Education. This trajectory sees my journey embedded in a sea of conflicts from trivial to persistence and recurrence which leads up to the phenomenon of 'chronic conflict' with an explanation and rationale of using a medical analogy. This medical metaphor is extended throughout the thesis with a parallel between the chronicity of disease to that of conflict, with special focus on inappropriate 'treatment' and management as is presented in the four narratives of this study.

The subsequent analysis of the four chronicles with its emerging themes also presents an ethical and moral dilemma for me as the researcher with an 'insider' advantage. The chapter ultimately draws from the insights and deep understanding I gain as an autoethnographer of the phenomenon of 'chronic conflict' and utilise these to identify strengths and challenges of leadership at the school level which could be strategically exploited to manage or cope with school conflict, thereby reducing or minimising potential 'chronic conflict'.

In engaging with the emerging data as presented by the participants of this study as narrators, a parade of prominent themes gripped by focus and which will be subsequently presented. This exudation of themes allowed me to interact vigorously with the data, focussing my attention on both my experiences as the researcher/investigator as well as the constitution of my very self in the dynamics of chronicity at schools. Autoethnography is generally understood as providing for the critical engagement of the self as it has been socially constructed, reconstructed and deconstructed (Hickey & Austin, 2007). Hence my own experiences (as explained in chapter 2), becomes a focal point offering me a new perspective, of the respective culture I find myself in

through a comprehensive view of all aspects of the research. Jones (2005) states that the personal autoethnographic text creates a specific, perspectival view of the world and where dialogue leads to catalytic change. This engagement created a space for me as researcher to interrogate my very own experiences based on memory work as well as a field worker, leading itself to a subsequent deeper understanding and increased awareness.

My experiences resonate in what Sparkes (2002: p.221) stated:

> This kind of writing can inform, awaken and disturb readers by illustrating their involvement in social processes about which they might not have been consciously aware. Once aware, individuals may find the consequences of their involvement (or lack of it) unacceptable and seek to change the situation. In such circumstances, the potential for individual and collective restorying is enhanced.

Autoethnography is further sharpened by a clearer understanding of the self, in both my past and present worlds, increased realization of the potential it offers for meaningful change and improvement as a practitioner. Autoethnographies typically "tend to communicate personal experiences and dialogues regarding oneself or one's interaction with others" (Gurvitch et al., 2008: p.249). This then jolted me into exploring my own identity, an almost inevitable consequence of autoethnography, having emerged through a process of deeper understanding and on-going interpretation of experiences of both the participants and my very own, past and present. I thus found deep solace in the study by Slattery (2012) who stated that, as identity changes, adjusts and questions itself to form meaning, it is viewed as contextual and adaptive, a creation of fluidity whose movement is based on the demands placed upon it. This fertile ground provided me the necessary space to effectively acknowledge the realistic demands of shaping my own identity, one that is congruent with the culture in which I found myself.

Concluding Thoughts

The essence of this study is captured and contextualised within the physical space of the four selected schools namely, Ajanta Primary; Beachwood Secondary, Kashmir Primary and Parklane Secondary, all of which whilst having significant differences such as plant size; learner

enrolment; demographics and socio-economic factors amongst others are in essence very similar. Their common denominators include constant and ongoing conflict emanating from power relationships amongst the various stakeholders as well as leadership and communication issues amongst others.

In writing this thesis and in consideration of my very role as an 'insider', I found it necessary to employ a reflexive autoethnographic approach, journeying through my very personal and later professional life which brought me in direct confrontation of constant school conflicts of varying degrees of intensity.

In attempting to gain a deeper insight into the phenomenon of 'chronic conflict', I set off on this retrospective journey of my own experiences which brought me to a destination of my very own conflicts. Ironically, at the onset of this research I was of the view that this study would unearth a reference of conducive and amicable approaches to understand and manage conflict. On the contrary, it unravelled the mystery of my very self, in that it reaffirmed as discussed in the introduction of this study, that the self and decision making are indeed inextricably woven. It allowed me to understand my own world view more clearly and to gain a clearer understanding of myself as a person with my own limitations, despite my professional role as a Superintendent of Education-Management.

The changing circumstances of conflict situations at the four schools in the prominent presence of numerous factors such as relationship and communication issues, school governing body as well as other matters revealed the need for a wider understanding and approach to conflicts, in particular 'chronic conflict'. Retrogressing into my adolescence revealed glaring differences between my older siblings and that of myself and my younger brother Sen, who was nurtured in a more contemporary period and who projected a more globalised and present day world view, a clear disconnect with my parents' and expectations. Similar projections are revealed at each of the four schools between the school leaders and those educators seemingly at the centre of the conflicts.

This research thus authenticates the notion that conflict ignored or not attended to promptly recurs and festers until it mastasizes into a dangerous and cancerous state, infecting other sectors which we distinctly see at the four schools, disrupting the effective functionality of the school.

In conclusion this excogitative understanding of conflict compelled me to gain a more insightful approach to my engagement with the schools' 'chronic conflicts'. Thus a significant finding was that of my own trajectory highlighting personal conflicts which also contributed to a clearer and deeper understanding of this phenomenon of 'chronic conflict'. Finally, the vehicle of self-study journeyed me inwardly, affording me the realisation for adjustment and improvement of my thinking and practice.

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