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**Narratives of Black Vice Chancellors on becoming and being leaders
of public universities in South Africa: contributory factors and
challenges experienced**

By

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A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of
Philosophy (Education), School of Education, College of Humanities

University of KwaZulu-Natal
South Africa

2020

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ETHICAL CLEARANCE NUMBER: HSS/0180/011D

ABSTRACT

South African universities have undergone significant transformation since the demise of apartheid and an important part of this transformation process is university leadership, both in who leads universities as well as the kinds of leaders who can drive the broader transformational changes needed within higher education. This study undertakes an examination of the narratives of black university Vice Chancellors with a view to exploring how they account for and make sense of their position, which they hold or have recently held. This study, more specifically, explores how they construct and make sense of their achievements in the South African higher education system, in relation to their professional, political, personal and historical influences on their journey to becoming VCs at universities in South Africa.

There is an abundance of literature on leadership in education, but little is known about university leaders, especially that of VCs. This study focuses on this dearth of knowledge on VCs, especially within a transforming context that requires large scale systemic, institutional and social redress changes. Current research on leadership does not only focus on the individual leader, but rather on the individual leader in relation to colleagues, followers and the leadership context (Avolio et al., 2009). The literature which informs this study looks at university VCs, bearing in mind that there is a dearth of rigorous academic research on this subject.

This study employs a qualitative research approach because it is steeped in personal and collective stories and histories of participants. Qualitative research is based on meanings, subjectivities and interpretations. As such, a narrative inquiry methodology was chosen as an appropriate research methodology for this study. Casey (1995) suggests that narrative inquiry provides an important space through which the experiences of those who are marginalised can be valued. In this study, participants create stories as they recount their experiences of being and becoming a university VC. The narrative inquiry methodology allowed me to understand the participants' perspective on becoming and being a black VC as they make sense of their trajectory across their biographical contexts, their academic and other achievements and their

experience of being black VCs within a transforming context. Interviews were conducted with 9 of the 17 black VCs. As a narrative inquiry, less interest was focused on breadth; and more on depth of experience and the rich thick constructions of meanings was deemed more appropriate for this study.

This study provides an analysis of critical influences that shaped the career paths of the black VCs and on being VCs of universities within a transforming context. The key findings relates to how their biographical beginnings influenced their trajectories into leaders of, initially, their disciplinary interests as academics, and later as possible candidates to lead public universities. The key findings also suggests that transformational opportunities contributed to their rise to university leaders. Being a leader of a university requires one to be agile, transformative and strategic. These key findings are relevant to aspirant VCs as well as institutions of higher education in their search for appropriate candidates to take on university leadership.

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis is my original work.

(Signature)

Imraan Buccus

As the candidate's supervisor, I have approved this thesis for submission.

(Signature)

Professor Prevanand (Labby) Ramrathan

DEDICATION

For Azeema, Nabihah and Samarah!

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I owe gratitude to my supervisor, Prof Labby Ramrathan. There is a great chance that I may not have maintained interest in this work had it not been for the elegance and clarity of his thoughts. There were times when I felt intellectually discouraged, but he offered encouragement and instilled confidence in me. For that, I remain grateful.

Thank you to Dr Nereshnee Govender for bearing with my tardiness and for so graciously agreeing to be my editor.

Thank you to Prof Deevia Bhana for offering invaluable advice and sustained guidance. I am thankful for her generous spirit, incisive intellect and useful comments at various points in the writing process.

This study would not have taken off without the help of Prof Cheryl Potgieter. She provided much needed direction in the early part of my doctoral work.

I also wish to record my deep gratitude to my family for their unconditional love and support during this arduous journey. My wife, Dr Azeema Khan, has been a pillar of strength – taking on the challenges that have come her way with resilience and firm commitment. She continues to be the central pivot in our family. I salute her. My daughter, Samarah's wit and joyful spirit lights up our home and my elder daughter Nabihah's perseverance, despite everything she endures, is inspiring.

I want to also place on record my deep gratitude to my late parents for instilling in me an intellectual appetite. My dad's obsession with reading the daily paper inspired me to read widely and to feel deeply – this lay the foundation for pursuing this ultimate degree. I remember my mother's constant prayer for my success and her resilience in a world where she endured multiple oppressions - race, class and gender. She would, no doubt, have been proud that I finally submitted my PhD.

I am indebted to my parents for preparing me to use my pen to counter injustice, to render powerless the inequalities that starkly divide, and to question alleged authority.

Finally, and most importantly, I thank my Creator for blessing me with the opportunity to complete a PhD. I remain inspired by the first words revealed in the Qur'an, 'Read in the name of your Lord....'

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ABBREVIATIONS

VC -	Vice Chancellor
HEI -	Higher Education Institution
HESA -	Higher Education South Africa
CHE -	Council on Higher Education
UCT -	University of Cape Town
UFS -	University of the Free State
UP -	University of Pretoria
WITS -	Witwatersrand
RU -	Rhodes University
OCB -	Organisational citizenship behaviour

CHAPTER ONE - PAVING THE WAY FOR THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

South African universities have undergone significant transformation since the demise of apartheid. Guiding the transformation of higher education since apartheid was the 1997 White Paper 3: A Programme for the Transformation of Higher Education, and the subsequent Higher Education Act that set the tone for a far-reaching and unprecedented change agenda for South African public higher education institutions. One such area of change has been the major overhaul in the academic leadership of universities across the country to address two important transformational issues. The first is the recognition that universities were lead mainly by white VCs and this demography needed to change. The second was the scope, scale and complexity of the system changes which included new management information, funding, planning, governance, quality assurance, reporting systems and the pressure to deliver on an expanded, more equitable and more responsive higher education system (CHE, 2016) meant that a new leadership perspective was needed to drive the required transformational changes.

In her forward to the book on reflections of South African university leaders, Badsha (2016) suggested that coupled with the scale and complexity to lead universities in South Africa against the expanding transformational needs and demands of an expanding system of higher education, weak leadership amongst vice-chancellors illuminated both the personal attributes of leadership as well as heavy demand of the office of a VC that brought deep and often seemingly perpetual crises at universities, some of which had to be put under administration. This means that there are both, issues of leadership as well as issues of leading a university that are becoming points of engagement to illuminate and understand the needs, challenges and expected competences for leading a university within a transforming society. This study, therefore, researches university leadership qualities and that of leading a university within the noted scale and complex domain of transformation unfolding within higher education through the lens of black VCs employed in public universities in South

Africa. This research scope will, therefore contribute to unfolding discourses and debates on university leadership for a transforming society. To this end, the intent of this study is to identify factors that influence leadership qualities in people that lead public universities. A further intent is to understand how university leaders have led public institutions within a transforming context and to draw from this understanding learnings that could be used to influence the next generation of black VCs for public universities in South Africa.

Noting the current context where the majority of public universities are led by black VCs, and that this was part of the transformational agenda of higher education in South Africa, a specific focus on this demographic profile of university leaders are being delimited in this study. To this end, this study explores, through the narratives of a sample of public university black VCs, their experiences of leading a South African public university during a time of unprecedented change to the higher education system. These experiences will provide a frame of references in developing competence amongst the black academic leaders who may aspire to become vice-chancellors of public universities.

This chapter, therefore, presents a background to the study that frames a problem statement related to the leadership challenges experienced by public universities black VCs. The chapter outlines the purpose statement and guiding research questions. A brief synopsis of the methodology used in generating the data is presented, followed by a chapter summation for each of the subsequent chapters of this thesis.

1.2 BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

There is a paucity of literature on VCs at universities in South Africa, whilst internationally there seems to be a hive of studies on VCs or university leaders. Hence, one of the intentions of this study is to contribute to the body of literature on VCs, more, specifically on leadership opportunities and issues related to black VCs leading a public university in South Africa. The most recent literature on university leadership in South Africa is one produced by the Council on Higher Education (2016) that presents a

reflective account by VCs and other university leaders occupying senior leadership position, on university leadership from 1981 to 2014 and which Badsha (2016) claims that there was “no neat script to work off, nor ‘manuals’ or prescripts of ‘good’ leadership or practice” (p 9) within the South African discourses to guide the practices of leading higher education in times of unprecedented change. Hence, another intent of this study is to provide insights into being a black VC of a public university in South Africa as part of a reference point for a “good” leader of a university in South Africa. This is unlike that of school leadership where there is an abundance of literature on leadership nationally and globally on an on-going basis. While this book on the reflections of VCs published by CHE (2016) focuses on their experiences and reflections on their leadership of public higher education institutions, probed through interviews, little is presented on who (the biographies) these VCs are and on how they have come to be VCs of public universities.

The “who” aspect of becoming and being a VC is significant and speaks to issues of personal and professional identities as well as contributory factors of becoming and being a leader. In addition, it contributes to the illumination of personal attributes of being a leader. The significance, therefore, is its contribution to knowledge base of transformational leadership within higher education, and would then extend the transformational leadership theories associated with school education into the field of higher education. Another intent, therefore, of this study is present the biographical influences, as recognised by the participant through their narratives, that they consider to be essential as a leader.

Muller (2016), in his introduction to the book on the reflective accounts of VCs and university leaders, emphasis that “there are the particular features of time and place that also throw up unique problems. There is no single right way of dealing with these, and different styles of approach are noticeable” (p 15). Time and place is of particular interest in this study as the account of the participants’ biographical beginnings and the period during which they took up leadership of public universities were of a unique time of unprecedented change within a transforming nation. Time and place is also a consideration in terms of agility of leadership in times of unprecedent change, especially

within the characteristically fast pace change, unpredictability and increasing instances of disruptions noted of the 21st century (Marope, 2017). This study, therefore, takes this vantage point of time and place to be central in illuminating the leadership qualities, challenges and opportunities in leading a public university within such changing contexts. Gevers (2016) also attest to this important consideration of time and place suggesting that each person who enters this demanding terrain of higher education will encounter a situation that has both unique and generic ingredients. The intent, therefore, in this respect is to allude to these unique and generic ingredients of leading a university within a transforming South African landscape through the narratives of the participants of this study. More significantly, the on-going research on VCs will provide a useful point of reference to track the trajectory of higher education change as well as the leadership needed to promote, support and sustain the change in higher education needed at particular moments in its evolution.

Associated with time and place is the issue of what constitutes training and development for leaders of higher education institutions. In this respect, Mazwi-Tanga (2016) reflecting on her journey into university leadership argues that,

South Africa has not fully professionalised the development of leadership in higher education. Yet it is a complex profession. The tendency is to think that, if one has the qualifications and a deep disciplinary knowledge of one's academic subject, that one can be a dean, then a DVC, and then a VC (p 161).

The implications of this pathway to the helm of university leadership suggest that VCs have come to lead universities through the various leadership positions that they have accumulated across their careers, be it in their field of scholarship, the positions they held at various levels of governance within a university or outside of a university setting or by deployment to leadership positions. The implications of appointing university leaders through these recognition processes is that leadership breeds leadership, meaning that if one is in leadership positions, it is more likely that one would climb the institutional leadership ladder up to the point of becoming a VC. Leadership training may not be necessary as assumptions of leadership qualities would rest upon recognition and successes of previous leadership positions within an organisation.

Drawing from the experience of school education in South Africa and globally, leadership training through structured programme design has become a norm in developing a pool of school education leaders from which principals of schools can be selected. What then could be a possibility for a leadership training programme to develop leadership knowledge and skills to develop a pool of potential university Black leaders from which to draw from to become VCs of universities? And if such a leadership programme would come to materialise, what then would be its curriculum and intended learning and who will or what will determine this knowledge and skills base? These fundamental curriculum questions raises important issues for designing a curriculum for higher education leadership. One vantage point from which to draw knowledge and skills for leading a university, may be located in the biographies and experiences of those in university leadership positions. In this respect, this study intends, therefore, to contribute to a knowledge base on what knowledge and skills may be appropriate for the training opportunities of aspiring VCs. A similar trajectory of events have led to the establishment of and need for a formalised leadership training programme for school leaders. There is, therefore, potential to conceptualise leadership learnings through formal programmes to professionalise VCs as leaders of universities.

Currently, the majority of VCs in South African universities are black. Despite this, the higher up the academic ladder one goes, the fewer black men and women one would encounter (CHE, 2016; Cloete, 2015). While the number of black academics have increased over the past decade, they continue to be clustered well below the professorial rank (CHE, 2016; Cloete, 2015). There are on-going government and institutional initiatives to develop a cohort of black men and women academics who have doctorates; and to increase the potential number of black men and women who are at the professorial and leadership level of South African universities. Additionally, institutions like The World Bank have recognised that in developing countries, universities need excellent leaders as they are crucial to achieving sustainable and much needed improvement.

With an increasing number of black university VCs being recruited to lead public universities in South Africa, this study becomes significant as it focuses on the

trajectories into and experiences of black VCs. This is in order to distil some of the contributing factors to being a relevant and transforming leader within a context of complex changes within South Africa. Furthermore, the lessons learned could inform the leadership roles and responsibilities for future black leaders of universities as the country continues in its transformation trajectory.

One of the reasons for the proposed study, is that while there has been a proliferation of research in recent years, both locally and internationally into what could broadly be labelled “leadership studies” (Gronn, 2002; Booysen & Nkomo, 2010; Cox & Nkomo, 1986) - career paths of South African University VCs have not been examined. In fact, there is very limited research into the professional trajectories of senior black academics in the corridors of South African tertiary institutions.

Research in the post 1994 context has focussed on the challenges academics face at institutions (Potgieter, 2002). The latter research examined the experiences of black academics at South African universities and the reasons they move between institutions or sectors. De la Rey (1999) conducted another in depth study on the career narratives of women professors. While both studies provide valuable insight into the experiences of academics, it does not provide any insight into the career trajectories or experiences of black academic managers or senior leaders in academia. Moore et al. (1983) stated that it is usually assumed that the most senior positions in academe have been or are held by those who have moved from one level in academe to the next. In South Africa, we do not have any in-depth study, which provides rigorous analysis to support or discount the latter findings.

In researching VCs of Mexican universities Zarate (2007) acknowledges that most of the information is anecdotal; and that while calls have been made for in-depth empirical studies of university VCs, the topic has received very little attention. Zarate’s remarks mirror the research situation in South Africa and is the context influencing the decision to focus my study in this domain.

In summary, taking the above engagement into consideration, this study has significance to VCs or aspirant VCs of universities, academics, institutions of higher learning, policy makers and government. VCs or aspirant VCs would benefit from this study in understanding their pivotal role in higher education transformation as well as in the broader transformation and developmental agenda of a country. Academics and aspiring VCs would also benefit from this study and it provides a succinct account of the varying trajectories that contributed to VCs becoming leaders of universities in South Africa and as such these narratives shows the varying and influencing factors that contribute to becoming a leader of a university. This is quite significant, especially within a context where there are no programmes for developing university VCs, nor are there any formal pathways of becoming VCs of universities. The individualities, the contextual influences and aspirational attitudes of VCs suggests that there are no planned processes, trajectories nor endowments that predict the pathways to becoming a VC of a university.

Institutions of higher education would benefit from this study in that the findings of the study could influence how they view leadership within complex institutions of learning and what leadership styles, endowments or individuals are required of leaders of universities in the various moments of their existence. Policy makers and government would benefit from this study as the findings could influence their views on higher education and universities in particular. How they conceptualise policies that guide university education, resourcing university education and influencing VCs to achieve their desired goals of transformation and development, could be influenced from the findings and outcomes of this study.

1.3 REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The early research into the field of leadership has often been to research an individual leader who most likely was a white male in corporate America. However, current research does not only focus on the individual leader per se, but rather on the individual leader in relation to colleagues, followers and the leadership context (Avolio et al., 2009). Avolio captures the essence of current leadership studies by succinctly

remarking that “Leadership is no longer simply described as an individual characteristic or difference but rather is depicted in various models as dyadic, shared, relational, strategic, global and a complex social dynamic” (Avolio et al., 2009, pp. 422-423).

In the literature, which informs this research the researcher had to turn to research on university VCs, which has primarily been conducted in the United States. There is no in-depth and sustained research specifically on VCs or senior academic leaders in South Africa. Research by Jansen (2005; 2009) reveal his experiences as a black dean at a historically white university, which provide some insights.

The chapter took into account the fact that although there has been a proliferation of local and international research in terms of leadership studies, there is a serious lack of in-depth studies on South African university VCs. An understanding of the pathways and role of university VCs cannot be grasped without an having a sense of the overview of the South African Higher Education system, the role of race and gender, neoliberalism and the impact of backgrounds on leadership ability.

Beginning with the pioneering work of Breakwell and Tytherleigh (2010) on VCs in Britain and taking account of the historical and socio-political differences internationally, this thesis focuses specifically on academic leadership and the career discourses of black South African university VCs. The thesis will be located within the realities and parameters of the historical and present experiences of the universities; and the fundamental changes that have taken place in the country and the institutions themselves. The changes noted have been shaped by a variety of policies and initiatives found in the White Paper 3 on higher education transformation, the Higher Education Act 101 of 1997 and the changes at various levels (Higgins, 2013; Barnes, Baijnath and Sattar, 2010).

The merger of universities meant that the number of institutions stands at 26 at present and they face a significant number of challenges such as student access, financial resources, maintenance of high quality tuition and research as well as the implementation of a number of new policies (Ramrathan, 2017; Cloete & Maassen,

2015; Habib, 2019; Manik and Ramrathan, 2018). The radical changes emanating from the #FEESMUSTFALL student movement led to new initiatives and challenges at various levels of university life as transformation became an imperative (Badat, 2015; Du Preez, et al., 2018). The changes in the demographics of academic staff and leadership within higher education became a necessity as the growth of a new generation of an academic cohort became a key element of this transformation process. These are issues that have been central in the present project as it explores how black VCs understand their roles as academic leaders.

Engagements on issues of race and leadership (academic or institutional) in South Africa continue, as the re-emergence of the decolonisation debates that are currently unfolding within higher education institutions across the country has shown. The project also deals with the professional trajectories of female VCs and the difficulties they have faced despite the existence of progressive legislation (Shober, 2014).

Within these realities and given the role of globalisation on the leadership decisions of VCs, the role of university VCs take new meaning in respect of the expected corporate models of managerialism in the context of rampant worldwide economic globalisation (Springer, 2015). In this sense, the focus on VCs at South African universities is basically to follow a highly regulated higher education environment, despite the fact that universities have a certain amount of autonomy. In the final analysis, the VC's are obligated to ensure that public institutions meet the goals of government in terms of education and building human capital which impacts on the country's broader development agenda. These are evident in a report by the National Development Plan (NDP) acknowledging that there were a limited number of academics in SA (as cited in, Cloete 2015) and that just over a third of all academic staff possessed a PhD, and therefore are eligible to supervise at doctoral level.

The role of academic leadership has become increasingly important in the context of the changing nature of higher education world-wide in terms of the pressures for access, the impact of new technologies, funding constraints and the overlooked subjective experiences of how leaders construct and interpret their life history. The significance of

the project is the dialectical analysis and understanding of the leadership of VCs through the lens of professional capital based on the contribution of Hargreaves and Fullan (2015) that includes action guidelines for layers of public education - from teaching and administrative staff to policy makers. Social capital cannot operate without accountable academic leadership overseeing effective organisational operations. This needs to be supplemented by external accountability, instrumental in reassuring the public that the system is performing in accordance with the expectations of its students, staff and stakeholders at large (Fullan, et al., 2015). The concept of 'professional capacity' as the epitome of the responsibilities of institutional leaders is synonymous with accountability and the appropriate implementation of a strategic plan of action.

Organisational spontaneity is related to the willingness of VCs to engage spontaneously in efforts instrumental in leading to organisational effectiveness and efficiency. Research has shown that actions associated with it always create positive impressions that could lead to organisation excellence, civic virtues and organisational compliance (Podsakoff et al., 2009).

Transformational leadership behaviour on the part of a VC is related to the articulation of a vision, expectation of innovative planning and the setting up of an appropriate model and goals (Law, Wong & Chen, 2005). Vulnerability on the part of a VC has been described as a key element upon which connection and communication is based (Nienaber, Hofeditz, & Romeike, 2015) because it is a deeply human and social phenomenon and the first step in understanding and analysing the existing realities in an institution (Brown, 2012). Such leadership is rooted in high morals, self-awareness and transparency, where information is shared equally in interactions and debates (Peus, et.al., 2012). The authenticity of the leaders is based on their honesty that allows them to be open in respect of their weaknesses, strengths and habits. These acknowledgements are the root of human and social connection and enhances trust (Nienaber et al., 2015).

1.4 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The transformation imperative brought about by White Paper 3: A programme for the transformation of higher education within South Africa and the effort to achieve the goals of this transformation agenda has proved to be a complex challenge. Part of the complexity has been ascribed to weak leadership within higher education institutions (Badsha, 2016). In addition, several universities; over the last two decades, have been placed under administration for various reasons, including leadership challenges. In an attempt to gain deeper insights into the leadership challenges within public universities in South Africa, empirical research is needed on VCs, in order to explore, identify and find solutions to the leadership challenges faced by South African universities. Furthermore, empirical research findings may explain the primary barriers that serve as roadblocks for seamless transformation imperatives and agendas.

I also opine that empirical research on black VCs will shed light on how they perceive the increasing demand for a mass based higher education system and fast changing, disruptive and un-predictable 21st century characteristics (Marope, 2017). Hence, this study seeks to explore and understand leadership qualities required to lead universities in a fast changing and transforming context through the lens of black VCs in South Africa. Such determination requires a sustained research endeavour on university leadership, especially that of black VCs, to develop some theoretical and practical guidance in leading a university in constant change. This study, therefore, contributes to this need for a sustained research project needed to develop insights into university leadership.

Noting that there is a majority of black VCs employed across the public universities in South Africa, a focus on the trajectories and experiences of black VCs is needed to inform a challenge of recruiting appropriate black VCs as leaders of public universities in South Africa. The challenge of weak university leadership noted in the literature (CHE, 2016), suggests that there is a need to establish how and why such challenges are experienced by black VCs with a view to implementing measures to address these challenges and to find ways of supporting VCs to overcome such challenges.

Despite the momentous socio-political changes in South Africa, the country does not have a substantial base of senior black academics (Cloete, 2015). A select few have made it as VCs and understanding their experiences would be useful in order to gain insights into the complexity of academic leadership. In a developing society like South Africa, with a changing higher education milieu, insights for preparing a new cohort of black academics to fill leadership positions in the higher education sector is important. Previous studies such as De La Rey (1999) provides valuable insights into the experiences of senior female academics, but it does not provide any insight into the dynamics of career trajectories or the experiences of VCs. This study aims to fill that gap by looking at the narratives of university VCs in order to explore the complexity of academic leadership for black VCs and how they make sense of their positions.

In summary, the problem statement is underpinned by four core issues. These include:

- Addressing weak leadership of universities in South Africa as noted in the literature;
- The challenges experienced by black VCs of universities in leading universities within a context of higher education transformation, noted by some universities being placed under administration by the Ministry of Higher Education;
- Finding solutions to university leadership challenges that will contribute to theoretical and practical guidance for leading a public university; and
- The need to derive learnings from the experience of black VCs to inform the development of a future cohort of potential black VCs.

1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following guiding research questions underpin the aims of the research:

1. What are the biographical influences on becoming a black VC of a public university in South Africa?
2. What challenges and opportunities have university black VCs experienced in leading public universities within South Africa?

3. How do black VCs make meaning of their roles as leaders of higher education institutions in South Africa?

1.6 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to explore the biographies and narrative accounts of black VCs, with a view to illuminating and understanding the influencing factors on becoming and being a VC of a public university in South Africa within a transforming context.

1.7 AIM OF THE STUDY

The main aim of the study is to explore and understand how black university VCs in South Africa account for and make sense of their trajectories into leading universities in South Africa within a transforming context. A further aim is to identify the leadership demands of a black VC at a South African university and explore and understand how they led these public universities during their period of university leadership.

1.8 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- I. To explore how black university VCs biographical influences on becoming a leader in selected South African universities.
- II. To analyse how the challenges and opportunities in being a VC of a university influences systemic transformation in universities in South Africa.
- III. To explore the experiences of black VCs in leading universities in South Africa.

1.9 METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH METHODS

1.9.1 Theoretical framework guiding the study

The ontological, epistemological and methodological framing of the study is presented within the research design section that follows this sub-section (see sub-sections 1.9.2 and 1.9.3). In addition to this theoretical framing guiding the research process, a multi-

theoretical perspective to guiding the analysis and theorising of the findings was adopted and is presented hereunder.

This study adopts a multi-theoretical perspective. This is because of the focus of the study that spans on becoming a black VC to being a black VC of a public university within a transforming context. The on-becoming a VC aspect of the study provides a lens to identify and understand the factors that contribute to leadership qualities and capabilities of leaders as the black VCs reflect on their various milieus that they have occupied on this leadership journey. For this aspect of the study, Bourdieu's cultural capital theory was useful to frame data analysis and theorising. Hence, Bourdieu's key concepts of habitus, field and capital, formed the theoretical framework to understand who they are against their personal biographies and histories that have led them to becoming VCs of a public university.

Being a VC of a public university presents an opportunity to explore and understand them as leaders of university. In this respect, leadership theories were used as theoretical framing for this aspect of the study. Two leadership theories were specifically argued for as theoretical framing for the study. The first is strategic leadership theory and the second is transformational leadership theory. The concepts of strategy and leadership formed the theoretical constructs to understanding the strategic positions as black VCs of universities; to lead a university within a strategic transformational agenda across the higher education sector in South Africa. Associated with strategic leadership, transformational leadership theory was used to analyse and understand the experiences of leading a university that within itself required substantive transformation. Higher education institutions (HEIs) in South Africa have faced major changes in terms of transformation (Mader, Scott & Razak, 2013; Ngcamu, 2016; Seale & Cross, 2016), that required exceptional leadership to drive transformation. The details of these theoretical frameworks and its associated constructs are presented in Chapter Three of this thesis.

1.9.2 Research design

The research approach selected for this study is qualitative research. Qualitative research, according to Creswell (2013) is based on assumptions and theoretical framings that informs a study. Qualitative research does not attempt to provide the absolute ‘truths’ but is based on meanings that people make, to obtain deeper insight into these meanings (Creswell, 2013). In this study, I sought to explore nine VCs stories using a constructionist approach to narrative inquiry because it allows for conversations and discussions with participants.

Qualitative research offers opportunity for participants to tell their stories in ways that are meaningful to them (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). My aim in using qualitative research is to provide opportunities for participants to provide ‘thick’ narratives of their experiences in being and becoming leaders, whilst addressing the social and cultural processes through which these narratives are produced. Qualitative research allows for listening to participants and interpreting, and retelling their stories (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). Narrative inquiry as a qualitative research methodology was selected for this study. It is used to make sense of people’s lives through the stories that people tell about their experience (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000; Clandinin, 2013). In seeking to understand VCs’ stories through narrative inquiry, my intention is to understand social experience. Like other scholars working in the field of narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990), my intention was to hear the stories from a personal point of view, but also to understand these stories as based on and underlined by the larger social system. This epistemological stance of hearing, reading and writing about the stories of others within a social context is social construction. Hence, narrative inquiry as the methodology for this study was most appropriate.

1.9.3 Research paradigm

In the social sciences, there are different paradigms which try to establish the nature of what things are (ontology) and different understandings of how people can make claims

to know what these things are (epistemology). In my study, I use the social constructionist paradigm to understand how VCs make claims about their leadership roles.

Social construction ideas provide justification for the use of stories and narrative inquiry, in that individuals as noted by Clandinin & Connelly (1990) are story tellers. Social construction allows for understanding these ‘storied lives’ to be understood in ways that fully appreciate the social, economic, political, cultural and historical dimensions of these stories.

Narrative scholars have suggested that (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990), in narrative inquiry the stories are the ‘raw data’. It is a qualitative method that examines stories that are contextualised and situated within a particular context (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007). Through these stories, this thesis will provide meanings that participants make of leadership as they talk about being and becoming VCs. As Clandinin & Rosiek (2007) indicate, stories are about experiences and these experiences are phenomena. Polkinghorne (1988, p. 13), a pioneering scholar of narrative inquiry states that, “Narrative is the fundamental scheme for linking individual human actions and events into interrelated aspects of an understandable composite”. If the social world is understood “narratively, ...then it makes sense to study the world narratively” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 17). From the outset of this research, I believed that narrative inquiry was the most appropriate qualitative methodology that honoured the participants stories. In taking their stories and re-telling them in this study, I also had an opportunity to build knowledge in the area of transformational leadership that could benefit South Africa’s quest to ensure transformation of academic leadership. Using narrative inquiry was a very useful approach in this study.

1.9.4 Research methods

As noted by Clandinin and Connelly (2000), interviews are widely used in qualitative research. In this study, I used conversational type interviews with nine VCs to generate stories about their roles and leadership positions in South African higher education. I

conducted one-on-one interviews with the participants. Through the participants' stories I was able to weave through individual and social forces in shaping their experiences which looked backward, and forward. I allowed participants to tell their stories on their own terms and around issues that they were willing to talk about. In other words, the stories had to be meaningful to the participant rather than me imposing questions that had little value to their experience. However, in guiding the data generation process, a set of open-ended questions were developed around which the participants could narrate their storied experiences of becoming and being a black Vice-Chancellor of a public university.

1.9.5 Sample

The population for the study was all VCs of public universities within South Africa. The specific focus on black VCs, therefore necessitated a purposive sampling process. In this study, I used purposive sampling. In qualitative research, purposive sampling refers to the need to choose particular participants who are 'fit for purpose'. In my study, I was interested in the experiences of black VCs at South African universities. This meant that the original pool of VCs at the time was 25 of which 17 were black. All 17 black VCs were the target sample for my study. In attempting to recruit these Black Vice-Chancellors for the study, only 9 of them agreed to participate. I was then able to conduct interviews with 9 of the 17 black VCs. As a narrative inquiry, I was not interested in breadth but the depth of experience and the rich thick constructions of meanings which meant that the small sample size was of little consideration. As Riessman (2007) notes, when the focus is on narrative inquiry, there is no need to be concerned about the large sample size. Thus, I was able to limit my project to the nine narratives.

1.9.6 Data collection

I used direct recruitment to recruit my participants. Each identified participant was telephonically called to ascertain interest in the study and to set up the necessary appointments to conduct the interviews. Noting that the universities were spread across

the country, I set out a schedule wherein I recorded the dates and times for each interview. This schedule facilitated the planning for my travel to each of the participating institutions. Having fixed the dates and times for the interviews, I approached each interview with caution, noting that I am researching upwards, meaning that I am researching a very senior leader of a university. The caution expressed was on the realisation that the VCs may not be able to honour the scheduled time for the interview because of emergencies and other more demanding matters. Most of my interviews with the VCs were near on-time, meaning that I had to sometimes wait a while before I was able to interview the VC.

The interviews commenced with a brief explanation of the purpose of the research and its intention, the expectations from the interview process and how the interview was to be conducted. Permission to use an audio recording device was obtained from each of the participants and upon gaining their permission, each of the interviews were audio recorded. A set of guiding questions were presented to each of the participants and they had a choice on how to address each of these guiding questions through the narration of their storied experience of becoming and being a VC. Each interview session with each VC varied in duration. Some interviews were about 90 minutes, while some were far in excess of 90 minutes. Noting the seniority of the participants within the university structure, one interview was deemed appropriate. Opportunities for further interviews were considered most unlikely. Hence, the length of each interview session.

1.9.7 Data analysis

The audio recordings of the interviews were transcribed. The transcriptions were used as the basis for the data analysis process. The data analysis followed a thematic content analytical approach. The transcriptions were read several times, individually and together with my field notes taken during the interview process for each participant and therefore followed a grounded approach (Freeman, 1996) to data analysis. Reading the transcripts several times allowed me to embody the information presented by the participants individually and collectively. This deep knowledge of the data allowed me to construct some ideas around how the data could be organised and analysed. These

ideas were then named and colour coded. These colour codes were used to identify key issues around which vignettes could be constructed. Further refinement of the key issues led to the establishment of initial themes. The themes were then finalised through consultation with my supervisor. The respective data set to develop vignettes for the themes and sub-themes were then used as the basis for the data presentation and analysis.

1.9.8 Trustworthiness and credibility

Instead of validity and reliability, narrative inquiry is based on trustworthiness and what Bruner (1987) refers to as truthlikeness which is what is ‘true for now’. The notion of trustworthiness in qualitative research is broken down into four components. These include credibility, dependability, confirmability and transferability. These constructs of trustworthiness is presented more fully in Chapter Four. For the purpose of this introductory chapter, I present a summary of the key issue around trustworthiness.

Trustworthiness was achieved through several processes in this study. The first was fidelity of data generation. The fidelity refers to whether the appropriate participants for the study were the source of data. As this study was about black VCs of public universities in South Africa, the selected participants were, indeed, black VCs. The second strategy in maintaining trustworthiness was that of relevance of the content of the interviews to the research focus. This was achieved through developing a set of relevant open-ended questions to frame the interviews conducted with black VCs. These questions were developed prior to the interviews and were the subject of deep engagement with my supervisor as a vetting process. Once approved by my supervisor, these open-ended interview questions were presented to the black VCs at the beginning of the interview process. They (the participants) chose how to use these framing questions whilst narrating their storied experiences of becoming and being a VCs of a public university in South Africa. The third process of maintaining trustworthiness within the research process was through the use of field notes. Whilst the VCs were narrating their storied experiences, I had taken brief notes on key points of engagements

or on potential analytics. These field notes became very useful during the process of working with the data and establishing themes for the data presentation.

Anney (2014) asserts that credibility, which is the truth of the findings of a study, establishes whether the findings of a study represent information drawn from participants are cogent, plausible and original. In this respect, the participants were given the opportunity to narrate their stories of becoming and being a VC in terms of how they had wished to be recalled. The credibility strategy used to ensure rigour of this study was member check. Participants were given the transcriptions to verify its content and to make any changes that they may have not included during their interviews. This member check process ensured credibility of information from the participants.

1.9.9 Ethical considerations

Upon approval of my research proposal, I had applied for ethical clearance from my university through the process and requirements as established by the university. My ethical clearance was granted and subsequent to this approval, I began my field work to generate the data required for the study. The process of conducting a research ethically meant that I had to follow standard protocols of gaining gatekeepers permission from all institutions where the VCs were based. The gatekeepers consent letters included details of the research project, the intended participants, the nature, purpose and use of the research, the expectations of the participating institutions and of the participants selected for the research process and the rights of the participants and of the institution, including the right to withdraw from the research process should the participant or the institution deem it necessary. All the participating institutions provided consent for the research to be conducted.

Similarly, informed consent was obtained from the selected research participants. The informed consent letters to the participants contained similar information about the research project, the expectations of the participants, details of the data collection

process and the rights of the participants, including the right to withdraw from the research process should the participant deem it necessary to do so.

Confidentiality of the participants and their respective institutions were maintained through the use of pseudonyms. The data generated through the interviews were used for the research purpose only and was stored in a locked cupboard in my supervisor's office for safe keeping and security of information. During the data generation process, the participants were once again informed of the research process, the intention of the research and how the data were to be used. Their right to participate or not to participate were also presented to them. Before conducting the interviews, each participant signed an informed consent form indicating that they had understood the nature of the research, what was expected of them and their permission to audio record the interview session.

1.10 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

One of the contextual limitations of this study is that the research was conducted within a political history of transformation within the country and the findings may be relevant to this political history. While this may be conceptualised as a limitation to this study, the strengths of this overrides this limitation in that the rich histories of the VCs and the diversity of the experiences and trajectories followed in becoming and being a VC are very illuminating. It further has the potential to expand the pool of aspirant VCs in the foreseeable future, thereby addressing a pressing challenge to the South African context where there seems to be a lack of adequate supply of potential VCs.

Other limitations of this study includes the selection of who participated in this study, how they were selected and the how the participant chose to narrate their trajectories in becoming and being VCs of universities. Being a qualitative study, located within an exploratory framework, minimises these limitations. The rich and diverse narratives of these VCs provided key insights on becoming and being a VC of a university within a transforming context that could influence and build confidence in potential academics to consider becoming and being VCs of universities.

1.11 SUMMARY OF CHAPTERS

Chapter One outlined the fundamentals of the research, including a background and context of the study, providing the research questions, the key conceptual, theoretical and methodological foundations and the particulars of the processes, realities and details of the selected sample participants. It also provided the research site and a number of key concepts and theoretical foundations of existing literature on contemporary leadership, especially educational leadership.

Chapter Two discusses the theoretical conceptual and methodological aspects related to educational senior leadership in a critical literature review on professional development, with emphasis on discourses resonating with the phenomenon of a wide variety of types of leadership and their applications.

Chapter Three provides the theoretical framework, which involves unpacking the phenomena associated with habitus and leadership and its varieties.

Chapter Four explains the methodological orientation of the study. It deals with the relations of the methodology with aims and objectives, describes the sampling strategies, the methods of data collection and techniques, the procedures followed and the ethical considerations of the study.

Chapter Five provides the data analysis, focusing on data related to the aims and objectives of the study.

Chapter Six involves extension of the data analysis by theorising the key findings from the data analysis; and presents the conclusions.

1.12 Conclusion

This chapter presented the background and intent for the study, articulating a problem statement from which the research purpose and research questions were derived. The

chapter also provided a context to the study intent, and argued for the relevance of pursuing this study. A summary of the research design and theoretical framings were presented, the details of which are elaborated in chapters three and four. The chapter culminated by presenting a chapter summation to alert the reader on what is engaged with in each of the ensuing chapters of the thesis.

CHAPTER TWO - LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter interrogates research in the field of academic leadership with specific emphasis on university VCs, an area of study that has received little attention in South Africa and abroad. Although there has been a proliferation of local and international research in over the last four decades into what could broadly be labelled “leadership studies” (Cox & Nkomo, 1986; Gronn, 2002; Booysen & Nkomo, 2010), no in-depth study has been conducted on the career paths and leadership issues of South African university VCs. The predominant area of research in the field of academic leadership is the ever-changing roles of academic leaders (Blackmore & Blackwell, 2006). This predominant focus explores what leaders do and how they cope within a managerialist higher education framework.

Most of the research on VCs, which reflects the situation in the UK and the US, portrays a diverse role that involves balancing the functions related to management and providing strategic leadership on higher education institutions. In addition, many studies examine how public policy, or management systems in institutions, impact on the trajectories of universities. However, there are very few studies internationally (Booyesen and Nkomo, 2010; Gronn, 2002) and no in-depth study has been done on the career paths of South African university VCs, that examine the impact that the specific experiences and thinking of VCs have on institutional management and development, and very limited research into the professional career trajectories of senior academics in South African tertiary institutions. Therefore, this study draws largely on research conducted amongst university VCs in the US and UK because of the paucity in the South African scholarship. Zarate’s (2007) study of VCs of Mexican universities, acknowledges that much of the information is anecdotal and represents perceptions. His key conclusion is that the undertaking of serious empirical work on the subject is a critical necessity.

The scholarly work by Breakwell and Tytherleigh (2010) on VCs in Britain provides, by far, some of the most detailed work to date, and will be drawn on in this literature review. However, while this study has some relevance with regard to the historical connection between the British and South African university systems, and while universities in both countries have often come under huge pressure to corporatise, there are also some limits to the usefulness of British VCs' experiences. These differences could be attributed to the existence of differences in terms of existing political, social and economic realities in these countries. This thesis focuses specifically on academic leadership and the career discourses of black South African university VCs.

Nonetheless, among the objectives of the work of Breakwell and Tytherleigh (2010) that proves useful for my work is that they also sought to understand academic leadership and career trajectory dynamics by interviewing a sample of VCs. The study above involved the interviewing of 13 VCs with special care taken to ensure that the sample was diverse. I draw on the methodology of interviewing a selection of VCs, but my study had a particular focus on black VCs. Perhaps an advantage (or arguably a disadvantage) that the Breakwell and Tytherleigh (2010) study enjoyed is the fact that all the interviews, bar one, was conducted by the principal researcher who was also a VC. In that context, none of the VCs approached for the study declined to be interviewed. In my study, some VCs declined to be interviewed without providing a substantive explanation.

Breakwell and Tytherleigh (2010) explain that one of them being a VC made access to fellow VCs easier and the knowledge that they shared in common with the interviewer made a more comprehensive analysis possible. However, having a VC do the interviews, despite the anonymity, could impact on the responses of the VCs. Furthermore, the critical importance of ensuring the anonymity of VCs in my study was reinforced by the Breakwell and Tytherleigh (2010) study.

This chapter interrogates the existing scholarship related to academic leaders, the role of university VCs and the career pathways of university VCs, and is delineated into the following themes: an overview of South Africa's higher education system; race and

academic leadership in the country; gender and academic leadership in South Africa; VCs, leadership neoliberalism and globalisation; VCs within the South African educational landscape; impact of VC backgrounds on leadership ability; the role [characteristics] of VCs, leadership approaches to career success; presidential career paths and progression into VC leadership positions, academic leadership and professional capital, role of trust in academic leadership, significance of organisational spontaneity as a characteristic of academic leadership, power of vulnerability in the role as a VC. Before unpacking the themes that resonate with the leadership and career pathways of VCs, a brief overview of higher education in South Africa is presented to provide a context that informs the focus and a rationale for the vantage point that this study took in engaging with the empirical aspect of the study and the engagement of the data produced and analysed in this study.

2.2 Overview of South African Higher Education

There is an abundance of literature on the ills of apartheid across all systems of government and in particular, school and higher education. While this chapter will not go into the details of the extensive literature on the ills of apartheid and on higher education transformation post-apartheid, pertinent literature is reviewed within this context to provide a contextual and reference point to issues related to the leading HEIs in the period in which the research was conducted.

Under apartheid, the system of higher education in the country was designed and implemented in order to cement within it the privilege and power of the ruling minority regime. The decisions and implementation of processes and structures led to the establishment and perpetuation of white universities and a few black institutions of higher learning. A few universities such as UCT, Wits and Fort Hare became, inevitably, integral parts of a 'new' higher education system planned and structured in a fragmented way. They served the political and ideological realities of segregation; according to the strategic and tactical goals of the apartheid state machinery.

The first steps undertaken by the democratic government after 1994 were initially rooted in the adoption of White Paper 3 on higher education transformation (Department of Education, 1997) and its proposed changes and educational initiatives and alternatives. Since the adoption of the White Paper 3 on Higher Education Transformation (Department of Education, 1997) and the Higher Education Act 101 of 1997, changes have manifested on many fronts. These changes include changes to demographic profiles of students accessing higher education institutions, structural changes through mergers and incorporations, curriculum changes through modularisation and programme differentiations, governance of higher education institutions and in the human resourcing of institutions of higher learning.

The new priorities set up by the above legislative step were initiated and followed up by the first two post-apartheid administrations in their efforts to restructure systems and processes. These initiatives opened new avenues for democratisation, efficiency and good governance, in accordance with the country's Constitution (Higgins, 2013). The existing legislative framework was a decisive step in the process the restructuring of higher education leading to diversity and plurality in South Africa's transformative context (Barnes, Baijnath and Sattar 2010).

It was evident that the new democratic administration had to devise a number of alternatives and innovations which included strategies and programmes to rid South Africa of the vestiges of racial discrimination and marginalisation. Its strategic objective was non-racialism in pursuit of democracy, social justice through re-dress policies and economic development for empowerment. Education and higher education in particular, was no exception. The huge inequalities in higher education created by the apartheid system continue to plague a democratic South Africa (Morris, 2010). Attempts by the democratic government to fight the existing social and economic inequalities in order to provide equal education and equal opportunities to all in South Africa, is proving to be an arduous task. Morris (2010) has argued that a number of policies such as those related to affirmative action and black economic empowerment have been implemented to allow black Africans opportunities and access to education institutions which were previously denied to them.

HEIs are not exempt from this practice and are compelled to ensure that these policies are implemented. VCs and academic leaders in South Africa were expected to grapple with their university's transformative role with regard to society and, also, the urgent necessity to transform universities themselves, in particular with regard to race and gender. This included students, staff and the university leadership within higher education.

South African universities have undergone massive transformation, since the demise of apartheid from 1994 onwards. Prior to 1994, there were 36 higher education institutions based along racial lines - a manifestation of the "cancerous engineering of apartheid" (Barnes, Baijnath and Sattar, 2010, p. 2). Following a process of robust engagement, in 2002 the then Minister of Higher Education, Kader Asmal, announced that a number of the existing 36 HEIs would merge; leading to a process that placed huge financial burdens on the state (Barnes et al., 2010). With careful thought and an implementation plan, this led to the birth of 26 public institutions of higher learning funded by the state. The merged universities and those that were left unaffected by the mergers equally had challenges in terms of the escalating demands of transforming the higher education sector. Reflecting on the outcomes of the mergers of HEIs in South Africa, there seems to be varying views about its intended success. While Higher Education South Africa (HESA, 2012) argues that the mergers made economic sense, others (Dominguez-Whitehead, 2011; Mohuba & Govender, 2016) suggest that most mergers failed to make any meaningful impact due to many reasons. Tilak (2011) claimed that weak leadership within HEIs were largely blamed for the poor outcomes of the mergers. Transformational leadership seems to have been the major contributory factor in the leadership challenges experienced by the merged institutions (Vinger and Cilliers, 2006; Chipunza and Gwarinda, 2010), which Jack (2007) acknowledges as being the secret weapon behind the success of any merger transaction. Dominguez-Whitehead (2011) argued that leadership in merged institutions could be described as unprecedented and demanding because of the historical realities they faced. They claimed that there has not been an appropriate theoretical framework to describe the kind of leadership needed in the process of transforming the new merged institutions.

Tilak (2011) on the other hand suggested that merged universities were in dire need of leaders who possessed exceptional qualities.

During the apartheid era, black students were prevented from attending universities due to legislated policies that restricted them, financial constraints and lack of merit (minimum pass requirements in matric) based on entrance requirements. Since 1997, the South African Constitution has addressed this anomaly. Policies that guide access have been transformed and makes provision for the intake of black students. While substantive changes have been made to the student demographics within higher education, there were still challenges with widening of access in higher education especially of potential students from marginalised communities (Ramrathan, 2017). Cloete & Maassen (2015, p. 6) regarded the then changes in demographic profile of students as being an *elite overcrowded system*. In addressing some of these challenges, Habib (2019) argues that University access in some fields of study is based on affirmative action where universities have been compelled to dramatically increase the intake of black students through reservation of places.

Post-apartheid, universities are expected to adapt to the changing landscape and to cater for a more diverse population who attend the institutions. However, it is not without a multitude of problems. The problems that plague university entrance, in particular, point to the need to address past inequalities through widening access to higher education, whilst at the same time maintaining a high standard (or quality) of academia in universities (Manik & Ramrathan, 2018).

While many would agree that the transformation targets for demographic changes and of increasing the number of students accessing higher education have been realised across the higher education system (see CHE vital stats 2014), there are challenges with throughput and graduation rates that compromised the gains made in transforming the demographic profile of its student population (Ramrathan, 2016; Letseka & Maile, 2008). There are several reasons for the poor outcomes of student success within higher education, including low levels of preparation for higher education studies; language competence of students; funding, support services, student housing and personal issues

(Council on Higher Education, 2013). More recently, the issue of target access to marginalised and low socio-economic communities are compounding student demographic issues and student throughput and success.

In order to streamline the higher education system, a wide array of new policies and initiatives came into existence. This included the Council on Higher Education (CHE) and its Higher Education Quality Committee, the National Student Financial Aid Scheme, and the National Qualifications Framework. Simultaneously, planning, quality assurance and funding mechanisms were created and the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) was tasked with planning and implementing financial support for black students (CHE, 2001).

It is also important to note that while the demographics have shifted dramatically to ensure a new cadre of black admissions, the revolving-door syndrome has caused many black students to lack the academic and financial base to achieve academic success (Jansen, 2009). There is pressure on academics and university leaders to develop ways of increasing academic performance, minimising drop-outs and securing financial aid for students.

More recently, fee-free higher education for students has been made available to address the financial burden placed on families and students that come from socio-economic backgrounds that are considered poor. While not all students were in favour of a fee-free higher education (Bitzer and Jager, 2018), access based on financial challenges have been removed through this student funding opportunity. The implications of a fee-free higher education for qualifying students means that the pool of funds available for higher education is further stretched with, perhaps, a diminishing budget for HEIs to meet its operational functions and strategic initiatives, hence, complexifying further the leadership of HEIs in the context of substantive changes.

Habib (2019), like many others, has recognised the immeasurable challenges facing universities, especially in terms of improving and increasing their financial resources, which is a major objective. Financial institutional instability and relatively low state

budgets resulted in higher fees that have, for years, resulted in greater exclusion of the poor and sections of the country's middle class. This is relevant for my study since a number of VCs continue to struggle with reconciling the political imperatives of expanding access and maintaining financial stability - this responsibility tends to fall more heavily on the shoulders of black VCs as shown by Habib (2019).

This meant that many universities could not operate to the best of their ability and thus were unable to contribute to economic and social development. Thus, as Jansen (2009) has argued, urban universities could not really fulfil their tasks to lead up to cultural transformation through increased student inclusivity and active participation in a diversified institution.

Habib (2019) has shown a number of the historically white universities have not changed much, after the completion of the merger process. Wide access to universities, the introduction of the study of African languages, the small number of black academics and researchers, language practices and institutional culture have been fundamental pivots in the transformation process. The slow pace of transformation as well as worker and students' alliances led initially to the #RhodesMustFall protests and later to the #FeesMustFall students' movements. As time passed, it became a large social movement that challenged the state and initiated the foundations of a process destined to lead to the transformation of the existing fundamentals of the higher education sector (Habib, 2016).

Habib's (2019) assertion is that the #RhodesMustFall movement was founded on two major challenges facing the higher education terrain: access and alienation. The movement built on the UCT students' demands for the removal of the Cecil John Rhodes statue, and captured the alienation of the majority of the university's black population. Simultaneously, it reflected valid concerns regarding the existing institutional racism as well as the slow pace of transformation at universities across the country. Within this context, social and economic inequalities in South Africa manifested in a wide variety of ways, including the dearth of black scholars and researchers. Such assertions have been corroborated by studies such as those of Barnes

et al., (2010) and the National Commission on Higher Education (NCHE). It is believed that equity and equality policies that ensured the appointment of black academics in leadership positions, were fundamentals in the transformation process, especially in previously white dominated universities.

In his book *As by Fire*, Jansen (2017) studies VCs and how they managed to exercise leadership during the *Fees Must Fall* protests. During this period university property was destroyed and VCs were violently threatened. In this context, Jansen (2017) laments the high turnover of VCs and how this leadership change impacts the cohesive progress of HEIs. In reviewing the book, Trowler (2018) is critical of how leadership is exercised by some of the VCs - calling into question the disappointment expressed by one VC when his staff did not support his decision to securitise the campus during the protests of 2015 and 2016.

Student protest, therefore, has become a regular event within the academic year of universities, demanding for, amongst others, accountability, rapid responses to changes, demand for student support outside of the academic programme and curriculum and leadership changes (Badat, 2015). Butler-Adam (2015) notes the massive infra-structural damages to institutions during violent student protest actions. The recent sustained student protest actions that saw massive destruction to institutions and heightened the call for a decolonised higher education curriculum spurred the second wave of decolonisation debates (Du Preez, et al., 2018) that HEIs are now compelled to engage with through a curriculum lens. Curriculum transformation has thus re-emerged within the transformation agenda of higher education beyond just changing the demographic profiles of the students.

An area of great emphasis has been the change in the demographics of academic staff and leadership within higher education. Badat (2010, p. 24) captures the challenges of staff profiles within higher education eloquently, maintaining that higher education was characterised by racism and patriarchy and that substantial changes in the male and white domination of academic staff, further arguing for the need to produce and retain a new generation of academics. In the current context of resourcing higher education,

both, race and gender across its staff, including senior leadership of universities; and in growing the new generation of academics have taken a substantial part of current transformation of HEIs in South Africa.

It is against this complex and challenging backdrop of higher education in South Africa, within a transforming context and in the context of major social and economic transformation, that this study explores how black VCs make sense of their roles as academic leaders and reflect on their experiences in the South African higher education system. Their perceptions and experiences with a particular focus on their roles and leadership as university VCs provides valuable insight into this phenomenon. The issue of race and its influence on academic leadership is a significant aspect and as such will be examined separately in the discussions to follow.

2.3 Academic leadership and race in South Africa

It is widely acknowledged that fundamental policy changes and decisive institutional steps to address the racial policies of the apartheid regime have taken place since 1994. Such steps have also been evident in the higher education terrain which faced a dearth of black academics and scholars (National Commission on Higher Education - NCHE; Barnes, Baijnath & Sattar, 2010; and Avolio et al., 2009). Early research in the field of leadership focused on individuals who were most likely white males in corporate America (Avolio et al., 2009). In contrast, current research focuses on individual leaders in relation to colleagues, followers and the leadership context (Avolio et al., 2009). This shift may have largely been attributed to the need for changes in leadership to effect social justice, equity and opportunity (Santamaría, 2014), suggesting that a continued pattern of employing the traditional white and male persons in positions of institutional leadership would not make the deep transformational aspirations of a nation, as noted within the South African context in terms of the deep racial divisions and low levels of opportunities for the majority of the population. Some argue that the curriculum within higher education, perpetuates and reinforces white dominance and privileges and the epistemic violence and hegemony of Eurocentrism is largely to blame for this state of white dominance (Heleta, 2016). Hence, tackling race and institutional leadership is not

only about the changing face of individuals that occupy institutional leadership positions, it requires a cadre of leaders that goes deeper than colour of the skin as this study will allude to. For example, as Robus and Macleod (2006) refer to as recurring everyday talk and practice amongst students, staff and other associated with higher education, relating to White excellence/black failure discourses, the intricacies of racialised discourses are so interwoven that dismantling these ingrained discourses is a surmountable challenge to institutional leaders for institutional change. Two examples of what Robus and Macleod (2006) speaks about are contained in the alarms created by appointments and publicity. These examples are of particular interest as it highlights the everyday discourse of race and excellence, especially in universities traditionally known for its whiteness. The first is in the appointment of a black VC at a relatively small, predominantly white university and the second is on a lack of black professors at a leading white university in South Africa.

The appointment of Rhodes University's (RU) first black VC has brought the debate about transformation in institutions of higher learning back into the lime-light. RU is among the least transformed university in the country. The University has 57 full-time professors but only four of those are black. Until recently, the university did not have any black deans (*Mail & Guardian*, 16 July 2016).

In addition, controversy was sparked in 2012 when the UCT's Associate Professor Xolela Mangcu penned an article about the lack of black professors at the university (*News 24*, 9 October 2014). The article, and subsequent responses by the university's VC Dr Max Price, rekindled a decade long debate on the place of black intellectuals and academics at South African universities.

These two separate but equally critical points in the transformation history of South African universities, were regarded as critical initiations, or perhaps, re-initiations of engagements on issues of race and leadership (academic or institutional), yet the transformational drive for a change in the racial profile of higher education was set a decade or more prior to these happenings within South Africa. The re-initiations of such race-based engagements have become a feature of the South African higher education

landscape with the most recent being the re-emergence of the decolonisation debates that are currently unfolding within HEIs across the country.

The recent history of South African higher education has meant that the outcome and shape of leadership in South Africa has been challenging and complex. Research in the post-1994 context has focussed on the challenges confronting academics (Potgieter, 2002). Potgieter's (2002) work examined the experiences of black academics at South African universities and the reasons for them moving between institutions or sectors (as discussed in the section on race in this chapter).

South Africa's leading universities, as ranked by the Academic Ranking of World Universities (ARWU) developed by the Centre for World-Class Universities at Shanghai Jiao Tong University, are now headed by a number of black men, and one black woman. However, it is well documented that there is still a limited number of senior black academics in South Africa; the pool of black men and women who have been appointed VCs are therefore exceptional leaders (Jansen, 2009). This statistic points to a more significant problem of transformation within the South African university context and that while legislation may be in line with transformation, often institutional culture may not be sufficiently transformed and is often used in white dominated universities across South Africa.

Reflective accounts of Jansen's (2005; 2009) experiences as a coloured Dean at a historically white university in South Africa provides some insights but lacks academic rigour and therefore limits the usefulness of such a source. The literature at this point illustrates that the work in this field is still developing and this thesis, which examines the career discourse of black South African VCs, will open up this area of research. Higgins (2013) makes the point that in transforming universities, institutional culture is always difficult to define. When "institutional culture equals whiteness" (Higgins, 2013, p. 114), there is often an increase in rhetoric around institutional culture, with very little effect. Higgins (2013) argues that the reason for the lack of efficacy around this notion of institutional culture is due to the complexity of the concept with no clear demarcations and outcomes. As a result, it is difficult to achieve or begin meaningful

engagement with developing what is supposed to be achieved as there are no clear definitions (Higgins, 2013).

Besides not being appointed to senior positions, racism has also led to academics leaving institutions. In Potgieter's (2002) study, respondents identified a number of reasons for academics leaving institutions. Prominent among the reasons were institutional racism, racism couched as liberalism, as well as evaluation and expectations, black essentialism, and poor management or leadership, how they responded to the new environment, and the influence of the political and private spheres. This work is important for my study since a number of potential VCs are also affected by this mobility between sectors. Potgieter (2002) argues that many black academics experience racism at former white universities. This is relevant for my study as it is one of the areas explored when probing how race shapes the role of VCs as leaders. The data analysis chapter will explore the impact of these reasons on participants.

In South Africa, the recruitment and selection process for VCs is extremely rigorous, and university Council makes the final decision. The final shortlist of candidates for VC positions at South African universities are made public and these lists often consist of candidates who have previously been shortlisted for the same post at another university. This is in keeping with rigorous systems setup in several universities across Britain and the US.

According to Breakwell and Tytherleigh (2008) there are several stages to the interviewing process in the UK and local government may sit-in at a particular stage of the process, but ultimately, like in South Africa, the university Council makes the final decision. While this process of Council making the final decision of university governance has many benefits such as operating outside of state or party-political agenda within the context of South Africa's recent history, the Council does need to be in line with the larger social and political changes happening across the country. If the Council is untransformed, it is likely that the VC will maintain the status quo rather than transform the university.

Breakwell and Tytherleigh's (2008) study was useful in that it provided insights into the methodological approach of seasoned researchers in the area of VCs and leadership. In a multi-dimensional approach, they engaged in a quantitative analysis of archival data on the personal characteristics of VCs. While this quantitative approach was not used in my work, it will be useful for future studies on VCs in SA and it could enhance a qualitative approach to research on VCs.

Breakwell and Tytherleigh's study also used a qualitative approach where the VCs were interviewed using in-depth interviews to understand the characteristics of VCs and how this related to leadership. This had direct relevance for my work on black VCs in South Africa and was a method that I applied primarily in my data collection process.

Given the political and social transformation needs of South Africa's present context, CHE, according to Higgins (2013), notes that the New Clause 8-49A (1) has allowance for ministerial intervention within university administrative choices, even though this ruling might fall away when challenged constitutionally. While this form of ministerial intervention may have negative consequences for institutional autonomy and academic freedom, it might be necessary in certain instances, especially if an institution is dragging its heels in terms of transformation (Higgins, 2013, p. 4). In the South African context, where transformation remains an urgent priority, this raises real questions about university autonomy. Institutional autonomy was a component of the Anglo-Saxon model of the university that the English-speaking institutions inherited from their British colonial roots (Higgins, 2013, p. 633). It has long been assumed by the common sense of a certain type of progressive thought in South Africa that university autonomy is inherently progressive. In part, this is a response to struggles against the apartheid regime's attempt to encroach on university autonomy from the 1960s onwards. According to Higgins (2013), although heavily dependent on government funding, universities enjoy considerable autonomy with respect to academic policy and administration.

Bearing in mind that university VCs are the focus of the present study, an understanding of their experiences will provide valuable insight into the complex elements of

academic leadership in South Africa. The findings and conclusions could provide a basis for developing a further cohort of primarily black academics, women and men, seeking to occupy high-ranking leadership positions at universities - also for providing the necessary professional and academic support to incumbents. The issue of gender referred to earlier in the discussion also resonates with the narrative on academic leadership and will be discussed in section 2.4.

2.4 Academic leadership and gender in South Africa

There is limited research on the professional trajectories of senior women academics in South African tertiary institutions. One of the key issues addressed in the equity laws is increasing the participation of women at all levels of society, including universities. Although progress has been made in this regard, it is not matched by developments in other fields. This is despite the fact that the ruling party has embraced women empowerment and has achieved significant success in positively changing women's position in society, even in higher decision-making bodies such as national and provincial legislatures. However, women who have attained positions within HEIs have encountered numerous barriers, even at the level of Deputy VCs (Shober, 2014).

Research has shown that black women in academia have been victims of two-fold disadvantage; based on their gender and race. In the process, inevitably, they find it difficult to transcend upwardly in terms of their career trajectory. This reality is much more prevalent at historically black institutions where women staff members felt that they were victims of sexism. On the other hand, women at historically white universities pinpointed the existence of the intrinsic link between sexism and racism, with racism being the overriding variable (Potgieter, 2002). Women who exited universities at their own volition were forced into the action due to lack of professionalism (Potgieter, 2002). While women in the university workplace struggle, the enrolment of women students has substantially increased (Sader, Odendaal & Searle, 2005). The percentage of women at professorship level and senior management is still exceptionally low where women professors constituted 11.6% and executive heads were 16.7%, while 88% of men were professors (Sader et al., 2005). However, by 2016 some improvements were

noted. Statistics by CHE showed that of the approximately 13 000 academics with doctoral qualifications, 5256 were women (CHE, 2016).

Sader et al. (2005) asserts that the reasons for the low numbers of women in higher positions in universities, may be due to their responsibilities for home and children, and therefore the demands of work cannot always be met. Men usually have women at home taking care of social reproduction, (Sader et al., 2005) while women have no such benefit. Therefore, women usually find that they struggle to keep up with the demands of their profession.

Furthermore, according to Sader et al. (2005) when women do take on leadership roles they are usually so preoccupied with doing the job properly that they rarely challenge the status quo; and because the discourse around women is largely one that assumes that women should be maternal and soft, and that their place is outside the demanding world of leadership, women in power are often expected to operate differently to men. When they do not comply, the discourse about these women by their colleagues usually turns hostile. This is exceptionally problematic as it buys into problematic essentialist arguments. Women in this context face discrimination on two fronts; firstly, they are not sufficiently promoted, and secondly, when they are, their success is usually discoursed upon in negative terms.

Morley (2013) suggests that 'femaleness' is often perceived as irreconcilable with intellectual and managerial authority and research suggests that women managers challenge a gender stereotype. The concept of social cognition suggests that we 'think gender' and that we have deeply embedded notions of gender-appropriate behaviour and roles. When we think 'leader', we think 'male'. This situation is not unique to South Africa. Breakwell et al. (2008) documented similar findings in British universities.

Having engaged with the issue of race and gender, especially at the leadership of universities, within a context of social re-dress and institutional transformation, I now shift my focus on more global issues influencing higher education and higher education leadership. The influence of globalisation and the neoliberal ideology has a profound

effect on society, the economy as well as the operational and leadership culture of universities. Insight into globalisation and the neoliberal ideology on the leadership of VCs is a significant area that warrants discussion.

2.5 The role of Globalisation and Neoliberalism on the leadership of VCs

De Vogli (2008) in his review of Navarro's book (*Neoliberalism, Globalisation and Inequalities: Consequences for Health and Quality*) claims that the hegemonic discourses, neoliberalism and globalisation are interconnected and also remarks that neoliberalism is the ideology and practice of the dominant classes of the developed and developing nations that underscores market deregulation and public service (state) retrenchment coexisting with the globalisation of economic activities. The global financial markets fluctuate daily in accordance with wars, struggle for global dominance as well as perpetual socio-economic challenges. However, in this global picture the theme of discussion that faces no contestations is neoliberalism, the "Global Octopus", that is the dominant social and economic concept (De Vogli, 2008).

Neoliberalism denotes a social and economic system of capitalism and economic liberalism dominated by 'free markets', and often having a devastating impact on access to higher education (De Vogli, 2008). In the majority of cases it is rooted in economic liberalisation and austerity, and the dominance of the private sector in economy and society (Soly, 2012; Cahill, 2014; Verhaeghe, 2014; Schram, 2015; Springer, 2015). Neoliberalism has a serious influence on education; especially at tertiary level as it helps set 'national economic growth; equated with wealth creation and capital accumulation' (Gill, 2010; Giroux, 2013; Ferragina & Arrigoni, 2016).

In the context of neo-liberalism and market forces, van der Mescht (2008) raises concerns about its impact on the nature of programs developed for people entering leadership positions in education. Some of these programs have been overly simplified and made less intellectually rigorous in order to meet the market demands of leadership in education (van der Mescht, 2008).

Present-day university VCs cannot ignore the issue of globalisation and the ideology of neoliberalism. Quite clearly, in the current context, university leaders have to contend with corporate models of managerialism in the context of rampant worldwide economic globalisation. Scott (2000) comments that universities' performance in a globalised world will depend on the ingenuity of university leaders as well as the adaptability of what he calls "university tradition". Clearly, in the current context, university leaders have to contend with corporate models of managerialism in the context of rampant worldwide economic globalisation. Universities in South Africa have revolved around the doctrine of 'economic growth', which is related to a number of 'fundamentals' such as 'customer service' (students and their parents); 'institutional performance' and 'performance targets'.

The importance of university VCs in the context of strong leadership has been recognised by the World Bank (Saint, 2015). Saint (2015) reminds us that the World Bank observes that universities in developing countries need excellent leaders as they are crucial to achieving sustainable and "far reaching improvement". In focusing on VCs of South African universities, it is important to keep in mind that South Africa has a highly regulated higher education environment and that, while universities enjoy a certain measure of independence, VCs have to ensure that their institutions fulfil government's goals in terms of education and building human capital which impacts on the broader developmental agenda.

Barber et al. (2013) have examined the higher education leaders' challenges in the global environment. Just as the realities of globalisation and technological changes have transformed and challenged banking and finance and communications, so too do they challenge higher education. These are powerful forces that have inevitable positive and negative effects on universities, their aims and objectives, and strategic and tactical visions in respect of innovative teaching and learning.

Within this context, thorough analysis of university leadership becomes an important issue because universities have become a crucial element of the market forces as the 'traditional version' of it belongs to the past. Neoliberalism has converted university

education to an ‘investment’ in a ‘better future’ (van der Walt, 2017). This means that the university has been turned around significantly and is not a ‘public good’ anymore (van der Walt, 2017). van der Walt (2017) in his scholarly work on the neoliberal university claims that neoliberalism appears to confuse meaning with value, places significance on efficiency and effectiveness to realise maximum profits in a market of clients and competitors dominated big corporations. It further has a pervasive influence on leadership with a strong instrumental slant and an increasing “technology of control” within a context of a “monetarist economy”. It also emphasises “ontological reductionism”, whereby educational management is strictly economist and managerialist (van der Walt, 2017).

The legislative reconstitution of universities as corporations, attempt to manage their affairs at organisational and operational levels along the lines of three fundamentals: the market, managerialism and performativity as these factors are associated with the commodification of knowledge (van der Walt, 2017). Within such a complicated context, the role of a VC is crucial, given the dominance of neoliberalism (van der Walt, 2017). The dominance of market forces have imposed pressure on the leadership to implement plans deemed essential in order to repurpose policies that meet the demands of the market. Collaboration is replaced by a shift towards individualism and prescriptive behaviour is the dominant scenario (Maistry, 2014). This erodes the human dignity of individuals and leads to the incubation of open competition that exacerbates the malignant micro-political climate at universities. This has dire implications for the VC and the leading team as they are obligated to lead effectively and efficiently and to navigate through a maze of confusion, uncertainty and surveillance. Hence, neoliberalism and globalisation has a profound influence on the manner in which VCs construct their role irrespective of race, class or gender.

Maistry (2014) in response to the uncontested doctrine of education for economic growth, demonstrates his penchant for the introduction of the human development approach as introduced by Amartya Sen’s exploration of human capabilities (Robeyns, 2005) and expanded by Nussbaum (2014). Nussbaum’s (2014) ideas on human development resonates with the discourses of care, love, collaboration, spontaneity and

altruism, which are significant in developing the individual holistically. VCs embracing this approach are better able to deal with conflict situations as they are able to immerse themselves by being a participant in challenging situations (e.g. strikes and student uprising), which fosters trust rather than exacerbating further conflict and hence, finding common ground and solutions. An exploration of VCs within the South African educational landscape will provide insights into some of their contextual experiences and how these experiences have impacted on their leadership trajectories.

2.6 Vice Chancellors within the South African educational landscape

A glimpse into the academic and leadership challenges of four VCs in South African universities is provided by Morrell (2015) in a local online newspaper. He describes how, Adam Habib, VC of Wits, has been under pressure, having to contend with arson attacks on Wits campus, and militant disruption of university business. Adam Habib had to also deal with the “Fees Must Fall Campaign” with students demanding no fees at university. In the recent wave of protests, the South African state president, the Minister of Higher Education and VC of the universities declared no increase in student fees and registration fees.

Morrell (2015) also describes the trajectory of Jonathan Jansen, a black academic who became first the black Dean at the University of Pretoria (UP) and VC of the University of the Free State (UFS) and was in the news soon after he took office. Known for his insightful critiques of racism and government inconsistency, his examination of the politics of racial transformation at the UP (based on his time there as Dean of Education), and the pioneering changes at UFS are described. Jansen’s (2005; 2009) own personal reflections about his experiences as a Dean at a historically white university, provides some insight into his perceptions, understandings and experiences of leading a HEI.

Morrell (2015) also describes the trajectory of Sizwe Mabizela, VC of RU since 2014 who has been mindful of national inequalities, and in particular the challenge of regional poverty in the Eastern Cape. Although highly qualified and having taught at several

universities, including heading up the Mathematics Department at RU, Mabizela was also subjected to personalised criticism.

Morrell (2015) also describes the challenges faced by Max Price, VC of UCT. The #RhodesMustFall movement acted as a clarion call for staff and students, for racial transformation and decolonisation. Developments attracted mostly hostile media attention which, in turn, fuelled waves of turbulence. In the context of turbulence in the higher education sector, the primary question that Wits VC Adam Habib asks in his recently released book on protests at universities, *Rebels and Rage* (2019) is around how to respond to a legitimate social struggle on the one hand, while avoiding an eventual decline in the university's academic standards on the other. This is no doubt a question that requires careful pondering.

This VC's reflections on the university and its challenges are important. Habib (2016) has shown that there are practical ways of dealing with challenges of funding imperatives; as well as dealing decisively with a minority that employs violence in order to impose their will on the majority. Habib's narration goes as far as dissecting what is described as the Zuma led ANC faction's role in the #FEESMUSTFALL movement as the ANC-aligned student leaders at his university were displaying behaviours typical of some of the country's politicians.

Recently the Council on Higher Education's (CHE) Monitoring and Evaluation Directorate (2016) developed a collection of reflections from VCs to look at the challenges of higher education leadership in a changing South Africa. VCs who had completed their terms were interviewed. Muller (2016) argued that this was useful as a collection that recorded the dynamic nature of changes in higher education. Some of those interviewed enjoyed the advantage of extensive international experience. This recent study and its methodological approach of interviewing helped inform my own decision to undertake in-depth interviews. Just as the above reflections could provide leadership ideas and direction for future VCs, so too could my study. While the reflections are different from an empirical study like mine, I was able to draw from the

approach of interviewing and how useful such records could be for future VCs and academic leaders in South Africa.

2.7 Challenges facing academics, academic pipeline and the professoriate

The academic sector is not exempt from the issues that affect universities in post-apartheid South Africa. Over the years there has been a struggle on the part of universities to attract sufficient numbers of black South African students wishing to pursue postgraduate degrees because of the fact that large numbers of undergraduates face immediate financial pressures, forcing them to start earning a salary and supporting their families (Habib, 2016). There are limited attempts to develop future generations of academics who could be in line to become the future professoriate.

A 2015 released report entitled ‘New Generation of Academics Program and Human Capital Development Strategy’ (Mabelebele, 2015) shows that the student population (1 million at the time) was small. In terms of academics employed at universities only 36% held a PhD meaning that the 75% target envisaged in the National Development Programme was far off; only 1800 PhDs were produced at the time. Only a few universities had supervisory capacities; white and male academics dominated the workforce; and over 20% of professors were retiring in the next 7-10 years. There was a paucity of South African black academics, especially at the professorial level.

Habib (2016) argues that such concrete realities point to the urgent need for a systemic and urgent national investment to change the situation. ASSAF (the Academy of Science of South Africa, 2010) comprehensive study ‘*The PhD Study: An evidence-based study on how to meet the demands for high-level skills in an emerging economy*’ points to the broad national consensus in the academic community that the developmental needs of South Africa demand the production of enough high-quality in all disciplines (ASSAF, 2010). A report by the National Development Committee (NDC) acknowledged a serious shortage of academics (as cited in, Cloete 2015). This reality was based on the fact that just over a third of all academic staff were in possession of a PhD, a fact that made them ineligible to supervise aspiring students at

doctoral level. The requirement of setting the foundation for a comprehensive plan for developing new generations of academics were clear in a 2011 official document (Higher Education South Africa, 2011) that indicated that inadequate succession planning, poor advancement and insufficient numbers in the institutions' postgraduate pipelines were the main reasons (Higher Education South Africa, 2011).

Habib (2016) has posited that a university professor's training often takes an average of at least 10 years of study and another 10 years of research and experience for the professor to become productive. This means that South African universities need to ensure that the imperative of enhancing the size and quality of the academic pipeline is an imperative in the path to achieving the development of black academics and the professoriate. According to Habib (2016), in the last 20 years, South Africa has not assisted prospective black African PhD and Masters students sufficiently. Without such help, the academia cannot be enriched with new generations of researchers and senior lecturers (Habib, 2016). Such new academic cohorts cannot become a reality without the creation of an enabling environment for future academics (Habib, 2016).

The Council of the Academy of Science of South Africa was assigned to generate evidence-driven advice in regard to the production of PhDs. It proposed a number of steps and a plan to increase both the number and the quality of PhD graduates. This endeavour was important as these graduates were destined to play an active role in the country's economic growth and development (ASSAF, 2010). PhD graduates are instrumental not only at producing original and path-breaking knowledge, but they also lead an institution's efforts in securing additional funds and grants for research projects both from the state (from institutions such as the National Research Foundation) as well as the private sector. Such efforts are sometimes unsuccessful because of the paucity of professors at South African universities. Attempts to swell the academy of PhD graduates are often impacted by the lack of funding for PhD students, despite the increase in post graduate enrolments (CHEC, 2014).

These problems are perpetuated by the fact that productive researchers who are eligible to supervise post graduate students are obligated to publish extensively, participate in

national and international conferences and be involved in administrative support duties (ASSAF, 2010; Kaya, 2000). Under such circumstances, it is understandable that the role of leadership in tertiary institutions is of key importance in the new ever-changing context where technological, economic and organisational conditions have increased pressures, and challenges in the higher education sector. Traditional leadership literature, as indicated, often defines leadership development as a structured plan, which usually seeks to define and categorise leadership as closely linked to essentialised traits of which leadership success is closely linked. This research has often overlooked the subjective experiences of how leaders construct and interpret their life history. Only in recent leadership literature has the focus been on factors such as internal angst, emotions and self-questioning (Gardner et.al., 2005).

The main characteristic of what the literature has described as “authentic” or “transformational” is identification with the role bestowed upon them by the relevant authorities in the public or the private sectors (Gardner et al., 2005). These are leaders who lead by example with honesty, transparency and efficiency; shaped by their personal, values and convictions (Shamir & Eilam, 2018). In this role synergy and coordination and common aims and objectives are fundamental for success (Shamir and Eilam, 2018). Within this context, South Africa’s higher education terrain faces important challenges around transformation and addressing the inequalities of the past. This priority requires that the majority of young, newly appointed black academics excel in responsibilities bestowed upon them, show excellence in teaching and innovation in research (Habib, 2016). However, their ability to excel is impeded by bureaucratic systems, difficult administrative rules and massive student numbers, making academic promotion difficult (Habib, 2016).

There is also a brain drain at universities due to academic salaries not being competitive with public and private sectors (HESA, 2011). It is within such a framework that this study explores how black VCs construct and make sense of their achievements in the South African higher education system in relation to professional, political, personal and historical influences on their career development.

The achievements of VCs manifested by their drive for excellence, efficiency, solid social relationships and prudent decision-making is an essential part of their professional capital that informs their leadership trajectory. The discussion in section 2.8 will attempt to provide an understanding of the leadership of VCs through the lens of professional capital.

2.8 Academic leadership and professional capital

There is broad recognition that transformation in HEIs is a social and economic imperative. Thus, the need for evidence-based ideas and strategic thinking are important. The 2012 publication of *Professional Capital* by Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) opened a new understanding; aiming at transforming the future of teaching and public education. Hailed as a ‘theory’ and ‘evidence’ based and strategically innovative book, it was thought of as a foundation of the process of combatting the existing ‘tiring arguments’ of academics and practitioner researchers. It included action guidelines for layers of public education - from teaching and administrative staff to policy makers. The authors described the concept of capital as related to the worth of an individual or group, especially concerning assets that could be leveraged in order to achieve desired goals (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012).

What they called ‘business capital’ presently assumes that ‘good teaching’ can be replaced by technically advanced online instruction, based on a quick process as it is technically simple that encompasses driven hard-core data that can be mastered willingly (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012). On the other hand, the professional capital viewpoint assumes that ‘good teaching’ is rooted in a collective responsibility and subsequent accomplishment. It involves judgments that are based on experience, knowledge and existing evidence; it is difficult and it mediates, moderates and maximises instruction online (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012).

Professional capital, which has three interconnected components (human, social and decisional capital) that make it functional has versatility and applicability with leadership in the academic field (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012). Thus, in the case of the

university's senior leadership, human capital is related to the personnel and human resource dimension of the quality and talent of the leader (Sparks, 2013). This is related to the ability to recruit the best, retain and develop them at all elements of their role at the university. Social capital is directly related to the levels of quantity and quality of the relationships and social and group interactions amongst people at an institution, including its personnel, leadership and all its role players and stakeholders (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2013; Hargreaves and O'Connor, 2017). Social capital is equally important because it is directly and indirectly related to information and knowledge access, obligations and trust. All these are crucial because the leadership and all parties work for a common vision and objective (Bryant et al., 2017).

Decisional capital is the combination and unity of expertise and practice in the process of decision making amongst the leadership and key stakeholders and role players within a higher education entity. The prerogative of the VC in the process of decision making could take a number of forms. It could be decisions between him and a limited number of leaders or it could be spread amongst a wide array of individual or groups that debate and make decisions accordingly (Ronnie, 2016). This type of capital targets good decisions as many are directly related to decisions around how human and social capital ought to operate in order to achieve the goals of the institution (Sparks, 2013).

The role of the VCs then, is to build and develop professional capital at all levels of operation, as the three capitals are directly related. Research has shown that people, including VCs, are motivated by ideas of success that are accomplished through action (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012). The important discourse that is highlighted when unpacking professional capital (especially the social capital component) are the issues of collective responsibility and collegiality (versus contrived collegiality).

A VCs acquisition of human, social and decisional capital is instrumental in the process of enablement of the operational functioning of the university, in terms of deciding on the foundations such as the mission and vision of the institution (Dufour & Fullan, 2013). Within these parameters and processes, the VC faces risks, challenges, and

disillusionment amongst groups or sections of elements within the university community. Professional capital in such cases is the rock solid element of the dual power of defense and attack in order for the leadership to expose and cut through the misrepresentations and misunderstandings prevalent under such circumstances (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012).

Professional capital and its link with the other capitals, not only deepens the existing human and professional relations, but also develops and cements a shared vision. Within this context, collective responsibility does not only constitute a simple commitment of all parties to a common goal, but it also includes honest and positive competition against existing difficulties (Hargreaves and Fullan, 2012).

Social capital denotes interactions of staff within institutions and organisations and the levels of linking, bridging and bonding in the efforts to achieve common goals and aspirations. Inevitably, the VC, as the institutional leader, needs to possess a social culture of unity founded on individual expertise and interpersonal trust (Sparks, 2013). Social capital guarantees an increase in knowledge as it provides access to the human capital of others, meaning that the VC needs to build the professional capital of staff in the effort to achieve collective work.

The leadership is also responsible for building the social capital of the broader community, especially when institutions of higher learning are situated in poor and marginalised communities (Kirtman, 2013). In such cases, it is important for leadership to develop good relations with such communities through their leaders, political and religious representatives and their youth. It is important to build relational trust with such communities through fruitful engagement, and to develop ties with parents and community leaders (Bryk, et al., 2010).

“Decisional capital” refers to resources of intelligence, energy and knowledge; crucial for the leadership to utilise social and human capital effectively. For this to be achieved, good decisions, expertise and readiness to work in a collective manner creates opportunities to foster an environment of shared leadership and shared, collective

decision-making as well as a deepening of professional ethos at the university (Cole, 2013).

Leadership's professional judgement based on a reflective mould and serious professional judgement leads to the merging of human and social capital; with strong collegiality (Liker & Meier, 2007). Decisional capital only develops when the leadership shows the desire to understand and apply the appropriate learning cultures. 'Shared depth' is a key for a leader, especially a VC, because through it, continuous learning flourishes and makes problem-solving easier.

2.9 The significance of trust in academic leadership

Trust amongst university employees towards the institution's VC takes different forms and is the foundation of a wide variety of implications. Bibb and Kourdi (2004) have pinpointed the following characteristics as the 'building blocks of trust': competence, supporting processes, boundaries, authentic communication, positive intent contact, and forgiveness.

Bibb and Kourdi (2004) have also reflected on the different types of trust, namely relational trust (related to the trust that an individual places in a person, a leader or a group of leaders and is established and developed over a period of time and depends on the actions that individuals and groups take, structural trust (denotes trust in entire institutions, organisations or countries) and transactional trust (related to a specific trust that is often one-off and is related to a specific context and time (Bibb & Kourdi, 2004). Similar attitudes and opinions have been expressed in research by Brown, Daly & Liou (2016) in their findings undertaken in the social network analysis of 43 primary schools in England.

The implications for leadership in the academic domain is clear; the VC is seen by stakeholders and the general public as the voice of the institution. Trust is a fundamental characteristic for the development of social capital at tertiary institutions and among its VCs (Harris, Caldwell, & Longmuir, 2013). Strong social capital in the educational

terrain is a guarantee for the existence of trust characterised by cooperation and implementing the agreed vision amongst the leadership and the key institutional stakeholders (Leana, 2011). Trust is clearly identifiable within the context of a number of indicators of social capital as outlined by Daly and Chrispeels (2008).

A study based on research in six countries produced the International Project to Frame the Transformation of Schools. It indicated that there is a very a high level of alignment between the parents' and other stakeholders expectations and the vision and implementation programs of the school. The trust is cemented due to the continuous engagement of parents and other stakeholders in the community. Trust in the school and its leadership is instrumental in building and developing community partnership relationships (Leana, 2011). In order to meet the wide array of expectations placed on universities, the building of 'reputational capital' is an imperative. Such an imperative includes an improvement in the quality of teaching, learning and research; and setting a widely accepted common set of agreements, instrumental in cementing a collaboration-driven and trusting environment (Cribb & Gewirtz, 2013).

In respect of the reputation of a university, the VC is the builder or destroyer of the relations amongst staff themselves. The VC is also key to ensuring job satisfaction, staff leadership and management, capacity building amongst staff, and facing off external pressures (Branson & Gross, 2014). Directly related to trust is its relationship with professional ethics which are key elements for efficient and sustainable leadership at a university (Bryk & Schneider, 2002). VCs are aware that their position and that of the university's existence are founded on rules and regulations that pinpoint acts of violations of good governance. This means that governance refers to the process where elements in a given society wield power and authority, and enact decisions that the leadership of the institution are obligated to follow (Arar & Abo-Rome, 2016).

All VCs ought to be aware that institutional leadership for the 21st century is founded on ethical and moral values that need to be defined as to be applicable to specific contexts and environments (Cherkowski, Walker & Kutsyuruba, 2015). Marshall's (2018) principles of ethical leadership has been considered a guidance for various levels

of education and has been applicable to leaders who need guidance in planning and implementing ethical codes and practices at their institutions. In the last few years there has been an increasing number of researchers investigating a wide array of dimensions of ethical educational leadership; mainly following the pioneering effort of Starratt (1991) whose paper was the first to produce a clear theoretical model on the issue of ethical leadership in education (Langlois & Lapointe, 2010). These studies have attempted to provide a framework in identifying a practice characterising an educational practice founded on ethical behaviour and action in terms of personal and professional conduct (Langlois & Lapointe, 2010; Langlois et al., 2014).

Ethical perspectives of educational leaders include caring for the institution, those who work for it, the students and all and role players (Shapiro and Stefkovich, 2016). Fundamental for higher education leaders are the ethics of caring rooted in the belief that solid and honest human relations are the foundation of the institution; and the basis of decision making (Starratt, 2004). Such ethical behaviour and action on behalf of institutional leadership will be a barrier to corrupt practices that have become frequent at South African universities.

2.10 Academic leadership and accountability

Accountability as a virtue has taken a wide variety of forms and manifestations (Elmore, 2003, 2006; Sirotnik, 2005). It has been widely accepted that transparent accountability is one of the most important attributes of leadership; especially at HEIs. Within this context, the building and investment in the professional capital of the senior leadership is of key importance; and results in efficient and effective organisational operations. In a path-breaking empirical effort Fullan, Rincon-Gallardo, and Hargreaves (2015) spell out the responsibilities of institutional leaders responsible for creating and implementing institutional policies in their efforts to build the foundations of an effective system of accountability. Their analysis is based on an empirical exploration of the circulation and development of professional capital and its three components that have been explored earlier (i.e. decisional, social and individual human capital).

In the creation of such a new type of model, the ‘professional accountability model’, the importance of the continuous improvement of the strong internal institutional accountability is supplemented by external accountability, instrumental in reassuring the public that the system is performing in accordance with the expectations of its students, staff and stakeholders at large (Fullan et al., 2015). The attempt of Fullan et al. (2015) was a long empirically-based effort in response to another important accountability paper developed by Darling-Hammond, et al. (2015), who proposed a framework consisting of professional capacity, meaningful learning and resource accountability as the pillars of strong accountability at an institution.

Hargreaves & Fullan (2012) utilised the notion and concept of ‘professional capacity’ as the epitome of the responsibilities of institutional leaders responsible for creating and maintaining the conditions that would guarantee accountability at all operational levels. ‘Professional capacity’, according to them, is the equivalent of professional capital, which is used to analyse and justify the focus on human resource development (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012). This is so that institutions are equipped to meet external and internal problems in an accountable manner based on the elevation of key professional and scholastic priorities such as high standards at organisational and operational levels (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012).

It is important to emphasise the fact that in theory and practice, the success of a VC relies on a plan and action rooted in the belief that the strategy of professional capital is based on high individual and group standards. These are the key ingredients of accountability and support within the institution (Hargreaves et al., 2014). Social capital is instrumental in building collective and individual efficacy simultaneously, and creates links of accountability that is decisive in efforts to develop their talents accordingly in their specific duties and responsibilities within the organisation (Hargreaves et al., 2014). In addition, professional culture is strengthened by effective collaboration that is important for creating, developing and sustaining the professional capital of all role players and stakeholders of the institution aspiring to success (Elmore, 2006).

External accountability is based on the efforts of university leaders who feel that it is crucial for the reputation of the institution to reassure stakeholders that the institution is a high performer because of its commitment to rules and regulations that are supplemented by monitoring and evaluation of its functions (Elmore, 2003). There are diverse opinions based on research in response to the question about the levels of importance in respect of internal and external accountability. Extensive research, however, has shown that internal accountability is more important and must precede external accountability if success and improvement of the institution is the key goal (Leana & Pil, 2006; Zavadsky, 2009; Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012; Hargreaves & Shirley, 2012). An important aspect that informs transparent accountability is trust. It also plays a significant role in strengthening leadership roles. The discussion in section 2.10 will focus on trust as an essential ingredient in driving academic leadership.

2.11 Spontaneity and its significance to the leadership of the VC

George and Jones (2009) have called organisational spontaneity, which is analogous to organisational citizenship behaviour (OCB), as the ‘extra-role behaviours’ rooted in existing opportunities and contextual influences such as skill levels, interpersonal relationships and help-seeking behaviour. It is related to the willingness of leaders, managers and employees to engage spontaneously in efforts instrumental in leading to organisational effectiveness and efficiency in their efforts to enhance the professional ethos, productivity and success of an institution or organisation (Jena & Goswami, 2014).

The key characteristics that underpin the contextual influences of organisational spontaneity in an organisational environment are interdependence and group norms, as well as institutional culture, policies, and reward systems (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Paine, & Bachrach, 2009). Spontaneity and OCB have become an important research interest in applied psychology and public administration and is related to discretionary activities of individuals within an institutional environment. It is considered a constructive and positive attitude beneficial to the organisation and the co-workers (Podsakoff, Blume, Whiting, & Podsakoff, 2009).

A number of the pioneer researchers of the phenomenon (Organ, 1988; Somech & Drach-Zahavy, 2004; Organ, 2016) emphasised the spontaneity factor and its nature of OCB; pinpointing the fact that actions associated with it always create positive impressions that could lead to promotion. Research on the spontaneous nature of OCB has led researchers to a wide variety of methods to analyse the types of behaviours associated with the behaviour including the 'basic' ones such as civic virtues, institutional loyalty, individual initiative and organisational compliance (Podsakoff et al., 2009).

OCB is a behaviour that helps individuals with different aspirations and motives; where they utilise a number of 'avenues' aligned with both professional and institutional goals. All actions are based on decision-making related to existing organisational processes and structures. All decisions are made in accordance with the planning and pursuit of short and long-term goals (Halbesleben & Bellairs, 2015). Most researchers of the phenomenon believe the 'highest level of OCB is conscientiousness; a behaviour that goes beyond the minimum organisational roles required by the employee (Law, Wong & Chen, 2005). OCB has also been related to the field of leadership behaviour with mainly four types fitting into the phenomenon - transactional, transformational, the leader-member exchange theory and the path-goal theory of leadership.

Transformational leadership behaviour has been associated with the articulation of a vision, expectation of innovative planning and the setting up of an appropriate model and goals; thus fostering the acceptance of group goals, expectations of high performance and intellectual stimulation. In terms of the characteristics of OCB in transactional leadership, non-contingent punishment behaviour and contingent reward behaviour are important elements (Law, Wong & Chen, 2005).

Podsakoff et al. (2009) in their meta-analysis of individual and organisational-level consequences of OCBs found that they were positively related to customer satisfaction and unit-level. Nielsen, et al. (2009) in their research of OCB and performance, discovered a significant and positive relationship between overall OCB and performance at the group level. Pavalache-Ilie (2014) in her empirical analysis of OCB

employers' personality and work satisfaction, indicated that there was significant association of OCB to self-efficacy because those with higher education levels focus mostly because of promotion aspirations. OCB was more intense in the public rather than the private sector (Pavalache-Ilie, 2014).

It was established that at the managerial level, the planning of a number of motivational strategies were instrumental in boosting OCB, especially when educational leadership is able and eager to create a supportive environment in the educational institution that enabled staff integration, organisational commitment, job satisfaction, fair play and altruism. Within these parameters the phenomenon of spontaneity and OCB in augmenting the leadership efficiency of a VC can be examined and analysed. The realities of a top leadership position at an institution of higher learning is associated with a number challenges that are connected to the contextual environment and social realities. The challenge to the VCs is the ability to behave in a way that connects spontaneity and OCB at an organisational and human level to create an atmosphere of dedication, loyalty and trust, thus reducing conflict and potential conflict and building a harmonious and more cohesive staff.

For these to become a tangible reality, the organisation is in need of a leader whose social and scholastic leadership is rooted in a deep understanding of the significance of civic virtues. These are the roots of key decision making, planning and action for the future. The spontaneity and OCB exhibited by the VC also has the potential to improve operational efficiency and effectiveness of the university, thus deepening the professional capital of the VC and the professional capital of the institution as a whole.

For an individual to display some sense of spontaneity involves engaging with individuals in a modest and humble way and not displaying arrogance and an omniscient attitude. This modesty would sometimes mean displaying a sense of vulnerability, which can act as a potential magnet for engagement and developing social relationships. The discussion in section 2.12 focuses on the power of vulnerability in developing and sustaining the leadership skills of VCs.

2.12 The power of vulnerability in academic leadership

An important lesson learnt is that a leader can only be successful when trust is built and perpetrated between the leader and the followers. This trust is the outcome of a number of virtues possessed by the leader, one of the most important ones being vulnerability which has been described as a key element upon which connection and communication is based (Nienaber, Hofeditz, & Romeike, 2015). Vulnerability as a social, psychological, sociological and human phenomenon has been the center of countless debates, hence the multiplicity of definitions in relation to the concept. As a deeply human and social phenomenon the first step in understanding and analysing the realities behind it, is to begin with the understanding that it is the outcome of the relationship and interaction between the individual and the surrounding environment. This reality has been demonstrated in the analysis of courage in life and leadership (Brown, 2012), which resonates strongly with the way black VCs construct their leadership role and the specific university context in which they operate in.

Vulnerability appears when the leader faces pressure or attacks emanating from external sources and loses control momentarily over a period of time (Brown, 2012). Lopez (2018) defined it as a willingness (on the part of the leader) to be emotionally exposed and transparent with other individuals or groups despite the possibility of being attacked or hurt. She utilised the example of a leader who when taking a risk could share the feelings of fear or to overcome a failure before planning and implementing a new vision.

In academia, there is a belief that vulnerability, especially in leadership, is a weakness as it is related to timidity and uncertainty. Lopez (2018) in her analysis of vulnerability in leadership and the power of courage to descend, analysed the relationship between vulnerability and showed that because of the fact that vulnerability comes with great risk, courage is a necessary ingredient in the vulnerability equation. The analysis showed that courage in leadership was directly related to the ethical attitude and behaviour of followers, strengthened by follower empowerment and supplemented by their courageous behaviour.

In such a situation, one of the key foundations in the efforts to build trust is rooted in the core of vulnerability, a crucial value in the process of building trust amongst stakeholders and role players. Brown (2012) has shown that vulnerability is synonymous with transparency as well as a key element of authentic leadership based on trust between the leader and the followers (Avolio, Gardner, Walumbwa, Luthans, & May, 2004). Such a leadership is rooted in high morals, self-awareness and transparency where information, and future actions are shared equally in interactions and debates (Peus, Wesche, Streicher, Braun & Frey, 2012).

The authenticity of the leaders makes them honest and open about their strengths, weaknesses and values. Leaders are judged by results, hence, their expectations for performance are high; and it is therefore imperative for them to face the consequence. Brown (2012) has shown that vulnerability is the root of human and social connection and it is wrong on the part of leaders to hide it. Therefore, vulnerability which enhances trust (Nienaber et al., 2015) also enables individuals (e.g. VC's) to make risky, creative and innovative decisions that can deepen their professional capital and the professional capital of the institution they serve.

The existing literature on leadership is clear that genuine leaders are born and made since what they are is because of inspiration, human and social relations and empathy (Sekerka, Bagozzi, & Charnigo, 2009, pp. 568-569). This means that genuine leaders are prepared to accept feedback and criticism from critics in their effort to improve; by trying to achieve the best results possible through listening and acting carefully, even under trying circumstances. Such processes open the path for success and is accompanied by the creation of new opportunities for both the leaders and the followers. In such a process, all questions are debated and agreed upon and possible uncertainties are answered (Scandura & Pellegrini, 2008). These realities apply equally to the case of university VCs where it is basically the attitude and action that characterise the important value of fragilities and fallibilities (Peus et al., 2012).

It is up to the institutional leader to demonstrate that his/her real or hidden vulnerability is the transformation catalyst that harnesses opportunities, especially under conditions

of crisis through common thinking; and building trust amongst the parties (Hanson, 2014). This is because at an institution of higher learning there should not be ‘enemies’ and fundamental questions are in need of integration and courage; Chodron (cited in Ackerman and Maslin-Ostrowski, 2004). It is up to the VC to transform the vulnerability into strong leadership based on collegiality and the integration of the efforts for new vision. Such efforts cannot be achieved with honesty in solving problems through transparent communication devoid of misconceptions.

2.13 Methodological considerations - researching VCs in South Africa

Noting that there are few studies on VCs in South Africa, I present the most recent of these to critically examine the methodologies used in the research and understand why such approaches to the study of higher education leadership were taken. In Habib’s (2019) study, his reflections on being a VC of a university at a time when his institution became the centre of attention in the #FeesMustFall campaign during the 2015/16 period of sustained protest action, formed the basis of insights of what it means to be a VC during a turbulent time. His reflections were based on his experience of the issues that he had to deal with, not only within his institution, but also in terms government’s involvement and the public at large. This rich account of his experience was only possible through a narration of this experience within the broader context of higher education transformation.

In an earlier study of university leadership, Jansen (2009) also used personal reflections to express his experiences and views of trying to bring about change in a culturally sensitive environment, where he had to tread very carefully to understand the issues, challenges and needs of a changing society. *Knowledge in the Blood* (2009) was a personal memoir of his experience of being a black dean in a traditionally white and male dominated university. In this book, he reflects on the fact that despite the fact that enormous changes have occurred in SA, we remain largely untransformed and there are a number of stereotypes which show “how students remember and enact the past” (p. 5). He continued with this line of engagement through his book *As by Fire* (Jansen, 2018). In this book, he studies VCs and how they managed to exercise leadership during

the #FeesMustFall protests. During this period, where university property were destroyed across the country, university VCs were violently threatened and harassed. He interviewed 11 of 26 VCs across historically white and historically black; well-endowed and inadequately resourced; urban and rural; large and small universities. He found that the challenges faced by the VCs were enormous. Part of the reason for Jansen's study on VCs was in response to a lack of a comprehensive study about VCs in South Africa, with a view to delve into theorising and explaining what these VCs experienced as such deep challenges.

Drawing from these two substantial works on VCs in South Africa, it seems that personal accounts of being a VC was the most appropriate methodology to generate a detailed and experiential perspective to being a VC. While the context of such studies were done during periods of high levels of disruptions, these rich personal accounts of VCs provided a basis for understanding the transforming context of higher education. These two studies have not covered sufficient grounds of understanding the roles, responsibilities, training needs and leadership issues in leading a public university within South Africa, and as such, many more small scale studies are needed before this level of scholarship can be elevated to theoretical and philosophical levels to deeply understand how and why VCs come to lead public universities in the way they do. More narratives of VCs are needed and this study takes this vantage point of focusing on the narratives of black VCs as a segment of VCs; and especially in the context of increasing the pool of black VC as a transformation imperative in South Africa.

2.14 Conclusion

This chapter provided a review of the current trends, thinking and research on academic leadership, especially illuminating discourses that resonate strongly with the leadership of VCs. For example, the discourses of globalisation and neoliberalism, professional capital, vulnerability, spontaneity and trust are significant discourses in determining the leadership trajectory of a VC (in the context of South Africa). Some are enabling discourses (e.g. professional capital, trust, vulnerability and spontaneity) while neoliberalism and globalisation have been shown to have a disabling effect, thus

constraining the leadership pathway of a VC. The theoretical framework, which informs the structure and support for the rationale of the study, the problem statement, the purpose, the research questions, the anchor for the literature review, the methods and data analysis (Grant & Osanloo, 2014) will be unpacked in the next chapter.

CHAPTER THREE - THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 Introduction

This chapter provides the theoretical framework of the study that seeks to examine how black VCs make sense of their roles as leaders within the South Africa higher education context. The theoretical framing chapter for this study is rooted in the nature of the research on black VCs, and the study adopts a multi-theoretical perspective. This was necessary as the study is focused on who these VCs are (their backgrounds, their aspirations to leadership positions and then leading higher education institutions). Hence, Bourdieu's key concepts of habitus, field and capital, formed the theoretical framework to understand who they are against their personal biographies and histories, while leadership theories formed the framework to understand how they have led their respective institutions as VCs. In order to understand how black VCs make sense of their roles as leaders, I principally work within the ideas based on Pierre Bourdieu's 1990 and 1977 theory and empirical manifestations of habitus, field and capital (Bourdieu, 1990; 1977).

In this chapter, I will discuss the following key concepts. Firstly, I will focus on habitus as a key element of understanding how individuals make sense of their lives and experiences. Next, the chapter focuses on the concept field as it relates to the social and education field of higher education. Finally, Bourdieu (1977) refers to economic capital, social capital and cultural capital as key to the construction of identity and social obligations. These are discussed in relation to the notion of leadership.

3.2 Habitus

Bourdieu's utilisation of habitus, capital and field, unite method and theory, especially in regard to educational management and leadership as Eacott (2016) has shown.

Habitus is the creation of a continuous interplay of individuals' free will and the socially-rooted constraints they face. Everyone's life is inevitably shaped by historical events and everyday experiences and realities - in short a system of motivating and cognitive structures that are socially constituted (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 76).

In this study, I seek to examine how VCs make sense of their roles as leaders in the higher education environment in South Africa. This means that their meanings following Bourdieu, are an 'interplay' between their ability to engage as free agents and the broader social constraints through which they negotiate being and becoming a VC. Whilst it is true that Bourdieu's writings have not dealt specifically with educational administration, the value of his understandings of habitus allows me to engage with the narratives of the participants in ways that see leadership as being a process that is socially located, involving individual agency and that such experiences are shaped by history and everyday social experiences.

An individual's realities, according to Bourdieu (1977), are shaped by their life's experiences and are key elements in the process of shaping present and future actions. Bourdieu's conceptual analysis of habitus has been criticised by a number of scholars who have 'utilised', primarily, the writings of Jenkins (1992, pp. 82-83) who declared the term and analysis of habitus as 'deterministic'.

However, the critics have ignored his strongly diversified analysis based on the belief that habitus is not the sole determinant of one's trajectory of life. Eacott (2010, pp. 266-267) has shown that the individual has the strategic ability to manage habitus through strategic initiatives within a specific context ('field'). Jenkins himself described the field as social positions that are occupied by institutions or individuals whose nature defines the situation for their occupants (Jenkins, 1992, p. 85).

Despite the fact that Bourdieu's ideas have been critiqued by a wide array of scholars (Felski, 2015; King, 2000; Tittenbrun, 2018; Wacquant, 2013) there is no debate regarding the fact that his theories and intellectual tools have been utilised extensively by a multitude of theorists and researchers in the sociological, anthropological and

educational disciplines. For example, as noted by Gale and Lingard (2015, pp. 2-3) the ways in which people make sense of their lives, ideas, thoughts and actions within a particular societal setting is related to the individuals' behaviour in relation to the existing social and political circumstances surrounding them.

Knowledge and understanding of existing circumstances from individuals engaged actively in society's and life's realities acquire behavioural patterns that seem self-evident and natural. However, individual's experiences are not natural; but as Bourdieu (1977) states are located in habitus and socially constituted. This knowledge and understanding of life experiences are instrumental in the individual's capacity to deal with the ever changing situations faced daily, thus directly relevant to this study on how VCs make sense of their role as leaders of universities. Bourdieu believed that, via habitus, human actions are determined by past conditions that are instrumental in the shaping of one's future (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 72). This means that individual behaviour and action are destined to reproduce the existing social order (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 81) while the relationships between individuals are rooted on interactions based on their past and present positions in the existing social structure (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 82).

In this context it can be understood that habitus is the determinant of what both collectives and individuals do; hence, its key importance for the development of social capital. In one of the most debated sentences (one of the many) Bourdieu utilised common concepts such as friendship, love and sympathy 'dominated' via the harmony of habitus "by the objective structure of the relations between social conditions" (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 82). The meaning of the above is that individuals create a friendship are rooted on the behavioural patterns produced by habitus and express of individuals' status in a given society. In a nutshell, habitus is a set of dispositions, attitudes and behaviours and these orientate an individual in society. These are transformed into structures of perception, conception and action (Bourdieu, 2002, p. 27).

The foundations of habitus are in the family's socialisation patterns of upbringing and is rooted and determined to a large extent by the individual's position within the existing social structure of, what Bourdieu called, the 'socialized subjectivity'. In other words,

it is a subjectivity conditioned primarily by structural circumstances. Habitus is considered instrumental in shaping the existing and future parameters of an individual's sense of agency and possibilities in a stratified society. In this study, the concept of habitus is used to identify and understand how VCs have come to be within the family socialisation, their exposure to leadership and being leaders of higher education institutions.

3.3 Field

Field in Bourdieu's analysis are the norms dominating a wide array of an individual's activities within areas of life such as family, university, politics and art. As Thompson (2008, p. 69) has pointed out, fields are organised around combination or specific forms of capitals. Fields are determined by their own regulative principles, which are based on the 'logic of practice' and the 'existing rules of the game'. These are instrumental in the power struggles among different interests that seek to control the existing rules and the capital in a particular field.

The inter-relation of the individual's habitus and capital are instrumental in determining an individual's position in a particular field. An individual's ideas, actions and practices are the outcome of habitus and cultural capital interacting in terrain and context of a specific field. Throughout life's processes, there is a continuous overlapping of fields such as those of family (a small one) with the economic, educational and social fields. Although there are similarities amongst fields in many instances, they tend to be semi-autonomous, when defining practices, activities and social patterns.

Each and every field falls within a social space epitomising the field of power, epitomised by the distribution of economic and cultural capital, the two competing principles of every social hierarchy. In his analysis, Bourdieu (1997) examines three key forms of capital: the economic capital, which can be converted readily; the social capital, comprising of a wide range of connections and social obligations; and the cultural capital that can be objectified through cultural products, embodied, and institutionalised (officially accredited).

Bourdieu (1997) has described the important functions of the economic capital as a key generator of resources invested in the development of children's cultural capital, that includes further educational and occupational success in the life process and becomes instrumental in perpetrating economic capital accumulation of economic capital. In cases where an individual's social network expands and broadens significantly in terms of influence, it becomes more conducive to financial success. This means that success in the economic terrain is directly related to greater social capital.

The ideas, concepts and analysis undertaken by Bourdieu have opened new paths of understanding of social realities in many spheres of societal interaction based on status, class, history and power in relation to education, leadership, teaching learning and research. Existing criticism as identified above ignore the tested reality of the sociologist's exploration and analysis of the dynamics of power and its diachronic relevance of the use of power and its direct and indirect influence on social and political order throughout the history of the world for times immemorial. Such criticism negates the relationship of power with 'cultural capital' evident in the core of his writings and analysis (Bathmaker, Ingram, and Waller 2013, pp. 724-725).

The present study aspires to contribute to the existing research literature utilising Bourdieu's theories in order to conceptualise the contemporary leadership practice in nine HEIs in South Africa. In this context, habitus, field and capital will be utilised to conceptualise University VC's practices and how they vary across a number of different contexts. International literature abounds of theoretical, empirical and conceptual analysis and attempted dissections of leadership in all spheres of society. Given the crucial importance of education; and especially tertiary education; it is considered one of the leading terrains in academia.

This is understood as higher education, shaped by competent, transparent, ethical and innovative leaders as a key foundation of a successful society. There is universal agreement that one of the key elements of a successful HEI lies is its leadership. Such leadership can only be understood and analysed through a conceptual framework that

sets up and relates the existing leadership practices to the realities and context of the institution as well as the historical and life roots of its leadership.

It is in this endeavour that will ultimately lead to the utilisation of an analytical or empirical framework consisting of detailed open-ended interviews with university leaders in the domain of their practices. This will be examined through the utilisation of Bourdieu's habitus, capital and field as outlined earlier.

One of Bourdieu's key positions in analysis of social phenomena is the emphasis on the individual's past that plays a crucial role in shaping present practices and actions in respect of the leadership position occupied. Webb et al., (2017) argued that the comprehensive nature of Bourdieu's analysis of most aspects of education as a social reality including leadership, especially in relationship to class background and existing inequalities makes it necessary for a more advanced and comprehensive approach through the utilisation of meta-analysis.

In their empirical effort they attempted to utilise a number of new theories that appeared after Bourdieu in their exploration of Australian higher education, utilising what they have called a 'practice-based' theory which provide researchers with the opportunity to delve into realities such as 'new practices' and what they call the 'non-human factor' and 'inter-sectionality'. The latter is described as an integral part of the social theory of knowledge and an empirical tool that becomes instrumental in the process of analysis, facilitated through meticulous exploration of routine struggles, actions and practices.

Such an analysis, they argued, will reveal the becomingness and complexities, of social change, subjectivities and positioning. The authors believed that their ideas would be serious theoretical additions and indeed extensions to Bourdieu's ideas and writings in expanding the understanding of aspects and realities of higher education including leadership patterns. It can be argued that the article has added to the massive critical literature on Bourdieu's contribution in respect of the complexity of class inequalities across the world.

As mentioned earlier, a leader's disposition is rooted in past experiences as encompassed in habitus. This means that the leader's thoughts and actions are founded on historical experiences, events and circumstances. His/her contextual conditions are determined by history (Adkins, Brosnan, & Threadgold, 2016). Bourdieu's followers such as Jenkins (1992, p. 75) have emphasised the importance of the power of the habitus which is derived from the thoughtlessness of habituation and habit; and not from principles and rules that are learnt consciously. This means that what is of crucial importance to habitus is the unconscious internalisation of events and social surroundings.

3.4 Capital

One of Bourdieu's famous quotations states "capital finds its way to capital" (Bourdieu, 1998, p. 21). This quote has serious resonance with the South African higher education reality at least before the seminal decision taken at the ruling party's latest National Conference that decided to drop registration fees for hundreds of thousands of poor, marginalised and lower middle class matriculants thus presenting the #FeesMustFall movement with a resounding victory. One of Bourdieu's seminal contributions in the process of understanding human relations lies in his analysis of the relationship between different types of capital; including cultural, economic, social and symbolic.

The key element of Bourdieu's (1986) dissection of social capital lies in the recognition that capital does not only exist in its economic form, but is also rooted in theories of symbolic power and social reproduction. His work emphasised unequal access and structural constraints to institutional resources based on race, class and gender. His view and analysis was based on the fundamental idea that social capital is not a property of the collective but the individual who is able to exert power to mobilise resources. Such individuals are able to achieve positions of power and status through the development of goodwill (Bourdieu, 1986).

Social capital for him is attached to class and other social stratification forms that lead to social elevation through advancement that leads to resource possession based on

acquired “institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition” (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 119). This means that social capital resides in the individual through the individual’s investment.

While Bourdieu and his followers have identified 4 categories of capital (economic, symbolic, cultural and social) (Jenkins, 1992, p. 85), the present project’s focus is mainly on cultural capital (the knowledge of VCs of their duties and responsibilities and how to succeed in fulfilling the expectations of all stakeholders). However, economic capital (the efforts and achievements of university leaders in the efforts to gain access to sufficient financial resources), social capital (relations and contact with significant groups or personalities in politics or business) and symbolic capital (positions and experience gained because of status gained and expanded through previous associations and/or positions) are also important; and indeed relevant.

There have been a number of other social science exponents of social capital such as Robert Putnam, but the difference is that Bourdieu’s is based on his theories of field and habitus (Bourdieu, 1984). Overall his theory of social capital has been substantiated by a wide range of social science theories that acknowledge the diversities and complexities of specific social environments. His research and general approach and analysis has influenced a diversified range of research dealing with a wide spectrum of social relations, including the present project on VCs.

Before the victory of the #FeesMustFall movement, few working class matriculants could study at the UCT, Stellenbosch or Wits because of the high fees. Such a reality, as Koh and Kenway (2012) state, inevitably questions the social and economic understandings of the university’s leadership, especially the VC.

Social life and their difficulties and challenges are integrally associated with the family and institutional habitus; and the complexities that play a key role in the relationship of leaders and those surrounding them in the work and community environments (Atkinson, 2011). Every university is a social and educational entity of the institutional habitus and a collective of stakeholders. The role players include the VC, the Council

that oversees him/her, academic and administrative staff, the students and the community. They constitute a societal and collective reality characterised and founded upon a number of laws, principles and activities (Atkinson, 2011, p. 333) all of which have their own impact on the individual leader as well as all those surrounding the VC - as an individual and a leader of a multi-class collective. Inevitably then, history, family, school, social and institutional surroundings and events such as personal and collective experiences have a direct effect on the higher education leader.

In my context case, field is the terrain of a wide array of institutions of higher education with their own complexities, problems and practices. It is a dynamic system with its own structures determined by the particularities of teaching, research and community engagement, a terrain of fluid boundaries that includes a wide array of economic and social conditions that could easily lead to power struggles especially in regard to leadership (Mahar, Harker & Wilkes, 1990, p. 8).

Capital in my case is significant because as university leaders enter the terrain at the apex of institutions, they discover that capitals derived from the historical past enable them in their elevation to the highest echelons. In the process these capitals are supplemented and matched with the values of the institution, the road to the top becomes a tangible reality, leading to the path uniting the past, present and future (Bathmaker, 2015, pp. 62-63).

Eacott (2010) has shown how to utilise strategies in empirical studies in order to realise the existing constraints of social capital. In this effort; his strong emphasis on the individual agency pinpoints the existence of a strategy as an unconscious rational choice (Eacott, 2010, p. 268) based on a certain logic that has been mastered by the actor because of life's experience. Through this experience the process has been transformed into an integral part of habitus in all respects. Overall, the thinking and writings of Bourdieu have opened new roads of understanding and analysis of important social phenomena taking shape in the present and/or forthcoming 4th Industrial Revolution. His thoughts are instrumental in the construction and undertaking of the present project

in the effort to capture a wide sphere of social issues and matters associated with leadership in tertiary education in South Africa.

Within this societal context, the analytical tools and lenses as outlined above provide a conceptual and analytical framework enabling dissection of the ways leaders think, plan and act. The present project is planned in such a way so as to investigate the interaction of habitus, capital, and field in order to understand and dissect the key aspects of the VC's action within a specified and unique context.

The thinking tools in Bourdieu's works are instrumental in opening the path for the researcher in the process of researching how individual histories inform university leaders and in the process shape their thinking, planning and subsequent actions. The background of how the habitus of the VCs led them, subconsciously or consciously, to the highest leadership role will be researched and analysed, with special emphasis on the existing dimensions of the practicalities associated with the role of the senior leader. Bourdieu's notions of habitus, capital, strategies and field are instrumental in dissecting and analysing the mixture of past experiences and present challenges and achievements.

3.5 Strategic leadership

This section begins with a brief description of the concepts of strategy and leadership with a view to understanding strategic leadership as it relates to this study. Strategy denotes a carefully undertaken plan targeting the achievement of certain actions aiming to achieve one or more goals within an organisational or institutional entity (Freedman, 2013, p. 4). A strategist sets goals, plans, and objectives and determines the appropriate actions in the effort to achieve these goals, through the mobilisation of the existing resources in order to execute the actions (Terra & Passador, 2016, p. 236). Strategic planning and strategic thinking, the roots of strategic leadership, are the foundations of a stream of decisions that will shape the future fate of the institution through the unfolding of external and internal societal and institutional realities and contexts; and the actions to be undertaken (Kvint, 2015).

Strategy has been described as a process of thinking, planning and executing, founded on a careful analysis and dissection of the existing internal and external contexts; and their relationships with the nature of existing problems and challenges - a policy that guides the planning and ways of dealing with the problems and challenges; and the coherent actions to follow and implement in the guiding policy (Rumelt, 2011). One of the keys for a successful strategy is that the strategist needs to possess the ability to foresee the possible consequences of undertaking initiatives for the future. This means that the strategist needs to possess knowledge and understanding of the existing external and internal environments, undertake comprehensive research on the realities evident in these environments and examine the logic in the process of planning. Careful understanding of existing internal resources, their capability and commitment and the necessity of calculated and synergistic action are key to success or failure (Freedman, 2013, p. 5).

Leadership, as a concept and an everyday reality has been covered extensively in the literature. It has produced a wide variety of viewpoints attempting to understand and analyse individual or collective actions associated with vision, influences, behaviour, intelligence and traits (Chin, 2015, pp. 200-201). It is a subject that has been analysed and debated from ancient times; while attempting to analyse the above characteristics of individuals and groups with a common belief that history and the existing political, social and economic environment play a key role in the development and understanding of the concept (Howell & Wanasika, 2012). As every phenomenon and its conceptual understanding in human history; the direct and indirect relationship between an individual or group in a given society; and the internal and external realities is of paramount importance (Arvey, Rotundo, Johnson, Zhang & McGue, 2006, pp. 3-4).

Leadership characteristics that abound in research-based literature include innovation, intelligence, adaptive and personality high self-esteem and self-confidence (Howell & Wanasika, 2012). Behaviour towards other leaders, managers and followers has been declared as a key element of successful leadership since the early 1950s. This was later labelled 'servant leadership' and was based on followers' participation in group debates and discussions (Chemers, 1997).

Despite the differences in leadership theories based on empirical research, there is a common acceptance of the fact that diverse situations call for different leadership styles. Effectiveness and efficiency in this case can only become a reality when the leaders understand and analyse (through experience and/or expertise) the existing realities and are able to convince a highly committed, and motivated team to establish a common vision; while balancing the interests of management and individual followers (Chin, 2015, pp. 200-201).

Amongst the most debated types of leadership by academics and practitioners in the last 30 years is the strategic one, especially its meaning and importance in organisational performance in society. In the efforts to conceptualise and dissect the particularities, characteristics and realities, two distinct opinions in regard to the theoretical and empirical dimensions of the concept have emerged over the years and made their presence felt. The first believed that although (in theoretical terms) there were a number of academic and conceptual debates on its nature, there were questions regarding the lack of research that could strengthen the roots of this type of thinking (Liedtka, 1998, p. 121). The exponents of this position existed some ten years ago and one of its key representatives was Fairholm who called existing empirical work on the topic as ‘work in progress’ (Fairholm & Fairholm, 2000, pp. 102-103; Fairholm, 2009) because of the perceived lack of empirical research and manifestation of the phenomenon.

The second position on the theoretical dimension of the concept expanded on the issue. It pinpointed the reality that there has been general leadership research since the mid-1980s, a significant part of which concentrated on strategic management and its wide variety of facets in both the private and public sectors. This included its effects on decision-making and the viability of organisations due to the role of such leadership that involves planning, decision-making, and the actions that make or break organisations (Mintzberg & Quinn, 1991; Montgomery, 2008, pp. 55-56; Porter, 1996, pp. 62-63).

These empirical efforts were a reality despite the fact that the mid-1980’s were not necessarily the era preparing the contemporary ever-changing world built on high

technology, speed, immense pressures, immediate action and craving for fast and immediate results (Noble, 1999, pp. 120-121, Thompson & Strickland, 2003). In fact the 'strategic leadership school' has its roots in the mid-1950's and 1960's with works by a variety of academics such as Selznick, Chandler, Ansoff, Drucker and Henderson as the most visible and read proponents (Andrews, Boyne, Law & Walker, 2011, pp. 645-646; Kiechel, 2010; Njagi & Kombo, 2014, p. 62). These realities and debates pinpoint the importance of strategic management as a key subject of analysis in the context of the present study because of the significance of existing and diversified research findings and paradigms that have emerged.

Research will outline and dissect its versatility and techniques based on the findings of the project and in terms of theory and practice connections and realities. The new millennium has opened paths for a new cohort of leaders at various societal levels and sectors. These leaders face demands for them to be far ahead of the competition. These groups include politicians, heads of states, multinational corporations, leaders of non-governmental organisations and/or state-run institutions. University leadership, including VCs are no exception to the rule.

All these leaders' major challenge is to tackle the challenges of the future in terrains of perpetual competition, ever-changing political, social and business circumstances; and the demands of the market and society. At present the most important element and characteristic of strategic leadership is that the leader of an institution will be judged in accordance with the achievements of his/her tenure and what is left behind before the departure (Boal & Hooijberg, 2001; Guerras-Martin, Madhok & Montoro-Sanchez, 2014, pp. 70-71). There has been a wide belief across the academic and professional world that the majority of leaders in various spheres of organisational and institutional activity build their operations mainly on tactical initiatives and imperatives which are based on a perpetual controlling environment; and the communication channels are only open to the internal structures of the entity. Such tactics lead to a comfortable and familiar environment short on strategic vision, planning objectives and action (Guillot, 2003).

In the South African situation, a relatively dated seminal report by *Human Capital Management* (2005/2006, pp. 3-4), a once-off effort of analysis of barriers to economic and social growth showed that the efforts of both the private and public sectors to elevate economic growth and global competitiveness were not as successful as expected. This was because the key to the way forward was the immediate adoption, planning and implementation of strategic leadership; paving the way forward for the success of the country.

The Universities South Africa *Strategic Framework 2015-2019* adopted by the HESA Board of Directors in October 2014 was described as a step towards strategic leadership at South African universities (Universities South Africa, 2014). It covered the expectations of all stakeholders and role players, the resources challenges; the student competencies as a vital link to the country's future; the expected high levels of operational efficiency and effectiveness in terms of institutional governance. It also covered the expectations of high quality in the research terrain; the creation of policies related to the expansion of a pool of higher education leaders; and the enhancement of transformation in the profile of institutional leadership (Universities South Africa, 2014). Irrespective of the detailed and diversified research findings on strategic leadership's imperatives in terms of its implementation; international and African academics have agreed that the fundamentals of this type of leadership are rooted in the leaders' and the organisation's vision and mission; and its planning and implementation.

Hence, in order for the above important targets to become a tangible reality, a number of steps need to be undertaken. The first would be communication and the cementing of alliances related to the understanding of the organisation's objectives, as well its goals. These are the foundations of institutional planning and growth; the imperative of accountability is the creation and sharing of the institutional planning amongst the leadership (Sanders, 1998; Kouzes & Posner, 2009; Phipps & Burbach, 2010).

Thompson, Strickland and Gamble (2005) in one of the most utilised definitions of strategic leadership at an institution, pointed out that such leadership is founded on the development of a strategic vision based on consultation with all stakeholders and role

players, and the undertaking of necessary adjustments when needed. It is important for the strategic leader to possess the ability to influence followers and especially management to follow the vision and implement objectives and decisions, thus strengthening the long-term viability of the institution while being instrumental in its short-term financial stability maintenance (Amos, 2007, p. 3; Rowe, 2001, p. 82).

For such strategic steps and initiatives the strategic leader is in need of being able to show anticipation, flexibility and commitment to empowering employees as the foundations of strategic change. Their necessity cannot be ignored (Hitt, Ireland & Hoskisson, 2007). In order for the strategic plans and subsequent actions to become a reality, the need for individual and group competence is of crucial importance as it is the root of absorptive capacities of assimilating and disseminating knowledge; and adapting to new variations and conditions both within the institution and the external environment (Boal & Hooijberg, 2001).

This is especially important for South African universities, given the transformational, financial and complexity-driven challenges since 1994 and especially because of the events of the last few years. Within these historical and contemporary realities, strategic leadership can only be a success when accompanied by outstanding and consciousness-driven job performance and solid organisational staff commitment (Eccles et al., 2009; Muswaba and Worku, 2012, pp. 148-149).

Following the dictates, rules and regulations of the Department of Higher Education and Training all South African universities are obligated to draw Strategic Plans that are structured in a unified, diversified and unique way. They are structured in such a way that their first priority is to align the institutional vision, objectives and strategic direction leading to change and transformation in accordance with the aims and objectives of the National Development Plan.

Knowing the realities of their own institution, the institutional leadership undertakes to strategically set visions and objectives aimed at changing, restructuring and transforming their university according to the dictates of the country's government.

Their vision, objectives, planning and implementation serve as the crux of the strategy aimed at achieving these targets around the actions and performance of management (Albert & Grzeda, 2015, pp. 652-653).

Inevitably, the expectations after 1994 concentrated on the overall multi-dimensional change and transformation of tertiary institutions and the newly established technical training colleges. It was a terrain of new struggles where strategic leadership would create a new path of human resources development associated with a fundamental break from apartheid management practices, with an emphasis on forward-looking qualitative changes in respect of procedures; and a strategic turn in terms of vision, objectives, planning and subsequent action (Hough & Neuland, 2014, pp. 456-457).

These realities were recognised and analysed by the new democratic government because all universities at the time were at a state of transition, determined by their historical and social contexts; hence, the forthcoming challenges associated with delivery of new visions and strategic initiatives at all institutional and organisational levels. The situation was exacerbated ten years after the first democratic elections when the ‘university mergers’ became a reality that required a much more challenging call of brand new grand visions and strategies; and the ability and capability of the new merged institutions to deliver a ‘fresh shared vision, objectives and strategies’. Although there have been research efforts attempting to analyse and dissect realities unfolding in the 2004-2007 period (2007 being the date of the ‘final completion’ of all mergers), the reality that most of them have faced serious challenges during these periods; and even prior to the #FEES MUST FALL turmoil (Cloete & Moja, 2005, pp. 694-695; Goldman, 2012, pp. 4863-4864; Viljoen & Rothman, 2002, pp. 2-3).

Corruption, poor student results, leadership squabbles, inappropriate assessment and monitoring of organisational functions did not allow staff performance to stabilise and corrective adjustments to occur (Gillard, Saunders, Terblanche & Sukel, 2012). In a space of a few years VUT (the Vaal University of Technology), Walter Sisulu University, Mangosuthu University of Technology, and the Tshwane University of Technology (TUT) have been placed under administration. Most universities, especially

the traditional Black African ones have faced immeasurable functional, economic and scholastic problems and challenges (Sidimba, 2011).

One of the foundations of success is the process of planning and the implementation of strategic leadership. It is not only the vision and mission of leadership but of organisational commitment that is directly related to the followers' identification with the mission and subsequent action. These are accompanied by the followers' willingness to follow the institutional imperatives (Arnolds & Boshoff, 2004, pp. 3-4; Gillard, et al., 2012). Such institutional commitment is the key of success based on the fundamentals of strategic management; leading to change and a transformation path as it is instrumental in the process of increasing organisational efficiency and effectiveness (Theron & Dodd, 2011, pp. 338-339; Ronda-Pupo & Guerras-Martin, 2012, pp. 165-166).

In the latest stream of analytical efforts on strategic management that provide new understandings of layers and types of the influence of strategic leadership on organisations, is the utilisation of the Motivating Language Theory model introduced by (Sarros, Luca, Densten & Santora, 2014, pp. 228-229) and 're-invented' by (Mayfield, Mayfield and Sharbrough, 2015, pp. 97-98). They created a model that is integral to strategic leadership operations and assists leaders to assess how they can transmit the existing institutional vision as an integral part of the strategic imperatives of the organisation. Such an assessment as an integral part of strategic leadership becomes instrumental in the process of improvement of organisational performance and provides the leaders with the opportunity to communicate the new forward - aiming initiatives to internal and external role players and stakeholders (Mayfield et al., 2015, p. 115).

The approach is based on a principle and strategy opposed to Denning's conceptualisation (Denning, 2015, pp. 13-14) that is rooted on a 'top down' strategy where planning, decisions and actions are the prerogative of top leadership and management. The new approach, loosely based on Raelin's analysis (Raelin, 2011, p. 200) advocates the belief that within an organisation planning, strategies and actions are

created collectively. This is a pattern founded on a linear organisational structure, a collective where all voices are equally debated.

Given the particularities of each university, rooted on the outcome of the Department of Higher Education and Training decisions, planning and implementation in the 25 years of the political change in the country that have been touched upon, it becomes evident that institutional attempts to change and transformation rely on the commitment, dedication and actions of strategic leaders. A number of fundamentals that need to be attained such as better education standards at all levels and disciplines, curriculum restructuring and Africanisation.

It is understood that these imperatives cannot be realised without strategic management that guarantee institutional effectiveness that is dependent on a number of institutional issues such as the commitment of everyone to outstanding job performance, high levels of communication and decision making patterns at all organisational levels. The VCs in this study were largely within the period where such strategic leadership was necessary and therefore this leadership concept was very useful to understand them as VC of institutions that demanded and required deep changes.

3.6 Transformational leadership

South Africa's higher education terrain has gone through turbulent times, which culminated in the 'final victory' of the #FEES MUST FALL movement. The victory was concretised at the latest African National Congress elective conference that supported the decision of then President Zuma to open the doors to free higher education. This applied to hundreds of thousands of poor and middle class matriculants who qualified for entrance to the country's universities.

As outlined empirically, HEIs in South Africa have faced major changes in terms of transformation (Mader, Scott & Razak, 2013; Ngcamu et al., 2015; Ngcamu, 2016; Seale & Cross, 2016), hence, there is a need for solid and innovative leadership. Universities, over the years, have been confronted with major change and

transformation challenges that require exceptional leadership. This means that the leader in his role is the foundation and the driver of transformation (Bendermacher, Oude Egbrink, Wolfhagen & Dolmans, 2017). Ngcamu & Teferra (2015) has shown that HEIs in South Africa are in need of leaders with intellectual, interpersonal and personal capabilities to lead the transformation processes. Such a position is in line with the findings of Sirat, Ahmad and Azman (2012) and those of Saunders and Stumpf (2016, pp. 2-3) who have shown that the global circumstances in the higher educational terrain have increased the complexity and challenges facing university leadership at all levels.

The legal duties and responsibilities of university leadership (who are defined as 'executive' or 'senior' managers) are described in detail in the Higher Education Act, 101 of 1997 as amended and the Institutional Statute as the guide to the institutional leadership. Leadership has been described by Puccio, Mance and Murdock (2011) as a continuous process vital in the pursuit of organisational and societal change. As structures and processes of organisations have been over the years open to radical and fundamental changes, the importance of leadership and culture at all levels increases (Bartram & Inceoglu, 2011; Garwe, 2014).

The foundations of transformational leadership are to be found in the pioneering writings of (Bass, 1985; Burns, 1978). Burns (1978) used the terms 'transformational leadership' and 'transactional leadership' interchangeably denoting that what separated the two leaderships were a wide variety of feelings, modes and thoughts. Avolio and Bass (1988) and Bass (1985) began a never-ending debate by showing that transformational leadership is more effective at all levels when compared to transactional leadership because there is strong evidence that it has been achieving higher job satisfaction, higher productivity, and lower employee turnover rates.

Although there is general agreement with Bass's 'final say' on the differences between transformational and transactional leadership (Bass, 1997); the latter does not go far enough in developing organisational motivation through trust building and collaboration. However, when coupled with individualised consideration, the

possibility of its proponents providing the basis for transformational leadership and its application within the organisations grows. Such leadership creates the possibility of a positive impact on motivation and performance of followers at various organisational levels. However, all these possibilities depend on the levels of created interdependencies and integration which are vital ingredients for a new work environment. Bass is clear that such transformational leadership is obligated to go far beyond the basic transactional style. It has to be strategic, charismatic, stimulating and inspirational and thus be able to develop higher levels of commitment and outstanding for enhanced performance levels amongst the followers (Bass, 1998).

Middlehurst (2012) has been one of the many proponents of both theories which have been researched and applied in the terrain of higher education. He believed that such a foundation leads to common inspiration and motivation that ultimately guides institutions to higher levels of morale rooted in a common organisational identity. A similar approach with more emphasis on transformation leadership has been evident in the widely acclaimed CEB Corporate Leadership Model. The model based on socio-psychological elements deals primarily with the existing relations between the leaders' competency factors and the factors such as ability, motivation and personality.

The key relations outlined are related to leadership and decision making associated with organisational control, decisive leadership patterns and action, cooperation and support related to respect and the principle of 'putting people first'. This involves working efficiently with teams and individuals, and possession of honest and clear personal values within the organisation. It also involves openness to new experiences and communication realities; creativity and conceptualisation of issues associated with openness and understanding of new experiences and realities, taking advantage of opportunities, innovation and creativity, strategic thinking and driving organisational change forward. Organisation and execution is related to organised and systematic operationalisation of existing procedures and directives, and quality service; adaptation and coping means emotional stability, management of existing pressures and increasing changes, problems and challenges and enterprise and performance (Bartram, 2015).

The fundamentals of transformational leadership, as outlined by their pioneers, are based on exemplifying the highest organisational ethical norms and actions and expects individuals and groups to adhere to them; it is about building organisational culture rooted in the principles of organisational common good, instead of attitudes and behaviours of self-interest (Bass, 1999, p. 11; Balwant, 2016, p. 378; Tyssen, Wald & Heidenreich, 2014, pp. 378-279).

A number of important contributors in the development of the theory and its empirical application have maintained that transformational leadership is the one that has emphasised the importance of meeting higher desires and satisfying basic needs; through a continuous processes of inspiring followers and the efforts to open paths to innovative solutions and create a better workplace (Eagly, Johannesen-Schmidt & Van Engen, 2003, pp. 569-570; Judge & Piccolo 2004, pp. 756-757). Dvir, Eden, Avolio and Shamir (2002) believed that a transformational leader was one who through his/her qualities was transformed into a role model within an organisation. The qualities included motivation, inspiration, and care for the employees and through such a behaviour was instrumental in the success of the organisation.

Such a definition has been considered an expansion of the writings on the theory of transformation that begun primarily with Bass who utilised psychological theories and measurements to analyse the influence and impact of leaders on the behaviour of subordinates. His research indicated that transformational leadership had a positive influence and impact on organisational behaviour. Transformational leadership led to mutual loyalty, commitment and better performance (Zhu, Newman, Miao & Hooke, 2013).

Judge, Bono, Ilies, and Gerhardt's (2002) contribution to the empirical understanding of transformational leadership lies in the fact that they showed that a particular context and environment is a fundamental factor shaping the relationship between leadership and personality traits. They demonstrated that the significance of leadership focus in assessing present and future risks are instrumental in determining leadership priorities at all levels. These are associated with the types of changes required to deal with

problems, challenges and the degree of contextual uncertainty. High pressure for change increases the value of transformational behaviour.

Within this context, Bartram & Inceoglu (2011) have shown that in times of such pressure the continuous collective planning and actions of leadership is of vital importance. Lack of capacity or effective management could lead to negative repercussions. In such cases, the action and behaviour of a transformative leader are of key importance in the process of planning, designing and implementing appropriate strategic and tactical directives leading to success.

The importance of transformational leadership has been emphasised by Sirat, Ahmad and Azman (2012, p. 512) who believed that leaders who are characteristically forward looking and transformational, need to fill all positions of university leadership. An earlier empirical study amongst university staff in South Africa (Vinger & Cilliers, 2006) indicated that the levels of transformational leadership amongst leaders in higher educational institutions in South Africa were, at the time, relatively high.

The findings were contradicted by the findings of (Mabelebele, 2013; Ngcamu & Teferra, 2015) who were seriously concerned with the existing lack of capacity amongst university leaders to lead transformation and manage change. Similar findings were produced by Seale and Cross (2016, pp. 1515-1516) who indicated that the higher education system in South Africa is in urgent need of leadership development because both senior leaders and managers lack the qualities, understanding and knowledge leading to success.

International empirical literature has shown that a leader's attempts to achieve transformation without the appropriate choice of strategic decisions can be negative for the organisation (Bartram & Inceoglu, 2011). It is also believed that one of the key elements of a transformative leader is a personal and organisational transformation associated with a charismatic personality that is associated with motivation, trust, solidarity and communication of subordinates.

It is an analysis that began with Druskat, in 1994 and expanded by researchers such as Barth-Farkas and Vera (2014, pp. 220-221); Kahai, Jestire and Huang (2013, pp. 970-971); Wyld (2013). The researchers connected this leadership behaviour with a resultant organisational asset, instrumental in turning followers into committed, dedicated and amenable to organisational changes. Such a leadership model is also associated with the leadership belief that the followers themselves also have a strategic role to play in the organisation and this will guide their beliefs, values and commitment at all levels.

It is the widely accepted connection of transformational and charismatic leadership that shapes the followers' beliefs, values and actions all of which are directly and indirectly related to positive change and transformation. The contemporary globalised organisational environment has been negatively influenced by a wide array of world turbulence dynamics associated with wars and economic and financial collapse of states and private sector entities. This has led to uncertainty, and the universities are in crisis; internationally and continentally. South Africa is no exception; meaning that transformational leadership is considered more than a necessity.

The combination of transformational, charismatic and strategic leadership has been seen as fundamental at universities as it is the continuous empowerment of followers that guarantees transformation - and in instances where followers and other key stakeholders and role players are dissatisfied, transformation becomes extremely difficult if not impossible (Chipunza and Gwarinda, 2010). Such a reality is evident in Ngamu's attempt (Ngcamu & Teferra, 2015) whose research indicated that those university leaders do not possess the correct approach and insight associated with their personal weaknesses. The key question then is whether senior leaders of tertiary institutions can follow the example of many of their followers' and managers' and utilise advanced training sessions instrumental in producing new cohorts capable to plan, design and implement the transformational role related to positive change and development in accordance with the dictated National Development Plan (Wang, Oh, Courtright and Colbert, 2011).

It was one of the founders and most important representatives of the theory of transformational leadership (Bass, 1998) who wrote that it was possible, and indeed useful to teach senior managers and leaders the precepts of transformational leadership. The same belief has been shown correct empirically in the works of (Brown and May, 2012; Dvir et al., 2002). It was shown that the processes, planning and implementation of behaviours and actions emanating from transformational leadership can be improved by training managers who have been trained adequately on how to employ the fundamentals of transformational leadership behaviours in order to impact organisational outcomes. Such attributes are of key importance for the senior executive leadership of tertiary institutions in South Africa, but for all those in high levels of university management. This is not only important for senior leaders but for all levels of the university management. This is because transformational and collective leadership at the highest management levels is an important element upon which change can be based and uncertainty can be overcome.

The value of transformational behaviour at higher educational institutions is not only determined by the highest management echelons, but it is crucial for leadership (Seale & Cross, 2016). It has been shown in both the theory and research in respect of the analysis of transformational leadership that it is based on knowledge and/or acquisition of knowledge (Seale and Cross, 2016). This is because these two tangible leadership dimensions are the key instruments for the continuous enhancement and effective productivity in an economy that faces the realities of the 4th Industrial Revolution, the epitome of a knowledge-based economy - a foundation of development and management of intellectual capital spearheaded by the country's universities (Brewer et al., 2016, pp. 2883-2884; Wang et al., 2011, pp. 224-225).

Universities in South Africa have become seriously contested terrains in terms of social, economic, political, cultural and educational challenges. The strict legislative and regulatory criteria underlying the selection of top institutional leadership, pinpoint the fact that the selection of leadership is just the first decisive step in terms of governance and research orientated priorities, which become the challenge of the entire university community.

Black (2015) argues that the challenges of transformation of South African universities are not only based on the outcome of the selection of their top leadership, but also involve the lack of structures, processes and initiatives instrumental in the development of their own leadership talent. This means that the successful transformation path for universities in South Africa should involve the identification of future leadership and is in need of planning and decision making associated directly with developmental initiatives and interventions that are instrumental in paving the way forward (Seale & Cross, 2016). However, these first strategic steps cannot become operationally successful without the combination of the leadership's transformational competencies with cooperation and synergy with the institution's management. This cooperation can only be strengthened by outstanding performance levels (Bartram, 2005). Transformation leadership is instrumental in making a positive difference at an institution, but it is shaped by a wide range of challenges and contextual demands associated with a number of historical foundations and realities.

Bartram (2015) has shown that there have been notable cases of leaders considered as having low levels of potential to achieve unexpected success in their duties by performing well because of a number of decisive developmental interventions. Overall it has been accepted that transformational leadership and its proponents are key to address the existing realities of leadership in South African universities. For the future change and transformation of the country's universities; the need for academic leaders to have scholarship, competencies needs to be supplemented by the creation of a contextually appropriate environment. This environment is in need of leaders that can be at the forefront of change and transformation.

3.7 Conclusion

Being cognisant of the complexities of becoming and being a VC of a higher education institution, a single theoretical framework to frame this study would have been inappropriate to capture the rich narratives of these VCs. Hence, a multi-theoretical approach to framing this study was most appropriate and the presentation and engagement of the various theories presented in this chapter alludes to this need for a

multi-theoretical framework. The complexities of becoming and being a VC in this historical moment of the country is intersected by politics, transformation, re-dress, individual aspirations, enabling relations and social forces and of the growing discipline of leadership. What it means to be a black VC in this moment in the history of the country and of transforming higher education is a complex phenomenon as will be revealed through the narrative inquiry and analysis of the narratives of each VC in forthcoming chapters. This chapter, therefore argued for and presented the theoretical conceptions to frame the themes within which the data is presented and which informed the theorising of the key findings of the study. The next chapter presents the data generation process within a narrative inquiry methodology.

CHAPTER FOUR - RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

(VC1): ...what I would call my silver linings in my life is that fact that I am from a family of teachers, nurses and priests. It is all in the service type of careers and I knew way back as perhaps 10 years, because I was surrounded by teachers in this little village and I said I want to become a teacher that is all. And by the time I passed my, the then, what they called my Standard 6 with a first class, I always admired my principal and I said, I want to be a principal. So those were two shifts in my thinking. Throughout my life I always had been in positions of authority, in leadership positions, irrespective I became a teacher.....

(VC2): I am a son of a school teacher, and a school teacher who comes from royalty. My mother was a housewife, she also came from royalty. I lived, I was born into what you would call, a powerful family in my little village, because both my parents have this element of being, sort of coming from the chief lineages, somewhere or another...I am the eldest son of what I would call the favourite daughter of the chief, so I sort of, I was always treated in a very special way.

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter I present the research design and methodology used in this study to generate the empirical data, the analysis of which led to a response to the research questions that guided the study inquiry. Having presented the problem statement and the intent of the study in Chapter One, in this Chapter I outline the methodological choices made in generating the appropriate data to address the problems identified around black VCs leading South African public universities within the context of transforming the higher education sector. In summary, the study is located within social constructionist epistemology, informed by a qualitative research approach and done through a narrative inquiry methodology.

The purpose, therefore, of this chapter is to orientate the reader to the key tenets of narrative inquiry, whilst drawing attention to the social constructionist epistemological

stance taken in this study. I have begun this chapter with extracts from the actual stories of two of my participants in order to provide rich justification for the use of narratives and stories as a research method to unravel the complex ways in which leadership is constructed. The chapter begins with an overview of the epistemological stance, underlined by social constructionist philosophies as I advocate for the social production of meanings and the two-way interactional relationship between the individual and the social. Next, I draw attention to the qualitative methodological approach which is based not on internal realities or representational truth, but on meanings, experiences and subjectivity. Discussion is thereafter focused upon narratives as a key method of qualitative methodology and the benefits of addressing the interwoven experiences that are socially and culturally located. I then discuss the specifics of the data production process drawing the readers' attention to the sample, the generation of data using in-depth interviews and conversations, the data analysis methods and issues around ethics.

4.2 Research design

A research design is considered as a plan or blue-print for a research process (Cohen, et al, 2007; Bertram and Christiansen, 2014). Once the researcher has developed the research questions a research design is established to answer the research questions (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014). In this study, the research design includes an epistemological positioning of a social constructionist paradigm within a qualitative research approach, underpinned by narrative inquiry methodology. The data generation aspect of the design includes the purposive selection of black university VCs as participants from whom storied accounts of their becoming and being a VC within a public university in South Africa were obtained through a semi-structured interview process.

4.3 Theoretical framework

According to Creswell (2013), qualitative research commences with assumptions and the use of theoretical frameworks in addressing a research problem and informs the choices we make methodologically. The researcher's view on reality (ontology), how

the researcher knows the reality (epistemology) and the basic procedures used in the research (methodology) forms part of the philosophical assumptions made to frame the study. In my study, I use the social constructionist paradigm to understand and make meaning of how black VCs make claims about their leadership roles. Furthermore, I used narrative inquiry as the process of obtaining information from black VCs to validate their claims about their leadership trajectories and being a black VC of a public university. These theoretical framings are unpacked in the forthcoming subsections.

Before I commence with an engagement on the theoretical framings that have informed by my methodological choices, I declare my own positionality as a researcher in this study briefly. My observations while growing up illuminated the injustices of an apartheid way of life and this observation sparked my interest in politics. I was uneasy. A religious leader dismissed my concerns about the state of our nation and advised me to focus on my school and religious education. This angered me and facilitated my entry into the world of political activism. I now write a weekly column in a national newspaper as a political analyst. Being a political analyst has provided me with a particular world view that could have influenced the way I viewed this phenomenon as well as the way I researched and analysed the data generated for this study. In acknowledging my positionality as a political analyst, I was mindful of not being subjective in the data collection and analysis process. I have therefore made appropriate theoretical choices that allowed me the opportunity to enter the world of my participants, different from that of my view of reality and my way of coming to know. It is in this respect that a narrative inquiry within a qualitative research design was selected as the theoretical framing for this study.

4.3.1 Research Paradigm: Social constructionist paradigm as epistemological positioning

In the social sciences, there are different paradigms which try to establish the nature of what things are (ontology) and different understandings of how people can make claims to know what these things are (epistemology). In my study, I use the social

constructionist paradigm to understand how VCs make claims about their leadership roles.

This section outlines a way of understanding the epistemological stance in this study and situates the use of narrative inquiry as a social construction of knowledge. Before I begin with an overview of social construction, narrative inquiry is a qualitative research methodology. It is used to make sense of people's lives through the stories that people tell about their experience (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000; Clandinin, 2013). In seeking to understand black VCs' stories through narrative inquiry, my intention is to understand social experience. Like other scholars working in the field of narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990), my intention was to hear the stories from a personal point of view, but to also understand these stories as based on and underlined by the larger social system. This epistemological stance of hearing, reading and writing about the stories of others within a social context is social construction. Within this philosophical stance, how individuals make sense of their experiences is socially constructed.

Within a positivist paradigm social reality is discovered, whereas a social constructionist paradigm gives value to how social reality, experiences and knowledge interacts with social processes (Burr, 1995; Flick, 2004). The idea that people make meaning of their experiences and live outside of a social context has long been discredited (Burr, 1995). However, this idea that an individual is 'free floating' with the capacity to make meaning outside of the social continues to remain pervasive. Scholars refer to this as essentialist thinking (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). Here, it is assumed that people can make 'truth' in an essentialist sense without consideration of social structures in which the individual is situated. However, the real experiences of black VCs, as I began in the introduction of this chapter, is only made possible by situating the meanings within a broader social construct (Burr, 1995; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, Gergen & Gergen, 2011). Social construction is an appropriate epistemological stance as it fits into how black VCs construct meaning of leadership from their experience of being and becoming a VC. Within the philosophy of social construction, meaning is

never individualised. All meaning is historical, based on social and cultural norms and is fluid. In the context of my study, this means that the meanings that black VCs give to leadership is socially constructed; based on many different values, beliefs and norms which interact between the individual and the larger social system. Ideas about leadership are based on social norms and what is appropriate leadership is based on how these norms are understood within a specific context. In returning to the introductory transcripts in this chapter, and in reference to VC2 for example, it is possible to understand social construction of leadership through VC2's position within a lineage of chiefs, royalty and power. This is also highly masculinised as leadership ideas based on male power within the understanding of royalty. Using this example, the ideas of leadership have a historical basis, is based on social and cultural norms and past experiences.

Social constructionist approaches thus allow for greater expansion in how experiences are conceptualised stressing the value of qualitative understandings that ensure that the context in which participants speak is valued (Burr, 1995). In this sense, the narrative inquiry, based on a qualitative methodology, is important to understand how people make sense of their identities and their relations with others and the social world in which they are situated. It is in this sense that narratives or stories are seen as social constructions. Instead of seeing what people say as absolute 'truth', narratives allow us to understand why individuals tell their stories the way they do.

In line with the social constructionist stance taken in this study, the focus is on the stories as they are related to the cultural and social norms, relations which make a particular story possible, how the story emerged and why a specific story is told through which identity work can be conceptualised. In the context of my study, the stories that black VCs narrate about being and becoming leaders is 'identity work'. In placing emphasis on the social processes through which people make meaning of their social worlds, a focus on language is important. Traditional understandings of language, whilst outdated, assume that when people speak, they reveal a hidden internal reality. There is an assumption that there is some kind of 'truth' in revealing this internal reality based

on beliefs and attitudes. Burr (1995, p. 34) argues that “language is not transparent” and goes on to challenge these ideas of knowledge based on internal realities.

According to social constructionists, language is necessary for any thought process (Flick, 2004; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). Flick suggests that the way people take up concepts and meanings within a language is based on their social and cultural context. It is only through language that we can understand the social realities in which the individual is based. Since language and its meanings are socially located, social constructionists argue that language is never neutral (Flick, 2004; Burr, 1995). All meaning is negotiated and shared and there is no internal truth or internal reality that stands outside of the social (Gergen and Gergen, 2011).

A social constructionist stance in this study offers a way of understanding the black VCs’ construction of being and becoming leaders in ways that could generate alternate ways of understanding about what it means to do academic leadership in contemporary South Africa. Since meanings are always social, and co-constructed within a particular context, individuals can produce new meanings and these meanings hold promise for social change. This is key to the epistemological stance that I have taken in this study. Through an understanding of black VCs’ narratives and stories, the possibility exists to create new possibilities to examine the underlying socially produced meanings and assumptions. These meanings are always embedded in the larger social interactions and processes.

If we see reality as bound to some internal reality, then it is difficult to understand how social, economic and cultural capital are used as resources by individuals in how they make meaning of their experiences. Social construction ideas provide justification for the use of stories and narrative inquiry in that individuals as noted by Clandinin & Connelly (1990) are story tellers. Social construction allows for understanding these ‘storied lives’ to be understood in ways that fully appreciate the social, economic, political, cultural and historical dimensions of these stories.

What is the value of social construction to this study? Firstly, the idea that people lived storied lives which are based on social realities, means that their lives and meanings can be changed. Social constructionism suggests as I have noted earlier, that meanings are not based on some internal, essentialist force. Instead, the meanings that people produce are socially generated as they interact with each other and experience the social world. In other words the social and cultural processes shape realities. If social and cultural processes shape realities, then social construction is powerful in generating new ideas and change; and opens up the possibility of both personal change and broader social change. They are always constructed in social life.

Thus, in returning to the words of my participants in the introduction of this chapter, there is a need to understand that black VCs' stories are not about some internal reality, but was produced within family and community settings. In Chapter Five, I will bring further data to life as I analyse black VCs' meanings of leadership by tracing their biographical beginnings to their current context. Narrative inquiry as a methodology is integral to producing the 'storied lives' and allows new insight into their lived experiences of leadership. This means that it is important to value the participants' perspectives in order to take seriously their own stories from their own points of view.

4.3.2 Qualitative research approach to the study

The study adopted a qualitative research approach. Qualitative research approach is an approach to research in its situated natural environment, focusing on words, expressions, feelings and the recognition of multiple realities which are experienced and interpreted by individuals in their social settings (Bertram and Christiansen, 2014; Cohen, et al, 2009). Qualitative research offers opportunity for participants to tell their stories in ways that are meaningful to them (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). My aim in using qualitative research is to provide opportunities for participants to provide 'thick' narratives of their experiences in being and becoming leaders whilst addressing the social and cultural processes through which these narratives are produced. Qualitative research allows for listening to participants and interpreting, and retelling their stories (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990).

In this study, I draw from qualitative research because it is steeped in personal and collective stories and histories of participants. Qualitative research is based on meanings, subjectivities and interpretations. Casey (1995) suggests that narrative inquiry provides an important space through which the experiences of those who are marginalised can be valued. Whilst the black VCs in this study occupy powerful positions, both economically and socially, these VCs are black and have been historically marginalised in South Africa. The transformation of South African higher education is also premised upon the success of black VCs who have historically been excluded from academic leadership under apartheid. In this section, I make the case for narrative inquiry based on qualitative research.

Qualitative research, according to Creswell (2013), is based on assumptions and theoretical framings that informs a study. Qualitative research does not attempt to provide the absolute 'truths' but is based on meanings that people make, to obtain deeper insight into these meanings (Cresswell, 2013). In this study, I sought to examine the nine black VCs stories using a constructionist approach to narrative inquiry because it allows for conversations and discussions with participants.

Qualitative research offers opportunity for participants to tell their stories in ways that are meaningful to them (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). My aim in using qualitative research is to provide opportunities for participants to provide 'thick' narratives of their experiences in being and becoming leaders whilst addressing the social and cultural processes through which these narratives are produced. Qualitative research allows for listening to participants and interpreting, and retelling their stories (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). On the other hand, quantitative research is interested in providing data that shows the effects across a large sample. Clandinin & Connelly (2000) explain that the main difference between qualitative and quantitative methodologies is the way in which structure is understood. Structure, according to the positivist quantitative methodology, is concerned with generating information across a large sample and is therefore descriptive. Since this quantitative methodology is descriptive and not in flux, the prospects of change are limited. The 'truth' is established through representation and statistics whilst voice, stories, and subjects are overlooked.

A qualitative research approach (Creswell; 2013) allows for voices and stories as connections are made through thick descriptions and narration of experiences.

In my own research, I was not concerned with the statistics and representational truth. My interest in a small sample of nine black VCs was to obtain in-depth, thick and rich narratives that would allow me to understand how black VCs produce knowledge of leadership, how this knowledge is socially located and how their articulations might provide new directions for social change and transformational leadership. My approach to qualitative research is thus informed by a social constructionist perspective which is based on a search for meanings, context and voices and stories. In contrast to the descriptive understandings of quantitative methodology, qualitative research suggests that language, contexts and social structures are not mutually exclusive (Patton, 2002). Rather, both language, contexts and social processes are co-extensive and co-constituted. Thus, rather than seeing stories as being a coherent internal reality, the relationship between being and becoming a black VC and leadership are complexly produced, contested, changing, and contextual.

As Denzin & Lincoln (2008, p. 14) state, qualitative research allows researchers to “stress the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied, and the situational constraints that shape inquiry”. Qualitative research is about human experience and social realities and is constructed. Unlike quantitative methodology, qualitative research also involves reflexivity and insists on the positionality of the researcher as key in shaping the research. In a later section of this chapter, I shall discuss my positionality as a researcher in detail. In relation to my study, a qualitative methodology is vital in examining the various ways that nine black VCs make meaning of leadership and how they talk about being and becoming a VC that shaped their leadership ideas and strategies. My attempt then is to understand a particular social reality as narrated by specific individuals from diverse race and class contexts. In what ways do black VCs understand and make meaning of their experiences? What is the context within which the black VCs meanings are constructed? Thus, in my study, the research questions, approach, the epistemological

stance and methodology are aligned to delve into meanings that are contextual and a co-constructed narrative between the participants and I, the researcher.

In the next section, I focus on narrative inquiry as the research methodology selected for and argued for in this study. Narratives are social actions through which identities, are constituted. Following this line of thinking, story-telling is a means through which one is socially situated in the interaction with others.

4.3.3 Research methodology employed in the study

Narrative inquiry is a qualitative research methodology and was selected for this study. It is used to make sense of people's lives through the stories that people tell about their experience (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000; Clandinin, 2013). In seeking to understand black VCs' stories through narrative inquiry, my intention is to understand social experience. Like other scholars working in the field of narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990), my intention was to hear the stories from a personal point of view but also to understand these stories as based on and underlined by the larger social system. This epistemological stance of hearing, reading and writing about the stories of others within a social context is social construction. Hence, narrative inquiry as the methodology for this study was most appropriate.

In this study, participants narrate stories as they recount their experiences of being and becoming a black university VC. Within qualitative studies, there are a number of approaches to allow for participants to tell their stories. As noted, I have adopted narrative inquiry as a methodological approach to understand the participants in my study. Since these participants focused on their biographical contexts, their experience of being black VCs and their transformative leadership patterns as key to their success, by re-telling their stories, this thesis offers a way into participants' own meanings and the social processes through which we can understand their transformational leadership. The stories are not simply an end in itself but the narratives provide information that will be useful to black academics who are considering leadership positions. Whilst the black VCs are set in a particular moment in South Africa's history, the stories are thus

contextually relevant, but we may also get a sense of more general and widespread concerns as they tell their stories (Hatchell & Aveling, 2008).

Narrative scholars have suggested (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990), in narrative inquiry the stories are the ‘raw data’. It is a qualitative method that examines stories that are contextualised and situated within a particular context (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007). Through these stories, this thesis will provide meanings that participants make of leadership as they talk about being and becoming VCs. As Clandinin & Rosiek (2007) indicate, stories are about experiences and these experiences are phenomena. Polkinghorne (1988, p. 13), a pioneering scholar of narrative inquiry states that, “Narrative is the fundamental scheme for linking individual human actions and events into interrelated aspects of an understandable composite. If the social world is understood narratively, ...then it makes sense to study the world narratively” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 17).

Whilst I have relied on some definitions of “narrative inquiry”, there are no singular fundamental definitions of narrative inquiry (Riessman, 2008). However, the first-hand account of experiences is a vital element of narrative inquiry in that the story that people tell about themselves constitutes the essence of experience. As a researcher using narrative inquiry, I understand my role as a way of understanding experience which is socially produced (Clandinin, 2013). At this point, I return again to the transcripts of VC1 and VC2 to illustrate the poignancy of stories as ‘raw data’ and as experience in order to further justify my use of stories and narrative inquiry. In the introduction of this chapter, both participants referred to their biographical beginnings, the communities in which they lived, the influence of middle-class values, teaching and the service industry which catapulted their understandings of power, position and education. But these transcripts all refer to the cultural and social norms with evidence provided about cultural lineage, royalty and power. A narrative approach such as this is directed at producing and understanding the narratives of the narrator or the inquiry which is produced in a narrative form (Patton, 2002; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990).

Put simply, “narrative inquiry [is] the study of experience as story” (Clandinin and Rosiek, 2007, p. 37).

Narrative inquiry begins and ends with a respect for ordinary lived experience [...] the focus of narrative inquiry is not only valorizing individuals’ experience but is also an exploration of the social, cultural, familial, linguistic and institutional narratives within which individuals’ experiences were, and are, constituted, shaped, expressed and enacted. Understood in this way, narrative inquiries begin and end in the storied lives of people involved (Clandinin, 2013: 18).

As the researcher, I understood that I needed to listen and respect the ‘truths’ of the participants whilst weaving in the social and broader cultural backdrop into their experiences as articulated by Clandinin (2013). It was my role to ensure that the stories were told in ways that augmented the participants’ lived experiences or their narratives. Within narrative inquiry, all experiences or narratives are based on relations, interactions are continuous and are social (Clandinin, 2013). This means that experiences “grow out of other experiences, and experiences lead to further experiences” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 2). The narrative approach based on stories is often produced through interviews which is the method I have used in this study. I have explained in detail so far, the social production of experiences and this is key to understanding experiences as an interaction between the individual and the social which is key to narrative inquiry. In providing the methodological approach underlined by narrative inquiry, I addressed core issues with participants in understanding leadership. I delved into their past experiences or biographical beginnings and the contextual markers of these biographies. Next, I addressed what it meant to be a black VC in the current context in the South African higher education environment, their reflections on becoming a VC and finally how they understood leadership qualities. In many ways this speaks to the continuous ways in which experience and leadership is understood whilst ensuring that the social production of experience is weaved in the discussion.

From the outset of this research, I believed that narrative inquiry was the most appropriate qualitative method that honoured and acknowledged the participants' stories. In taking their stories and re-telling them in this study, I also had an opportunity to build knowledge in the area of transformational leadership that could benefit South Africa's quest to ensure transformation of academic leadership. Using narrative inquiry was a very useful approach in this study.

In the next sections of this chapter, I focus on data generation processes and includes the sampling process the specific tools used in producing the data, the analysis and my own positionality as a researcher.

4.4 Research methods

In the context of this study, research methods refer to the instruments or tools one would use in the research process to collect information from observations, recordings or participants (Ramrathan, 2016). Examples of research methods include questionnaires, interview schedules, observation schedules, document analysis, photo voice, artefact and memory recall. Interview as a research method was used in this study to generate the empirical data that formed the basis of the analysis.

4.4.1 Interviews

As noted by Clandinin and Connelly (2000) interviews are widely used in qualitative research. Maree (2017) states that an interview is a two-way conversation in which the interviewer asks the participants questions to generate data and to learn about the ideas, beliefs, views, opinions and behaviours of the participants. Talking to and listening to people are excellent ways of getting information from people. Interview, therefore, was considered as the most useful method of generating data for this study as it allowed me to ask questions to the participants about themselves in relation to their trajectories into becoming and being black VCs of public universities. In this study, I used conversational type interviews with nine black VCs to generate stories about their roles and leadership positions in South African higher education.

Conversational type of interview suggests and questions and responses may be both directional, from the researcher as well as the participant and it could take the form of either unstructured or semi-structured interviews. Unstructured interviews, while the definitions are varied, and some would regard them as informal conversations, is a process where neither the questions nor the responses are pre-determined (Maree, 2017; Denzin and Lincoln, 2008). Probing questions allow for the opportunity of the interviewer to dig deeper into the narration for further insights and deeper understandings. Semi-structured interviews has some structure in the questioning process and these structured questions have been pre-determined, but with spaces for probing questions to enrich the conversation, either to probe deeper on a particular issue or to seek clarity and further insights related to an issue that emerged in the response by the participant (Maree, 2017; Denzin and Lincoln, 2008).

In this study, a set of pre-determined questions were developed as a guide to the kinds of information that was required for this study. These pre-determined questions were developed largely from the review of literature conducted for this study. However, noting that narrative inquiry begins and ends with a respect for ordinary lived experience and the way the narrator chose to narrate his/her lived experience and in the order in which make sense to the narrator as he/she recollects his experiences to be told, these pre-determined questions, if asked in the way it was pre-determined, would have compromised these principles of narrative inquiry. Hence, the set of pre-determined questions could be construed as setting the scene for an unstructured interview or that it could be considered as a semi-structured interview. The most appropriate way, therefore, was to regard the interview process as a conversational interview, the beginning of which, as part of the contextualisation of the study purpose, the pre-determined questions were presented to the participants as part of the contextualisation process to encourage flexibility and choice of narrating their storied trajectories on becoming and being a black university VC.

I conducted one-on-one interviews with the participants. Through the participants' stories I was able to weave through individual and social forces in shaping their experiences which looked backward, and forward through probing questions. I allowed

participants to tell their stories on their own terms and around issues that they were willing to talk about. In other words, the stories had to be meaningful to the participant rather than me imposing questions that had little value to their experience. The conversations revolved around the following main questions:

- Talk about your background: influences, context choices that led to you being a VC
- How does your background inform your leadership style?
- How does race, gender, class impact on your leadership style?
- What do you think are the key attributes of a VC?
- What are the challenges of leadership?
- How does your context (and who you are) influence you being successful at your university?

In all qualitative studies, researchers must pay attention and take seriously what participants say (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). In narrative studies, the ability to listen carefully, and attentively is of vital significance. Instead of just listening to what you aim to achieve, qualitative researchers must be prepared to listen to what matters to the participants. As such throughout the interviews, I listened carefully to participants based on deep interest, respect and only prompting very minimally when necessary. This is why the conversational like interview method worked very well without over loading the participants with questions, but allowing the black VCs to provide their stories. It must be noted here that as a PhD student and in relation to the VCs; power relations were deeply manifest in the interviewer-interviewee relationship.

4.4.2 Advantages of interviews as a research method

In all research processes there are limitations and strengths associated with it. The strengths of using interviews includes the fact that it favours the oral traditions of telling a story. Scholarly work going back to Bailey (1994) mentions the fact that a key advantage of interviews is that they are flexible and the researcher can probe and repeat

a particular question to clarify; and to ensure that the question is understood. Interviews are better than eliciting written responses since some people are more expressive when speaking as opposed to when writing. Interviews also allow the researcher to take into account the non-verbal behaviour of the interviewee.

Marshall and Rossman (1999) point to the fact that interviews are advantageous as they allow for the generation of significant amounts of information in a short period of time and the researcher has the chance to follow up immediately. Interviews proved to be useful for the engagement with black VCs as it allowed for the generation of large amounts of information and I was able to follow up and extend the probing immediately. It also allowed me the opportunity to engage in data saturation where I was able to follow up questions with the participants even after interviews were concluded.

4.4.3 Disadvantages of interviews as a research method

Some of the disadvantages of interviews, according to Neuman (1997) revolve around the costs incurred as a result of traveling to locations that may be far off. In addition bias expressed by the researcher by way of appearance and the tone used can affect the response of the interviewee. According to Bailey (1994) interviews also have the disadvantage of providing less anonymity, despite the assurances of anonymity. Bailey (1994) also makes the point that the respondent could also lie if the respondent thinks that their response may be socially undesirable. In this study, a distinct disadvantage was the cost involved in traveling to various universities across the country to interview VCs.

4.5 Population and Sample

In making decisions about which research methods would be the most appropriate methods to produce the data for the study, it is crucial that you determine the source of information. The source of information (participants selected for the study) can also depend upon the research approach and the epistemological orientation of the study. Therefore, as part of the overall design of the study, one needs to be clear about the

population that one can draw the sample from. In this study, the population is constituted of all VCs that are or have led public universities in South Africa. There are 26 public universities within South Africa and each institution has had more than one VC with the exception of the two newest universities that were established very recently (in the last decade). This means that the population of VCs is larger than 26 and includes black and white VCs.

Since the specific focus of this study is on black university VCs, a sampling process was needed to identify and recruit the participants of this study. In this respect, non-probability purposive sampling was used to identify the appropriate participants for the study. In qualitative research, purposive sampling refers to the need to choose particular participants who are fit for purpose (Cohen, et al, 2007). This means that there must be some criteria to inform the selection of participants. Since the focus of this study is on the narratives of black university VCs, the first criteria for selection is that the participants were black. In its broad definition, according to the constitution of South Africa, the participants could include persons from the African, Indian and Coloured race groups. The second criteria was that they were serving (being in office) as VC of public universities in South Africa since the demise of apartheid. The second criterion is linked to a specific contextual interest of the study related to the transformation of higher education guided by White Paper 3: A programme for transforming higher education.

4.6 Recruitment of participants

In my study, I was interested in the experiences of black VCs at South African public universities. This meant that the original pool of VCs at the time was 26 of which 17 were black. All 17 black VCs were the target sample for my study. I used direct recruitment to recruit my participants. Participation in the research was voluntary and this voluntary participation was made known to each of the black VCs that I called. Each identified participant was telephonically called to ascertain interest in the study and to set up the necessary appointments to conduct the interviews. Only 9 out of the

17 black VCs agreed to participate in the study and accepted my invitation to interview them.

Noting that the universities were spread across the country, I set out a schedule wherein I recorded the dates and times for each interview. This schedule facilitated the planning for my travel to each of the participating institutions. Having fixed the dates and times for the interviews, I approached each interview with caution, noting that I am researching upwards, meaning that I am researching a very senior leader of a university. The caution expressed was on the realisation that the VCs may not be able to honour the scheduled time for the interview because of emergencies and other demands by the VCs. Most of my interviews with the VCs were near on-time, meaning that I had to sometimes wait a short while before I was able to interview the VC.

I was then able to conduct interviews with 9 of the 17 black VCs. As a narrative inquiry I was not interested in breadth but the depth of experience and the rich thick constructions of meanings which meant that the small sample size was of little consideration. As Riessman (2007) notes that when the focus is on narrative inquiry, there is no need to be concerned about the large sample size. Thus, I was able to limit my project to the nine narratives.

4.7 Data collection

The interviews commenced with a brief explanation of the purpose of the research and its intention, the expectations from the interview process and how the interviews were to be conducted. Written permission to use an audio recording device was obtained from each of the participants and upon gaining their permission, each of the interviews were audio recorded. A set of guiding questions were presented to each of the participants at the beginning of the interview process and they had a choice on how to address each of these guiding questions through the narration of their storied experience of becoming and being a VC. Each interview session with each participant VC varied in duration. Some interviews were about 90 minutes while some were far in excess of 90 minutes. Noting the seniority of the participants within the university structure, one interview

was deemed appropriate. Opportunities for further interviews were considered most unlikely, hence the length of each interview session.

4.8 Data analysis

The research is conducted within a social constructionist paradigm and used thematic analysis to make sense of the data. Largely engaging the social constructivists theory of career development and leadership theory; and agreeing with the basic principles that there is a variety of understandings of the world made by each differing individuals, common themes were identified to be operating even within a group of very different individuals. An overall reading of the interviews brought to the fore several themes that were commonly shared amongst the different black VCs. Thematic sorting entailed identifying an issue and extracting all material relevant to the issue; categorising it followed by a narrative discourse analysis.

While there is no blueprint or manual for thematic analysis, a number of thematic analysts work has been drawn on to guide the interpretation. While a few guiding questions were used to conduct the interviews, the direction and course the interviews took, were largely determined by the participants. The discourses or themes emerged from the interviews. The basic structure of the coding process emerged from the data. This kind of working with the data and determining of the themes for the study is underpinned by Freeman's (1996) analytical framework (see Chapter Five for more details).

Findings from this research revealed that the participants have similar and differing experiences in their academic journeys to becoming VCs. Their narratives demonstrate that navigating their VC position was a complex one. There is a distinction between 'shared' and 'common' experiences. As the participants described their pathways to their current positions, it became evident that many of them were headhunted and that there is no evidence to suggest that any of them purposefully pursued the trajectory to become the VC of a university. Not all came through the trajectory of being Heads of Department, Dean, or Deputy VC, rather, academics and political activism, need for

transformation; affiliation to activist and political organisations; enlightenment through the freedom struggle and even “a series of accidents” contributed to them becoming VCs. Hence, not all of the black VCs are captured within each of the themes. Rather the range of themes and subthemes provided a scope to illuminate and understand the complex nature of becoming and being a black VC of a public university.

The common themes that emerged with respect to the critical influences that shaped their career paths included: family background, experiences within the university environment, mentoring relationships, navigating leadership positions within post-apartheid SA, overcoming race challenges and white elitist ideologies, support for VCs, the importance of scholarship, leading predominantly white higher education institutions. An examination of these themes point to particular patterns that may provide the basis for an understanding of how we could work towards further developing a cohort of primarily black academics for leadership positions in universities or at the very least, begin to generate ideas and a debate or discussion about black academic leadership. Each of the participants’ stories illuminated the challenges along their career paths, coping with the inherent difficulties of the role of a university VC and with one woman VC navigating her position as a black woman in an enduring white male-dominated profession.

The process of analysing the data commenced with the transcriptions of the audio recordings of the interviews. These were transcribed by myself. The transcriptions were used as the basis for the data analysis process. The transcriptions were read several times, individually and together with my field notes taken during the interview process for each participant. Reading the transcripts several times allowed me to embody the information presented by the participants individually and collectively. This deep knowledge of the data allowed me to construct some ideas around how the data could be organised and analysed. These ideas were then given names and a colour code. These colour codes were then used to identify key issues around which vignettes could be constructed.

Further refinement of the key issues led to the establishment of initial themes. The themes were then finalised through consultation with my supervisor. The respective data set to develop vignettes for the themes and sub-themes were used as the basis for the data presentation and analysis.

4.8.1 Themes

In writing up the inquiry, I focused on the following main areas.

4.8.1.1 Theme 1: Biographical beginnings

Within this theme, I looked at their family biographies and the influence this has had on their trajectories in terms of becoming leaders of higher education institutions. In this respect, I explored the family positionality, the educational environment and opportunities that the families presented and how these black VC's see their family environments as having influenced their career trajectories.

4.8.1.2 Theme 2: Contextual Issues

I looked at three contextual experiences that influence university leaders in their early years of development. These contextual experiences included political sensitisation, race and discrimination and gender issues.

4.8.1.3 Theme 3: Becoming and being a VC

This section looked at how the black VCs in question fared within the changing political context. Within this theme, I delved deeply into the dynamics of becoming a VC within a political context; and being a black VC in the context of transformation (both politically and educationally). This theme also looked at their reflections on their journey to becoming a VC.

4.9 Trustworthiness

Demonstrating trustworthiness involves showing the methodological approach used by the researcher to collect and analyse the data. According to Bailey (1994), in qualitative research, trustworthiness is shown by using credibility, dependability, conformability, and transferability.

One of the processes used was the fidelity of data generation. In this study, black VCs were interviewed as black VCs were the focus of the study. To ensure that trustworthiness was maintained I paid attention to the relevance of the content of the interviews to the research focus. Open ended questions were developed for the interviews and these were discussed extensively with my supervisor as a vetting process. Once approved, these open-ended interview questions were used to engage the black VCs at the beginning of the interview process. Like indicated previously the VCs chose how to use these framing questions, whilst narrating their storied experiences of becoming and being a VC of a public university in South Africa. Additionally, in an attempt to maintain trustworthiness, I used fieldnotes. During the interviews, I made notes on various areas of engagement. I returned to these notes when working with the data to generate themes.

4.9.1 Credibility

An important consideration in research is rigour and, in this context, credibility addresses this concern. Credibility instils confidence in the idea that the research presents information from the original data. According to Polit & Beck (2014), in the world of research, confidence in the outcome of scholarly work is critically important. In this study, the focus in terms of credibility was to show that this scholarly work was drawn from the original interviews and represents a credible interpretation of the interviewees' views.

Participants were engaged on data generated from the interviews in order for them to confirm that the record correctly captured their own experiences as a member check

activity is establishing credibility. Some of the interviews were more than 90 minutes and this prolonged engagement increased confidence and credibility in the data captured from the interviews (Streubert & Carpenter 1995). The above was in line with the strategy of member checks as Shenton (2004) emphasises the importance of this method of validation in qualitative research. In this case, sharing with the interviewees allowed a process of clarification and additional information checking, thus confirming that the data captured was correct.

4.9.2 Dependability

This aspect of trustworthiness is about the way in which the research was undertaken. In this regard, the research steps that were taken as the study progressed have been shown earlier here; as this is an important part of demonstrating dependability. Shenton (2004) emphasises dependability as important for showing how trustworthy the research is.

In line with showing the dependability of this research, the interviews were recorded and transcribed and used to engage the interviewees where necessary. Bitsch (2005) is credited with demonstrating that dependability shows how stable ones research findings are over a period of time. An audit trail is a strategy to show dependability (Chilisa & Preece, 2005). In this study, research decisions were explained and accounted for, and this included showing how the interviews were gathered, recorded and analysed. In line with this, the transcripts and field notes were archived in digital format and stored on multiple password protected devices.

4.9.3 Transferability

Transferability allows us to understand the extent to which the findings of the research can be applied to another settings. Shenton's (2004) work illuminates our understanding of transferability by suggesting that using thick descriptions in our work is a common way of making it transferable. These thick descriptions contribute to making the results credible (Shenton, 2004). In addition, when other researchers work in a similar area of

social enquiry, the detailed descriptions could help them replicate the study in another setting. In this study, transferability was taken into account by providing a detailed description of the interviewees responses.

Purposive sampling is also important for transferability and this was the technique used in this study. Here participants are selected for a specific purpose linked to a particular area of research where the participants are required because of their specific knowledge (Teddlie and Yu, 2007). In this context judgement decisions are possible. According to Teddlie and Yu (2007) purposive sampling allows for a greater level of detailed findings than other probability methods. Using purposive sampling allows for the maximisation of information gathered from a few interviewees and is not used for making generalisations.

4.9.4 Confirmability

Confirmability focuses on an important aspect of trustworthiness which is about the objectivity of a study. According to Baxter & Eyles (1997) confirmability deals with the corroboration of the finding of the study by other researchers. Baxter and Eyles (1997) remind us that confirmability is also concerned with ensuring that the findings are not made up by the researcher, but are indeed informed by the data that was collected.

During this study, interviewees stories were attained in each of their offices across the country and the interviewees were engaged regarding the information gathered from the interviews. Like in some other areas of establishing trustworthiness an audit trail remains relevant. In addition, confirmability also involves keeping a reflexive journal according (Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

In this study, the researcher kept a journal that included field notes, personal thoughts on the interviews that were conducted during the collection of data. In addition, recorded interviews were stored and available for reference during the writing process.

4.10 Ethical considerations

The University of KwaZulu-Natal's (UKZN) Research Ethics Committee provided ethics approval for this study. In undertaking this doctoral study I abided by the process and requirements as established by the university. My fieldwork began immediately after ethical clearance was granted. In line with abiding by the ethical protocols of research, I followed the process of getting the permission of gatekeepers at the institutions where the black VCs were based. The letter to the gatekeepers included details of the research project, the intended participants, the nature, purpose and use of the research, the expectations of the participating institutions and of the participants selected for the research process and the rights of the participants and of the institution.

As professional academic enquirers, researchers are compelled to abide by the established protocols to protect the dignity of their interviewees (Fouka & Mantzourou, 2011). In addition, in the context of my research I ensured that the identities of my subjects were protected by using pseudonyms (Creswell, 2005). The subjects in this research were also informed that the interviews were being recorded and the lives of the interviewees were not placed at risk or harm during this study (Creswell, 2005).

4.10.1 Informed consent

In line with protocol, informed consent was obtained from the selected research participants. Like the letter above, letters to the participants contained similar information about the research project, the expectations of the participants, details of the data collection process and the rights of the participants. This doctoral study recognised fully that attaining informed consent was an essential part of a study that involved human participants.

During the data generation process, the participants were once again informed of the research process, the intention of the research and how the data was to be used. Before conducting any interviews, each participant signed an informed consent form indicating that they had understood the nature of the research, what was expected of them and their

permission to audio record the interview session was obtained. They were also reminded of their rights as participants in the research process including the right to withdraw from the research process should they deem so.

4.10.2 Confidentiality

The literature focuses on the importance of confidentiality. Baxter & Eyles (1997) make the point that the central pivot of confidentiality is about making sure that the data collected from the participants should not be linked to them. This is a particularly important responsibility placed on the researcher as the researcher knows the respondents and their responses to the questions posed in the data collection process. In this study, the confidentiality of the participants and their respective institutions were maintained through the use of pseudonyms. In order to ensure the security of information, the data generated through the interviews were used for the research purpose only and was stored in a locked cupboard in my supervisor's office.

4.10.3 Privacy

Privacy is of particular concern when interviews are involved and researchers have a responsibility to ensure that the right to privacy of the interviewees are protected throughout the research process. In this study, the black VCs were assured of their respect for their privacy and autonomy. This is in line with the ethical considerations around privacy.

4.10.4 Anonymity

Anonymisation facilitates the protection of the research participants from the potential of compromising their confidentiality. Scholarly work has shown the need to anonymise research participants and anonymity through the use of pseudonyms remains the norm (Corden & Sainsbury, 2006). Careful care was taken in this research on black VCs to ensure anonymity through the use of pseudonyms.

4.10.5 The right to withdrawal

Participants were informed of the right to withdraw from the research process should the participant or the institution deem it necessary. All the participating institutions provided consent for the research to be conducted. Their rights to participate or not to participate were also presented to them.

4.10.6 Mental and physical harm

I confirm that no mental or physical harm befell any of the 9 participants in this study. At all times, I reminded the participants that they may exit the study voluntarily, especially if any part of the interview impacts on their physical or mental wellbeing.

4.11 Limitations of the study

One of the limitations could have been that even though I provided the rationale for the interviews to all purposively sampled participants, 8 of the sampled participants did not accept my invitation for an interview and no reasons were provided. Hence, some analytical generalisations of the findings of this study will be constrained and not be applicable to all 17 black VCs. However, in qualitative research generalisations have little value.

Another contextual limitation of this study is that the research was conducted within a political history of transformation within the country and the findings may be relevant to this political history. While this may be conceptualised as a limitation to this study, the strengths of this overrides this limitation in that the rich histories of the black VCs and the diversity of the experiences and trajectories followed in becoming and being a VC are very illuminating. It further has the potential to expand the pool of aspirant black VCs in the foreseeable future, thereby addressing a pressing challenge to the South African context where there seems to be a lack of adequate supply of potential VCs.

Other limitations of this study includes the selection of who participated in this study, how they were selected and how the participant chose to narrate their trajectories in becoming and being VCs of universities. Being a qualitative study, located within an exploratory framework, minimises these limitations. The rich and diverse narratives of these black VCs provided key insights on becoming and being a VC of a university within a transforming context that could influence and build confidence in potential Black academics to consider becoming and being VCs of universities.

4.12 Conclusion

The narrative inquiry methodology was deemed most appropriate for this study as the focus was on black VC's narrating their versions on what and how the various influences and influential moments across their lives, steered them to becoming VCs of public higher education institutions within South Africa. The richness of each of these stories and diverseness of the their life experiences shaping their pathways to becoming VCs, would not have been possible had another research methodology been chosen.

This chapter therefore, commenced with an extract of two of the participant's narration as a way of introducing and arguing for why narrative inquiry was the most appropriate research methodology for the study. The chapter also presented crucial elements of narrative inquiry that contributed to the deep and insightful narration of the participants narrative on becoming and being a VC of a higher education institution.

One of the challenges noted in the narratives of the participants was the explicit and vivid recollection of crucial aspects of their lives growing up in families that had their peculiar narratives. While it is expected in narrative inquiry studies to include a chapter that captures the essence of the narratives of each participant, either reported as captured in their own words or reported in third person voice or a combination of first and third person voice, I have chosen not to insert this chapter due to the sensitivity of the information presented within their stories. The black VCs are public figures and while ethical clearance had been received for the study and the requisite informed permissions were received from each of the participants, I considered the future implications of

revealing their detailed, personal and vivid stories and decided not to present this chapter in this thesis based on future ethical considerations. In attempting to preserve the detail and richness of the narratives, the next chapter on data presentation and analysis includes extended extracts of the narratives, almost in the form of vignettes, to compensate for not having presented a chapter on the narratives of each of the participants.

CHAPTER FIVE - DATA ANALYSIS

5.1 Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine the discourses of black University VCs in order to explore how they account for, and make sense of their positions as VCs. The study explored how they construct and make sense of their achievements in the South African higher education system in relation to professional, political, personal and historical influences on their careers as VCs.

The three research questions that guided this study were as follows:

1. What are the biographical influences on becoming a black VC of a public university in South Africa?
2. What challenges and opportunities have black university VCs experienced in leading public universities within South Africa?
3. How do black VCs make meaning of their roles as leaders of higher education institutions in South Africa?

5.2 Data analysis process

The data was generated through conversational interviews with the 9 black VCs. The audio recorded interviews were transcribed. The transcriptions were then regarded as the basis for the data analysis. Being guided by Freeman (1996) in terms of developing categories for analysis, I used a grounded process of analysis. *Grounded categories* according to Freeman (1996) are developed from the data itself without prior assumptions of what their significance may be. Narrative inquiry lends itself to this kind of determination of the categories for analysis as the participants chose what they want to say, how they want to say it and in what sequence to tell their stories. Hence, the categories of analysis are not pre-determined. The guiding questions that were used in the interview process contextualised the focus of the study and the participants had the freedom to narrate their stories in the way that they did. Taking this process into

account, not all participants provided responses to or were asked specific questions related to each of themes developed for presenting and analysing the data.

EMIC		ETIC	
Outsider as Insider		Outsider as Outsider	
----- ----- -----		-----	
GROUND ED ANALYSIS	NEGOTIATED ANALYSIS	GUIDED ANALYSIS	A PRIORI ANALYSIS
Categories emerge from data with minimal a priori expectation	Categories developed by researcher with input from participants	Categories developed a priori; subsequent analysis guided – and categories modified through interaction	Categories determined in advance of data collection and analysed

Source: Freeman (1996, p. 372)

Verbatim data formed the basis in the construction of vignettes to support the thematic analysis. While much care has been taken to protect the identity of the participants, as an additional method of ensuring participant confidentiality, certain participant descriptors and names in responses were omitted or slightly modified. The research is conducted within a social constructionist paradigm and uses discourse and thematic analysis to make sense of the data. An overall reading of the interviews has brought to the fore several themes that were commonly shared amongst the different VCs. Ultimately, this chapter analyses data on critical influences that shaped their career paths and on being a black VC of a public university in South Africa.

5.3 Theme 1: Biographical beginnings: early exposure to potential for excelling

Individuals’ biographies and its influence on their professional lives and responsibilities have been recognised as a major contributor in their (VC’s) professional growth, development, decision making and enactment of their responsibilities (Higgins, 2007). Hence, a focus on the black VCs’ biographies, especially that of their family

biographies, provides interesting insights of influence on their trajectories to becoming leaders of higher education institutions within South Africa. In this respect, I explore the family positionality with the communities that they exist in, the educational environment and opportunities that the families present to emerging educational leaders and how these selected participants have viewed their family environments as an influential component in their journey to becoming VC of higher education institutions in South Africa.

The data suggests that their family biographies have contributed to their recognition of their potential and aspirational possibilities. Further, the participants recognised that their family biographies provided a beacon to refer to as they account for their ascendance to lead higher education institutions. Some participants recognised that their excellence in their education was related to the education and other service oriented careers of their parents and others in their extended families; suggesting that the value that education was given within their families inspired them to excel.

VC1: Okay let me start this way. I always, one of my, what I would call my silver linings in my life is that fact that I am from a family of teachers, nurses and priests. It is all in the service type of careers and I knew way back as perhaps 10 years, because I was surrounded by teachers in this little village and I said I want to become a teacher that is all. And by the time I passed my, the then, what they called my Standard 6 with a first class, I always admired my principal and I said, I want to be a principal. So those were two shifts in my thinking. Throughout my life I always had been in positions of authority, in leadership positions, irrespective I became a teacher. One, high school teacher where I majored in History, Geography, Afrikaans. I think it is these types of subjects that really opened up a new way of thinking about these things. Yes, and I taught and then I started teaching at the Hoffmeyer High School, it was not long when I became the first HOD.

Drawing from this extract, this female VC alludes to nurture influences on her decision to become a teacher and subsequent leader in various points of her professional life. From an early age she aspired to being a leader. There is an inherent sense of leadership

(*I want to be a principal*), inspired by her principal. She saw the principal as someone being representative of excellence and, therefore, associated her excellent performance to being a leader, in this context; a school leader. Being *from a family of teachers, nurses and priests* is perhaps the family nurturing element of the family background that provided possibilities for becoming someone important in society, an aspirational possibility in this VC.

VC2 traces the development of his leadership qualities back to his childhood. The social and familial relationships that he experienced as a young boy influenced his self-confidence:

VC2: I am a son of a school teacher, and a school teacher who comes from Royalty. My mother was a housewife, she also came from royalty. I lived, I was born into what you would call, a powerful family in my little village, because both my parents have this element of being, sort of coming from the Chief lineages, somewhere or another. And we were staying at my mother's village which was, I suppose, what shape my being, and my mother was very close to her uncle who was the chief. My father was the secretary to the chief. I am the eldest son of what I would call the favourite daughter of the chief, so I sort of, I was always treated in a very special way.

For VC2, it was his family positioning within his community in terms of being part of the Royal family, an ancestry endowment, that he felt special about. The notion of being in a powerful family suggesting that the family was considered royal leader. Hence, leadership, being ancestrally endowed, was the nurturing environment that contributed to notions of leadership within this black VC.

Competitiveness within the community is another element that contributed to possibilities of excellence, especially as it relates to community standing and sustenance of aspiration to be at the forefront. In this respect, VC2 expands on the influence of his family on his aspirations and trajectory to leadership.

VC2: My father, when I grew up, I think there would have been about 10 to 12 teachers in the village who were my father's sort of contemporaries and they were all raising up children. They were not teaching in the same schools, but they were teaching in different schools within the villages in the area. They were friends, but they were also very competitive because they taught at different schools. And this not only translated into the outcomes of their results to be measured at the end of the year as to how many students they were able to give first classes, in Std 6, at the time, which was the end of primary school, and it was, you know, you wrote public exams, or something like that in Standard 6. So these teachers were all sort of competing at that level, but they also competed through their children, you know. We as children were aware that Dad has got maybe 11 other rivals and whatever we do, it is reflected on him. So, if we do well at school, it re-emphasises a certain ethos of my parents. Because, in the same class where I was, there were children of my father's rivals, or competitors so we always also competed in that. I remember this pretty well because there were maybe about six or so kids in my class where we were, I mean it was fierce rivalry about every exam, about every subject we wrote you wanted to beat your competitors, and I am talking about this from the age of about 7. So, it was the teaching background, the rivalry and the fact that you had this cluster, They were buddies, they met on Fridays and drank together, they socialised, they played monopoly together as parents and then they came home and they would then warn you, you know, you must do well, so and so's child is like this... It is little things like this that shape your thinking in a very funny way. Because my Dad always insisted that you had to remember everything you were taught at school, everyday. So before he was going to be doing his own school work, he would ask you, what have you done today at school in history. Tell me, what did you do in Geography, what did you do in English, what did you do in Arithmetic. So all of us grew up with this like sort of, we were on tenterhooks all the time knowing that we could be asked, what did you do on Monday, on a Friday. So in a very subtle way, your learning process was almost continuance. We were never ever out of school in my home. It was the most important thing.

Being in a powerful family, therefore meant that members of the family must be seen equally as competitors (*re-emphasises a certain ethos of my parents*) to maintain the

standing of the parents within their communities. This participant attributes his success to the socialisation process where he learnt to live in accordance with the expectations and standards of his family and the society that they were associated with. Family honour and reputation hinged on the intellectual ability of children in this family. Education was very important where academic prowess was a strong marker of social status and success. Research shows that better educated parents might be expected to complement the teaching received by their children more effectively ... and being better informed about education issues (Louw, van Der Berg, & Yu, 2006).

While being a powerful family was seen as a fertile ground for breeding excellence in performance as was seen in the above two participants' account of family influence, other participants recognised their home environment that contributed to their recognition of their potential to excel. VC3, for example, refers to his mother being that person as being significant in his recognition of his (VC3) academic abilities.

VC3: So if you ask me what was, and several people have asked this, was there something that was different right, in the fact that I was growing up in Greytown. My mother is like almost adamant that we would succeed at school. So there was very little cohesion and so on, but on the other hand every time I wrote a test and I kind of got a good mark in the test, like she would pick up the phone and tell everybody, you know the usual kind of jazz. So there was like that kind of subtle kind of pressure. Actually I don't know what would have happened had I not performed well at school, you know what I am saying, it might have been a very different scenario.

VC3: Well first of all I should say I came first amongst Indians in South Africa in matric, and there was a whole thing about going to university and so on.

Here too, much value and pressure was placed on academic achievement and the policing of academic progress was intricately tied in with family honour and pride (*she would pick up the phone and tell everybody, you know the usual kind of jazz*). While this participant recognised the role played by his mother in striving for excellence, his performance at school made him realise his potential for excellence, culminating in him

being the top achiever in his grade 12 results amongst the Indian population (noting that the education system at that time was segregated along racial lines).

With respect to participant VC4, accessibility of education material in his home was an enculturation into excelling where newspapers, books and visits to neighbourhood libraries was encouraged. An environment that inculcated a value for reading as early educational experiences.

VC4: However within that er...within the home there was a certain kind of milieu for the news, we read newspapers morning and evening, and er a mother who did a lot of reading... So ja, I loved the culture of reading. I grew up with that and I loved books, I went to the community library which was about a kilometre and a half, I had to walk.

The home environment was a space to enculture a love for reading and an interest in pursuing knowledge. Another participant relates being brought up within a reading culture as influential in his life.

VC5: I was born and raised in a place called District 6 and stayed there for the first 26 years of my life. Very, very orthodox catholic upbringing, very orthodox. German nuns and Christian brothers. Fear of the Lord smashed into you at an early age, so I had this great sense of the distinction between good and bad and fear of the Lord and fear of sin and all those sorts of things and it took me a long time to get rid of that, but that's off. Yes, a reading, singing family, I think that was very important. My father was a lorry driver. Always brought back books and things and he was a wonderful raconteur and storyteller, and so we all got to know a lot about lots of things. I remember his coming one day with Rubiac from Omar Kayam, it is like good stanzas from Omar Kayam. This was unusual for District 6. He was not particularly educated, but he just had this understanding that he should give us access to a bigger frame for our thinking and was available from the community at large.

One of the participants led me to recognise other spaces of influence. Being raised in a community with no exemplars of high expectations of aspirational value, VC6 refers to

an individual within the church that he attended regularly as being that accidental encounter, who exposed him to aspirational possibilities in higher education studies.

VC6: Well even, like as in any first generation student I did not think about going to University. For me it was a big deal just finishing High School in the old Standard 10. So for me there was absolutely no expectation of doing anything beyond high school except going to work, and what made that even more sort of real was the fact that I didn't know anybody in the community where I grew up, in Retreat in... in the Cape Flats. I didn't know anybody who went to University, so there wasn't that role model in the church that we attended or uncles or aunts, you know who we knew, nobody ever suggested that etc., etc., etc. Then of course just by accident, I think my life is a series of accidents, by accident I met a guy who was at our church, who goes to university, first in that whole community, and then I decided - for him he gets me to study which I had never done before and all that stuff as a senior high school kid. So I ended up at the university completely unsure why I am doing it or whatever and I actually failed my first year, which people seem to be surprised about, partly because... and partly because it was in Afrikaans which at that point I didn't understand.

I was very competitive in sport, so everything between the two of us was, if we played chess it was like to the death, when we played soccer it was to the death. When we did high jump over the back yard of their Council house on to mattresses and flop over the washing line, it was very competitive. And so when it came to studies it was very competitive even though he was two years ahead of me by nature of promotion in primary school, even though we were the same age. Had he not taken me and said you must study with me through the night on a Friday, which was a big joke you know, study on a Friday and eventually getting into this thing and enjoying it and being disciplined, you know to work through Physics and Biology and Mathematics with him, I don't think I would have gone anywhere.

It is very likely, because the programme I was in I had many international students, some of them ... wow, anyway, so I suppose what I am saying is for one moment to the next I sort of was surprised that people thought I could think and write and do well. It

took me a long time to accept that, you know, because of the sense that we were not good enough as a Cape Flats kid who stumbled upon... When I look at my own kids, it is so clear to me how they get to University. My son is finishing his masters. It is so clear to me how that happens because of the influence of parents, myself, who went to university. But I had none of that except by accident. So I am still surprised sometimes and sometimes guilty that I did okay because I remember that so many of my friends at school were much smarter than me.

In this participant's recall of his biographical beginnings, external recognition of excellence became the driver to engage with and excel in education matters. Initially, the recognition by a church goer, then by some international students gave him the confidence to believe in his capabilities.

[2] District Six - Family life for VC5 appeared harmonious and despite his father not being educated, he encouraged reading, nurtured love of reading and story-telling. In this working class home, moral behaviour was regulated and policed by religious doctrine that instilled a fear of sin.

The biographical narratives of these participants reveal that the home environment played a crucial role in the recognition of the participants' potential to excel and aspire to greater heights. The recognitions were either influenced by being in powerful families, being in families that privilege education and a reading culture, in families that subtly coerce excelling performance or in other spaces, like the church. This finding is not new, but extends to show that early recognition of potential is another biographical factor that influences leadership trajectories. Bourdieu's habitus (1979) is relevant here

[2] District Six has been and continues to be one of the principal sites on which coloured identity is symbolically claimed and contested in Cape Town (Beyers, 2009). According to Beyers (2009) during the 20th century this high-density neighbourhood, adjacent to the central business district of Cape Town, consisted of a largely low-income, racially diverse population of which the majority was classified 'coloured'. After District Six was proclaimed a 'whites-only' area in 1966, most of its approximately 60 000 residents were forcibly removed to the barren and windswept Cape Flats in phases until 1982 (Beyers, 2009).

in terms of being socialised within a context of excelling. The cultural capital of educated individuals, a reading culture and breeding excellence have been noted as influencing elements in the trajectories towards higher education leadership, the emphasis is on elements rather than the cause to become leaders of higher education institution.

5.4 Theme 2: Contextual issues sensitising aspiring VCs

Within this theme, I explore three contextual experiences that influence aspiring VCs in their early years of development. The first of these three kinds of experiences is the political sensitisation that the participants were exposed to and experienced, the second relates to race and discrimination and the third being gender issues. While all of the participants had experienced element of all three contextual influencing factors, the narratives of some of them are presented to give a deeper sense of how these experiences have come to sensitise them in profound ways.

5.4.1 Political sensitisation of aspiring VCs

Political activism, going into exile or being detained formed the base of another important theme within the lives of some of these VCs. Due to the oppressive history of apartheid South Africa, many of the VCs were in some way involved in political activism, some more than others. These experiences become integral to the discourse about themselves and shaped their development. According to Beukman (2006) institutional leadership is impacted by the activist experiences of leaders and in this context; transformation affects all organisations in South Africa. Beukman (2006) contends that the public service is impacted by the contextual paradigms of transformation and development.

This section explores how for some of the participants, their political activism also provides them with political credibility to effectively run universities within the post-apartheid context. For VCs like VC7 and VC4, the political climate and their activism

contributed to them becoming VCs. For VC7 it was his work with the United Democratic Front in the 1980s and through this work.

VC7: No, probably by default is the journey that I have travelled to becoming an academic you know, I consider myself really an academic by default. I certainly did not come through the traditional career pathway that one would normally expect a Vice Chancellor to go through. And it is a quirk of history really that I got to what I am doing currently now, as I was in exile for about a decade during which time I had to decide what I was going to do, except for loitering around in London and Europe, to do something productive. I then did postgraduate work. I did a Masters and eventually a PhD.

In Sociology, you know, I basically focussed in Sociology of industrialisation in post-war South Africa; and Politics and Economics really was specifically the disciplines that I then endeavoured to study. And so my interest was really through political discourse as an activist really and I then had to make a substantial decision in 1995, 1994, when this massive transition was taking place, we were all taken by surprise, as you can imagine. At least I was taken by surprise, by a great surprise that things were so swiftly changed, you know and the political space would open up again for us to come back and so at that stage I had to make a decision about whether I was going to return into politics, which I was involved in, as an activist, really, an opposition activist, and my decision was no. I felt that I don't see myself as a professional politician, I had never seen that, for me it was a calling, a commitment and so on. And also secondly, my personality probably didn't lend itself to be a politician by practice, as a profession, as a vocation because of the rebel within, so to speak and I felt that the country probably would need people to focus on the development of other spheres of society and particularly education would be crucial, given the chasm of colonialism, and I found it as such a massive chasm of poverty and equality and wealth distribution that one of the key instruments to facilitate greater access of people for self-development and social development would be education. And so I then took the decision that I want to come back and work in an educational space and that probably the University was the best arena for me to have chosen. I then made the decision that I was going to come back

and focus, not in a traditional University, I wanted to play a role to set up the institutions of the new democracy. So I set up an Institute of Governance at the University of Fort Hare, on its Bisho campus to support the fledging administrations and local government and the national government coming up. This was really in the early days of the democratic experiment as well.

VC4 also explained how it was the political nature of his studies that really inspired his career. He recalled:

VC4: So... Uhm, you know essentially I uhm, when I started at UCT, working on my studies and became a full time political activist, very involved in a national student political organisation as a key official and office bearer, then become the head of (...incoherent...) newspaper for 3 years. Uhm eventually because of various serious political deceptions and having a child being born during the state of emergency, while living underground, I had to leave the country in '86 and began a doctorate at York University. And then returned, and then got involved in the very important United Democratic Front, one of the armed early stages of the UDF together with Trevor Manuel who was very progressive in the Western Cape. And on returned from UK , I got involved in the Peoples Education Movement, as the NEC, also the convener for the Western Cape. That's when I also started to become an academic, having been head hunted by Professor Jakes (...incoherent...) being associated to join UWC, it very much fitted the vision he had for UWC, UWC gave me ten years, the most fantastic experience and opportunities that any university could give a young black scholar...

For VC4, being forced to leave South Africa due to his political activism, culminated in him acquiring a doctoral degree. This is not to suggest that he would not have acquired a doctorate had he remained in South Africa. On his return from the UK, he continued his activism by way of education and academia and this facilitated him being headhunted for his VC position.

The political climate during apartheid was one of unrest and struggle, with many activists being detained in prison. Illustrated in the extract below, VC8 used his teaching

skills to educate those in prison. While being detained in prison took him away from teaching in academic environments, he pursued his passion in prison by educating fellow prisoners. Being in prison may have contributed to him changing the course of his profession in medicine.

VC8: Well, to give you my background first. I am a medical doctor, so by nature we end up teaching okay in many ways. But I did want to specialise and be involved in teaching, that is why I did postgraduate studies after studying in the same university as you. I was at the University of Natal, in the seventies, I qualified in 1980. After that I went to Edendale Hospital in Pietermaritzburg, it was still one of the best teaching hospitals then and I did a round of almost every discipline, post qualifications, but my main area of interest was Paediatrics. I wanted to do postgraduate studies in child health and be involved in teaching as well. But I took a detour, because of the politics of the time, I was detained and in prison for some time. That again brought up the teaching in me, because whilst in prison there were young people who also wanted to, some of them had not finished matric, and so I started teaching in prison.

However, after imprisonment I changed course. I didn't go into Paediatrics. I went to Family Medicine, having had an exposure in General Practice and realising the gap between our medical education and primary health care, especially in general practice. So I did my postgraduate studies in Family Medicine at Wits. For me, partly it was to engage in district health services and teaching in that regard and therefore when I went to the University of Transkei, Medical School, after qualifying at Wits, and teaching there students in first year, second year and also postgraduate students.

In each of these three cases, their personal experiences of being involved in the political struggles have sensitised them into a powerful role that they could play. They also recognised that there are various spaces to make a difference and have consciously chosen to take an educational focus to their political activism. Hence, pursuing an educational trajectory and taking on leadership in their educational perspective of political leadership and influence.

5.4.2 The intersection of race, gender and class on their journey to becoming VCs

While the position of black VCs and academic leadership more generally have transformed dramatically in terms of race in the last ten to fifteen years, there is still a long way to go in terms of gender transformation. Having said this; gender, race and poverty (class) issues are still dominant transformational concerns and an influential contextual reality within the South African context. All of the respondents had reflected on their experiences of the intersectionality of or individuality of race, gender and class on their journey to becoming VCs.

Given that all the participants are black and they were born and spent most of their young lives under the racialised system of apartheid, it was a defining feature for them. Where they lived, how they were educated and how they were perceived and their various anxieties as a young person would have been influenced by race and class. And while the overcoming of racial oppression is a story of all black South Africans, the success of these black leaders makes their stories all the more compelling.

Once again it was not just against economic odds but against a system of racial oppression that not only led to the material dispossession of millions, but also contributed to the positive being of black people (Hadfield, 2010). In terms of leadership, it is interesting to examine how this has created the opportunities for appointing VCs that were not White. Some participants acknowledge openly that race played an opportunity role in their appointment as VCs.

VC6: And so race in a fact was the opening, you know, through which I could be appointed. Because the Chair of Council at the time made it very clear, he said, you have to be a bruin of swart, which was a very clumsy way of putting it, but the Vice Chancellor needs to be... as far as he is concerned compared to the one we have now. So there was a very clear sense that I was needed to come, they were ready for a black Vice Chancellor.

Race issues was not only between black and white categorisations. Within the overall black categorisation, race and regional issues also played out as VC6 further alludes to in the narrative below.

VC6: Well, my first goal of course was to be Vice Chancellor at UDW and I was really excited about that possibility but for reasons that had partly to do with the fact that, I was thinking about it the other day in Durban, that at that time I always felt that the struggle in Durban was between choosing an African or an Indian, it was as blunt as that, you know and somebody once put it to me in those terms. And so since I was seen as neither of those, you know, it was never going to happen, so it was either you know, Ramashala or Saths Cooper. It was always played out in those terms, you know. And to some extent you can understand the provincial sentiment and politics around that because certainly the people I worked with, the Adam Habib's, the Angela Paruk's and so on, they were progressive in my view, academics.

Some saw the oppressive nature of race and excelled in the face of racial oppression to become recognised despite their race.

VC5: You know the nuns had a clear, I am afraid they were, I believe now, quite racist, in the ways in which they approached things and also there were very, very clear class distinctions that they made. So what it did for me was, I think, it gave me a far better sense of self-esteem than I might otherwise have had. If it wasn't for the fact that I could play sport so well and I could do well in the schooling and their affirmation of that by getting you to do things. I just played sport, I was the champion sprinter, champion discus, champion high jumper, I eventually captained the Western Province cricket team, that is the Black Union, I was the South African Badminton champion, I was the South African schools discus champion. I found playing sport so easy, so when you do that, that is a different space altogether, you know it is not an intellectual space.

The teachers liked me. Teachers like students who could put up their hand and give the right answer because it meant that, that validated them you know. I found out early that teachers liked me and so, at the time I didn't have many thoughts because at that time

we didn't have much sort of discourse about what is it you wish to become you know, my father was a lorry driver. You made your way, you fell into what possibilities there were and you just, but I always knew that I should be kept in school, which was a decision that the family took that I should be kept in school and unfortunately my two sisters, older sisters paid the price for it. They were taken out of school in Standard 8, both of them.

In terms of leadership, you instinctively want to take over, not take over, but you want to be part of what happens you know, and look, what I had to overcome outside of District Six, what I overcome was the fact that I was shabby, you know, my mother was an alcoholic and so our shirts were never clean, you know it was that kind of stuff you know, and it was hard, it was hard, we didn't have, you know, we had holes in our shoes and that sort of thing. So I had all of that to carry.

The intersectionality of his race, gender and class position disadvantaged his early years, and overcoming these disadvantages through alternate positioning (like through sports) meant that there were possibilities that he could exploit to demonstrate his potential and leadership qualities. In addition to his sporting abilities, gender played a role in the decision to keep the participant in school. VC5 was keenly aware of the ways in which his sister was disadvantaged by gender norms and resultant inequalities. The gender order and patriarchy were instrumental in this decision to keep the boy child in school and the ways in which enduring gender inequalities limit girls and privilege boys is demonstrated in the decision of poverty-stricken families to sacrifice girl education in favour of boys. The foremost factor limiting female education is poverty. Economic poverty plays a key role when it comes to coping with direct costs such as tuition fees, cost of textbooks, uniforms, transportation and other expenses. Wherever, especially in families with many children, these costs exceed the income of the family, girls are the first to be denied schooling. This gender bias decision in sending females to school is also based on gender roles dictated by culture. Expectations, attitudes and biases in communities and families, economic costs, social traditions, and religious and cultural beliefs limit girls' educational opportunities. His awareness created discomfort. As an

adult he is keenly aware of the negative consequences the decision to attach greater importance to his education meant for his sister.

VC5: Oh yes absolutely. I don't know how, I wasn't part of that discussion, those discussions and I only learnt about that very recently, when my sister, who was by far, the most talented person in our family who is now in America. She is older, she is 69 now. In a moment of, what, cleansing of the spirit I suppose, she did say to me that she was sacrificed so that I might go on. I didn't know that and I feel very uncomfortable about it.

While this was the case for one of the participants, the extract below demonstrates a greater propensity towards gender equality. In this family, girls and boys were afforded the same opportunities in gaining access to higher education. Critical thinking was encouraged and nurtured in the family home, where the parents played a great part in promoting progressivism. Growing up in a liberal environment allowed them the space to make decisions.

5.4.3 Gender challenges of being a woman leader

Under apartheid, race was the primary axis of inequality and, to a large extent, it continues to be so (Morrell, et al., 2009). All post-apartheid policies have sought primarily to address racial inequality, while at the same time paying attention to gender imbalances and injustices (Morrell, et al., 2009). While the position of VCs and academic leadership more generally have transformed dramatically in terms of race in the last twenty years, there is still a long way to go in terms of gender transformation. Gender is a key agenda of transformation that needs to be addressed. Women in positions of leadership are still too few and far between. According to Morley (2013) the lack of women in leadership positions is common not only in the United Kingdom but across Europe. “The pattern of male prevalence in senior leadership positions is visible in countries with diverse policies and legislation for gender equality” (Morley 2013, p 8.). In the UK, in 2009/10, women were 44% of all academics. A higher proportion of staff in professorial roles was male (80.9%) than female (19.1%). Men

comprised 55.7% of academic staff in non-manager roles and 72.0% of academic staff in senior management roles (Blandford et al., 2011). The 2012 HEFCE Report states that in 2010-11 most academics were still male (57%), and female academics were concentrated in less senior roles” (Morley, 2013, p.5).

While universities may engage in a discourse of equity, women still find it difficult to climb the leadership ladder. There are several parallels between the conditions in Europe and South Africa in terms of female academic leadership. Morley (2013) argues that while universities may utilise feminist discourses and make attempts to promote women, their attempts are often not successful. Furthermore, Morley (2013) argues that the lack of proper empirical research into why and how women do not succeed in academia is lacking.

Discussions in the literature often rely on unproblematic notions of polarised gender identities in public and professional domains. Gender is treated as a demographic variable, rather than something that is in continual production, according to Morley (2013) e.g. via processes of knowledge production and distribution, opportunity structures and social relations in higher education. Metaphors of entrapment, waste and victimhood abound e.g. glass ceilings, leaky pipelines and ivory basements.

Ironically, while much of the literature describes male norms, it often reproduces female norms and overlooks differences in age, ethnicities, sexualities and cultural and social class locations. The literature overflows with normative assumptions about childcare and innate, benign female dispositions and aspirations. As Ross-Smith and Huppertz (2010) observe, there has been a plethora of research on the barriers to women’s advancement in management but less empirical research has concentrated on women who have spent prolonged periods of time in senior managerial roles (Morley, 2013, p. 15).

This argument by Morley (2013) sheds important light into constructive ways forward in attempting to think about women in management. While the scope of this project was limited to VCs, a future line of inquiry could be opened up to include wider sections of

management. Through this broadening of the category of leadership, there could be a focus on the role of women in senior managerial roles, such as Deputy VC.

Of the 26 South African higher education institutions, four VCs are women (at the time of doing this research). Only one woman VC was interviewed for this study, other women approached did not agree to be interviewed.

VC1: I was just a student and then I passed my B ED, I was still teaching and I was the 5th black woman to get into Vista when Vista was opened up and there I became a lecturer in Education, ya, a senior lecturer in Education the first black women on the Mamelodi Campus. That too was a whole new world because it was basically one, Vista was then meant as a non-residential university. Almost like a counter balancing act for people getting into some of the White institutions, and also like at UNISA most of the staff was white, so it was constantly, you know looking for yourself in the passages, constantly being looked upon as being different. And I also know I was a very good teacher, that I can vouch for. I was a very good teacher and my students always adulated at the way I did things.

VC1: In any case, from there I became again the first black senior researcher with HSRC and it was also very taxing again, here I found myself completely in a predominantly white male environment, being a researcher and again you know, that parading of being, you had better, not better, you are different, perhaps better came to the fore all the time. I think what stood me in good stead during that time was my ability to know so many languages. I was very fluent in both English and Afrikaans. I knew all the languages because that interaction that I had, I had linguistic abilities which really helped me navigate through a place like the HSRC.

I am moved from being a Senior Lecturer at UPE before it became UPE, again the first black woman in Education to teach at the University. Then from there, I got an Associate Professorship at UP. And then from there I saw this position being advertised, in fact it was at a Fulbright Scholarship come together, then they spoke about they needed a DVC academic at the technikon and I just said, Technikon University? No.

And then I just went for the interview. And then fortunately I had both. I had everything. So again I was the first in the entire sector now to become the first DVC academic woman ...and also acting as a VC in the absence of the VC. And I think to me that is, it was at the PE Technikon, that is where my learning ground was because I had 11 male Deans under me. 11 faculties, now you can imagine the richness of such experience. I really learned and to me I think that was right of passage to a higher landing coming this way.

I had been lobbied from so many places but I, at that point you know there is one thing about women at home, your sense of saying, I am not ready yet, to me that is what stood in my way, am I really ready for this challenge? With the PE Technikon I knew when my predecessor was going to leave I was going to move into that. I was black, I was a woman, I had the qualifications and with experience. Then came the mergers and even at that point during the merger time there was a possibility I could have had it, the but I was disappointed, but I am not going to get into that. And then here comes this opportunity for me. I applied and I was appointed. But I had other distractions, this was not the only goal I had in mind. I had looked at other institutions and I was fortunate to be short-listed to be interviewed and in the end I withdrew and this one came at the end of September, I took I was ready for the jump.

To a great extent, but there was a time when the issues of gender and race were debilitating factors, they stood in my way. Particularly when you were a high school teacher, no matter how good you were, how learned you were, you knew that could not buy you into anything. And then as you were at the university, your label of success was underpinned by two things that is you were either let in, you didn't get in yet. Because she is a women and she is black. But I knew I went in there on my own cognisance and was accepted. Ya.

The double bind of race and gender featured prominently as factors that limited and disadvantage black [young] women. Even as a young girl in school, this participant's progress was hindered by gender inequalities and the prevailing gender order or order of patriarchy. As a young girl, the path to success and even later as an academic, was

one that required her to transcend the glass ceiling. Like the male participants who had to overcome entering and leading white male dominated institutions, she too drew on her resilience and power as a woman to overcome the discriminatory and stereotypical attitudes and practices at university.

VC1: Whilst it is resilience and again I go back to me being a woman, women are basically very resilient. And this is one of the things we must never lose sight of. In our weakness we are very powerful. And too, again it goes back to those values that a model organisation want, you know, caring, empathy and all those. And you are able to choose your battles. Men like to be listened to, why not play that game? Pretend you don't understand and then you can actually see where this whole thing is going to. Or make them feel they are leading at times. You have got to really be able to shift the goals all the time. And also I think we have got big hearts, choosing my battles very carefully. It is very challenging I don't want to tell you lies.

VC1 makes reference to an essentialist understanding of women as inherently resilient and believes in women power, while juxtaposing this against 'feminine' qualities of care and empathy that are largely associated with feminine styles of leadership. Being able to navigate a predominantly male-dominated terrain and to transcend the glass ceiling, in her opinion, requires strategic manoeuvring and allowing men to believe that they are in control.

VC1: Ya, the environment. The environment when I first came, it is because people were still living in the past of their own and here comes this woman from nowhere, changes policies da, da, da and there was some sort of, not resentment but resistance that came up. But now that they see what I am doing with my vision and mission all intact, they see everything around, they see, perhaps she is coming with something good, she is not as bad as we thought she was.

The enduring stereotypes about women and their ability to occupy senior positions, particularly in male-dominated professions required her to prove that she is able to lead

in the face of much resistance. There is greater pressure on women leaders to prove that they can lead higher education institutions.

5.4.4 Concluding comments on the contextual influences on the journey to being VCs

The personal and the situational experiences of these black VCs cannot be excluded from the struggle histories of South African societies towards liberation. The domination of the discourses on race, class and gender has not only been at a national political level, but pervaded the home, educational spaces and work spaces. The normalisation of such discourses led, in general, to the acceptance of such discourses in these spaces. The resistance and education on and about these issues as experienced by these black VCs brought them in to the centrality of these discourses. This centrality sensitised them to disrupt these normative and limiting discourses.

The sensitisations through their personal experiences of the intersectionality or individuality of these issues had strengthened their resolve to confront such issues in purposively directed leadership drive, taking the path of education as their contribution to political change within the country. Their personal resilience and personal activism against these socialised norms of race, gender and class has drawn out their leadership qualities that they then harnessed within educational spheres to make a societal difference as the next theme will allude to in their roles as VCs.

5.5 Theme 3: Becoming and being a VC in post-apartheid South Africa

Momentous changes had swept across the South African higher education scene in the nineties. This was in line with the broader political current in the country. The more resourced universities at this time catered mainly for white students and the less resourced universities provided tertiary education along racial lines for the black population. In this context, it was commonplace to think of the University of the Western Cape as a university for Coloured students and the University of Durban Westville as a university for Indian students. So, the tertiary education space required

visionary leadership, and the political context provided the ideal setting for black academics to climb the academic ladder; and assume positions as VCs. This section explores how the VCs in question fared within the changing political context.

5.5.1 Becoming a VC within a context of political change

The changes and continuities in South Africa's higher education system have been documented (Jansen, 2009). On 5 March 2001, the Minister released a National Plan for Higher Education that argued that there was a need to have fewer higher education institutions in SA (Bhorat, 2004). The restructuring of higher education through mergers and other forms of realignment is by no means a South African or even an education phenomenon (Harman and Meek, 2002) even though its local manifestation might invoke apartheid's illogical development as the stimulus for such radical changes (Jansen, 2004). The themes that emanate from the data forms part of the broader recurring issues that have developed in the higher educational landscape in South Africa.

The advent of democracy in 1994 ushered in all forms of transformation in all spheres of the country including higher education. It was important that higher education had to transform. Part of the transition and transformation included equity and equality policies that would ensure the appointment of black scholars into leadership positions, particularly in previously white dominated universities. However, the recruitment and retention of especially leading and promising black scholars remains one of the most difficult tasks facing higher education, in part because of the financial attractions to the private sector and in part because of the nature of the academic workplace (Jansen, 2004). It is against this backdrop that many VCs were charged with the task of leading South African universities in the transformation process.

It is important to mention that engaging in institution-wide change requires examining institutional culture - defined by the set of shared attitudes, values, goals, and practices that characterise the institution (Trice and Beyer, 1984) and, when necessary, engaging in cultural change. According to Trice and Beyer (1984) colleges and universities are

historically slow to make changes to institutional culture, however. They tend to seek extensive deliberation and study, which too often result in resistance to change. Therefore, the transition according to the VCs who participated in this study, was not a smooth process, with some VCs not being enthusiastic about being VCs in those universities that were previously governed by white male VCs. However, the evidence points to these black VCs being approached to lead the universities. While many of them may not have always worked strictly within academia they all have been attached to the university context at some point in their careers either as lecturers or in a variety of management posts, while some worked in research institutes, higher education funding organisations and so on.

Like in many other post-1990s contexts globally, there was an opening up of these leadership posts to more diverse candidates (Breakwell & Tytherleigh, 2010). While leadership positions requirements were changing and there were hopes to attract a diverse group of candidates did not mean that new candidates were broadly diverse as the narratives of the participants suggests.

VC1: Now there is pressure then on the historically white universities to, I guess, appoint, it is a good time for people who want to be Vice Chancellors who are black. Because the historically white universities, I mean there is a lot of hand wringing at UCT where they appointed Max Price and overlooking somebody like Cheryl de la Rey. And I think Max indirectly I think in the early days, kind of explaining why he was the right candidate for UCT in terms of being a transformation. So the long and short of it is that race still matters a lot in who becomes a Vice Chancellor of a South African university.

While traditionally the post would have been vied for by different individuals applying, given the particular moment in South African history, institutions needed to deracialise and a much more proactive recruitment process was adopted. It also meant; given the legacy of apartheid, that many individuals were not confident in applying for the post and hence, probably needed the vote of confidence to apply for a post previously reserved for white men and very few white women.

Given the racialised make-up of South African university management, exemplified by the fact that VC3 experienced discomfort when offered the job at DUT, this was common for black managers in an institution with a majority of white managers.

VC3: So there is no question about that. I mean I am not suggesting that I wasn't ready for it or anything like that, but, you know, why would they have come to me, instead of like going to one of their own people, I mean there were a lot of senior people at the University of Natal at the time. Very senior people saying to me, how come you got this job? And that is part of the story is without question the fact that the University of Natal was anxious about the fact that it was so white. So there is that and on the other hand I was, for me my work has always been political based, so it was also about saying - can I make an impact - or can I have an effect, or can I, are things that I can do which will help to change things.

VC4: It was not open, I don't think. Uhm you must remember this is a 107 year old University. You must remember that prior to my arrival in 2006 every VC of this university was white, but they weren't just white. There were about six or seven characteristics that defined every VC before me. Private school, Oxford, Rhodes itself, they served for different denominations; uhm there was a certain class factor and so on. So this university I don't think was ready, for the black VC, and one of the questions I did put to the now Election Committee, when they interviewed me on the 12th of September, the day Biko was murdered. When I came for the interview in September, my final word to the Election Committee is, after the presentation was to say, "You've got to think very carefully about appointing me, I have laid out to you what my background is, what my values are and what my commitments are. If you find a match appointment, but if you don't find a match, if you don't think you are ready for someone like me. Not just black, someone who also comes with some very strong commitments, then perhaps don't appoint me. And one of my referee's from Kgotsa Mokene, who is now their President, he was Vice at that point, his referee which I read a little later and he said, "VC4 is very ready for an institution like Rhodes. The real question is whether Rhodes is ready for him?"

VC7: I felt that the country probably would need people to focus on the development of other spheres of society and particularly education would be crucial, given the chasm of colonialism, and I found it as such a massive chasm of poverty and equality and wealth distribution that one of the key instruments to facilitate greater access of people for self development and social development would be education. And so I then took the decision that I want to come back and work in an educational space and that probably the University was the best arena for me to have chosen. I then made the decision that I was going to come back and focus, not in a traditional University, I wanted to play a role to set up the institutions of the new democracy. So I set up an Institute of Governance at the University of Fort Hare, on its Bishu [Bisho] campus to support the fledging administrations and local government and the national government coming up. This was really in the early days of the democratic experiment as well.

No, I have no doubt that context does play a role, or some role, I don't want to exaggerate context but I certainly think it creates a sense of familiarity in the context of you, and of you in relation to the context also, I guess. And my decision to come to NNMU was a deliberate decision just before I became 50, I decided that I want to come to PE to spend a few years here AT THE University that had given me so much, an opportunity, politics of resistance that we were involved in here in the communities, I taught in these communities, I taught in the schools here, my Mom and Dad died here as well in the City. My sisters are still, not all of them, but two of them are here. My old comrades and social, and I guess also political networks, if you can call it that, are still located largely, although not exclusively in the city itself and I felt that I needed to give something back to the city from where I gained so much.

The then President of the Government asked me whether I wanted to become the Vice Chancellor. Also 94, because I wasn't interested at all, I was planning to leave the University to come back to PE to do some other things, but they then asked me would I be willing to head the institution, probably on the basis of the work that I was doing at the Institute and so on, they needed someone to rescue the University that was basically falling apart during that time. So this is my second job as a Vice Chancellor.

Recognising potential and expertise on black academics also paved the way for becoming a VC as in the case of VC6. The meteoric rise of VC6 from a PhD graduate to a professor in his first appointment as an academic, is probably a first in the history of academic appointments within higher education.

VC6: When I finished the PhD [at Cornell University] in good time and all that stuff and then I had to come home and UDW had the department of Political Studies that Jairam Reddy who was the Vice Chancellor at the time was the Chair of the interview panel. Jairam says to me, when can you start, so I said well, as soon as I get back whenever, June, July. And I went straight from there, this is to irk some people like Ashwin Desai, they will never tell it to me to my face, but I went, my first academic position in the University was as a full Professor, I never grew from Junior Lecturer, Lecturer, to Senior Lecturer, Associate Professor. My first job was as a full professor. I still wonder if that was good or bad. But I think the basis for that was by the time I graduated, I had written, I suppose, more journal articles in international journals than anybody in the University, in Education, certainly. I had written a book, you know, which came out with the dissertation on a completely different subject, so it wasn't a dissertation turned into a book as so often happened. I think that is probably why I got selected, but personally I would never hire somebody straight out of University with a PhD, even if they had written 10 books and made them a full professor first. But that was interesting. And then of course, Head of Department, Dean, and then Acting DVC. In a relatively short time, probably a year and a half to two years, as Director of the Education Research Centre there. And then Acting Deputy Vice Chancellor. So yes, all of this happened very quickly. I sort of fell foul of the Vice Chancellor at the time, she actually hated me, I still to this day don't know why. But it was very clear to me that I was not going to get very far there and then of course both Wits asked me to come there as Vice Chancellor through Colin Bundy and Pretoria asked me to come there as Dean. But the Dean thing was more challenging. I felt it was more important because you know, the English Universities really didn't see the need for the transformation. Whereas under van Zyl at Pretoria it was very clear that they wanted to move and I found that fascinating even though it would mean less money. So I went to Pretoria and it was one of the best decisions I made and had a great seven years there as Dean, a

couple years as Administrator and then came here. So yes, I suppose in a single sentence it was stumbling across opportunities that got me on the way.

The potential to make a difference, either through academic excellence, past experiences of being in a leadership role or being part of political agency, was recognised internally by the participants or externally by influential individuals within the then political transformation terrain of South African politics had led these individuals to be appointed as VCs of the public universities. Internal recognition was driven by their awareness of and experience of the injustices of the past and their self-efficacy in the potential to make a difference in society informed their choices to accept positions of leadership within higher learning institutions.

Self-efficacy has been noted as a crucial aspect of belief for success, and clearly the narratives of these participants have shown the belief in themselves as change agents that can make a difference on a large institutional scale. The external recognitions served to reinforce their decision to take up the challenge of leading higher education institutions. This external recognition by influential persons in the broader political sphere is a crucial enabling factor without which no real change could be realised. Hence, the confidence to take up the VC positions in the context of deep political transformation needs both the self-efficacy confidence as well as the political connection to succeed, both of which the participants alluded to.

5.5.2 Being a VC within the context of transformation both politically and educationally

So even though there were and continue to be attempts to employ black senior managers, the institutional culture might not be willing to accept the transformation and this makes it difficult for black managers to be effective. This must be the same reason why many women may find it difficult to transition into management. Despite the labour laws, the practices and culture of many institutions including at universities, makes it difficult for women to enter into positions of management. Black VCs who enter previously white dominated institutions are compelled to transform the

institutional culture. However, instituting changes proves to be a challenge because often the existing institutional culture may impede transformation initiatives in higher education (Higgins, 2007).

VC8: But you have to make sure that you can be able to face a rapidly changing environment. You should be able to deal with diverse opinions and be able to lead a big organisation. Because it is not just the three campuses, it is bigger than that because the alumni is there, there are various people that you have to interact with who will be looking at you how you are running this institution. So you have to prepare yourself for that leadership. You have to prepare yourself in terms of the sector. You must know the sector. You must know education generally, but higher education in particular and you must be able to network as much as possible for the institution. So you have to really build yourself and prepare yourself for this whole venture. It is not just sitting in the office looking at paper and processing things. It is bigger than that.

The challenges faced by black VCs who occupy these positions are enormous and they face much scrutiny from all sectors. There are expectations of them to institute changes, to transform NOT reform policies and to develop black academics. VC8 demonstrates awareness around leadership of the different universities in South Africa. Leading a university like Fort Hare during apartheid as opposed to post-apartheid, differs considerably.

Post-apartheid, VCs are faced with challenges of catering for diversity and multiculturalism and not simply catering for and creating a minority of elite academics. VC8 alludes to being forced to reflect on his own inherent leadership style. Due to the demands of transformation and the state of universities, it is crucial to adopt a leadership style that is compatible and suited to the dramatic changes required at particular universities.

VC8: The big issue about Higher Education first and then Fort Hare, is the fact that we are going through a period of very deep and broad transformations in the country. If you had Fort Hare let's say before 1994 first, we would not be in the same context as

we are now, where you are trying to make sure that the issues of access, the issues of equity, the issues of rebuilding an institution coming up especially with the new campus that we have got in East London, having to have various cultures, because the Alice culture from the start was different from the East London culture, which was originally Rhodes, therefore we had to stabilise that and make sure that there is a shared vision by the various campuses. So it is a time of change and not superficial change, it is deep change.

We have a legislation that was enacted in 1997, but we had a re-incorporation, or an incorporation of the campus in 2004 and therefore between 1997 and 2004 there was one unit called Fort Hare. But from 2004, there was this other unit, so it was another time of change for the institution. And it was a time of change with the new Higher Education Plan also having come in around 2001, so the university has been going through change. Higher Education Sectors are going through change. The trajectory of the university when it comes to the academic project has been a trajectory that was growing when I started as Vice Chancellor. In fact, even when I started as Deputy Vice Chancellor, from a very low base of research, from a very low base of student numbers we have grown now to student numbers of about 11 000. So the cultural issues, the transformation issues, the issues of the new university being built there was a 2000 strategy plan that was developed which I had to change immediately because with the incorporation of the Rhodes campus, we had to change that plan, which was meant for the Alice campus. An IOP was developed when you incorporated East London, but that IOP was also short lived because it was also from 2004 to about 2007. So you just had to change. So it was a time of change and it affects your leadership because if you are leading a stable organisation you have a different approach to leadership. If you are leading through a period of change you have to give that transformation and leadership that is required in the institution. So that is basically what has affected my style. However, there are inherent issues within me about leadership. Issues of consultation are really built in any organisation that I lead. I do have to make sure that there is as much consultation as possible. Which is required in this day and age in South Africa.

My view is that we are leading public institutions which are resourced by public funds and I start from the premise that education first is a public good. There may be elements of the very a very high private good, especially for higher education. But still there is a need to make sure that there is accountability to the public if you are running an institution. So corporatism should not be the dominant feature of the institutions of higher learning. There are definitely basic generic issues that we can get from the corporate sector that may assist in running an institution. If you have to make sure that your balance sheet is as healthy as possible, there are certain elements that you may borrow from the private sector and that is in the way of running an institution. But definitely these should not be the dominant issues. We have to promote collegiality in an institution of learning. The openness that is required, the free debate that is required in institutions of higher learning. But at the same time, managing those resources responsibly. So it is again, like the scholar, manager debate that I was talking to, that you need to strike that balance.

If you look at Fort Hare, when I came in it had just emerged from an implosion that was there, Derrick had managed to steer the ship. So when I came in, yes, we are still in troubled waters and I needed to continue emerging from that. At times it leads to decisions having to be made about the size of the institution, which may be seen to be corporate culture coming in, but you cannot sacrifice the academic project through that. You have to make sure that you steer the ship in such a way that you don't jeopardise the core functions of the institution of higher learning.

This narrative alludes to the enormity and complexity of change that was required and envisioned suggesting that being a VC in the context of deep political change was no ordinary matter. From institutional culture through to student and staff demographic changes and from curriculum changes to student performance and outputs, all of which under the gaze of the nation within a politically charged environment show the enormity and complexity of change that these VCs had to take on as leaders of their respective institutions as the following narrative alludes to.

VC4: And I think he was right, Rhodes had to answer that question very clearly. It may well be that the Vice Chancellor David Woods, who was my previous VC before me, may have received pressure from UCT, that he had to finally bite the bullet. Look, it was a very, it's a very, not just a historically white university, historically it was one of the historically white universities that were more selective among the historically white universities, English speaking, and that has evolved even outside of the university, you know what I mean.

Well you know issues are issues and some issues you know, they not static. They've shifted. Two of the fundamental issues that any Vice Chancellor coming in 2006 had to address were, institutional culture and social equity. Institutional culture at two levels. One is at the level of the historical legacy in connection with racial colonisation of Rhodes and UCT and other institution. In fact I think it's not historically white, in fact all it was universities. Even UWC Fort Hare and others, had issues racial colonisation and colonisation. So that's one aspect of institutional culture, if you like academic culture, how do you de-general, how do you de-masculinise, how do you declassify, how do you decolonise intellectuals, and their projects ok. How we come to grips with that, you know there is a difference between being an African University and being just a university in Africa. You know Oxford is a European University, not just a university in Europe. Yet we take our models, we take our governance structures, we take our rituals and all that from European Universities. So what does it mean to be an African University?

Upon being asked about whether he was ready to take on the post at RU, a leading academic responded “*Is Rhodes ready for you?*” This statement suggests as VC4 says RU had a “*very typical culture*” and breaking through for a black chancellor may be challenging. Suggesting that there would certainly be resistance in terms of transformation. He alludes to an even greater sense of resistance that would come from English supremacist universities that were not ready to give up control and power to black leaders.

The previous VC had to “*bite the bullet*” which means that he had to do something difficult or unpleasant that he has been putting off or hesitating to do. This is indicative of the resistance that black VCs encounter when they assume their positions of leadership. However, the pressure from higher authorities for universities to transform suggests a “*crossing the Rubicon*” moment where change means taking an irrevocable step - a point of no return.

VC2: This is how I try to run the university, that I am the person around whom many forces intercept. Staff, students, unions, the Senate, the Council, the external forces. My view is that one of the qualities I have is the ability to distil all these intersecting forces and see how information enhances the other sectors of the university. That is a statement on its own, but it is actually something I am conscious about. If I get something from Senate, how does it relate to Council, how does it relate to the SRC, how does it relate to the unions and visa versa. If I get something from the unions how does it impact on Senate and so forth. And that role of always having to cross-check and realise that it is not just one direction where you get the information and it moves in that direction. It is where you are sitting, you are sitting at the crossroads all the time. The crossroads of the university, because you know unlike a factory where everything moves in one direction, there are many ways in which things are moving in a university, all the time and those directions are determined by statutes and the powers that are vested in each of these structures. And the conscious thing you can do is to remember that there are structures.

The universities are not run by absolute power. Vice Chancellors do not have absolute power, Council does not have absolute power, Senate has no absolute power, the powers in a university are best steered by how they interact and shape each other. Sometimes you don't get the answer you want immediately, and you must be patient for that and that is one understanding that you would have to have. The second understanding is that the complexities and the extremes of the socio-political nature of the South African is such that some of the decisions that you are going to make don't often follow the rules and you must have a very clear understanding of why you are going to make those exceptional decisions, because you have got to account to the other

structures. But the situation of the complexities that you are going to be forced to make exceptional decisions, now when you have made those decisions you must have considered, or you must be standing on such good ground such that you can carry yourself through. I think that is an important component, I think, of a Vice Chancellor at UKZN. Of course, the last thing that you have to realise is that, like all universities in South Africa, or at most universities in South Africa, UKZN doesn't come from a rich background, and you have to be able to ask yourself, how do I make do with what I have, but also try and get the best out of both students and staff in order to create what I call a semblance of a vibrant, academic and credible institution. Because you don't have all the resources. That is the challenge that you have. You wouldn't have that if you are UNISA or Stellenbosch where they have got tons and tons of reserves. We don't have that, but you have got to make the best out of that. So those are three issues that you have to look into, ya at UKZN.

In South Africa, the rhetoric around becoming VCs, all largely have to do with social justice issues, good governance and promotion of excellence. According to VC4 and many of the other participants, transforming the institutional culture and promoting social equity through re-dress, were at the heart of higher educational transformation in all universities and the responsibilities of such rests with the VCs appointed. Being appointed in the VC position required transformational change to be effected.

A recurring dilemma for VCs is how to rid these universities of the colonial stranglehold and transform them into authentic African higher education institutions that cater for a culturally diverse population (Anderson & Whitford, 2016). For example, in line with the need to address a diverse population RU has not shied away from defining 'institutional culture'. In its Equity Policy (2004, p. 4) the university defines 'institutional culture' as the "Way things are done" within an organisation specifically the traditions, customs, values, and shared understandings that underpin the decisions taken, the practices engaged in and those practices that are rewarded and supported'. In order to achieve what it calls a 'culture of inclusivity', the Equity Policy talks of the need for 'change in the culture, values and practices of the University' which, it says, are 'as a result of apartheid practices' and which are 'experienced by some staff and

students as alienating'. This begs the question as to how continuities and changes in institutional culture is dealt with and accepted in the face of policy change.

Being a VC in this political juncture of the South African politics, and as expressed by all of the participants of this study, centred around recognition of the past injustices, transformation of institutional cultures and organisation and the affirmation of the potential of the marginalised communities with a view to inclusions and widening of access into higher education. The experiences of these black VCs could be referred to as the defining moment of higher education transformation within the South African history for social change. The participants consider themselves as being appropriately chosen to lead change in the their respective institutions and believed in their ability to make a difference. The next sub-theme speaks to some of these issues of being the agent of change and their belief in their abilities to make a difference within the landscape of a transforming higher education system within South Africa.

5.5.3 Reflections on being VCs

Noting that VCs do have a limited time to make a difference as leaders of higher education institutions, self-efficacy and personal belief seems to be the strength that enabled them to lead their institutions. VC2 speaks of personal principles that guided his stint of being a VC and believed in these principle to lead a complex higher education institutions through which a clear institutional identity would be created based on his leadership.

VC2: Because somebody really had to identify that and said this is where I am going to nail my mast. People will complain, but at the end of the day, you know, it was actually a no-brainer because universities are meant to do research. People could argue, but they will know that they will be arguing, not because it is actually true but because they are trying to realise, look we are studying from a low base, but you know you have to realise that you can only start from somewhere, and that is all that you needed to do. The world is not full and rich in principles out there. There are a few things that you identify that really become the things that you either go down with or by, or you rise by.

And I think throughout my life I have learned a few things. One of those is to look at complex phenomenon or issues and see what are the simple rules that guide them, and go for the simple rules and believe that the complexity will tie itself within the simplicity of the rules.

...I don't know that I have come to that point even myself. I think there are three things. I am a person of principles, I am a person of integrity and I am a person who is very ethical and to that you can add, I am very fearless. Because when I believe in a principle and I have studied it, I am quite ready to present it to whoever I am meant to present it to without fear. And that is just how, how I grew up and that is how I was brought up. My mother often tells people when they ask her, how did you raise your sons, she says, we just let them be. So if you know the story of that lion that was born free, I tend to think of my parents that they gave me that freedom of life. So those are the principles that guide me but I really believe in reading the ethics of what I do, having integrity such that my actions and my worth correspond as best as they can, and often I have been told I would make a bad politician and I believe that because I am not sure whether integrity matters to politicians, but that is a separate matter altogether. I think that is what I have valued throughout my life. Those are the three things that have guided me.

A respected academic and VC himself, VC9 lauds the various VCs who have led problematic universities that needed turnaround strategies. He submits that; *transforming certain universities was more of a challenge than others. It would take a VC of certain mettle - leadership that was able to withstand pressure and cope with the difficulties UKZN, UWC and Fort Hare in particular faced. University of Natal merged with University of Durban Westville. The university of Fort Hare merged with the East London Campus of Rhodes University.*

Alluding to the recognition of individual VCs and their individual strengths, VC9 believes that only Malegapuru would have pulled off the merger and formed UKZN. *I would never have been able to do it. I would never, it would have been too much for me. Derek Swartz turned Fort Hare around in a big way. I mean Fort Hare was tottering. And Brian O'Connell has been absolutely outstanding at UWC. When I left UWC, Cecil*

was still there and the place was, again expectations that student numbers would go down and he has turned the place around.

These articulations by VC9, to some extent, confirms the challenges and complexities that these black VCs had expressed in their reflections of being a VC as they took leadership to transform institutions of higher education.

VC4: You must also remember, there is no fixed qualities that you are looking for because, they might be shaped by a certain time and context. What UWC may be looking for in 2013 might be different from what Wits is looking for. So, in part it has to do with a match and cohesion between the institution at a particular moment, and what qualities the VC, the person who is seeking to be the VC has. For example, let's assume that you know a VC has come in, the ten year period has been taken, he really kind of invade the institution. Now, you know, it comes with a lot of challenges and difficulty and so on, the next VC may not be needed to be the dynamic person to change the institution itself, now you need someone's help, to maintain that, to refine certain things.

This VC mentions that beneath the apparent similarities in the transformation agenda of these participants in this study, what should be considered is that leading a university is not a “one size fits all” situation. Each institution is accompanied by its peculiarities and depending on the progress made towards transformation, taking the university to another level of transformation will require a leader who has the ability to be astute and to discern between continuity and change. What this suggests is that responding to the particularities of an institutions, the VCs needed to believe in themselves to lead and respond appropriately along their journey to transforming their particular institutions and that a one-size-fit-all process is absent to guide them.

For VCs of previously run black universities the issues of raising the profile of their institutions and good governance was also very complex and important within the transformation agenda not because they have to compete with the previously white universities that are richer, but because of its poor images and its histories. The VCs acknowledged that transformation would certainly be part of a higher educational

institutions agenda, and so becoming VC would be one way of making inroads towards some type of restorative justice. VC6, for example, took bold and unpopular decisions as leader of his institution as demonstrated in his attempt to the ‘diffuse’ the Reitz¹ saga at UFS.

VC6: The other thing that drove me here is curiosity, I am by nature a curious person and I love trouble, so I get bored very quickly if you put me in a university that works and where people are just happy and everyone is happy. You put me in a university where Reitz just happened and the whole world of black nationalism says shut the varsity down, and the English sort of say, oh they are not like us, you know, we don't have racism, you know. That is the kind of place I want to go to.

In a media publication on his inaugural address on being the newly appointed Rector of the University of the Free State, Professor Jonathan Jansen made the following statement about the Reitz incident:

1. In a gesture of racial reconciliation, and the need for healing, the University of the Free State will withdraw its own charges against the four students. The University will therefore not pursue any further action against the four young men implicated in the Reitz incident. In this spirit of toenadering, the University will go further, and invite those four students to continue their studies here.

2. In recognition of our institutional complicity in the Reitz saga, and the need for social justice, the University of the Free State will not only pursue forgiveness but will also pay reparations to the workers concerned for damages to their dignity and their self-esteem.

3. And,

¹ The Reitz debacle at UFS in 2007 where four white male South African students videotaped Reitz residence cleaners eating meat that had allegedly been urinated on.

In a determined commitment to the urgent task of reconstruction, the University of the Free State will re-open the Reitz residence and transform it into a model of racial reconciliation and social justice for all students (Jansen, 2009).

The decision to withdraw the University's internal charges against the four students involved in heinously demeaning and racist actions has drawn praise from some quarters and condemnation from others. Those who praise Professor Jansen see his decision in the spirit of ubuntu. As Rector, though newly appointed, he has taken upon himself responsibility for the actions of the Reitz four, 'they are my students', as a father takes responsibility for his children's actions.

These extracts demonstrate that the complexities and challenges were different and that they required different approaches to their leadership as VCs. Bold leaders or charismatic leadership, like that demonstrated by VC6 suggests that transformation leaders are not just about transforming but it is about reading the context, making strategic moves and believing in the envisaged outcomes. Among the references in the literature is the work of Santamaría (2014), who reminds us that bold leaders are required to drive social justice in order to meet the aspirations needs of the nation. An eclectic leader in the context of surmounting transformation needs within the higher education spaces defines some of the VCs and their leadership qualities.

In his reflection on being a VC of UKZN, VC2 alludes to personal beliefs, experiences, personal biographies and insights that cumulatively informs his leadership as VC. Noting that he led the merged university of a historically white university and a historically black university, his focus on transformation was on the substance of higher education and little on the demographics of the institution. Buy-in into a particular vision of the university that privileged research and knowledge production within a transforming university biography was his flagship as VC which he says as *where I am going to nail my mast*.

VC2: I think if I had a choice, ya, I think something like UKZN would represent the best choice. It also, I mean now that I know the South African university system better, I can

say this. You know, in terms of students, I think we have the right mixture of students at UKZN that you don't find in many universities, they tend to have extremes of things. Either they have got, as I say, the privileged, or they have got the very poor. I think at UKZN there is a mixed kind of ability, both socio-economically, politically and otherwise. We have a huge diversity that is quite enriching. That is the one thing, we also have a staff that is not extreme, you know, we don't have extreme liberals here that think that only they know the future of the world and only they determine how the world must be seen and so forth. Neither do we have extreme Africanists who think that everybody must be thrown into the sea. And neither do we have an Indian population that is without a mission of the non-racism and non-sexism of South Africa. So I think as an institution, both from the staff and student point of view, UKZN is actually quite moderate and I think that suits my personality and the way I think I tend to... You know, people think differently, they think I am a radical, I am an extremist and so forth and actually, if you were to analyse my decision making, it is always about trying to be moderate and balanced.

Of course sometimes you have to argue about the extremes, but actually, the end point of what you want to achieve, is taking the best of the extremes and bringing them together. But as I say, people will maybe give you different views of that, because you know, you often know yourself, and other people, they also analyse you. But for me, I think the attraction about UKZN, it is the fact that it is actually a model of moderation, in a very contested country, politically and otherwise. We don't have extreme of any sorts here. And that explains why we are always debating things at UKZN.

I think because of the way I grew up and the way I travelled the world and the way I observed systems, whether they are political or they are educational, or other systems, as I travelled through the world, I observed a few things that they have commonality. You know, when I was in England, I was amazed as to how the English understood, what I would call, the universality of knowledge, but equally understood that universality could only be appreciated through their English ethos and history.

So it was not simply looking at knowledge, it was asking yourself here is this knowledge that we all see, through the internet, through journals and so forth, but we are English. We are not French, we are not German, we are not Indians, we are not Chinese. And you ask yourself, you can have the same thing put in front of you but you have got to interpret it in a particular way because you come from a particular history.

So when I came into South Africa or even when I was in England, I went to the US, I went to India, I went to Australia, I saw this phenomenon every time. That people don't deny the universality of knowledge, of information or culture. But when they have observed it, they often have to step back and say, but who are we, how do we filter this culture into our society, how do we filter this knowledge into our society, how does this knowledge actually relate to us as we are faced with challenges of development, of educating and bringing our own children in South Africa, and regrettably I ask myself, what actually is going on in South Africa? And the conclusion I came to, it may be crude, but it is this, that in South Africa we did not filter any information. We just imbibed and translated it. We didn't realise that, you know, you come from Venda, you come from Durban, from maybe a Muslim family that has got values. It is not, you are not supposed to see what everybody else sees, whether it is a man or whatever it is, but you have got to interpret it in a particular way and we were not doing that in South Africa. And the education system was the worst. All it did was to ape, to imitate, to want to see that everything that comes from there, it is correct, and lets just do it that way. And you know I couldn't relate to that, I thought, this is a very sad society that does not understand its identity in the world and try and use this identity to interpret knowledge and also to gain insights into knowledge that other societies don't have.

It had to deal with the superiority and the inferiority that had lasted for such a long time, such that, you know, I keep giving this example of where did sabbatical leave come from? Sabbatical leave came from a colonial history where it took you six months to go to England on the ship. To go and refresh your own sort of colonial history and then come back. And that is why sabbatical was always classified around 6 months, a year, because people had to go back to the motherland. It comes from there. It doesn't come from any other notion historically. So this is the thing that struck me most, to say, if I

sit here and I work with African people, they learn all of those things, what meaning does it have to them when they go back home. It doesn't have. So that is why I am saying, I don't think my journey is complete yet, because to me this is the challenge that faces the Higher Education in South Africa is to have a leadership that understands that every nation has accepted globalisation, but every nation fails and interprets that globalisation into its identity and it is in relation to its own projection of the future.

And that identity has a long history that it comes from, and so I didn't see that as a big project in South Africa.

5.5.4 Concluding comments on becoming and being a VC

The personal histories of VCs intersected with the current of liberation in SA. In a similar fashion, the broader transformation of SA beginning in 1994 also impacted on higher education. Central to this current of transformation was the inclusion of black scholars as VCs at various universities. Their key task remains focused on now transforming these universities; despite the seemingly insurmountable challenge of established institutional culture.

In addition to the issues around institutional culture, VCs have to contend with student and staff demographic changes, curriculum changes and a range of other complex issues in the context of transformation. In essence, institutional culture and promoting social equity through re-dress, were at the heart of higher educational transformation. What has also emerged clearly is the fact that black scholars that were approached to lead universities sometimes lacked the confidence to take up the position, given our history of race, power and politics. However, they were able to show self efficacy; and the encouragement and vote of confidence from political networks propelled their desire to succeed. Adding to the complexity was ensuring they were able to make bold decisions and ensure good governance of the universities they lead, given the historical legacy and poor perceptions of some universities.

5.6 Conclusion

This chapter analysed data on critical influences that shaped the career paths of the black VCs that were interviewed in this study. In analysing the data, I looked at the experiences of the black VCs, by focusing on their biographical beginnings, contextual issues and the dynamics of becoming and being a VC in post-apartheid South Africa. The next chapter extends the analysis by presenting the key findings of the study; and engaging with them theoretically.

CHAPTER SIX - DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

6.1 Introduction

In this thesis, I provided a justification for studying black VCs of public universities in South Africa within a transforming context. By studying black VCs through their biographical beginnings, and their trajectories into and being VCs of public universities in South Africa, it illuminated issues of university leadership that could be used as a platform to conceptualise leadership competences required for leading universities within a transforming context. These leadership issues include a focus on personal attributes of becoming and being a leader, being a leader within a transforming context that requires appropriate and agile responses to the heavy demands for change and universities being in a state of perpetual crisis and addressing weak leadership amongst VCs as noted in the literature. Noting that the majority of VCs are black and that there is all likelihood that more black academics will aspire to take on university leadership, this study specifically studied black VCs, to provide learnings that could be used to develop the required leadership qualities for black academics aspiring for university leadership positions. This is especially significant in the South African context that is undergoing transformation in all aspects of higher education.

In this concluding chapter, I reflect on the the key findings of the study; and engage with them with the aim of theorising the factors impacting on the careers of black university VCs. In this context, this chapter briefly revisits the key findings of the study; and these key findings are discussed using the theoretical framing that informed the data collection and analysis. The research questions are engaged with and recommendations are articulated which conclude the chapter.

The three research questions that guided this study were as follows:

1. What are the biographical influences on becoming a black VC of a public university in South Africa?

2. What challenges and opportunities have university black VCs experienced in leading public universities within South Africa?
3. How do black VCs make meaning of their roles as leaders of higher education institutions in South Africa?

In order to understand how VCs make sense of their roles as leaders, this study has drawn on the work of Bourdieu (1977) and transformational leadership in order to understand how biographies and social positioning interact to produce leadership patterns. Drawing on the narrative analysis of the various vignettes arranged thematically, several key findings emerge. They include: Biographical beginnings, Contextual influences, Becoming and being a VC in a context of political change and transformation and transformational leadership.

6.2 VC's Biographies: Habitus, Field and Capital

Biographical research and narrative analysis, has been the central methodological approach taken in this thesis. The attempt was to gain first-hand knowledge from the black VCs about how they understood their history and background in being and becoming a leader. In this regard Bourdieu's theoretical framing around habitus, field and capital as explicated in the theory chapter, provides important tools to understand the formation of experience and identities as an interaction between the black VCs 'free will' and the contextual lives which provided both constraints and possibilities. Whilst it is true that Bourdieu's writings have not dealt specifically with educational administration, the value of his understandings of habitus allows me to engage with the narratives of the participants in ways that see leadership as being a process that is socially located, involving individual agency and that such experiences are shaped by history and everyday social experiences. Life experiences are shaped by 'historical events and everyday experiences and realities' and as such all the VCs experiences are socially produced (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 76). Field in Bourdieu's analysis refers to the norms through which individuals experience and act on the social worlds and could be the family, school, communities, politics and economics. As Bourdieu notes, the concept of social and cultural capital is useful to the extent to which it helps understand

how individual and groups acquire resources which are durable and based on social networks (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 119). In other words, social capital refers to relationships, identities shared norms and cooperation, whilst cultural capital is the ways in which individuals have accumulated knowledge, skills and behaviours to produce particular competencies. Importantly, habitus, field and capital interact with each other and are not separate. The black VCs leadership disposition is rooted in past experiences as encompassed in habitus. This means that the leader's thoughts and actions are founded on historical experiences, events and circumstances. There is nothing inherently individualised about black VCs experiences and the value of habitus is the ways in which they have internalised experiences in lieu of their social contexts. Thus instead of seeing biographies as something to do with the individual, what Bourdieu allows us to see is the significance of social experience and history in shaping black VC's habitus and is at the core of understanding their motivations, desires and their leadership patterns and not some formal organisational power.

In examining the various vignettes under the theme 'biographical beginnings', a key finding that emerges is around the influence of the family on influencing their intellectual development and career aspirations. A number of the participants cite the importance of having had teachers and nurses in their families (and communities) and how this influenced their desire to study further and to succeed. Having a teacher in the family or in the village had a positive impact and inspired hope for educational aspirations, and thus eventual success. In the context of class being racialised in South Africa, the presence of teachers and nurses represented positivity, and the potential for social mobility as a result of furthering one's education. Again, the work of Bourdieu is cited extensively in my theoretical framing. While it is known that his work did not deal specifically with the dynamics of education, his theory regarding habitus facilitates an engagement with the narratives of the participants in ways that see leadership as being a process shaped by the dynamics of socialisation within a higher education context.

In understanding habitus, we learn from Bourdieu that one's historical socialisation plays a significant role in shaping of one's future (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 72). Here habitus

is a useful construct to understand the centrality that educational opportunities played within the home environment; and how this led to an embodiment of aspirational attitudes and activities that became normalised in the lives of the VCs. In the case of one participant, competition for excellence laid the foundations for expectations of excellence from the children at home. So, for this VC, his ultimate higher education leadership position has its roots in how the expectation of excellence was a repeated norm each year and eventually became a normalised discourse within the home. Here, it is also worth noting that relationships between individuals are rooted in interactions based on their past and present positions in the existing social structure (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 82). In examining the narratives of the black VC's, another instance where educational activities at home led to an embodiment of aspirational attitudes, thus becoming normalised in the life of a VC, was where one participant reflected on how the embodiment of a reading culture at his home became a normal expectation and activity.

Parents placing value on reading and books, despite being poor, had a great influence on this participant. Again, the role of the family in attaching value to reading had a positive aspirational influence. It is known that this influence of socialisation can alter career trajectories, and help recognise one's potential to reach greater leadership heights in life. A reading culture inculcated in the home context is a critical element propelling academic achievement; and leading ultimately, in this case, to being a leader at a university in South Africa. Evidently, habitus is a set of attitudes that orients a black VC as a leader in higher education.

Like indicated in an earlier chapter, Bourdieu's habitus (1979) is relevant in terms of how the dynamics of socialisation have an impact on one's life. Here we are reminded again that the foundations of habitus in the family's socialisation patterns of upbringing are determined, to a large extent, by the individual's position within the existing social structure; what Bourdieu called the 'socialized subjectivity'. For the VCs, habitus is instrumental in shaping the existing and future parameters of possibilities for them to lead in a stratified and transforming society. Primarily, this means that the VC is aware of his/her identity as the leader of an institution with a wide array of responsibilities that

characterise the pre-reflexive and practical angles of this ‘identity’. Such identities in all their dimensions (‘colour’/race, class origins, gender, ‘historical behaviours’, ‘national identities’) can become instrumental in the terrain of realities within an institution of higher learning and be expressed through mobilisations or collective behaviour. Aspects of this were evident in the recent #FeesMustFall protests in South Africa. In cases such as this, the identity of the students and their leadership stood against the identity of the VCs, who were, to a large extent, obligated to act in accordance with state laws.

Taking the narratives of 9 black VCs at different South African universities, I have provided an account of how personal biographies, family, communities, politics, education and history have shaped their experiences and how that affects how they act on leadership.

6.3 Contextual influences - political activism as inspiration

In this section, I highlight the contextuality in the experience of being a VC threading through the earlier conceptions of power, habitus, fields and capital. The narratives highlight the contextual influences. One key finding is that the political context during their upbringing heightened sensibilities and inspired the black VCs to develop academically by acquiring further academic qualifications.

It is clear that the political currents of the time were trying, but a positive spin off seems to have been the inculcation of the idea that becoming leaders in the areas of intellectual and academic endeavour would contribute to uplifting a scarred society. Much of the narrative of the political context at the time was about the role of education in liberation and in a post liberation context - so, this narrative in a time of political turmoil led to someone like VC4 opting for the ‘Peoples Education Movement’ and eventually joining the ranks of the academy at UWC on his return from exile in the UK. Similarly, VC7 saw a link between his activism and developing institutions (academic in nature) to help in a post liberation context. In this regard, he felt that his role in setting up the Institute

of Governance at the University of Fort Hare would play a key role in assisting to infuse capacity and knowledge for those that would lead the democratic project.

Bourdieu's notion of field was a useful construct to understand the contextual influence related to political activism and inspiration associated with becoming a VC. The social field during the formative phase of their lives were characterised by the political struggles and domination conflicts that positioned various social groupings in contestation discourses, including that of political activism for political change within the country. These contextual discourses and activism that the families of some of these black VCs belonged to, created a sense of deep awareness of the social and political injustices that needed strong forms of activism to bring about social, political and emancipatory changes. Hence, when these individuals took on VC positions within higher education institutions, they became agents of social change and used the educational spaces to make these political changes.

In wanting to pursue transformational leadership, Judge et al. (2002) reminds us that a particular context and environment is a fundamental factor shaping the relationship between leadership and personality traits. Hence, time and place, as flagged in the literature, is an important consideration in contributing to personality traits and this study has shown that family environments and the political contexts of resistance for change were crucial factors in shaping attitudes, views and inspirations.

They (black VCs) demonstrated that the significance of leadership focus lies in assessing risks and priorities. For the black VCs in question, these were associated with the types of changes required to deal with problems, challenges and the degree of contextual uncertainty. This means that the structural and functional responsibilities of the VC who aspires to pursue a path to progressive organisational change needs to elevate the collective efforts through process-based and structural transformations that propel forward looking leadership; as Garwe (2014) has shown.

Contextual uncertainty has been a serious problem at South African universities; and has been rooted in a wide range of realities such as bureaucratic complexities, lack of

good governance, leadership contradictions, council/university leadership disagreements and the student protests. While this remains a serious issue for VCs to contend with, it can be addressed with the adoption, planning and implementation of a ‘collective political will’ between the VC and key stakeholders in an alliance to built on good governance principles (Balwant, 2016, p. 376-377).

6.3.1 Contextual influences - race, class and gender in shaping educational leadership

Much has been written about historical white domination in the tertiary education sector (Habib, 2019; Jansen, 2004). At the point where the VCs in question emerged as leaders, the political context was pregnant with possibilities for those who were previously marginalised in terms of race, gender and class. A number of the black VCs had striven to make their contributions to end apartheid and were now aware that the political context was ripe for them to lead. This also presented an opportunity for them to lead in strategic ways; in order to ensure also that students who were victims of various forms of oppression were now given access and opportunities at institutions of higher learning. A key finding in this area is around how their marginalisation in terms of race/class/gender now presented contextual opportunities to drive change. The political context presented an opportunity for another kind of activism; an activism with strategic agendas as leaders in higher education responsible for advancing the democratic project in this area. However, the peculiarities of the South African race debate also played itself out for some of the black VCs. Some provinces are dominated by particular previously disadvantaged minorities; and one of the participants reminds us that opportunities presented by racial marginalisation had other provincial complexities to manoeuvre. He was not successful in his attempt to become the VC of UKZN as the context meant that you needed to have been black or Indian, bearing in mind that the majority of South African Indians live in KwaZulu-Natal. In a differently peculiar way, his classification as Coloured presented an advantage for him in terms of becoming the VC of the university in another Province of South Africa.

South Africa's complex historical and sociological context calls for a creative, dynamic and innovative style. Effectiveness and efficiency can only be realised when the leaders understand and analyse (through experience and/or expertise) the existing realities and are able to convince a highly motivated team to establish a common vision (Chin, 2015, pp. 200-201). This would be particularly difficult for the VCs bearing in mind the racialised and skewed distribution of power.

Another key finding in this area was that one particular VC was pained by the fact that gender oppression occurred in such a toxic way that his sister, whom he acknowledges was much more intelligent than he was, was not given the opportunity to further her education, yet he was. He makes the point that this decision was taken in the context of poverty, where poor families sacrifice girl education and allow boys to continue studying. The findings resonate with the theoretical foundations illustrated by Bourdieu in the combined understanding of capital, field and habitus, where gender, class and race have effects for the experience of leadership. The existing social realities in South Africa and the everyday experiences of VCs need to acknowledge the present nature of these discourses. They are multifaceted in nature and have direct and indirect effects on their professional lives.

6.3.2 Gender challenges

There were four female VC's at South African universities at the time of this study, but only one agreed to be interviewed. A key finding here is around how difficult it continues to be for females to navigate higher education leadership spaces, as they continue to be dominated by males. In the context of this finding what also emerges is that women leaders have to endure the critique that their leadership position came about as a result of being female and being black. It is clear that there is insufficient acknowledgement of the qualifications and related sacrifices that women have had to endure in order to be VCs. The female VC in this doctoral study is understandably bitter about the critique of her leadership despite one's resilience in the face of the triple challenge of race, class and gender. This thesis extends Bourdieu's notion of social and cultural capital in relation to gender, race and class, by exemplifying the significance of

‘capital’ in understanding how VCs experience leadership where historical injustices have shaped leadership styles.

Whilst my study shows that black VCs draw in social and cultural capital in being and becoming leaders, they are also invested in challenging the terms of race, gender and class privilege that continues to marginalise the experience of both leaders and students in South African universities. As May and Ferri (2005, pp. 134-135) note these social realities, especially in organisational settings, highlight the urgent need for methods and approaches that could produce new levels of understanding and insights into the ever-changing relationships between gender, race, and class. Such a new approach, it was believed, would be instrumental in fulfilling the need for the creation of new frames of reference. This was in terms of the theory-based empirical realities of gender as a crucial element of multiplicity that is a key characteristic of the social intersection of sexism, racism and classism.

6.4 Becoming and being a VC in SA - in a context of political change

The higher education context in SA, despite the enabling political context, has struggled to attract black academics. The reasons advanced for this include the fact that the private sector pays better and the academic workplace comes with a number of unique challenges (Potgieter, 2002 in Jansen, 2004). This adds further complexity to the task of leading South African universities; bearing in mind also that universities have historical entrenched cultures and practices. A key finding that emerged here is the fact that this period in South Africa’s political history played a role in enabling the upward trajectory of black scholars, to take up positions of leading South African universities. The task, historically, of leading universities was reserved for white men and a few white women. In addition to the race dynamic, a number of historically white institutions had a particular class snobbery about them, so one had to come from the upper echelons of the social strata to lead a university. The political context altered this. Bearing in mind the historical nature of racial capitalism and the racialised nature of class in South Africa, most black scholars would have come from working class

backgrounds. Of course, a number of other related dynamics would determine the nature and extent of ones working class history.

Another finding was the recognition, by the black scholars in question, that leading higher education institutions was an important pivot in efforts to facilitate access to development. Universities had, for decades, excluded black people and this impacted on development, social cohesion and of course crippled social mobility for black people. The black VCs had a good grasp of the ramifications of the political changes as many of them were immersed in different forms of activism; and the changes taking place positions them well to be drivers of change in the higher education sector. This is in line with the work of scholars like Puccio et.al. (2010) who see leadership as a continuous process; with the aim of driving organisational and societal change. Many of the black VC's played leadership roles in their years of activism against the apartheid state and were now leading universities at a politically opportune time in terms of the context lending itself to spearheading changes at higher education institutions.

Many of the black VC's that were interviewed for this study embody the idea of embracing continual leadership in facilitating societal and educational change, as articulated in the work of Puccio et al. (2010). In a related way, their historical activism was an ideal catalyst for leading universities at a time of political change. Ackerman and Maslin-Ostrowski (2004, pp. 333-34) has shown that it is the leaders' prerogative to make the key decisions after receiving advise from stakeholders and role-players in order to deal directly and decisively with challenges. Although it could be thought of as a collective decision, it is the VC's that pave the way to overturn a crisis or a potential one into a path towards change and transformation. This is a tough target, a decision built out of existing distress and vulnerability.

The major problem is that the black VCs, a number of them with a history of political activism, face never-ending student and worker-led political activism related to a range of issues. Such demands, usually from the poorest sections of the student population, often lead to relentless violent protests on campuses. These have left black VCs in a serious leadership conundrum. Under such circumstances of educational leadership

vulnerability, the black VC's initiatives and actions are placed under scrutiny by all stakeholders. The black VC and those surrounding him/her are aware that such decisions will lead to results, and such results are fundamental for the VC's position, and have fundamental repercussions for the institution.

As Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) have shown; there is a direct and indirect relationship between a leader's vulnerability and his/her honesty, authenticity and transparency. Because of these realities, leaders are able to share their existing weaknesses and strengths; and their emotions. It is up to the stakeholders and role-players within an institution to accept the same realities with the institutional leader. This will determine the decisions/s that are best for the university.

6.5 Becoming and being a VC in SA - in a context of educational transformation

At the heart of the context of leadership in a changing educational context is how do VC's transform institutional culture, in order to address social redress through education. black VC's have to contend with entrenched institutional cultures despite the context of political and educational transformation. This, no doubt, has a significant impact on the ability of black VCs to drive transformation. Universities, in the post-apartheid context, are plural in a variety of ways. The racial and cultural homogeneity of these institutions have been disrupted; but the entrenched institutional culture remains an almost insurmountable challenge for the black VCs. A key finding, unsurprisingly, is the fact that institutional culture remains arguably the toughest hurdle for these higher education leaders. These leaders struggle with taking forward issues of access and equity in institutions that don't have a history of having to face such issues of educational transformation head-on.

In addition, when historically black and historically white institutions merged, facilitating a cohesive shared vision for the merged institution was among the most difficult tasks. This involved driving an array of changes, including deep structural change which was not (historically) something that white institutions have had to deal with. Dealing with the historical legacy and connection that some institutions had to

colonize is also a key challenge. Linked to this is the challenge of changing academic culture and placing the university firmly as an African university, despite the structural governance dynamics and links to Europe.

Another key finding revolves around the challenge of dealing with dynamic and intersecting forces with divergent agendas and demands; and facilitating a cohesive vision for the institution. Adding to the complexity of leadership is the fact that black VC's don't have absolute power - powers in a university are steered by different stakeholders; from SRCs to Senate. The black VCs' acquisition of human, social and decisional capital is instrumental in the processes of enabling him/her to combine the vision of a transformed institution into a mission where the structural and systemic paths operate cooperatively. Such initiatives are in line with the seminal contribution of Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) who described processes and systems of transformation as a continuous endeavour of leadership to develop an institutional culture of a collective responsibility leading to future subsequent accomplishments.

In the effort to make transformation an integral reality of institutional culture; the leadership's decisiveness needs to be rooted in evidence, knowledge and experience; combined with logistical arrangements, collaboration amongst all stakeholders and overall collegiality. It is such discourses that are the enablers of human, professional and institutional links that can lead to the deepening of a shared vision of a transformed institution; founded on professional relationships and good governance.

Facing the challenges of transformation within the context of a new political environment; the university's top leadership is shaped by wide categories of actions and decision making. These initiatives are outlined in an analysis of the relationship of trust, behavioural traits of educational leadership and performance. Harris et.al. (2015) show how such VC initiatives can lead to access to relationships with not only the university stakeholders, but also private sector entities, NGOs and the general public. The above initiatives are described as instrumental in the creation of the VCs bonding social capital as the way forward in the effort to solve existing problems which include infrastructural problems, financial and good governance disputes, amongst others.

6.6 Transformational Leadership

Another finding, and a challenge for black VCs is about how to exercise leadership in a way that transforms universities they lead, especially those entrenched in the culture of colonialism and the grammar of whiteness, into being African institutions of higher learning. This is in line with the objective of the transformation of institutional cultures; and the affirmation of those who have been denied access into higher education institutions. The black VCs see themselves as being the agents of change, attached to the confidence in their abilities to make a difference within the landscape of a transforming higher education system within South Africa. Social Capital is equally important and related to information and knowledge access. This is crucial because the leadership of a university aims to work for a common vision. Related to this is the importance of decisional capital in dynamic political and educational contexts. It is about the unity of expertise and practice in the process of decision making amongst the leadership within a higher education entity. The prerogative of the black VC in the process of decision making could take a number of forms. It could be decisions between him and a limited number of leaders or it could be spread amongst a wide array of individual or groups that debate and make decisions accordingly. Barth-Farkas and Vera (2014, pp. 222-223) have related institutional leadership and behaviour as the key for a transformed organisation because of the creation of a collective belief that change is a common commitment of all stakeholders at an institutional level. The common belief is that the strategic choices of the university leadership are shared by stakeholders who are participants in the strategic decisions; and integral players who have common values with the leadership.

With these processes unfolding, the black VCs efforts towards a transformational path for the institution relies on strategic decisions that are well planned and implemented as Bartram and Inceoglu (2011) have argued. The transformational leadership of a VC is key to change and transformation and it is up to him/her to shape the collectivity based on collaboration.

6.7 Contribution of new knowledge

Using the research questions as a framework, this study has contributed in several ways on the exploration of the trajectories of black VCs to becoming leaders of public universities in a time and context of transformational changes. To date, there remains a dearth of qualitative work that provides insight into the biographies and narratives of black VCs in South Africa. Drawing from this study, the biographical influences on becoming and being a black VC of a public university in South Africa includes being politically sensitised through being immersed into and critical of the prevailing political context; a strive for academic excellence in the study trajectory of the aspiring black VC to develop confidence, recognition of leadership qualities and growth in leadership and professional capital to support and sustain leading a public university in times that require transformational leadership, agility and purposiveness.

Interestingly, a number of the research participants indicated that their family upbringing and background had made an important contribution to their intellectual life and career, and their ascendance to leadership positions at the highest level of the educational ladder. Their families' direct relationship with different educational and service orientated occupations within the family were also instrumental in the planning and achieving of higher education-based excellence.

Another interesting and important contribution to existing knowledge and understanding of one's academic and leadership life is the importance of political activism and the related context. This played an important role in influencing the career trajectory of some VCs. This doctoral work has shown that South African universities lead the field in terms of having academics who were detained by the state for their activism, later lead universities. The personal and political experiences of interviewees and the effect this has had on their leadership roles opens new paths of understanding in regard to the relations of human endeavour, politics, education and leadership traits. Race, class and gender have effects for transformational leadership but so too does the challenge of post-apartheid South Africa and the agenda to change society and higher education.

In response to the challenges and opportunities experienced by black VCs and as shown in this thesis, is socially located, historical and the manifestation of transformational leadership arises from these social, political and cultural conditions. Given the paucity of academic and empirical research on the subject of this doctoral study, the present effort attempted an exploration on the subjective career experiences of South African university black VCs; with one of the objectives being to gain an in-depth understanding of factors and dynamics contributing to their leadership status as leaders of public universities in South Africa. The attempt was based on an exploration of the ways black VCs have constructed their leadership style; and the impact that various factors have on leadership style. These factors include race, class, gender; and the role of the specific university context and its impact on leadership style.

Empirical evidence emanating from the research effort indicated that the general belief was that the transformation and de-colonisation of the country's university terrain is rooted in the re-construction of the leadership of the sector. It emerged that for this re-constitution to become a reality, there is a need for the renewal of existing traditions and institutional forms. This means that 're-imagination' is required on the part of the of the university leadership. Part of this re-imagination requires VCs to be decisive in his/her actions and that these actions are to be rooted in evidence, knowledge and experience of leadership. Further insights include assessment competencies or risks and priorities within an uncertain context, forward looking leadership qualities within contextual uncertainties and strategic leadership that uses the political context to drive changes within universities. The empirical contribution of the thesis has shown that it is a combination of the wide varieties of leadership dynamics found in the theoretical and conceptual literature that play a key role in the success of tertiary education institutions.

In response to the final research question on how black VCs make meaning of their roles as leaders of public universities in South Africa, while narrative inquiry as a methodology of gaining deep insights on particularities of individuals through their stories, one can draw some illuminating factors that influence, for example in this study, on becoming and being a VC of a university. Most notably is the larger political and

social context that harbours the most influential factors on becoming and being a VC. The focus on black VCs in this study is also indicative of the larger political and social context that frames becoming and being a VC. The four specific areas of gaze was the family background, the personal attributes and aspirations of becoming and being a VC in this study are all influenced by the politics and the contextual realities that prevailed in a period of heightened political transformation. Hence, the social and political context is inherently an influential factor on becoming and being a VC. In each of the narratives of the VCs, their biographical influence created opportunities for excellence and inspiring leadership through family leadership in their broader communities. This initial exposure to being in social positions different from the others cannot be ignored and as alluded to through insights from Bourdieu on social class, positionality and capital, these initial biographical influence cannot be ignored.

Most certainly, individual or personal achievements in excellence, depends largely on the individual. Personal aspirations, recognition of ones' strengths and possibilities for leadership resides in ones experience of success and failures. In this study, the narratives of the black VCs alluded to the larger contextual challenges and opportunities that have come to shape their lives as individuals and intellectuals. Each of them was inspired to do more, to excel and become leaders in opportunistic positions, be it student leaders, political leaders, academic leaders or structural leaders.

6.8 Recommendations arising out of this study

The findings of this study are significant to aspirant VCs in terms of taking note of the influential aspects of becoming a VC; and to use these influential aspects as vantage points in developing their resolve to becoming VCs of HEIs. This study, therefore recommends that aspiring black VCs be politically and culturally sensitive to the prevailing contexts informing and influencing higher education. It is also recommended that aspiring black VCs pursue excellence, strive to take leadership roles along their journey as academics and to build their leadership and professional capital through these episodes of leadership along the journey to the position of VC within public universities.

The study is also significant to HEIs as they plan for and appoint VCs to lead their respective institutions. Important learnings and guidelines for recruiting VCs can be taken from this study. In this respect, the study makes recommendations to public higher education institutions to consider personal, professional and leadership attributes when recruiting VCs to their respective institutions.

The study is also significant to government and policy makers in the higher education system; they would need to take into consideration the issues that black VCs have experienced in being a VC of a HEI, in engaging in crucial aspects of leading a university and developing leadership capacity for emerging and existing VCs. In this respect, the study makes the following recommendations: (i) to consider developing a university leadership programme to professionalise and develop a pool of potential VCs to lead public universities in South Africa; (ii) to review transformational imperatives on an on-going process to take into consideration new and emerging demands of a transforming and responsive higher education systems (e.g. decolonisation of higher education curriculum) to support and guide VCs, as forward looking and agile leaders of leading public universities in times of rapid changes and uncertain and disruptive contexts; and (iii) to continue to foreground race and gender as critical policy issues in appointments of VCs of public universities.

6.9 Concluding comments on the discussion on the findings

Momentous changes have swept across the higher education scene since 1994. In South Africa's transforming arena of leadership at universities, we are fortunate that a number of university VCs are black and many of their own contexts of historical socialisation mirror that of students that are entering the higher education sector today. Many students today are first generation students hoping that their access to universities will facilitate their upward social mobility. Having VCs who, because of their own socialisation, can understand the plethora of student struggles around poverty and marginalisation, is useful and important for South Africa's developmental context.

VCs who have a firm contextual grasp of institutions that they are leading would also find it easier to understand the dynamics around students having the academic potential, but lacking the financial means to further their tertiary education. On a related note, this doctoral work has shown that reading, for example, in the home context has important aspirational spin offs. So, lobbying the Ministry of Education to help inculcate a culture of reading in the home context will augment academic potential and facilitate greater academic success. This would ultimately lead to social mobility for those who occupy the margins of our society - this is much needed in South Africa's developmental context.

While VCs may understand marginalised contexts of students, they are also cognisant of the fact that a number of structural issues impeded access and academic success for students. In line with the argument made earlier in this study, higher education is in great need of a reconstruction of university leadership. It is clear to me, after having spent much time reflecting on this study, that a radical re-imagination of leadership is required from VCs. They need to think about concrete ideas to address the structural impediments in our higher education sector. This would also involve thinking around creative funding streams to enable greater student access and to ensure greater academic success for particularly first generation university students.

Finally, VCs need to popularise the narrative that they do not lead in contexts of their choice. A critical part of leadership would involve making students understand the limitations imposed by structural challenges and the fact that the leadership of universities in the post apartheid context is contested by the market. The logic of capital is never sympathetic to students on the margins of society.

6.10 Conclusion

Noting the dearth of literature on VCs, particularly within the South African context, this study sought to present black VCs' account of their journey into becoming VCs of public HEIs within a context of a complex, demanding and transforming phase of the South African society, driven by complex political and constitutional changes since

apartheid. While the scope of researching VCs of HEIs is wide, the three research questions formed the guiding framework for this study, so that unintended aspects of being a Black VC within this wide scope of research could be prevented. The intention, therefore, was on exploring how black VCs account for their journey into VC positions at public universities in South Africa and how they relate their experiences of being a VC in a particular historical moment in South Africa.

In privileging black VC's voices, the study took on a narrative inquiry research design. The narratives generated from the interviews with the respective participants, presented various illuminations that required a multi-theoretical approach to presenting and analysing the narratives. Hence, a range of theories then formed the theoretical framework for the study. While it was not expected to find commonalities amongst the stories of the participants, the analysis of narrative framework was then used to analyse particular aspects across each of the narratives of the black VCs. A narrative analysis of each narrative was purposively not done as explained in the concluding comments of the research design chapter. The key findings revealed interesting insights on becoming and being a black VC as presented in this chapter and contribute substantially to the growing body of literature on VCs in South Africa and globally.

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APPENDIX 1 – ETHICAL CLEARANCE



5 February 2020

Imraan Buccus (9400894)
School of Education
Edgewood Campus

Dear Mr Buccus,
Protocol reference number: **HSS/0180/011D**
Project title: **Academic Leadership – Career Discourses of Black South African University Vice-Chancellors**

Approval Notification – Amendment Application

This letter serves to notify you that your application and request for an amendment received on 04 February 2020 has now been approved as follows:


- Recertification

Any alterations to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form; Title of the Project, Location of the Study must be reviewed and approved through an amendment /modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number.

PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

Best wishes for the successful completion of your research protocol.






Yours faithfully


.....
Dr Shamila Naidoo (Chair)

/ss

cc Supervisor: Professor Cheryl Potgieter
cc Academic Leader Research: Professor SB Khoza
cc School Administrator: Ms Mbalenhle Ngcobo

Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee
Dr Shamila Naidoo (Chair)
UKZN Research Ethics Office Westville Campus, Govan Mbeki Building
Postal Address: Private Bag X54001, Durban 4000
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Founding Campuses:  Edgewood  Howard College  Medical School  Pietermaritzburg  Westville

INSPIRING GREATNESS

APPENDIX 2 – LANGUAGE EDITING CERTIFICATE

NERESHNEE GOVENDER COMMUNICATIONS (PTY) LTD

REGISTRATION NUMBER: 2016/369223/D7

DR NERESHNEE GOVENDER (PhD)

WRITING PRACTITIONER • EDITOR • COPYWRITER • TRAINER

PhD-Management Sciences - Marketing (Media, gender and identity)

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05/02/2020

Attention: Imraan Buccus

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RE: EDITING CERTIFICATE

**FOCUS AREA: ACADEMIC LEADERSHIP – CAREER DISCOURSES OF BLACK SOUTH
AFRICAN UNIVERSITY VCS**

PhD thesis - submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of
Philosophy (Education), School of Education, College of Humanities University of KwaZulu-
Natal

This serves to confirm that this thesis has been edited for clarity, language and layout.

Kind regards,



Nereshnee Govender (PhD)