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Principals' Experiences Leading Strategic Planning in High-Performing Primary Schools in Trinidad and Tobago

Adesh Reitoo Ramlal
Walden University

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Adesh Ramlal

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Review Committee

Dr. J Don Jones, Committee Chairperson, Education Faculty
Dr. Kathleen Kingston, Committee Member, Education Faculty
Dr. Gary Lacy, University Reviewer, Education Faculty

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Abstract

Principals' Experiences Leading Strategic Planning in High-Performing Primary Schools
in Trinidad and Tobago

by

Adesh Ramlal

MSc, University of Dayton, 2015

BEd, University of the West Indies, 2007

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

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Abstract

In the education system in Trinidad and Tobago, only 60% of students are achieving mastery in literacy and numeracy as documented by national tests. The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore principals' experiences leading strategic planning designed to increase achievement in literacy and numeracy in 8 high-performing primary schools in Trinidad and Tobago. Fullan's change process theory provided the framework for the study. Data were collected from interviews with 8 principals. Data analysis included coding, categorizing, and identifying themes. Findings indicated that principals plan, implement, and monitor the facilitation of change processes through in-depth strategies in teaching and learning with a continuous focus on literacy and numeracy. Findings also revealed that there is continuous professional development to support teachers and transform their capacity in practice. The extension and confirmation of knowledge were validated by the change process theory that change process at the campus level of the school must include strategies for improving the school. Findings may be used to evaluate strategic planning quality and assessment practices in low-performing schools in Trinidad and Tobago, and to improve principals' capacity for effective strategic planning.

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Dedication

My dissertation is dedicated to my associates because it was through their support and constant encouragement that I was able to progress toward achieving my goals and aspirations.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Education is a vital component to the socioeconomic development of a country. Education is indispensable in all spheres of human life (Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, Ministry of Planning and Development, 2016). The Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, Ministry of Education (2015) has institutionalized a School Based Management Model, and a strategic assessment of the education system highlighted the need to improve the leadership and management of schools through strategic planning. Strategic planning is an instrument of quality assurance to aid in the sustainable development of schools to adapt to changes in policies and market forces (Myende & Bhengu, 2015). Successful implementation of strategic plans provides a blueprint for leadership practices to ensure the achievement of students' value outcomes (Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, Ministry of Education, 2015). The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore principals' experiences leading strategic planning designed to increase achievement in literacy and numeracy in eight high-performing primary schools in Trinidad and Tobago. Fullan (1983) posited that the theory of change points to how transformation occurs using knowledge to develop strategies that institutions can use as a foundation for academic success. High-quality planning supports leadership in strategy implementation, staff commitment, and stakeholder commitment (Armstrong, 1982; Kotler & Murphy, 1981). The findings from this study may help to inform principals about strategic planning and processes that have been found to be successful in high-performing primary schools. Through the medium of strategic planning, students' foundational skills in literacy and numeracy may improve

and may facilitate improvement in national test scores. The academic potential of students may improve, thereby providing a pathway to graduation at the primary, secondary, and tertiary levels. Principals' capacity for leading strategic planning may also be developed, thereby promoting social change in the education system. This will be evident by strategic planning designed to increase achievement of students' literacy and numeracy skills. The Ministry of Education can also use the findings of the study to engage in education policy initiatives.

This chapter includes the background of the study, the problem statement, the purpose statement, the overarching research question and two subquestions, and the conceptual framework. The scope of the study, the justification of the gap in the literature, and the research approach are also presented. The chapter also includes the significance of the study and its contribution to practice, theory, and social change.

Background of the Study

Strategic planning is a vital tool to aid in the sustainable development of schools because it fosters a collective vision through collaboration of stakeholders in the execution of duties and responsibilities toward students' academic achievement (Antoniou, Myburgh-Louw, & Gronn, 2016; Myende & Bhengu, 2015). The effective implementation of strategic plans ensures that the strategic planning process is institutionalized through leadership practices within a consultative and functional integrated management system that is purposeful (Wyk & Moeng, 2014). Beginning in the 1980s, research on strategic planning focused on strategic planning and organizational performance, accountability, and a range of school improvement initiatives (Wolf &

Floyd, 2017). Huber and Conway (2015) engaged in a quantitative study and concluded that schools with high-quality school improvement plans or strategic plans with specific focus on strategies to close students' gaps in achievement levels correlated positively with an increased level of student achievement. Strategic planning is integral to developing specific strategies; identifying and formulating problems; setting specific, measurable, attainable, and time-lined objectives; and analyzing alternative solutions (Armstrong, 1982; Dutton & Duncan, 1987; Miller & Cardinal, 1994; Powell, 1992). There is little literature specific to principals' experiences leading strategic planning for improvement in literacy and numeracy at the primary level. This study addressed this gap in the literature related to this topic.

The problem of low student performance in literacy and numeracy was explored because through the medium of strategic planning, students' foundational skills in literacy and numeracy may improve, thereby facilitating improvement in national test scores. The academic potential of students may improve, thereby providing a pathway to graduation at the primary, secondary, and tertiary levels. To further understand the issue, I interviewed principals of eight high-performing primary schools about their experiences leading strategic planning for improvement in literacy and numeracy. The facilitation of change processes of strategic planning initiatives was also documented through the lens of principals. The results may be used by principals in primary schools for improvement in literacy and numeracy. Fullan (2015) noted that there are big ideas that must be addressed if there is to be whole system change. Fullan identified key ideas including the

notion that all students can learn, the importance of establishing key priorities, ensuring a collective capacity, and precision strategies for improvement.

Problem Statement

In the education system in Trinidad and Tobago, there is a problem in the academic achievement of at least 40% of primary students. The problem is evident in student performance in literacy and numeracy with approximately 60% achieving mastery as documented by national tests. The Ministry of Education (2016) highlighted that at least 40% of the students in standard one and standard three in primary schools attained a score of less than 50% on the national tests in 2016, 2015, and 2014. This level of performance at the primary level may affect the performance in mathematics and English at the Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate (CSEC) level. The Ministry of Education documented that the average percentage of students not achieving a passing grade in the mathematics and English at the CSEC level for the years 2014, 2015, and 2016 was 43% and 34% respectively. Strategic planning is required in all schools in Trinidad and Tobago to address the problem of low student performance in literacy and numeracy. Performance continues to lag in approximately 200 of 490 (40%) of the primary schools, while other schools with similar demographics are high performing (Ministry of Education, 2016). Wolf and Floyd (2017) conducted a meta-analysis of 117 journal articles spanning the years 1980 to 2011 and concluded that those who engage in research on strategic planning must focus on opportunities for improving and understanding how detailed planning influences organizational outcomes. When strategic planning is well documented with a strategic focus on teaching and learning, including a

strategic documentation of an implementation plan and areas of responsibility, in addition to monitoring the implementation process outlining indicators of success, major school transformation is noted specific to whole-school student learning (Cosner & Jones, 2016, Hayward, 2017).

Strategic planning is a vital tool to aid in the sustainable development of schools because it fosters a collective vision through collaboration in the execution of duties and responsibilities of stakeholders toward students' academic achievement (Myende & Bhengu, 2015). District-level professionals must use data to engage in effective decision-making and to develop a blueprint or strategic plan for improvement in teaching and learning (Jimerson, 2016). Organizational statements inclusive of mission, vision, values, and goals have an impact on daily practice and should be used to plan for school improvement and organizational change (Gurley, Peters, Collins & Fifolt, 2015). Antoniou et al. (2016) noted that schools must work collaboratively in the planning process to ensure that sustainable improvement can be achieved, which will improve teaching and learning. The literature highlighted that there are varying factors that guide the strategic focus on the influence of organizational outcomes specific to teaching and learning (Cosner & Jones, 2016; Gurley, Peters, Collins & Fifolt, 2015; Hayward, 2017). With a wealth of literature available on strategic planning, what is not known is how principals in high-performing schools improve literacy and numeracy through leadership of their campus strategic planning. The current study addressed the research gap specific to principals' experiences leading strategic planning designed to increase achievement in literacy and numeracy in high-performing primary schools in Trinidad and Tobago. To

answer the main research question and two subquestions, I interviewed eight principals to document their experiences regarding the use of strategic planning to ensure students' success.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore principals' experiences leading strategic planning designed to increase achievement in literacy and numeracy in eight high-performing primary schools in Trinidad and Tobago. This study focused on seven high-performing primary schools from Trinidad and one high-performing primary school from Tobago.

Research Questions

The primary research question was the following: What are principals' experiences leading strategic planning designed to increase achievement in literacy and numeracy? The study addressed the following subquestions:

RQ1: How do principals in high performing primary schools in Trinidad and Tobago lead strategic planning processes designed to improve student performance in literacy and numeracy?

RQ2: How do principals in high performing primary schools in Trinidad and Tobago facilitate change processes through the stages of planning, implementation, and monitoring in strategic planning designed to address student performance in literacy and literacy?

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study was Fullan's (1983) change process theory. Fullan posited that the change process at the campus level of the school must include strategies for improving the school. The theory of change focuses on how change occurs using knowledge as the foundational base grounded on eight organizational factors including leadership focused on curriculum and instruction, district level support, emphasis on student development, high expectations for students, support systems and processes for monitoring performance of staff and achievement of students, continuous staff development, parental involvement, and promoting a healthy school climate (Fullan, 1983). Four process variables that are embedded within the factors include leadership aptitudes, a value system for stakeholders, intentional communication, and collaborative planning and collaborative implementation (Fullan, 1983). The organizational factors and the process variables are fused and used as an innovation focused strategy as the conduit to school improvement (Fullan, 1983). This theory informed the current study as the change process intertwined with the eight organizational factors and the four process variables provided the foundation for transformation if there is to be improvement in literacy and numeracy. This theory provided a cohesive framework for analyzing the experiences of principals from high-performing schools with a focus on how they lead change processes targeting improved student performance. Application of Fullan's theory offered essential theoretical knowledge to ground the study to the purpose and research questions. Egbert and Sanden (2014) posited that the conceptual framework impacts the

development of the study as a whole and adds value to data collection, analysis, and interpretation of the results.

Nature of the Study

The nature of this study was a basic qualitative design. Basic qualitative research is grounded on a theoretical framework to guide the analysis of the phenomenon based on the experiences of a target group of individuals who will add value to the knowledge in the field of study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Patton, 2015; Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Creswell (2012) posited that qualitative research allows a researcher to explore problems using a direct approach in data collection and analysis in a bid to comprehend the central phenomenon under consideration. The strength of this study included exploring the experiences of eight principals from high-performing schools at the primary level to document how they lead strategic planning, with a specific focus on leadership of successful strategic planning processes that result in improved student performance in literacy and numeracy, and the facilitation of change processes. A basic qualitative design was used to explore the experiences of the research participants to understand the phenomenon, aligned with the constructivist paradigm, through the interpretation of the experiences of the participants in their natural setting (see Keen & Marcus, 2018). Data were collected through interviews that were recorded using the voice recorder on an iPhone. Key elements of data analysis included coding, categorizing, and identifying themes specific to the research questions.

Definitions

Leadership: The ability to anticipate, initiate, and maintain relationships in the process of empowering stakeholders to create the strategic change that is vital to achieve organizational goals through strategy implementation (Anyieni & Areri, 2016; Avolio, 2005).

Literacy: The ability of an individual to use a range of aptitudes related to linguistics along a continuum of learning to achieve goals through the medium of reading, writing, and communicating (International Literacy Association, 2019; The Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, Ministry of Education, 2017).

Numeracy: The ability of an individual to understand, work with numbers, and use a range of aptitudes related to numbers that is vital to engage in meeting the demands of life (Department of Education and Skills, 2011; The Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, Ministry of Education (2017).

Stakeholders: Participants who engage and interact to ensure that schools achieve the stated students' value outcomes inclusive of school principals, teachers, parents, families, community advocates, activist organizations, and governmental and non-governmental organizations who provide perspectives and lend support toward refinement of the strategic plan (Kim & Keen, 2018; The Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, Ministry of Education (2016).

Strategic planning: A structured process for a given period after analysis of the school's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats that is vital to facilitate policy direction and the sustainable development of schools, thereby ensuring strategy

formulation, implementation, and control to influence a school's strategic direction through deliberate strategic decision-making (Dolph, 2016; Myende & Bhengu, 2015; Wolf & Floyd, 2017).

Assumptions

This basic qualitative study addressed principals' experiences leading strategic planning designed to increase achievement in literacy and numeracy. This first assumption was that the principals' experiences would provide the depth and breadth of data specific to the research questions and to understand their successes in leading strategic planning, the change process, and stakeholder ownership of strategic planning initiatives. The second assumption was that the principals would truthfully respond to the interview questions with open and honest communication. The third assumption was based on the conceptual framework, Fullan's change process theory, which provided grounding for that change occurs with the utilization of knowledge as the foundational base. Ravitch and Carl (2016) posited that the conceptual framework serves as a guide and frame or foundation for use of data in the process of conducting research that intersects the major construct of the study.

Scope and Delimitations

The purpose of this study was to explore principals' experiences leading strategic planning processes designed to increase achievement in literacy and numeracy in eight high-performing primary schools in Trinidad and Tobago. Principals are the instructional leaders in schools tasked with the responsibility for leading strategic planning processes. Findings may be provided to principals of low-performing schools that can be used to

transform these schools through the use of foundational skills for improvement in literacy and numeracy. Also, the data can be used to engage in further research.

The sampling strategy was criterion based. Through purposeful sampling, eight principals who are leading strategic planning in high-performing primary schools in Trinidad and Tobago were selected. The criteria for the selection of seven schools in Trinidad and one school in Tobago was based on the number of schools from the two islands. Trinidad comprises seven education districts with a total of 446 primary schools, while Tobago, the smaller island, has one education division that comprises 44 primary schools spread across rural and semirural communities. The eight principals were selected based on national test results as having promoted their schools from mostly effective to excelling in the areas of literacy and numeracy consistently over a 4-year period. According to the Ministry of Education (2016), all primary schools are placed in one of four categories based on a composite score of zero to 560: academic emergency (0-80), academic watch (81-240), mostly effective (241-400), and excelling (401-560). This level of accountability is noted in Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) that promotes assessment in the areas of mathematics and English language arts. The purpose of assessment is to inform stakeholders within education districts about student and school performance in a bid to plan, implement, and monitor interventions for improvement of low-performing schools and to recognize the achievement of high-performing schools. Assessments also serve the purpose of informing education district leaders and education policymakers about accountability at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels of the education system (Education Commission of the State, 2017). Ravitch and

Carl (2016) noted that purposeful sampling enables researchers to select participants for specific reasons including having knowledge of a specific phenomenon with the aim of getting the necessary information to answer the research questions. Findings from the study may be transferrable to local, regional, and international contexts.

Limitations

One limitation included my biases toward the study related to my previous training as a school improvement partner. To overcome this limitation, I was objective in all my actions while conducting the study. I ensured data triangulation through criterion-based purposeful sampling of eight principals, iterative questioning, reflective commentary, member checks, and a second reader. I ensured that interviews were documented properly through the use of iterative questioning using probes to gather in-depth data and to identify codes, categories, and themes from the data. I used probes to ensure truthfulness in the participants' interview responses. The use of reflective journaling during data collection and analysis allowed me to monitor the development of my understanding of the data (see Guba & Lincoln, 1989). Ravitch and Carl (2016) noted that researchers must utilize structured reflexivity processes to ensure that bias in data analysis is eliminated through the medium of journals and multiple coding to promote transparent analysis. Member checks were also used to confirm the accuracy and summary of the transcripts. Member checks also included the verification of my inferences, codes, and themes during my reflective commentary based on contextual meanings to ensure objectivity of the data collection process (see Miles & Huberman, 1994). Additionally, a coworker who is also a school supervisor served as a second

reader. The transcripts were read and matched against the codes, categories, and themes to ensure the accuracy of my interpretation of the data.

Delimitations

Through purposeful sampling, the sample size included eight principals who are leading strategic planning in high-performing primary schools in Trinidad and Tobago. The eight principals represented one school from each of the education districts in Trinidad and Tobago. These principals were selected based on national test results as having promoted their schools from mostly effective to excelling in the areas of literacy and numeracy consistently over a 4-year period. A basic qualitative design was used. Basic qualitative research is grounded on a theoretical framework to guide the analysis of the study based on the experiences of the participants that will add value to the knowledge in the field of study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Patton, 2015; Ravitch & Carl, 2016). The strength of this study included exploring the experiences of eight principals from high-performing schools at the primary level to document how they lead strategic planning, with a specific focus on leadership of successful strategic planning processes that result in improved student performance in literacy and numeracy, and the facilitation of change processes. A basic qualitative design was used to explore the experiences of the research participants to understand the phenomenon, aligned with the constructivist paradigm, through the interpretation of the experiences of the participants in their natural setting (see Keen & Marcus, 2018). Data were collected through the medium of interviews.

Significance of the Study

Significance to Practice

This study may add value to professional practice in the development of principals' effectiveness in the leading, planning, and implementation of strategic plans that increase achievement in literacy and numeracy. Findings may be used to inform the practice of primary school principals with regard to successful strategic planning and change processes focused on improved literacy and numeracy.

Significance to Theory

Exploring principals' experiences leading strategic planning may advance the leadership practices of principals when planning for the improved academic achievement of students. Anyieni and Areri (2016) revealed that the leadership style of the principal influences the decision-making processes and the implementation of strategic plans. Kai-Wing (2016) postulated that a principal's knowledge of leadership is an influential factor for visioning, networking, and enhancing stakeholders' capability that results in improved academic achievement and general organizational performance.

Significance to Social Change

Sharma and Monteiro (2016) postulated that education empowers individuals, thereby triggering social change. Social change will be achieved as the students' foundational skills in literacy and numeracy are improved across the curriculum. Al-Haddad and Kotnour (2015) posited that change enablers in the education system encompass knowledge, skills, and competencies intertwined with the capacity and

capability of stakeholders. The current study may add value to principals' capacity to promote positive social change in the education system.

Summary and Transition

A basic qualitative approach was used to explore principals' experiences leading strategic planning processes designed to increase achievement in literacy and numeracy in high-performing primary schools in Trinidad and Tobago. The results from this study may inform the capacity of principals leading strategic planning processes, which may result in improved academic achievement. The addressed elements, factors, and processes about what is known about strategic planning. A gap exists in the understanding of leading strategic planning designed to increase achievement in literacy and numeracy. To fill this gap, I interviewed eight principals from high-performing primary schools in Trinidad and Tobago to document their experiences leading strategic planning processes specific to literacy and numeracy.

Chapter 2 provides a synthesis of research on strategic planning in schools from the 1980s and includes research published within the last 5 years. The synthesis of research provided a comprehensive review of the literature specific to the research problem, purpose of the study, and research questions. The literature research strategy is explained, and a review of Fullan's change process theory is included.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The purpose of this study was to explore principals' experiences leading strategic planning processes designed to increase achievement in literacy and numeracy in eight high-performing primary schools in Trinidad and Tobago. In the education system in Trinidad and Tobago, there is a problem in the academic achievement of at least 40% of primary school students. The Ministry of Education (2016) highlighted that at least 40% of the students in standard one and standard three in primary schools attained a score of less than 50% on the national tests in 2016, 2015, and 2014. This level of performance at the primary school level may affect the performance levels in mathematics and English at the CSEC level. The Ministry of Education documented that the average percentage of students not achieving a passing grade in the subjects of mathematics and English at the CSEC level for the years 2014, 2015, and 2016 was 43% and 34% respectively. Strategic planning is required in all schools in Trinidad and Tobago to address the problem of low student performance in literacy and numeracy. Performance continues to lag in approximately 200 of 490 (40%) of primary schools, while other schools with similar demographics are high performing (Ministry of Education, 2016).

The study was guided by two subquestions that addressed principals' leadership of successful strategic planning processes and the facilitation of change processes in strategic planning. An exhaustive literature search was conducted to validate the gap in the literature specific to the research topic. Strategic planning is a vital tool to aid in the sustainable development of schools because it fosters a collective vision toward students' academic achievement focused on opportunities for improving and understanding how

detailed planning influences education outcomes (Myende & Bhengu, 2015; Wolf & Floyd, 2017). Strategic planning is integral to developing specific strategies; identifying and formulating problems; setting specific, measurable, attainable, and time-lined objectives; and analyzing alternative solutions (Armstrong, 1982; Dutton & Duncan, 1987; Miller & Cardinal, 1994; Powell, 1992).

Literature Search Strategy

The following search terms were used to develop the literature review: *strategic planning and literacy*, *strategic planning and numeracy*, and *strategic planning and literacy and numeracy*. Further search terms included *strategic planning and school improvement*, *strategic planning and academic achievement*, *strategic planning and schools*, *strategic planning and elementary schools*, *strategic plan implementation and schools*, *leadership and schools*, *leadership and change*, and *leadership and change processes*.

Search phraseology was expanded to include *strategic planning and leadership instructional leadership*, *transformational leadership*, *visionary leadership*, *transformative leadership*, and *leadership aptitudes*. Other search terms provided information rich literature related to the research questions: *strategic planning and student development*, *monitoring staff performance*, *monitoring the achievement of students*, *professional development*, and *parental involvement*. The searches resulted in a synthesis of research on strategic planning from the 1980s and followed a timeline of current research published within the last 5 years. I found 105 peer-reviewed articles that were analyzed and synthesized in this literature review.

Several research databases were used to identify literature on strategic planning. Articles published within the last 5 years accounted for 75% of the articles found, combined with 25% of articles on strategic planning from the 1980s to 2013. Databases included Academic Search Complete, Education Research Starters, Education Source, Eric, Eric and Education Source Combined, ProQuest Central, Sage Journals, Thoreau Multi-Database Search, ABI/FORM and Taylor and Francis.

Conceptual Framework

Fullan's (1983) Change Process Theory was used for this qualitative study. Fullan posited that change processes within a school are important if stakeholders within the school are to formulate strategies to improve schools. Change takes place over time, and change involves the acquisition of new skills through the medium of practice, continuous feedback, and organizational conditions at the level of the school (Fullan, 1983). These conditions determine the success of the process, and successful change is achieved through an interaction of organizational conditions within the internal and external environment of the school (Fullan, 1983). Change is a process, not an event, that has an attached meaning that something is happening over time that will involve the transformation of schools, situations, and individuals (Hall & Loucks, 1977). Substantial change can be triggered through the transformational practices of principals in their role as managers, instructional leaders, and stakeholders, which extends beyond the classroom and school and includes the school community (Woulfin & Weiner, 2019).

Fullan (1983) synthesized the primary work of Huberman (1991), Stalling (1980, 1981), Showers (1983), and Little (1981) to illustrate the theory of change processes

within schools. Huberman engaged in the case study in a school district to monitor a reading instruction program through the medium of a National Diffusion Network. Huberman found that with the aid of strong leadership support in planning for improvement, there were widespread implementation of the reading program as change processes evolved after a period of 6 months through a policy of gradual implementation of the reading program rather than comprehensive implementation at once. Huberman concluded that behavioral mastery specific to the comprehensive understanding of the structure of the program improved over time.

Stalling (1980, 1981) engaged in a staff development mastery learning model that included a four-phase reading program specific to training secondary school teachers to improve the reading abilities of their students. Stalling (1980, 1981) concluded that teacher-led groups and groups led by project leaders who guided the implementation of the reading program through a process of gradual change had a positive impact on classroom practice. Showers (1983) engaged in a program of coaching and transfer of training that included five components: theory, demonstration, practice, feedback, and coaching. Showers concluded that successful change processes ensured mastery of essential skills to guide teaching approaches and the organization of instruction through peer coaching specific to curriculum and instruction. Little (1981) focused on school norms and work conditions specific to staff development and improvement. Little noted that the leadership of the school and the stakeholders at the level of the school must engage in planning, researching, and evaluating plans for academic achievement to ensure long-term improvement in the academic standards of students. Change is a process

by which there is development of new skills coupled with new ways of doing things (Marris, 1975; Fullan, 1982).

Fullan (1983) posited that change process at the campus level of the school must include strategies for improving schools. The theory of change focuses on how change occurs using knowledge as the foundational base grounded on eight organizational factors including leadership focused on curriculum and instruction, district level support, emphasis on student development, high expectations for students, support systems and processes for monitoring performance of staff and achievement of students, continuous staff development, parental involvement, and promoting a healthy school climate (Fullan, 1983). Four process variables embedded in the factors include leadership aptitudes, a value system for stakeholders, intentional communication, and collaborative planning and collaborative implementation. When the eight organizational factors and the four process variables are supported, there is improvement in the achievement of the goals of the school, coupled with a strong sense of community and a capacity for further improvement through focused innovation and school-wide strategies (Fullan, 1983).

Change processes can be examined through the lens of initiation, implementation, and institutionalization related to building the innovation and is characterized as a major approach to school improvement (Berman, 1981; Huberman & Crandall, 1983).

Developing a strategic plan is the first step in an innovation-focused strategy that directs the leadership of the school to collaborate with stakeholders within the internal and external environment to develop systematic procedures to ensure that the eight organizational factors and the four process factors are addressed. To guide the process, a

needs assessment must be initiated, a school planning committee must be established, and the strategic plan development, implementation, and plan evaluation must provide specific guidance for improvement (Fullan, 1983).

The school superintendent at the district level needs to be involved in the development of planning by working collaboratively with schools based on experience, knowledge, and research findings. Through the use of data-driven decision-making, the innovation is selected for school improvement. Further, the principal's role as an instructional leader needs to be developed to build the capacity of staff, to provide technical assistance, and to provide leadership in the gathering of essential data to plan for continuation. The aim of the innovation is to ensure sustainability and scalability for future change (Fullan, 1983).

The role of leadership in schools is essential to ensure that there is strategy leading to a new strategic direction. The management and facilitation of the improvement process enables an effective leader to produce ideas at the highest level of thinking and actions to a deep level of detail. The leader must develop new skills and conceptions developed from theory, practice, demonstration, feedback, and support (Fullan, 1983). The leadership of schools must focus on change processes as well as system-wide change focused on professional judgements, use of qualitative and quantitative data, prioritizing support, and monitoring progress (Davies, Busick, Herbst, & Sherman, 2014). Burbaugh, Seibel, and Archibald (2017) aligned the role of leadership to the theory of change noting that the alignment of pedagogy, practice, and organizational outcomes can add value to leadership practices.

Fullan's (1983) change process theory offered essential theoretical knowledge to ground the study's purpose and research questions. Eight organizational factors and the four process variables provided the foundation for improvement in literacy and numeracy. Change process theory provided a cohesive framework for analyzing the experiences of principals from high-performing schools with a focus on how they lead change processes targeting improved student performance. Egbert and Sanden (2014) posited that the conceptual framework impacts the development of the study as a whole and adds value to data collection, analysis, and interpretation of the results.

Benefits of Strategic Planning From a Historical Perspective

Strategic planning is a model that allows the leadership of schools to document a strategic picture of the school in the present time, identify the direction it needs to go, and outline its strategic direction for the future (Davies & Ellison, 1998). Each individual school needs to develop a vision of its curriculum offerings together with other dimensions of a school clearly documented to bring the vision into a reality (Beare & Slaughter, 1993; Caldwell, 1997; Handy, 1994). The process of strategic planning is built on three foundational stages that include strategic analysis that seeks to document factors that will influence the school in the present and in the future, strategic choice that allows stakeholders to identify options, evaluation of the options, and selection of the most appropriate strategy for suitability, acceptability, and feasibility, and strategic implementation to bring the vision into a reality (Johnson & Scholes, 1997). The institutionalization of strategic planning seeks to support the coordination of leadership and management of schools with the aim to improve the quality of teaching and learning

(Ewy, 2009; Hodgson & Chuck, 2003; Taylor, Machado, & Peterson, 2008). Through the strategic planning process, schools that engage in self-evaluation, and implement the strategic plan by strategic management, with staff professional development at the center of the cyclical process adds value to the quality of teaching and learning (Cheng, 2011). Agi (2017) engaged in the quantitative study utilizing a descriptive survey of the sample size of 200 teachers, concluded that there is a positive relationship in teachers' perception of strategic planning and school improvement inclusive of sustained academic achievement of students, improved school climate, improved stakeholder involvement, and improved capacities of leadership and staff professional development. The development of a strategic plan to attain school goals through an accurate assessment of the needs of the school is critical to the realization of school improvement (Hanover Research, 2015).

Leadership and Leadership Processes

Leadership is considered as one of the key components of the school that directly impacts student achievement (Dutta & Sahney, 2016). Hallinger (2011) focused on evidence from 40 years of empirical research and highlighted that the leadership of schools needs to develop suitable leadership strategies based on the context, and the ability to build capacity for improvement initiatives. Hallinger noted that leadership strategies include: instructional leadership, transformational leadership, values leadership, collaborative leadership, and distributed leadership and further highlighted that the latter three strategies are prescriptive based on attached values rather than on empirical data. The leadership strategies that impact on the leadership dimension include: goals and

expectations, strategic planning, coordinating, teaching, learning, and curriculum, teacher development, and a supportive learning environment effected by instructional leadership to a greater extent, supported generally by transformational leadership, and the other leadership strategies (Hallinger, 2011). The leadership of schools should also possess personal skills inclusive of positive emotional intelligence, human relations skills, being considerate to the needs of stakeholders, including communication skills and empathy (Sun, Wang, & Sharma, 2014). Ultimately, regardless of the context of schools, the leadership must build a personal and professional resilience focused on planning for improvement, the development of the capacity of staff, coupled with acquiring and managing financial, physical, and maintaining relationships with human resources (Gurr, Drysdale, Clarke, & Wildy, 2014). Additionally, Noman, Hashim, and Abdullah (2018) engaged in a case study focused on the International Successful School Principal-ship Project and noted that successful leadership constitute components of people-centered leadership, the ability to communicate the vision and goals towards academic achievement, and catering towards the professional development of teachers.

Instructional Leadership

Ng, Nguyen, Wong, and Choy (2015) posited that instructional leadership can be viewed through the lens of the narrow concept and a broader concept. The narrow concept examines instructional leadership as related to the actions of principals specific to teaching and learning. The broader concept embraces instructional leadership related to the following: implementation and communication of the school's vision, mission and goals, coordination of the curriculum, effective supervision and evaluation of instruction,

constant monitoring of student progress, protection of the instructional time, promotion of professional development, provision of incentives for teachers, provision of incentives for students, and the maintenance of a high visibility (Harris, Jones, Cheah, Devadason, & Adams, 2017; Ng et al., 2015). If principals are to provide effective school leadership, principals as instructional leaders are required to have both declarative knowledge and procedural knowledge of school operations in order to effectively guide the process of developing pedagogically focused goals (Kitchen, Gray, & Jeurissen, 2016). Principals' pedagogical role and responsibilities as instructional leaders must be at the forefront to improve teaching and learning and at the same time attend to strategic planning initiatives towards the effective leadership and management of schools (Karagiorgi, Afantiti-Lamprianou, Alexandrou-Leonidou, Karamanou, & Symeou, 2018).

Transformational Leadership

Williams Jr, Raffo, and Clark (2018) engaged in a review of the literature on transformational leadership and positioned that transformational leadership has a direct impact to organizational performance as a leader's credibility, and charismatic quality adds value to the organization's goals. Stringer and Hourani (2016) conducted a basic qualitative study to explore the perception of principals' roles and responsibilities in times of change. The transformational role of principals is aligned with five professional standards. The first professional standard, leading strategically, will ensure that planning and implementation of strategic plans and processes, initiating change processes, and exploring creativity and innovation in curriculum delivery are attended to. The second professional standard, leading teaching and learning, directs the transformational

leadership role of the principal to develop and outline strategies to develop effective teachers to support teaching and learning. The third professional standard, leading the school as an organization, triggers the knowledge of transformational leaders on principles of rigorous self-assessment, financial planning, engaging in evidence based and data driven decision-making, planning for change and implementing change. The fourth professional standard, leading people, aligns the thinking of transformational leaders to knowledge of models of professional development, building and sustaining the school as a learning community, and planning and sustaining school improvement initiatives. The fifth professional standard, leading the community, aligns the thinking of transformational leaders to the knowledge of issues and trends in education globally, and opportunities for collaboration with the purpose of engaging parents and other stakeholders. Embedded within the realm of transformational leadership, principals' varying roles and responsibilities intertwine their role as visionary leaders, and instructional leaders (Stringer & Hourani, 2016). The varying roles of the transformational leader are integrated within the provision of shared vision and goals, the development of structures and systems to enable collaboration, leading strategic and systemic changes within schools and education districts (Hewitt, Davis, & Lashley, 2014). Ultimately, the leadership of schools need to document higher quality plans with clearly stated achievement goals, coupled with documented planning strategies for implementation and monitoring of student achievement towards transformation (Huber & Conway, 2015).

Combined Practice of Transformational and Instructional Leadership

The leadership of schools must utilize a wide range of school leadership practices that are critical for stakeholders within the school to transform and sustain school improvement initiatives in a quest for overall performance and classroom instruction (Leithwood & Sun, 2012). Day, Gu, and Sammons (2016) utilized a mixed methods study to illustrate the leadership of schools use of transformational and instructional leadership practices to ultimately improve the core business of schools, that is, improved students' outcomes. The findings from the study highlighted that transformational and instructional leadership of schools are layered that must build and sustain a focus on the quality of teaching and learning. Specific actions must include: a redesigned leadership of staff teams, improvement in the assessment procedures, use of data driven decision-making and evidence-based decision-making, improved teaching policies and programs, strategically allocating resources, continuous adjustment and changes to the students' target setting (Day et al., 2016). The transformational leader focuses improvement on organizational qualities, organizational factors and variables, and in the transformation of overall school effectiveness (Shields, 2010).

Transformative Leadership: Leadership for Social Change

Transformative leadership has a focus on schools through the lens of justice and democracy and examines inequitable practices to ensure that the learning environment, and the social environment within schools produce a better quality for students (Quantz, Rogers, & Dantley, 1991; Shields, 2009; Weiner, 2003). The leadership of schools must be able to engage in transformational processes while at the same time empower

stakeholders to promote the intellectual development of all students (Capper, 1989; Giroux, 1995). Zapata, Percy, and Andrews (2018) noted that the strategic plans must address the equity lens specific to planning and decision making towards a clear statement of commitment in the promotion of access, inclusion, and equity.

Transformative leadership promotes the action of the education leader to create appropriate learning contexts towards the provision of equity of opportunities for all students (Shields, 2010). The basis of transformative leadership is to reduce if not eliminate the deficit thinking and inequities in the education system towards the creation of new knowledge frameworks. This new knowledge framework will allow education leaders to lead by providing opportunities for all students to engage in purposeful pedagogies facilitated by high expectations (Shields, 2010).

Leadership and Vision: Mission and Goals

Gurley, Peters, Collins, and Fifolt (2017) utilized strategic planning as the conceptual framework to find out the use of organizational statements to guide organizational practice. Gurley et al. (2017) concluded that organizational statements inclusive of vision, mission, and goals impact on the leadership of schools and leaders need to ensure that organizational change within schools must be centered on the commitment to improvement as related to the mission and vision. The mission statement of the school solidifies a shared understanding about the central purpose of education and related educational programs which forms the basis of school governance and decision-making processes (Boerema, 2006). Educational leaders must articulate a shared

understanding of the contextual needs of the school and clearly articulate the unity of purpose toward school improvement (Gurley et al., 2017).

Additionally, the vision of schools must be used as a conduit to build equitable schools through the influence of positive changes of all school related dimensions (Kose, 2011). Equally important, measurable performance goals of the school must be precisely documented indicating the level of intended performance in specific school dimensions, for example, student learning, stakeholder involvement, and professional development, related to the standard operating procedures for the leadership of schools (Gurley et al., 2017). Further, Morpew, Fumasoli, and Stensaker (2018) documented the role of strategic plans as related to universities in Northern Europe and North America. The usability and applicability of Morpew, Fumasoli, and Stensaker's research is transferrable to primary schools as the researchers documented the use of student centered or learned centered statements documented as vision statements, mission statements, and performance goals. Additionally, the use of key data sources inclusive of strategic plans and even previous research were analyzed to identify changing trends in higher education that can be linked to institutional ideology (Morpew & Hartley, 2006; Salchaie & Morpew, 2014; Taylor & Morpew, 2010). My research will entail the use of the experiences of principals in high performing primary schools to document their successes towards institutional ideology specific to successes in literacy and numeracy.

Leadership and School Transformation

Myers and Hitt (2017) reviewed 18 empirical studies and categorized leadership dimensions that should be attended to in the process of school transformation. The

leadership of the principal in the establishment and maintenance of the vision, leadership of instructional initiatives, facilitated an environment conducive to teacher development and student achievement, and stakeholder involvement are important in building the capacity of stakeholders within schools (Hitt & Tucker, 2015). The empirical studies reviewed highlighted that the change processes within schools must direct the leadership of schools to use the vision of the school as a focal point for high academic expectations. It also highlighted that the leadership must build the capacity of teachers in the areas of instructional improvement with a focus on accountability, and improve the climate of the school through the alignment of priorities directed towards teaching and learning, and creating the authentic relationships with parents and other stakeholders (Meyers & Hitt, 2017).

Additionally, the leadership of schools, together with key stakeholders, must document strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, in a bid to identify the root causes of under-performance which can then be used for appropriate diagnosis towards school transformation (Duke, 2015). Ultimately, the leadership of schools have the major responsibility to encourage the use of data to diagnose teacher instructional and student learning deficiencies within the change processes which is especially useful where the culture schools are guided by data driven decision making towards school transformation (Reyes & Garcia, 2014). Further, the leadership of schools is also an important element to promote the professional capacity of staff documenting priorities for achievement using data about performance, and constantly communicating process goals and performance indicators towards student achievement (Caldwell, 2016).

Research on Strategic Planning

Wolf and Floyd (2017) reviewed research on strategic planning spanning the past 30 years with the purpose of critically analyzing research on strategic planning. Wolf and Floyd analyzed five articles for the period 1980 to 1986 from the Academy of Management Journal, seven articles for the period 1981 to 1987 from the Academy of Management Review, two articles for the period 1984 to 1989 from the Journal of Management, five articles for the period 1985 to 1993 from the Journal of Management Studies, two articles for the period 1984 from the Journal of International Business Studies, nine articles for the period 1980 to 1990 from Management Science, 34 articles for the period 1980 to 1992 from the Strategic Management Journal, one article dated 1994 from the Academy of Management Journal, one article dated 2004 from Administrative Science Quarterly, one article dated 2009 from the California Management Review, four articles for the period 1994 to 2006 from the Harvard Business Review, one article dated 1994 from the Journal of Management, five articles for the period 1994 to 2008 from the Journal of Management Studies, 29 articles for the period 1994 to 2009 from the journal Long Range Planning, one article dated 2011 from the Journal of Organization Studies, one journal dated 2003 from Sloan Management Review, and seven journals for the period 1994 to 2003 from the Strategic Management Journal, totaling 106 articles. The summary and critique after the analysis of the research articles noted that there needs to be a renewed emphasis of research on strategic planning with a specific focus on how strategic planning can influence the organizational outcomes of institutions. Additionally, there is a major weakness in the research which include a

lack of theory driven methods which will serve to add value to the reliability and validity of the research. Equally important, in addition to the use of theory in strategic planning, cataloguing and documenting planning practices, suggestions and recommendations on the improvement of institutions can enhance future research on strategic planning (Wolf & Floyd, 2017).

Research on Strategic Planning in Schools

Strategic Plan Implementation

Yenipinar and Akgun (2017) utilized a quantitative methodology to explore principals and teachers' views on the level of strategic management implementation. The findings highlighted that the leadership of schools is essential to lead strategy identification, strategic guidance, and strategic thinking. While leadership is generally successful, improvement is needed on leadership practices related to implementation strategies (Yenipinar & Akgun, 2017). Yenipinar and Akgun's study was not grounded on a theoretical framework which was one of the weaknesses highlighted by Wolf and Floyd (2017) who noted that research on strategic planning needs to be grounded on theory. However, Yenipinar and Akgun's study has validated the possible benefit that my study will generate, that is, principals' experiences leading strategic planning which may generate a depth and breadth of data related to implementation strategies specific to literacy and numeracy. Principals can use codes, categories, and themes generated from this research to examine the quality of their strategic planning. Then, critically reflect on the level of further planning, implementation of specific strategies, and monitoring that is needed related to success indicators for improvement in literacy and numeracy.

Strategic Plan Quality and Implementation

Strunk, Marsh, Bush-Mecenas, and Duque (2016) conducted a study to examine the use of strategic planning as a formal process and investigated the relationship between the quality of strategic plans and its implementation towards school improvement initiatives at a Los Angeles Unified School District over a 3-year period. The researchers utilized the mixed method design using descriptive analyses to draw on the relationships between strategic plan quality and the actions and developmental outcomes that are derived from a quality plan. The conceptual framework utilized was Vroom (1964) expectancy theory and provided a detailed explanation of Vroom's (1964) expectancy theory to key elements of the strategic planning process. It was concluded that the average strategic plan quality was low throughout the 3-year reform. The leadership of schools need to ensure that five constructs are attended if school plans quality are to improve which include: principal leadership of plan implementation, continuous teacher collaboration, staff collegiality, parental involvement, and improved school climate. There is also need for further research on school improvement initiatives (Strunk et al., 2016). Application of this data to my research highlights that principals' experiences leading strategic plans in high performing schools may generate a plethora of data on school improvement initiatives specific to literacy and literacy.

Strategic Plans as a Functional Guide

Sang, Kindiki, Sang, Rotich, and Kipruto (2015) conducted a study to establish the availability of strategic plans and the level of implementation of the strategic plans in secondary schools in Nandi County, Kenya. The researchers utilized a mixed method

design. Sang et al. (2015) utilized a competency model as the theoretical framework which highlighted the competencies as knowledge, abilities and skills as independent variables mapped against the stages of strategic planning as the dependent variables, mapped onto government policy as the intervening variable. It was concluded that a large sector of secondary schools had no strategic plans to serve as a functional guide in achieving the vision, mission, and the goals of the school. The schools with strategic plans have minimal documentation of developmental goals (Sang et al., 2015).

Chukwumah (2015) postulated in a quantitative study that while principals developed strategic plans, essential components inclusive of targets for improvement, expected outputs and performance indicators were not documented in at least 80% of the plans. Additionally, the leadership of schools need to promote a commitment to strategic planning practices towards the improvement of the total education outcomes for students (Chukwumah, 2015). There is a lack of leadership specific to strategy formulation of education policies and that training and development aligned with guidelines towards student achievement need to be embedded in strategic plans (Nyagah, 2015). Sahin and Ak (2018) posited that students' risks as related to their strengths and weaknesses must be analyzed and planned for towards ensuring that documented strategies in strategic plans are realistic and reliable. The documentation of the results of my research may produce data on the leadership of strategic plans used as a functional guide for improvement in literacy and literacy.

Strategic Planning Aided by Collaborative Planning

Myende and Bhengu (2015) conducted a study to understand the involvement of heads of departments (HODs) in strategic planning. A qualitative case study was utilized, specifically, a multiple instrumental case study with an interpretative design which examined the extent to which HODs were involved in strategic planning, how their involvement transformed teaching and learning, and also to generate an understanding of the leadership practices that encourage the promotion of staff engagement in strategic planning. The conceptual framework utilized was participative leadership which is a leadership and management model based on the assumption that participation will increase school effectiveness. It was concluded that HODs were not involved in the important stages of the strategic planning process, although they were involved in some aspect of planning. Also, HODs involvement is an important element in the teaching and learning process, and transparency driven leadership and collaboration are important factors for HODs to actively participate in strategic planning (Myende & Bhengu, 2015). Additionally, it is essential that strategic plans are designed and implemented based on the composition of three main elements: strategic analysis of school improvement processes including stakeholder involvement; strategic goals; and documentation of an action plan that outlines a strategic goal into action (Wyk & Moeng, 2014). Equally important, principals need to be equipped with leadership and management skills in order to effectively institutionalize policies related to teaching and learning, resource allocation, and rewards/incentive schemes which will aid in the successful implementation of strategic plans (Ndegwah, 2014).

Strategic Planning and School Improvement

Sahin (2013) conducted a study to determine the range of ideas that principals possess with respect to school improvement and the strategies that they utilize to improve schools. The researcher used the qualitative methodology, specifically descriptive research. The conceptual framework of the study documented was school improvement, a concept that enhances the standard of education in schools throughout the world. It was concluded that in order to improve schools, principals' leadership of promoting co-operation and communication among stakeholders must take first priority, followed by teacher development, improving the physical conditions of schools, and finally, providing and encouraging increased utilization of educational technologies. Additionally, knowledge of the strategic planning process, the use of the appropriate leadership style, training and professional support, and the effective use of financial resources have either facilitated or hindered school improvement processes documented in strategic plans (Wanjala & Rarieya, 2014).

Further, teachers' application of knowledge management can aid in sustaining improved strategic planning, the continuous development of teacher competencies, and utilization of assessment for learning geared towards student learning (Cheng, 2013). Knowledge management entails a process of constructively using information and knowledge based on school improvement data to enhance the problem-solving capacities in the management of schools (Sallis & Jones, 2002). Principals' use of strategic plans as a school improvement tool is recommended to be used to document all aspects of planning which include: a self-evaluation of the school processes, data collection and

analysis, and documentation of strategic plans (Al-Zboon & Hasan, 2012). Equally important, Anyieni and Areri (2016) engaged in a quantitative study utilizing a descriptive research design to investigate factors that influence the implementation of strategic plans. The theoretical framework utilized were leadership style and communication theory. It was concluded that the leadership style of the principal with leadership variables of innovation, communication, and competency promotion influenced school improvement through the implementation of strategic plans (Anyieni & Areri, 2016).

Strategic Planning and Innovation

Hayward (2017) engaged in research specific to lessons learned from strategic planning as related to improvement in teaching and learning in developing economies. Analysis of the article pointed that the article was related to higher education. However, the findings can be directly related to education institutions including primary schools. Hayward (2017) research focused on goals and human resources related to teaching and learning, challenges to change processes, and implementation of strategic plans. Hayward concluded that the leadership of schools that utilize innovative ideas can be used to trigger the creative capacities of staff and other stakeholders in the provision of human and financial support in support of transformational change. Uzarski and Broome (2018) highlighted that there is plethora of research on strategic plan development and less information on strategic plan implementation and evaluation. Uzarski and Broome presented a leadership framework towards implementation of strategic plans. Political, human resource, structural and symbolic frameworks were documented as approaches.

The political frame will seek to align strategic plans to partnerships within the external environment of the school. The human resource frame will seek to empower stakeholders, the symbolic frame will align a collective vision, values, and culture. The structural frame will form the foundation of the strategic areas for improvement towards implementation (Uzarski & Broome, 2018). In order to develop competency of students, the teaching strategies utilized in schools must integrate both theory based and skill based approaches to teaching (Grant & Baden-Fuller, 2018). Further, Howes (2018) noted that top-down approaches to strategic planning will limit the identification of strategic initiatives towards innovation. Institutions must manage change through a combination of top-down, bottom-up, and listening and leading approaches towards transformation (Fullan & Scott, 2009; Howes, 2018).

Strategic Planning and Transformational Practices

Dolph (2017) highlighted the challenges and opportunities of Urban School Principals as related to school improvement utilizing review of the literature. Dolph concluded that the leadership of urban schools needs to lead change through the acquisition of instructional leadership skills to ensure improvement of instructional practices, and the development of an enhanced school culture in order to propel the academic achievement of students. Additionally, Hitt and Tucker (2016) synthesized 56 empirical studies as related to how the leadership of schools influences student achievement. Hit and tucker concluded that there are five essential domains of leadership practices that need to be attended to if schools are to be transformed. These five transformational practices include: the establishment and continuous conveyance of the

vision, the facilitation of a quality learning experiences for the students developed through teaching, learning, assessment, and a safe and orderly school climate, building the professional capacity of staff, the creation of a supportive a school as an organization through its total organizational functioning, and connecting with external partners, inclusive of parents and the community (Hitt & Tucker, 2016). The focus of strategic planning must provide the avenue for managing change, and at the same time, create a focus for innovative ideas, changing attitudes, and teamwork within the realm of teaching and learning form the core beliefs of administrators towards strategic planning (Balkar & Kalman, 2018). High quality strategic plans are paramount in ensuring a greater level of organizational change processes of schools. The use of quick wins as a transformational practice must be planned for and prioritized within the elements of strategic planning towards school improvement (Meyers & Hitt, 2018).

Promoting Professional Development

Professional development linked to improvement in teaching is an accepted theory of action as it aids teachers to translate ideas and innovative strategies into their system of practice (Kennedy, 2016). Kennedy (2016) reviewed 28 studies specifically examining professional development through the lens of theories of how students learn, and how teachers learn. The review of the literature from the 28 studies highlighted four constructs that must be considered in the development of professional development for teachers. Firstly, the most common reference point for professional development is the focus of content knowledge that must be threaded on the transformation of teachers' skills on strategies to develop student thinking. The next essential construct focuses on

the collective participation of learning through the medium of professional learning communities by which teachers extensively discuss their intellectual work in addition to strategies for the development of teaching and learning. Another fundamental construct focuses on program intensity based on the cumulative number of contact hours which serves to be useful when strategies related to teaching and learning are shared. The fourth construct entails the use of subject specific coaches which has its strengths and weaknesses (Kennedy, 2016). Effective professional development programs that utilized facilitators who were familiar with issues that teachers' interface with, based on personal experience and expertise were more effective than coaches who were hired for large-scale programs (Kennedy, 2016; Kounin, 1970). The leadership of schools should promote professional development programs to support teachers to build and transform their capacity in practice (Boyd, 2016). Fullan (2011) reminds the leadership of schools that when professional development is built on teamwork and collaboration, the capacity of the teachers become advanced and they become innovators through their collective expertise. The combination of continuous collaboration, ongoing reflection, and reciprocity are elements that solidify professional development (Cornu, 2016).

Parental Involvement

The significance and importance of parents in the transformation of schools as related to students' success and school improvement initiatives based on empirical evidence is left unopposed (Torre & Murphy, 2016). Respect for parents in a bonded relationship between the home and the school forms the foundation for parental involvement in schools (Connors & Epstein, 1994; Henderson & Berla, 1996). The

leadership of schools must develop an authentic membership with parents through meaningful involvement documented in the schools' operations as policy specific to their involvement in their child's education (Boutte & Johnson, 2014; Crowson, 2003; Goldenberg, 2004). Principal leadership must also display a commitment of the shared vision through the offerings of programs that will provide multiple avenues for parents to become involved in the life of the school (Cotton, 2000; Goldenberg, 2004). Policies and practices that are documented and implemented to increase parental involvement in school programs must be the norm for school leadership as there may be times when the external circumstances may result in a deficit of school resources, especially financial resources, and parental involvement will continue to remain focused to the vision of the school (Powell, 1991). Ultimately, parents must be important partners in the strategic development of schools. A system strategy documented in strategic planning initiatives to promote the leadership of schools must involve parents as a deliberate strategy to keep them informed and engaged in capacity building towards the promotion of school goals (Fullan, 2015). Parental involvement has been energized through the development of many organizations at the national level that serve as advocates to the benefit of children in the education system. The Trinidad and Tobago Unified Teachers' Association through its staff representatives in each school throughout Trinidad and Tobago function as advocates to provide information to parents and other stakeholders within school communities through seminars, workshops and conferences (Trinidad and Tobago Unified Teachers' Association, 2012). The National Parent Teacher Association promotes active parental involvement in schools of which the welfare of children is its

main objective, and also to strengthen the relationship between the home and the school to ensure intelligent co-operation (National Parent Teacher Association, 2012). The Children's Authority of Trinidad and Tobago advocates for the rights of children in school and at home by providing legal guidelines to principals, teachers, and parents to adhere to (The Children's Authority of Trinidad and Tobago, 2019).

Summary and Conclusions

The leadership of schools formed the foundation for the development of systems and processes embedded in the life of a school within the framework of the internal and external environment. Transformational leadership extended in every dimension of the school, intertwined with instructional leadership and transformative leadership. Additionally, the major themes drawn from the literature review included elements of Fullan (1983) change process theory, benefits of strategic planning from a historical perspective, leadership and leadership processes, instructional leadership, transformational leadership, combined practice of transformational and instructional leadership, transformative leadership, leadership and vision, mission and goals, leadership and school transformation, research and strategic planning, research and strategic planning in schools, strategic plan quality and implementation, strategic plans as a functional guide, strategic planning and school improvement, strategic planning and innovation, strategic planning and transformational practices, promoting professional development, and parental involvement.

Additionally, the review of the literature provided a wealth of knowledge on strategic planning as a vital planning tool. The leadership of schools is tasked with the

responsibility to lead strategic planning through the medium of leadership practices based on context towards improved student learning. High quality strategic planning supports leadership through the organizational processes and factors in strategy implementation and monitoring coupled with staff and parental ownership and commitment. What was not known was what precise strategies, and how the strategies are planned, implemented and monitored to improve literacy and numeracy through leadership of strategic planning. This study addressed the research gap specific to principals' experiences leading strategic planning designed to increase achievement in literacy and numeracy in eight high performing primary schools in Trinidad and Tobago. Principals of low performing schools can use the data generated from this research on what can be done, and how to institutionalize specific strategies to transform more schools. Ultimately, the focus is to improve students' foundational skills in literacy and numeracy. Equally important, the data can be used to engage in further research.

Additionally, Chapter 3 documents the research design and rationale, the role of the researcher, the methodology, which included instrumentation, data collection instruments, and procedures for recruitment, data collection, and data analysis plan. Also, issues of trustworthiness, ethical procedures, and a summary of the chapter are connected to the research topic, purpose, and research questions that aid to provide data to reveal the gap in the literature.

Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore principals' experiences leading strategic planning designed to increase achievement in literacy and numeracy in eight high-performing primary schools in Trinidad and Tobago. This study focused on seven high-performing primary schools from Trinidad and one high-performing primary school from Tobago. This representative sampling was based on the number of primary schools in both islands (446 in Trinidad and 44 in Tobago). Although there is a wealth of literature available on strategic planning (Agi, 2017; Balkar & Kalman, 2018; Grant & Baden-Fuller, 2018; Howes, 2018; Meyers & Hitt 2018), what was not known was how principals in high-performing schools improve literacy and numeracy through leadership of their campus strategic planning. This study addressed the research gap specific to principals' experiences leading strategic planning designed to increase achievement in literacy and numeracy in high-performing primary schools in Trinidad and Tobago.

The findings of this study may be used to plan, implement, and monitor strategic planning policies. Policies can be used to develop students' foundational skills in literacy and numeracy and may be used to improve subjects across the curriculum. Principals' capacity for leading strategic plans may also be developed, which may promote social change in the education system. This will be evident by the principals leading strategic planning designed to increase achievement of students' literacy and numeracy skills.

This chapter is organized in six sections. The first section restates the purpose of the study and provides an overview of the major sections of the chapter. The second section includes a restatement of the research questions, the phenomenon of the study, the

research tradition, and the rationale for the chosen tradition. The third section includes an explanation of my role in the research process. I document personal and professional relationships with the eight participants and explain how biases or relationships were managed. Ethical issues are also addressed. The fourth section includes the methodology related to participant selection; instrumentation; procedures for recruitment, participation, and data collection; and details of the data analysis plan. The fifth section includes strategies used to enhance credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of the study. Ethical procedures related to the protection of the participants are also documented. The final section provides a chapter summary.

Research Design and Rationale

The research questions that guided this study were developed based on a gap in the literature. The research question and subquestions included the following:

What are principals' experiences leading strategic planning designed to increase achievement in literacy and numeracy?

RQ1: How do principals in high-performing primary schools in Trinidad and Tobago lead strategic planning processes designed to improve student performance in literacy and numeracy?

RQ2: How do principals in high-performing primary schools in Trinidad and Tobago facilitate change processes through the stages of planning, implementation, and monitoring in strategic planning designed to address student performance in literacy and literacy?

The central phenomenon of the study was principals leading strategic planning as viewed through the change process theory. Strategic planning is defined as a structured process for a given period that is vital to facilitate policy direction and the sustainable development of schools, thereby ensuring strategy formulation, implementation, and control to influence a school's strategic direction through deliberate strategic decision-making (Dolph, 2016; Myende & Bhengu, 2015; Wolf & Floyd, 2017). Strategic planning is required in all schools to address the problem of low student performance in literacy and numeracy (The Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, Ministry of Education, 2015). The exploration of principals' experiences in high-performing schools was needed to develop an understanding of leading strategic planning designed to increase achievement in literacy and numeracy. Fullan's (1983) change process theory highlights that change process at the campus level of the school must include strategies for improving the school, and the theory of change focuses on how change occurs using knowledge as the foundational base.

The research approach was a basic qualitative design. Basic qualitative research is grounded on a theoretical framework to guide the analysis of the data based on the experiences of a target group that will add value to the knowledge in the field of study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Patton, 2015; Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Creswell (2012) posited that qualitative research allows a researcher to explore problems using a direct approach in data collection and analysis in a bid to comprehend the central phenomenon under consideration. A basic qualitative design is used to explore the experiences of the participants to understand the research focus, and aligns with the constructivist paradigm

through the interpretation of the experiences of the participants in their natural setting (Keen & Marcus, 2018). A qualitative case study is a research design that allows for an in-depth exploration of a phenomenon through interviews, observations, and other forms of data (Patton, 2015). Phenomenology is a qualitative design that addresses the lived experiences of participants through in-depth interviewing, observation, and dialogue (Patton, 2015). Ethnography is another qualitative design that is used to understand an issue affecting a large group in society and includes interviews, extensive field notes, and documents as a long-term process (Patton, 2015). These designs were not used because my research interest was the experiences of eight principals related to strategic planning to increase student achievement in literacy and numeracy. Other forms of data collection including observation, extensive field notes, and documents as a long-term process were not used in this study. The strength of this study was exploring the experiences of eight principals from high-performing primary schools to document how they lead strategic planning. I focused on leadership of successful strategic planning processes that result in improved student performance in literacy and numeracy, the facilitation of change processes, and stakeholder ownership of strategic planning initiatives to improve student performance in literacy and numeracy.

Role of the Researcher

My role in conducting this research was as a participant. Ravitch and Carl (2016) posited that in the process of conducting qualitative research the researcher is considered the primary instrument who engages with the research participants in their natural setting. Maxwell (2013) noted that the researcher's identity is considered as the central element

in the selected design and the researcher's positionality related to roles and relationships and social identity must be considered.

My professional relationship as a school supervisor did not include power over the participants who are principals. I had no direct supervisory role over any of the eight principals who participated in this study. Further, participation in the study was on a voluntary basis as consent forms clearly outlined the purpose of the study and the option to participate. Shenton (2004) noted that researchers should ensure that participants are willing to engage in the process so that data will be provided without compromise. My training as a school improvement partner may have contributed to biases in the study. To overcome this limitation, I ensured that interviews were documented properly through the use of iterative questioning using probes to gather in-depth data, from which codes, categories, and themes were generated. Additionally, the use of reflective journaling during data collection and analysis allowed me to monitor the development of my understanding of the data (see Guba & Lincoln, 1989). Ravitch and Carl (2016) noted that researchers use structured reflexivity to ensure that researcher bias is eliminated through the use of journals, multiple coding, and transparent analysis. Member checks were also used to ensure that the participants scrutinized the accuracy of the transcripts, and reviewed the interpretation of the data based on their articulations. Member checks also included the verification of my inferences, codes, and themes during my reflective commentary based on contextual meanings to ensure objectivity of the data collection process (see Miles & Huberman, 1994). Additionally, a coworker who is also a school supervisor served as a second reader. The transcripts were read and matched against the

codes, categories, and themes to ensure the accuracy of my interpretation of the data. No ethical issues were encountered related to the work environment, conflict of interest, or power differentials.

Methodology

Participant Selection Logic

The sampling procedure was criterion based through purposeful sampling of eight principals who are leading strategic planning in high-performing primary schools, including seven schools in Trinidad and one school in Tobago. The criteria for the selection of representative sampling of schools in Trinidad and Tobago were based on the number of schools from the two islands as a unitary state. Trinidad comprises seven education districts with a total of 446 primary schools, while Tobago, the smaller island, has one education division that comprises 44 primary schools. These principals were selected based on national test results from Trinidad and Tobago, which indicated the schools as having been promoted from mostly effective to excelling in the areas of literacy and numeracy consistently over a 4-year period. According to the Ministry of Education (2016), all primary schools are placed in one of four categories based on a composite score of zero to 560: academic emergency (0-80), academic watch (81-240), mostly excelling (241-400), and excelling (401-560).

The seven principals selected in Trinidad serve in the following schools. Pseudonyms were used to identify each education district with one school and its principal, as documented by the identifier schools #1 to #7, which served as the unit of analysis in the following education districts: School # 1, Victoria Education District;

School # 2, Caroni Education District; School # 3, St. Patrick Education District; School # 4, Port of Spain Education District; School # 5, North Eastern Education District; School # 6, St. George East Education District; and School # 7, South Eastern Education District. Additionally, the one principal selected in Tobago served in School # 8, Division of Education. After gaining approval from my committee for the proposal, I then sought permission from the Ministry of Education, Trinidad to conduct the research. I also sought permission from the Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB) to conduct the research. After approval from the IRB, approval number, 04-25-19-0659284, I made an appointment to visit each of the eight participants in their respective schools. The informed consent document was discussed with the participants. Participants provided their signature and dated the informed consent to complete the recruitment process. Ravitch and Carl (2016) noted that purposeful sampling enables researchers to select participants for specific reasons of having knowledge of a specific phenomenon, with the aim of getting the information needed to answer the research questions.

Further, the relationship between saturation and sample size must be considered. Sample size as related to qualitative studies integrates the concept of saturation which has an attached meaning that new data does not highlight further themes related to the topic of research (Glaser & Strauss, 1976; Mason, 2010). In qualitative research, a researcher may consider from 1 or 2 to 30 or 40 participants which is dependent on the complexity of the issue, coupled with the in-depth meanings the participants can provide about the phenomenon (Creswell, 2012). Sample size is dependent on informational considerations of which the ultimate purpose is to maximize the amount of information generated in the

process of data collection and analysis (Patton, 2015). Consequently, eight principals who are leading strategic planning in high performing primary schools were selected. It was anticipated that based on their experiences leading strategic planning they would be able to provide a breadth and depth of data how they lead strategic plans, with a specific focus on leadership of successful strategic plan processes that result in improved student performance in literacy and numeracy, the facilitation of change processes, and parental involvement of strategic planning initiatives to improve student performance in literacy and numeracy. Rubin and Rubin (2012) posit that research participants must be chosen based on their ability to provide both depth and thoroughness based on the topic of study.

Instrumentation

In this basic qualitative study, a semi-structured interview protocol was aligned with the purpose of the study. The questions highlighted in the interview protocol (Appendix B) also addressed the eight organizational factors, and aspects of the four process variables which formed the basis of Fullan's (1983) change process theory. Based on the number of questions, the interview process was completed within a timeframe of approximately one hour. Additionally, the use of my reflective commentary through the use of journals at the data collection sessions, documenting emergent patterns in the process of data collection provided allowance for monitoring the development of my understanding of the data. I used recorded interviews as my data collection source as I utilized the experiences of the research participants to understand the research focus based on their practice leading strategic planning. Ravitch and Carl (2016) noted that experience questions focus on what are the participants' experiences. Jacob and

Furgerson (2012) noted that the researchers' main questions form a scaffold of the interview process thus ensuring that the research questions are answered based on the experiences of the research participants.

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

Data were collected from eight principals who are leading strategic planning in high performing primary schools, seven schools in Trinidad, and one school in Tobago. Consequently, the seven principals selected in Trinidad served in the following schools of which pseudonyms were used in the identified education districts: School # 1, Victoria Education District, School # 2, Caroni Education District, School # 3, St. Patrick Education District, School # 4, Port of Spain Education District, School # 5, North Eastern Education District, School # 6, St. George East Education District, and School # 7, South Eastern Education District. Additionally, the one principal selected in Tobago served in the following school of which a pseudonym was used: School # 8, Division of Education Tobago. I collected the data through the medium of interviews that were recorded utilizing the voice recorder on an iPhone. Data was collected once, spanning period of approximately one hour, at each of the participant's school. The duration of data collection spanned over eight days, one day in each participant's school. Follow up plan for recruitment included the identification of four other schools that fitted the sampling criteria. Further recruitment was not needed as the eight principals selected shared their experiences leading strategic planning and they provided a breadth and depth of data. Rubin and Rubin (2012) posit that research participants must be chosen based on their ability to provide both depth and thoroughness based on the topic of study. After the

data collected was transcribed, I scheduled a second visit to each of the eight principals to complete the member checking process. The data collected during the interview was shared, and each participant was asked to confirm the accuracy and clarity of the transcript. Further, after the data was analyzed, I scheduled a final appointment to share a summary of the findings. I then thanked the participants for their time, and this served to complete the debriefing process.

Data Analysis Plan

Key elements of data analysis included coding, use of categories, and themes as connected to the data collected specific to the research questions. A code utilized in qualitative research can be phrased as one word, or a phrase that symbolically assigns a salient point as related to the response to research questions used by participants in the research process (Saldana, 2016). Also, categorizing is done by the researcher according to thematic, conceptual, and/or theoretical organization (Saldana, 2016). Consequently, my data analysis plan included hand coding, together with the use of the qualitative data analysis software, NVivo. However, NVivo was not used because hand coding allowed me as a researcher to use the evidence of the spoken words of the participants by highlighting key words and phrases specific to the interview questions. The verbatim interviews documented had rich meaning; and was highlighted for first level coding that was analyzed into categories, and then translated into themes. The use of my reflective commentary through the use of journals at the data collection sessions, documenting emergent patterns in the process of data collection also provided allowance for monitoring the development data analysis. Member checks were also utilized in the

instrumentation process to ensure that the participants scrutinized the accuracy of the transcripts based on their articulations which served to validate the accuracy of data analysis. Additionally, a co-worker, who is also a schools' supervisor, served as a second reader. The transcripts were read and matched against the codes, categories, and themes to ensure the accuracy of my interpretation of the data. It was anticipated that there was no discrepancy with the participants' responses as they truthfully documented their experiences related to strategic planning which presented a language of commonality in the education system.

Issues of Trustworthiness

Patton (2015) noted that trustworthiness can be integrated into four sub-criteria: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. For each criterion of trustworthiness, I documented the essential strategies to ensure trustworthiness in the development of my dissertation. Lincoln and Guba (1985) contended that credibility is one important aspect that a researcher must consider when establishing trustworthiness. Shenton (2004) highlighted that in producing credibility the researcher must ensure the adoption of research methods is well established, inclusive of questions to be pursued in the gathering of data, together with methods of analysis. For the purpose of this dissertation, the basic qualitative research was adopted. Also, interview questions were documented and data was generated through the medium of face-to-face interviews with the eight participants. Equally important, in conducting the interviews, probes were used to prompt the generation of a greater breadth of data for the interview questions.

Equally important, triangulation is another provision to ensure credibility in the process of data collection and analysis (Shenton, 2004). For this dissertation, the eight participants, who are principals in eight different districts in Trinidad and Tobago, reflecting a diversity of participants, provided data through interviews, as related to the topic, principals' experiences leading strategic planning, which was triangulated through the medium of data analysis and synthesis. Shenton (2004) noted that the persons selected for personal interviews should be given the opportunity to refuse to participate in the research and only those who are genuinely willing should be involved in order to ensure credibility. This practice was adopted as the participants submitted an Informed Consent agreeing to participate in the research. The participants noted the value of the research topic and thus contributed richly to the interviews that allowed me as a researcher to collate codes, categories, themes. Shenton (2004) postulated that triangulating data through the medium of views and experiences of the participants, and verification of experiences can be validated against the background of the phenomenon under investigation. Also, the use of iterative questioning is important through the use of probes to gather in depth data by returning to a participant's response to seek clarity enhanced data triangulation. Additionally, the use of my reflective commentary through the use of journals at the data collection sessions, documenting emergent patterns in the process of data collection, provided allowance for monitoring the development of my understanding of the data (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). Shenton (2004) posited that reflexive commentary aids to monitor a researcher's development of emerging themes which is crucial in establishing credibility. Further, Ravitch and Carl (2016) noted that as a researcher, one

must utilize a structured reflexivity processes to ensure that the influence on data and analysis are eliminated through the medium of journals and multiple coding towards transparent analysis. Furthermore, member checks were also utilized to ensure that the participants scrutinized the accuracy of the transcripts based on their articulations.

Member checks also included the verification of my inferences, codes, and themes by self, documented during my reflective commentary based on contextual meanings to ensure objectivity of the data collection process (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Additionally, a co-worker, who is also a schools' supervisor, served as a second reader.

The transcripts were read and matched against the codes, categories, and themes to ensure the accuracy of my interpretation of the data. After triangulation of data sources, the data was then developed into codes, categories, and themes. The experiences of the eight principals provided rich data sources that added value to the credibility of the research as the phenomenon under consideration was documented. Ravitch and Carl (2016) posited that data triangulation, among other forms of triangulation, allows a researcher to converge sources of information in order to generate themes.

Transferability is another construct that ensured trustworthiness and thus ensured quality of the overall research. Merriam (1998) posited that transferability deals with the extent to which the findings of a study in one location, or one country, can be applied to other situations in another country. Lincoln and Guba (1985) added value to the concept of transferability as the authors specified that it is the responsibility of the researcher to provide sufficient contextual information about the site that will allow the consumer of the research to decide on transfer of the findings and recommendations. The information

documented in this dissertation thus far provided contextual information about my research topic. Data on the specific context of the geography of each of the eight schools include that one school is located in the city has a population of approximately 700 students. The other seven schools may be considered as semirural situated in developing communities. The school population of the schools range from 200 to 500 students.

Dependability is another construct that ensured trustworthiness and thus added value to the quality of the research. Shenton (2004) postulated that the processes of the research should be documented in detail which will enable a future researcher to utilize the research design. Shenton also noted that a detailed description of the research design, its implementation, the specificity of the data gathering process, and the reflective appraisal of the research will also add value to dependability. I have documented the research design as a basic qualitative research, the other core constructs of the study, inclusive of the triangulation of the data collected was aligned to the research questions. Consequently, the constructs of dependability described guided the research towards the goal of ensuring dependability.

Confirmability is another construct that ensured trustworthiness and thus added value to the quality of the research. Miles and Huberman (1994) posited that the extent to which a researcher admits his or her predispositions to the research process is one of the major criterion for confirmability as any bias in the research can be identified by the consumers of the research. I was trained as a School Improvement Partner by Cambridge Education. I have knowledge on the topic of strategic planning. Consequently, I ensured that interviews were documented properly and themes were generated from the data

collected through a direct iterative process from the research questions to ensure that the findings were an accurate representation of the participants' responses. Additionally, I ensured that a structured reflexivity processes was adhered in order to document the process of data collection and analysis through the medium of journals. A second reader was also utilized to ensure the accuracy of my interpretation of the data. I documented the quality of my research by ensuring that the elements of trustworthiness had the constructs of creditability, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

Ethical Procedures

The Ministry of Education, Trinidad and Tobago, granted permission to conduct the research (Appendix A). This allowed me to gain access to the eight principals who served as the research participants. However, this step was only taken after approval of the proposal from my Chair and my Methodologist, together with the University Research Reviewer. After the proposal was approved, the recruitment materials, the informed consent documents, the data collection tools which included the interview questions, together with the permission from the Ministry of Education, were collated. An application to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) was then submitted with an attachment of all related documents. Upon receipt of IRB approval, approval number, 04-25-19-0659284, related appointments were made to complete the data collection process from the eight participants.

Equally important, the participants, who are principals, were treated with the utmost respect and were reminded of the option to withdraw from the study at any time during the conduct of the study. Permission was sought from the education ministry

identifying the criteria for selection, the specific names of the primary schools, and approval to participate from the participants. Consequently, the major ethical concern of seeking permission from the relevant authorities and approvals were treated with the highest level of importance.

Furthermore, the actual names of the eight principals and the names of their schools were kept anonymous. The data collected will be electronically stored on an external hard drive in electronic files for at least a period of five years. Additionally, I will mechanically destroy the storage device to ensure that actual names of the eight principals and the names of their schools are kept anonymous. The data collected were analyzed, and translated into codes, categories, and themes, which will be made public information that can be used for policy decision making to transform schools in the areas of literacy and numeracy. Additionally, no ethical issues were envisaged as related to conflict of interest, the work environment, or even power differentials. Principals' experiences leading strategic plans produced findings from this study that will help to inform principals about strategic plans and processes that have been found to be successful in high performing primary schools.

Summary

This chapter outlined the foundational elements of the research. The research design and rationale were succinctly defined and explained which provided a link to the literature review, together with the major elements of Chapter 1. My role as a researcher was also documented as biases and ethical issues and procedures were documented. The methodology, which constituted the core construct of the study, registered details about

the selection of the participants, the instrumentation to be used for data collection and data analysis. Issues of trustworthiness as related to strategies that were used to ensure credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability were clearly outlined.

Chapter 4 documents the data collection and data analysis, evidence of trustworthiness, and the results of the study as related to the research questions.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore principals' experiences leading strategic planning designed to increase achievement in literacy and numeracy in eight high-performing primary schools in Trinidad and Tobago.

Research Questions

The study was guided by the following main question: What are principals' experiences leading strategic planning designed to increase achievement in literacy and numeracy? The study also addressed the following subquestions:

RQ1: How do principals in high-performing primary schools in Trinidad and Tobago lead strategic planning processes designed to improve student performance in literacy and numeracy?

RQ2: How do principals in high-performing primary schools in Trinidad and Tobago facilitate change processes through the stages of planning, implementation, and monitoring in strategic planning designed to address student performance in literacy and literacy?

This chapter is organized into eight sections. The first section includes the purpose of the study, the research questions, and a preview of the major sections of the chapter. The second section addresses any personal or organizational conditions that influenced participants or their experience at the time of study. The third section outlines participants' demographics and characteristics relevant to the study. The fourth section provides information on the participants including location, frequency, and duration of data collection; description of data collection; and any unusual circumstances in the data

collection process. The fifth section ‘presents the processes used in organizing the data from coded units to categories and themes. The sixth section addresses the implementation of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. The seventh section presents each of the research questions and related themes supported by quotations from the interview transcripts. The eighth section provides a concise summary of answers to the research questions and a transition to Chapter 5.

Setting

Data were collected from eight principals in Trinidad and Tobago. The seven principals selected in Trinidad serve in the following schools, and pseudonyms were used to identify each education district with one school and its principal: School # 1, Victoria Education District; School # 2, Caroni Education District; School # 3, St. Patrick Education District; School # 4, Port of Spain Education District; School # 5, North Eastern Education District; School # 6, St. George East Education District; and School # 7, South Eastern Education District. The one principal selected in Tobago served in the following school: School # 8, Division of Education, Tobago. The school populations ranged from 200 to 700 students. The geography of the schools varied. School # 4, Port of Spain Education District, is located in the inner city in the capital of the country and has the largest enrolment of approximately 700 students. The other seven schools are located in rural and semirural communities and have an enrollment of 200 to 500 students.

One issue related to the organizational conditions included the physical accommodation, which was noteworthy to report because it impacted three of the eight

principals. School # 1, Victoria Education District, is housed in a church compound and has approximately 200 students. Classrooms are separated by whiteboards, students are educated in cramped classrooms, and there is limited space for specialized resource rooms. School # 7, South Eastern Education District, has been sharing accommodations with another school in the same education district since 2015 due to health and safety issues in the original school compound. The school currently operates on a shift system and has approximately 400 students. School # 5, North Eastern Education District, which has an enrollment of approximately 500 students, experienced flooding in November 2018, which resulted in the loss of resources including library books, teaching and learning resources, computers, and other equipment and supplies. The five other schools have ideal conditions related to physical infrastructure and classroom conditions. These schools have air-conditioned classrooms, resource rooms with libraries, computer rooms, and music rooms.

Demographics

The eight principals were selected based on national test results from Trinidad and Tobago, which indicated their schools had been promoted from mostly effective to excelling in the areas of literacy and numeracy consistently over a 4-year period. According to the Ministry of Education (2016), all primary schools are placed in one of four categories based on a composite score of zero to 560: academic emergency (0-80), academic watch (81-240), mostly excelling (241-400), and excelling (401-560). All eight principals hold permanent appointments. One principal has served as principal for 11

years, four principals have served for 9 years, and three principals have served for 4 years, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Demographic Information on Principals

Principals	Gender (F – Female M- Male)	Years of Service as Principal	Appointment Status	Academic Status of School	Academic Performance Index Year 4
School # 1 Victoria Education District	F	9	Permanent	Excelling	424
School # 2 Caroni Education District	F	4	Permanent	Excelling	408
School # 3 St. Patrick Education District	F	9	Permanent	Excelling	405
School # 4 Port of Spain Education District	F	11	Permanent	Excelling	469
School # 5 North Eastern Education District	M	4	Permanent	Excelling	409
School # 6 St. George East Education District	F	9	Permanent	Excelling	505
School # 7 South Eastern Education District	F	9	Permanent	Excelling	414
School # 8 Division of Education, Tobago	F	4	Permanent	Excelling	401 (Above National Standard)

Data Collection

Data were collected at each principal's school located in the respective education district in Trinidad and Tobago. An appointment was made with each of the eight principals over a 2-week period. I visited each school where I discussed and reviewed the informed consent form. I obtained consent from each principal, and a copy of the consent form was also given to each principal. An appointment was then made for data collection at each of the principal's schools. Interviews were conducted once and lasted approximately one hour using a prepared interview protocol (Appendix B). Probes were added as the interviews progressed. The interviews were recorded using an iPhone.

Data Analysis

As I engaged in the coding process with the data collected from the interviews, I used the evidence of the spoken words from the participants by highlighting key words and phrases specific to the interview questions. The interviews provided in-depth data; however, specific words and phrases were selected and highlighted for first-level coding. This process was used for each of the two interview questions, 22 subquestions, and probes in the interview protocol. After the first-level coding was completed, the data had to be further analyzed into categories and then translated into themes. Key elements of data analysis included coding, use of categories, and themes. A code used in qualitative research can be "one word, or a short phrase that symbolically assigns a salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute" for language used by participants in the research process (Saldana, 2016, p. 4). Also, categorizing was done according to thematic, conceptual, and/or theoretical organization. I used reflective journaling at the data

collection sessions. I also documented emergent patterns in the process of data collection to monitor the data analysis. Member checks were also used in the data collection process to ensure that the participants scrutinized the transcripts for accuracy based on their articulations, and reviewed the interpretation of the data. Each of the eight principals inserted the comment “seen and certified correct,” the date, and his or her signature on the transcript. My coworker, who is also a school supervisor, served as a second reader.

Results by Research Questions

The results of the study are organized by documenting themes aligned to the research questions.

Research Question 1

Research Question 1 asked the following: How do principals in high-performing primary schools in Trinidad and Tobago lead strategic planning processes designed to improve student performance in literacy and numeracy? The following themes were used to answer this research question:

- leading strategic planning targeted toward school improvement,
- engaging in a continuous focus on literacy and numeracy,
- utilizing data-driven decision-making for curriculum and instruction,
- institutionalizing innovation and accountability,
- providing leadership driven by context,
- providing resources for literacy and numeracy through stakeholder involvement and partnerships, and

- institutionalizing strategies as an instructional leader to guide curriculum and instruction.

Leading strategic planning targeted toward school improvement. Critical analysis of the statements made by the principals indicated that leading strategic planning caters to the strategic analysis of schools and serves as a functional guide toward achievement of the vision, mission, and goals for school transformation. The principals' belief in leading strategic planning leads to school improvement, success for students, and organizational change. The principal from School # 6, St. George East Education District reported the following:

I am a firm believer that we must plan effectively to ensure that everything in the school runs effectively. It ensures that the mission, vision, our goals, our core values and everything are clearly stated. Every member of the staff because they are part of the strategic planning process, they feel greater ownership towards what we are doing. They are more a part of it they are held accountable. It improves the rapport between teachers, members of staff because not only do we plan as a whole school; they plan in the various departments. Teachers, I think even their relationships with each other are improved through strategic planning.

The principal from School # 8, Division of Education, Tobago reported the following:

Strategic Planning is critical for school success and school development. All the success realized at the school was because of the planning process. We know if you don't plan, nothing could be achieved and with that I am confident in saying that I have a staff who now shares my vision in terms of pushing the school

forward. We compete not with other schools on the island; we're aiming for national standard but however we compete against ourselves. So, the planning process we have all hands on board not just persons of the school development management team but all teachers have a voice so they would share in the passion and share in us realizing our goal.

The principal from School # 2, Caroni Education District reported the following:

Well, I think any recipe for success; you must have a plan first of all. So, as a successful school that is highly performing we must have a plan in how we move forward. So, if you want to talk strategic planning, school development, school based management; all these things contribute to planning for the future.

Engaging in a continuous focus on literacy and numeracy. The principals were requested to share the focus of their schools' strategic plan. School # 4, Port of Spain Education District, posited "Well it's the key to foundation at the elementary level in a child's success; it is the key, literacy and numeracy." School # 1, Victoria Education District, added, "We plan to raise the level of performance in numeracy and literacy." After analysis of the principals' statements, I noted that despite the fact that the schools are high performing schools, sustaining and maintaining a focus on student performance with literacy and numeracy noted as key facets to building students' foundational knowledge and skills. The principal from School # 7, South Eastern Education District reported the following:

Our school's strategic plan is based more on literacy and numeracy and this is implemented at all levels. What we have done is move teachers from one level to

the next, in order to bridge the gap between levels and to see where our strengths and weaknesses lie in order to build on the weak areas and also improve on the ones we are doing well on.

The principal from School # 5, North Eastern Education District reported the following:

The main focus would be how can we maintain the students' performance level and how can we encourage them to continue to perform and improve their performance and at the same time, they must have fun and be prepared for the future as it comes.

Utilizing data-driven decision-making for curriculum and instruction. Data driven decision making is generated from formative assessments on a weekly, fortnightly, monthly, and also through the medium of mid-term standardized testing. Summative assessments are also done as end of term tests. Alternative forms of assessment included project-based learning, performance tasks, checklists, and other scaffolding strategies. The principals posited the need for identification of learning difficulties of the students through diagnostic testing, and also utilizing item analysis of test questions. The principal from School # 6, St. George East Education District reported the following:

When we do our testing and so on the first thing we do is our item analysis. That of course will tell us the areas of difficulty for the children. So, based on their weekly test and all of that we are able to see where the children need extra help and work with them.

The principal from School # 5, North Eastern Education District reported the following:

The assessment procedure is a very important level in the teaching environment, so we do weekly tests and the tests are analyzed, we must analyze to see where the weakness is because we can't continue teaching if what was taught was not received by the student. When the weekly tests are analyzed the teachers can determine the weakness in terms of student weakness and the need to improve. That's an ongoing process. We have high expectations of the students the staff and the parents.

The principal from School # 3, St. Patrick Education District reported the following:

Through formative testing and observation because when you are assessing the child it's not only on pencil and paper, we observe the child in his/her entirety holistically. Based on formal assessment at the classroom even during lessons at the end, there is a form of assessment as well and teachers meet at levels so there is comparison. What we have also started doing is standardizing our termly tests because what happened before is 90% in one class may not be the same 90% in another class, it's also a means of ensuring that there is a certain level of collaboration among the teachers and the children are working at the same pace.

The principal from School # 7, South Eastern Education District reported the following:

The strategy that really impacts the most is the scaffolding strategy, where you are able to take apart the item and analyze it at any given level, scaffolding is very important to get the children to analyze, to reason and to apply their knowledge. Continuous assessment is very important in that teachers are able to identify where the students are falling short and be able to help the child.

The principal from School # 1, Victoria Education District reported the following:

When a teacher acquires a new class the first thing that is done is diagnostic testing so that teaching and learning can be guided from that point. Formative tests are done throughout the school fortnightly and sometimes weekly, we have oral questioning, teacher observation, performance tasks, use of checklists, use of scoring rubrics and projects, and this is how the students are assessed. Feedback is always given to pupils and parents in a timely manner, so parents are aware at all points in time about how the child is performing.

In School # 6, St. George East Education District, the principal highlighted that there is a School Based Intervention Team (SBIT) with guided terms of reference that aids with the diagnosis of students at the infant/beginning level and the intervention continues from class to class. The principal noted:

Every class, we have those children who are at risk. So the SBIT, the team comes into play. We find out those children who are still encountering difficulties for example with reading. The team now will sit with the teachers to try to come up with different strategies that the class teachers may have not used before.

Institutionalizing innovation and accountability. The recording and reporting of assessment data adds value to the level of accountability for all stakeholders inclusive of principal, teachers, parents, students, the school community, and the education ministry. One principal has institutionalized the use of an online data management system which is an innovative strategy. Other principals have documented traditional forms of recording and reporting inclusive of weekly, fortnightly, monthly, and termly reports with

related master sheets, anecdotal records, and cumulative record cards. The following principals noted the use of the recording and reporting instruments: School # 1, Victoria Education District, noted “We have observation checklists; we have termly reports, report books, item analysis, cumulative record cards, anecdotal records and fortnightly reports.” The principal in School # 5, North Eastern Education District reported the following:

The weekly test is recorded in a mark sheet by the teacher and are submitted to the office. There is also a monthly test and then an end of term test that is recorded on the student’s report for reporting to parents.

Two principals, School # 6, St. George East Education District, and School # 3, St. Patrick Education District have shared the use of a tracking records/tracking form that is used to track students’ achievement/progress. The principal in School # 6, St. George East Education District reported the following:

We do the diagnostic testing, that result is recorded so we have also their tracking record. So, that is one way it is recorded. So the tracking record will show us where the children are and if there was an improvement in the next year.

The principal in School # 3, St. Patrick Education District reported the following:

What we have done is a tracking form that is being done in three specific areas that are math, language and creative writing. It is a whole school approach as well, so based on their fortnightly test and monthly test, the teachers will record the scores in those three particular areas and it is color coded so blue would be under 50% and red would be under 30%, so it a means of tracking the child’s progress on a monthly basis and using the results to plan and differentiate

instruction for the gifted, average and challenging. There's the student's name, then their percentage obtained in mathematics, ELA, creative writing, ELA would be all of the components combined, language as well as vocabulary, comprehension. There's also a column for absenteeism, one that is related to social issues, special education, indiscipline, as you know, these are the factors that sometimes have a direct impact on the children's performance. There are also interventions, progress made and comments.

Given the increase in technology, School # 4, Port of Spain Education District, has used a School Management System. The principal posited

We also have an online school management system that we use, IBIS link, and you can get on that system and you can actually see each child's performance. You can look at the class performance. You can see the children who are underperforming. We use it to monitor and to track. Even with the weekly test in the various subject areas but specifically we are able to look at the math and the ELA subjects. On IBIS link, the parents get reports. So at the end of the weekly test, a parent can go online and see how her child did. The information is just a click away whether you want data from a child, if you need to contact a parent, simple as sending out your correspondence. It's instant and off course a lot of benefit in using it in tracking our students and their performance so our staff was definitely on board with it and our parents they too appreciate it a lot. It's just a matter of setting up an account. The same way you have a Gmail or a Hotmail

account. You have a password, its secured. We have been on for a few years now and it has been working well.

Providing leadership driven by context. The principals were requested to identify two leadership styles that they believe have added value to their role as principal leading strategic planning. The following leadership styles were noted: laissez faire leadership, charismatic leadership, instructional leadership, transformational leadership, visionary leadership, democratic leadership, authoritarian leadership, strategic leadership, team/collaborative leadership, and use of a combination of styles. Hallinger (2011) focused on evidence from 40 years of empirical research and highlighted that the leadership of schools needs to develop suitable leadership strategies based on the context, and the ability to build capacity for improvement initiatives. The principal in School # 7, South Eastern Education District reported the following:

You have to take authoritarian leadership when it comes to implementing ministry things and ensuring that teachers are on par with what is on the curriculum. There are times when you would have to be Laissez faire when it comes to trivial things that teachers make an issue, you let them rant and rave sometimes and you take a laid back state because I know sometimes having two different sets of teachers, on full time and some on shift sometimes the teachers on shift just need to vent and you have to give them that listening ear. You have to be the charismatic leader as well and encourage them although they may be going through trials and challenges you have to keep encouraging them that all is not lost and we are going to get there and at the end of the day each child is important

and we have to do what we have to do on our part to make it worthwhile for the child.

The principal in School # 3, St. Patrick Education District reported the following:

It's more of a combination of styles, if you try Laissez-faire leadership it will not work, if you try autocratic leadership it will not work, there are very strong personalities here and there are people here who started working here the same time as myself and some even longer. I use a combination of leadership styles and understand the teachers' strengths, I tap in to their resources and delegate duties and be firm if need be.

The principal in School # 2, Caroni Education District reported the following:

Well there are times I am authoritative and you have to be when you're dealing with a staff of 40. But there are times when I am democratic and we have open discussions, that is what we do at staff meetings. So there are times we would give in and I have no problem with it. But it's a shared vision and the teachers take up on it, that shared vision it's autonomy at play because you give them certain responsibilities and they run with it because it is shared.

The principal in School # 1, Victoria Education District reported the following:

I think that being an instructional, transformational and democratic leader at the same time works hand in hand. As instructional leader a lot of planning takes place, we have to identify our school motto, we have to identify our core values, our goals and with these I work together with my teachers in planning and organizing. There must be some democracy when it comes to deciding what is

important, so teachers also feel empowered and are a part of the planning process. We all recognize that we want to transform this place, we want to move from this point to the point that we as a team have identified.

The principal in School # 8, Division of Education Tobago reported the following:

In terms of the leadership style, in such an office you would have to vary your leadership style. Definitely, being a transformational leader, you know one who will be embracing change and looking for positive. An instructional leader, one who could not just talk it and say that but demonstrate it. A leader who takes pride in democracy because often times the decision could be made by the Principal, we have the final word. But when you have persons feeling, whether it's belief that you need it or not, sometimes it's just for them to feel that they are part of the decision making. You tend to win them over and things are easier in going forward. So the leadership style tends to vary based on situation. But as all Principals you need to definitely be an instructional leader.

The principal in School # 5, North Eastern Education District reported the following:

When you think about it, it's really a combination of all leadership styles. The basic one is democratic, we have a democratic leadership style here, where everyone sits and discusses everything, it's an open system where decisions are made, so it's never just the principal's decision but it's our decision after discussion. In alignment with our recent curriculum movement we also have strategic leadership, where you have to plan, that's what this whole thing is about,

you sit with everyone and you make a plan to improve student performance along these lines.

The principal in School # 6, St. George East Education District reported the following:

I am very democratic in the way I deal with things. I am not the “Sage on the stage”. I don’t know everything. I try whatever we are doing; I try to get everybody’s input. I try to show them why I think it’s the best thing for us to do and get them to buy in. At the same time if a teacher has ideas I always tell them run with your ideas. So you develop that skill in teachers to lead because I don’t want to be the only leader in the school. And then I believe in teamwork so every single thing that we do here there is a team responsible for it. The team will liaise with administration and they will come up with their vision, their mission, their goals, what they would like to achieve and then we work from there.

The principal in School # 4, Port of Spain Education District reported the following:

I believe I’m very democratic. If we want to try anything, any new strategies, even any new programs I believe in calling all the Heads of Departments within our school because our school is so large, other than the appointed heads, we also have a head of first year, a head of second year throughout the school. I believe in little briefings so you would find at break time I would tell staff today we have to have a staff briefing to share, that’s where I get the buy in. So very democratic, I listen to the teachers’ views. Before we do anything we decide a consensus, yes we are going try this. I think I’m very much a transformational leader. We like to

try new things. We're always looking for a new idea, giving people an opportunity to share.

Stakeholder involvement and partnerships. The principals were requested to identify the strategies for the provision of resources for literacy and numeracy. It was noted that resources are provided for the teachers through the medium of fund raising activities, parent support, community support, business community support, wider stakeholder support, the ministry of education, and the local school board.

The principal in School # 4, Port of Spain Education District reported the following:

We engage in lots of fund raising, not just for the fund raising aspect but lots of social events to have our parents as key stakeholders involved in their children's development so to speak. So, a lot of the resources we purchase from school funds.

The principal in School # 1, Victoria Education District reported the following:

Yes, they have a list of all the resources that are available, that list is provided to every class. Resources that they need and we do not have at that point in time, I make arrangements for it to be purchased, or if it can be hand-made at the school, material is provided.

The principal in School # 3, St. Patrick Education District reported the following:

It's internal; we try our best to do everything on our own, through fund raising, through parent's support and through the community's support. If there are very big projects that require a lot of money or immediate attention, the ministry is

there, when we needed our electrical upgrade, the ministry came in and did that for us. We try to do things without disrupting the school.

Institutionalizing strategies to guide curriculum and instruction. The principals were requested to identify strategies that they use as an instructional leader to guide curriculum and instruction. They postulated varied strategies inclusive of clinical supervision, daily monitoring, tracking of instructional documents, evidence based practices, and including feedback from parents, among other strategies. The principals also noted the development of the teachers through constant empowerment and encouragement to improve teaching and learning.

The principal in School # 6, St. George East Education District reported the following:

For me, walkabouts. I sit in the classes from time to time unexpectedly. I make it clear to the teachers I'm not here to judge you; I'm here to help you. Also the teachers are very open to me and they have realized that I'm there to help so that they will come to me and say "OK Miss I'm having problems. Let's say in classroom management I need some help". So I will work with them on that. We have like I said clinical supervision, we have class checks, I have my team leaders who meet with the teachers to find out if there are any problems and we take it from there.

The principal in School # 5, North Eastern Education District reported the following:

My job is to monitor overall and make sure things are in line with accepted practices. We have clinical supervision on right now where we can work with the teachers in ways of improving the classroom environment. We receive feedback

from parents and students and I basically do the overall monitoring of it all. I will monitor and do supervision and mentorship and try to ensure that we keep in line with accepted practices.

The principal in School # 3, St. Patrick Education District reported the following:

You need to know what is going on if you are to improve at anything, I have the most experienced teacher as the leader at each level. Record and evaluation forms are submitted at a weekly basis and this is tracked. The vice principal and experienced teachers are also given specific levels to take charge of so it's not me alone doing all the work of the monitoring and the clinical supervision.

The principal in School # 1, Victoria Education District reported the following:

Instructional leadership will involve setting clear goals, managing the curriculum, monitoring lesson plans, allocating resources and evaluating teachers regularly to promote student learning and growth. We have regular staff meetings to discuss teachers' performance and how to help students learn more effectively. We always have best practices being shared, in fact sometimes in sharing these best practices in our staff meetings, we end up having mini workshops. It also involves me knowing the strengths and the weaknesses of my teachers, knowing how to capitalize on those strengths and what we have to do to improve those weaknesses. One of the most important things is knowing that teachers strive on being appreciated and acknowledged for what they do and I always show appreciation. It's a simple thank you individually, it's a commendation in the log book or it's sometimes in the form of lunch.

The principal in School # 2, Caroni Education District reported the following:

One of the things I do is that a lot of times when we come across new information we tend to share that, dispense that in our staff meeting. We would copy it; we would go through it if we have to. We also have other teachers who would do training and we share that. In addition to we have what we call a TTUTA segment in our staff meeting where we give the TTUTA rep and staff rep an opportunity to share any areas that they see needed based on our need. We also utilize a lot of our own teachers because many of them have different skills. We try to utilize them in our staff meeting to share information where curriculum is concerned.

The principal in School # 4, Port of Spain Education District reported the following:

We try to ensure that teachers are on task. Each Head of Department at the beginning of the week submit what is known as a work plan for the week and then they also do common weekly tests. We do implementation of the curriculum, that's where we are able to see how many subjects each teacher is able to cover because on any given day you have so many interruptions but we try to keep on task. We do lots of PD sessions at every staff meeting we do a PD session.

Monitoring is important, so like this third term we are heavy into the book checks and class checks and lesson plans so that is key I think, the monitoring to see what's happening in classrooms. What is monitored gets done.

The principal in School # 8, Division of Education Tobago reported the following:

Well, as I would have mentioned before how critical instruction is for transformation, I would not just go with my class checks, I will go and I will do

my little walk-throughs and observe and off course jump to the opportunity where I can jump in the lesson. So with that I have many opportunities to teach. The children get a chance to hear somebody who is different and off course the teachers get an opportunity to view the lesson being taught in a different way. The way of clinical supervision in having the discussion on areas of weaknesses and say ok you tried strategy X or Y, I go and I demonstrate what it is you can do and teachers can do to help to bring about change within the classroom for whatever area of weakness it is.

Table 2

Summary of the Codes, Categories, and Themes for Research Question 1

Codes	Categories	Themes
RQ1. How do principals in high performing primary schools in Trinidad and Tobago lead strategic planning processes designed to improve student performance in literacy and numeracy?		
Views on Strategic Planning Belief in strategic planning Planning for the future In-depth planning Change process happening Goal setting Attuning to core values	School improvement School success Improved student performance School development Success for students Organizational planning	Leading strategic planning targeted towards school transformation
Focus on Strategic Planning Needs analysis of school performance Focus on students' strengths and weaknesses Tracking students' progress on data management system Upgrade reading resources Improve reading levels Teaching of jolly phonics Use of interesting and suitable reading materials Numeracy committee/team which serves to provide continuous professional development Teacher leaders to provide classroom modeling	Shortcomings in literacy and numeracy Bridging the gap in literacy and numeracy Monitoring students' performance Literacy and numeracy as key foundational skills Maintaining students' performance Specific strategies to close the achievement gaps Strategic focus on teaching and learning Strategic focus on teaching and learning Literacy/numeracy intervention programs	Continuous focus on literacy and numeracy
Assessment Strategies Diagnostic testing Use of item analysis	Use of data Identification of problems	Data driven decision making for curriculum and instruction

<p>Formative tests- weekly, fortnightly, monthly, mid-term Oral questioning Teacher observation Performance tasks Checklists Projects and scoring rubrics/Project Based Learning Continuous feedback Summative assessments Scaffolding strategies Standardized tests Use of table of specifications in test preparation Use of school based intervention team to aid in assessment of students' needs</p>	<p>Strategies to close the achievement gaps Analysis of alternative solutions Facilitation of change processes Precision strategies for improvement</p>	
<p>Recording and Reporting Strategies Weekly reports Fortnightly reports Termly reports Use of master sheets for recording data Report books for students Teachers' anecdotal records Tracking data form Tracking record books to include student's behavior, social skills, emotional skills, participation, absenteeism Calculation of School Performance Index Continuous analysis of students' results with attached reports School data management system (use of IBIS link)</p>	<p>Accountability systems Facilitation of change processes Use of precision strategies Strategic documentation</p>	<p>Innovation and accountability</p>

Leadership Style	Leadership styles	Leadership driven by context
Laissez Faire leadership	Collective capacity	
Charismatic leadership	Influence on decision making	
Instructional leadership	Leadership practices	
Transformational leadership		
Democratic leadership		
Authoritative leadership		
Visionary leadership		
Autocratic leadership		
Strategic leadership		
Collaborative leadership		
Provision of Resources	Varied partnerships	Stakeholder involvement and partnerships
Fundraisers		
School funds		
Parental support		
Community support		
Local school board		
Ministry of Education		
Business sector		
Other stakeholders support		
Strategies as Instructional Leader	The role of instructional leadership	Institutionalization of strategies to monitor teaching and learning
Walk-about	Accountability	
Class checks/book checks/lesson plans checks	Establishing key priorities	
Use of team leaders'/experienced teacher at departmental levels	Precision strategies for monitoring and improvement	
Clinical supervision on a monthly basis		
Feedback from parents and students		
Daily monitoring at departmental levels to ensure teachers are on task		
Mentorship		
Tracking of instructional documents – schemes of work, record and evaluation, lesson plans		

Evaluation of the data and data analysis submitted by the teachers for their students
Regular staff meetings to discuss their performance, how to help students, how to be more effective, and sharing of best practices
Mini professional development workshops
Special commendations for best practices
Evidence based best practices – sharing of research
Submission of work plans by Heads of Departments weekly
Professional development sessions at staff meetings
Lesson demonstrations by principal on strategy implementation

Research Question 2

Research Question 2 asked, how do principals facilitate change processes through the stages of planning, implementation, and monitoring, in strategic planning designed to address student performance in literacy and numeracy? The following themes were used to answer the research question:

- ensuring successful implementation of teaching and learning strategies for improvement in literacy and numeracy, and
- providing continuous effective professional development programs to support teachers and transform their capacity in practice.

Ensuring successful implementation of teaching and learning strategies for improvement in literacy and numeracy. School # 4, Port of Spain Education District, posited that team teaching at the departmental levels is effective and is complemented with structured planning. The principal noted:

Well we try to do team teaching as well. So our teachers, each department has a day where they will meet to plan in their department. So as much as we have our entire school meeting for our PD sessions, we meet in our departments to plan, we go through our weekly work plans, we outline exactly what we want to achieve for the week. Sometimes a teacher might come in with a special area, maybe her area is creative writing or math. We meet and plan. We make sure we have everything laid out, all our resources we are using, pictures, manipulatives and so on and then we implement.

School # 6, St. George East Education District, impressed on the negativity for abstract teaching and promoted conceptual teaching, differentiated instruction, differentiated assessment. Other principals posited independent learning, projects, presentations, research by the students, discussions, among other strategies, including involvement of the parents in the teaching and learning process.

The principal in School # 6, St. George East Education District reported the following:

Whatever concepts are being done we start at the concrete. We ensure that the children are hands on with whatever we are doing. Abstract teaching for me is a no-no up to the standard 5. We start at what the children know, always at where they are and we move from there. We don't just go and say ok in standard 1 you

must be able to add tens and ones. We go back to the ones so that lots and lots of concrete work is being done. The teachers themselves like I said to ensure that every child reaches his or her potential and differentiating instructions are an integral part of our teaching. We differentiate instruction; we differentiate assessment, so the weaker children would not be required to do all 20 questions on the test.

The principal in School # 8, Division of Education Tobago reported the following:

I know they allow for a lot of independent learning to happen. Projects, mini projects I would call them. For example, if a teacher has to do a topic maybe on the bodies of water, they would allow them to go do the research before. Within the class they would allow for things like group work. Presentation skills as well and even in looking at the class and the variations in terms of where children are on the academic strand, and also coming out of the professional development where differentiating instruction is one of the core. They learn how to differentiate based on product and process. They are able to do that so that even so we have new a lot of integration, technology integration, so it's not just a lot of talk, we have the television, we have the projectors, we do a lot of videos, we try to integrate as much as possible with the use of the technology.

The principal in School # 3, St. Patrick Education District reported the following:

They do more eliciting instead of telling. Discussion, I always encourage them to keep the note taking to a minimum and to move the lesson from unknown to known, to build on the child's previous knowledge, to use pictures and concrete

resources that they can manipulate and play with. We have a resource list of different things that are available for different subjects so the teachers know what is available. At the beginning of the school year we ask teachers to submit the names of books or reference materials that they would be particularly interested in. Teachers are always doing their own research on new methods and techniques and a lot of things are shared on our Facebook page especially in creative writing.

The principal in School # 1, Victoria Education District reported the following:

An important strategy in teaching and learning here is involving the parent in the learning process because there are quite a few parents who are unable to read and write, so we have to identify the resources that they can use, we teach them like the infant department and use the phonics program. We have recognized in classes gone by, when the parents are not able to assist, very often the children fall out of school.

Providing continuous effective professional development programs to support teachers and transform their capacity in practice. The principals were asked to describe how often they engaged staff in professional development programs and to also identify the specific focus. It was noted that professional development is done on a continuous basis daily, weekly, monthly, or whenever staff gets the opportunity to discuss and share best practice. The areas of capacity building ranged from literacy, numeracy, curriculum delivery, building collegiality, effective communication, the use of technology, among other topics.

The principal in School # 1, Victoria Education District reported the following:

We conduct professional development sessions to share differentiated learning techniques to meet the diverse needs of students, we will also introduce parents to these strategies so they can use them at home to promote numeracy skills. We also place emphasis on problem solving and the acquisition of conceptual knowledge. We want to enhance teachers' skills in the teaching of numeracy and numeracy, we have identified teacher leaders who can provide classroom demonstrations and modelling for their peers.

The principal documented the need for professional development sessions in differentiation, and the introduction of the said skills to the parents. This highlights that the principal believes that a level of parental engagement in teaching and learning is necessary. The principal also noted the overall need to develop teachers' skills.

The principal in School # 1, Victoria Education District reported the following:

We also have professional development in coaching and mentoring and we provide constructive feedback and follow-up activities. The teachers and myself engage in study groups where we discuss current research, identify where we are and where we are moving to and what strategies we are implementing. We have regular staff meetings to discuss teachers' performance and how to help students learn more effectively. We always have best practices being shared, in fact sometimes in sharing these best practices in our staff meetings, we end up having mini workshops. It also involves me knowing the strengths and the weaknesses of my teachers, knowing how to capitalize on those strengths and what we have to do to improve those weaknesses. One of the most important things is knowing

that teachers strive on being appreciated and acknowledged for what they do and I always show appreciation. It's a simple thank you individually, it's a commendation in the log book or it's sometimes in the form of lunch.

The principal further highlighted the need for coaching and mentoring of teachers is of utmost importance as is providing feedback. The principal again highlighted the in-depth strategies that she has institutionalized to engage her teachers in professional development and build their capacity in practice.

The principal in School # 1, Victoria Education District reported the following:

The last one we had was a mathematics workshop, previous to that we had creative writing, comprehension and the teaching of mental mathematics. After we do these workshops, we don't just leave it there, we come back in house and review all that we did at the workshop and what we may not have understood and we clear up all misunderstanding.

The principal documented examples of professional development workshops. It must be noted that workshops are not done and forgotten about. There is discussion on what was learned and strategies for implementation are also discussed.

The principal in School # 3, St. Patrick Education District reported the following:

They would always share what we learned in workshops in the area of reading. Creative writing, our last two workshops were for the standards four and five teachers and it was specifically to understand the rubric because I found that when we score the children, it will never match to the mark that they would get at the national exam. Our scoring was always higher and I clearly understood why after

we did that workshop because we went into the mark breakdown and we realized that we were marking a bit too easy.

The principal in School # 8, Division of Education Tobago reported the following:

First of all, to improve the quality and standard of teaching and learning at the school through effective curriculum delivery, to ensure ongoing teacher professional development, to provide students with an environment that is conducive for learning and number four use various forms of assessment including assessment for learning to improve students learning and achievement.

In terms of the strategic plan, how do we go about developing it? What I did was I formulate teams within the school giving each person a responsibility. We have the numeracy team, let me start with the numeracy team, and they would have come up with strategies again needs assessment across the board. What are the common areas of weaknesses? What we need to focus on? How do we teach particular skills? And then based on that I would allot time from my staff meeting for some, I call it best practice sessions where they will share, so every meeting they will do some aspect of it in terms of how to teach different topics, challenges that the teachers are facing in the class, how to use resources?

The principal has clearly stated the need for effective curriculum delivery and the focus on diagnosing the strengths and weaknesses of teachers' capacity. The strength of the numeracy team is also documented as related to the practice sessions utilized in staff meetings to develop teachers' capacity.

The principal in School # 8, Division of Education Tobago reported the following:

One of my professional development in reading seek to show teachers how they can integrate this Jolly Phonics into the whole idea of the new curriculum because they couldn't see or make the connect, and even at what point to allow one to flow into the other. They would see Jolly Phonics by itself and yes I'm teaching the curriculum by itself but I was able to show them how we can marry it for greater integration.

The principal in School # 6, St. George East Education District reported the following:

We do internal professional development where the numeracy team takes the lead. We have school professional development; whole school that is, compilation of a reasoning and critical thinking booklet because you know that's the newest addition to the S.E.A. We have a literacy team as well. So what that team did is because comprehension was the area we were targeting, we have compiled passages in every single class that could be used in those so every teacher has a compilation of 45 passages per term, 45 poems, 45 graphics that we use so everything is standardized throughout the school. We have in-school in math and literacy focusing on professional developments. I would take time at 12:00 to 12:30 p.m. to do part of it. Once per term we do a big one.

The principal has noted the use of specific strategies in staff development sessions after diagnosing the need for strengthening teachers' skills in consideration of the high stakes examination for the students. In addition to other professional development sessions, the staff also meet during their luncheon period for capacity building.

The principal in School # 5, North Eastern Education District reported the following:

We discuss any problems that comes up, we also have staff briefings where we go out and talk about the problems we are having, most of the time it's about resources or student behavioral problems. I can't identify any one line of strategy because we discuss it as a whole, we have a problem then we discuss it and try to find solutions.

The principal in School # 7, South Eastern Education District reported the following:

We have done several staff development meetings, we did item writing, we did tables of specifications to ensure that the test is weighted properly not only with knowledge questions. We also did team building exercises because this is one of the areas that we started to fall short on with both shifts. We have had mathematics resource personnel from RCLRC come in with all the CAC resources because some of the teachers indicated that they were not sure how to go about using the resources, so personnel actually came in to assist the teachers on how to go about getting the children to think critically.

The principal in School # 4, Port of Spain Education District reported the following:

We try to ensure that teachers are on task. Each Head of Department at the beginning of the week they submit what is known as a work plan for the week and then they also do common weekly tests. We do implementation of the curriculum, that's where we are able to see how many subjects each teacher is able to cover. We do lots of PD sessions at every staff meeting. Monitoring is important, so like this third term we are heavy into the book checks and class checks and lesson plans so that is key I think, the monitoring to see what's happening in classrooms.

The principal posited the need for continuous planning and continuous monitoring between the departments of the school. Again, the commonality of the language of the principals specific to continuous professional development sessions at every staff meeting was evident.

The principal in School # 4, Port of Spain Education District reported the following:

The last thing we did would have been effective communication with your key stakeholders. We looked at the referral process, we got somebody from Student Support Services to come in and do the referral process. We did two with mathematics in light of the new math for Secondary Entrance Assessment.

It must be noted that the principal as instructional leader has a strategic focus on the academic areas of needs, and also on effective communication and the needs of the students as related to the referral process. Students with perceived learning difficulties are referred to the School Based Intervention Team to prepare an individualized action plan for students, together with submission of a referral form to the Student Support Services Division for specialist intervention.

The principal in School # 2, Caroni Education District reported the following:

We also did training in technology because that was part of our school development plan. Also, table of specifications and item analysis. We did technology in the classroom, and the math workshop that we had integrated aspects of technology in teaching and learning.

Table 3

Summary of the Codes, Categories, and Themes for Research Question 2

Codes	Categories	Themes
<p>RQ2. How do principals in high performing primary schools in Trinidad and Tobago facilitate change processes through the stages of planning, implementation, and monitoring, in strategic planning designed to address student performance in literacy and literacy?</p>		
<p>Strategies Utilized in Teaching and Learning Differentiated instruction/differentiated assessment Oral assessment Independent learning Projects/mini projects Research on topics by students Group work Peer tutoring Presentations/role plays/skits Technology integration Departmental meetings to plan for instructions Team teaching Identification of teaching and learning resources needed for the week (pre-planning) Continuous collaboration within departments Technology training/support for teachers who lack confidence Use of resources/pictures/manipulatives for conceptual teaching Use of reading strategies – language experience</p>	<p>School improvement initiative at the core business of schooling – teaching and learning Facilitation of change processes</p>	<p>Successful implementation of teaching and learning strategies for improvement in teaching and learning</p>

approach, direct reading

approach, KWL

Use of comprehension strategies across the curriculum

Teacher demonstration

Involvement of parents to provide reinforcement at home

Frequency of Professional Development and Areas of Focus

Daily – coaching and mentoring, partial use of luncheon period

Monthly staff meetings – discussion of teachers’ performance, strategies to help students learn more effectively, sharing of best practices

Once per term – planning, monitoring, and implementation of what was learnt

Continuous staff development – best practice sessions

Staff briefings

Strategic plan development

Technology integration in teaching and learning

The teaching of math/focus on problem solving

The teaching of mental math

The teaching of comprehension

The development of comprehension skills

The teaching of creative writing – narrative

Pursuit of varied professional development activities
Visioning towards school improvement

Effective professional development programs to support teachers and transform their capacity in practice

descriptive and report
writing
The teaching of reading
The teaching of jolly
phonics
Integration of jolly phonics
Using the thematic approach
Curriculum planning and
curriculum integration
Using teaching and learning
resources
Curriculum delivery,
adaptation, and
implementation
The change process –
handling change and
managing change
Building collegiality
Team building
Use of resources in literacy
and numeracy
Item writing
Preparing a table of
specification
Effective communication
with key stakeholders
Using technology in the
classroom
The referral process

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Patton (2015) noted that trustworthiness can be integrated into four sub-criteria: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. For each criterion of trustworthiness, I documented the essential strategies to ensure trustworthiness in the development of my dissertation. I ensured that the research method used, that is, a basic qualitative research, was well established through the medium of detailed documentation and application of the design in Chapters 1 to 4. I also used the one research question and

the two sub questions to guide the exploration of data gathering through the medium of face-to-face interviews with the eight participants. The method of analysis used was hand coding. The qualitative data analysis software, NVivo, was not used because as I became immersed in the data analysis, the codes, categories, and themes were identifiable. Equally important, in conducting the interviews, probes were used to prompt the generation of more details for the interview questions and were documented in order to gather a greater breadth of data.

Triangulation is a provision to ensure credibility in the process of data collection and analysis (Shenton, 2004). Individual interviews, member checking, reflective commentary through journaling, second reader, and feedback from my dissertation committee were used to ensure triangulation of data. Individual interviews were conducted with eight participants selected through criterion based through purposeful sampling. The use of iterative questioning through the use of probes to gather in depth data by returning to a participant's response to seek clarity enhanced data triangulation. Member checks were also utilized to ensure that the participants scrutinized the accuracy, and interpretation of the transcripts based on their articulations. Member checking allowed the data to be triangulated through the medium of data analysis and synthesis. Additionally, the use of my reflective commentary through the use of journals at the data collection sessions, documenting emergent patterns in the process of data collection, provided allowance for monitoring the development of my understanding of the data (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). Ravitch and Carl (2016) noted that as a researcher, one must utilize a structured reflexivity processes to ensure that the influence on data and analysis

are eliminated through the medium of journals and multiple coding towards transparent analysis. Additionally, a co-worker, who is also a schools' supervisor, served as a second reader. The transcripts were read and matched against the codes, categories, and themes to ensure the accuracy of my interpretation of the data. Feedback from my dissertation committee specific to the direct quotations of the participants' selected responses that were used to develop the codes, categories, and themes also served as data triangulation. The summary of the results as documented in Table 4 (Appendix C) was shared with the participants in keeping with the Walden University guidelines. The experiences of the eight principals provided rich data sources that added value to credibility. Patton (2015) postulated that triangulation strengthens the credibility of the research that builds confidence in the results and conclusion derived.

The information documented in this dissertation, provided context on transferability. Data on the specific context of the geography of each of the eight schools include that one school is located in the city has a population of approximately 700 students. The other seven schools may be considered as semirural situated in developing communities. The school population of the schools range from 200 to 500 students. All eight schools are high performing primary schools and the principals have permanent appointments in the position as principal. Three out of the eight schools have challenges with the physical infrastructure, and physical accommodation, while the other five schools are considered as model schools. Despite the challenges, all eight principals shared rich experiences leading strategic planning in literacy and numeracy.

I have documented the research design as a basic qualitative research, the other core constructs of the study, inclusive of the triangulation of the data collected were aligned to the research questions. Consequently, the constructs of dependability described guided the research towards the goal of ensuring dependability.

Miles and Huberman (1994) posited that the extent to which a researcher admits his/her predispositions to the research process is one of the major criterion for confirmability as any bias in the research can be identified by the consumers of the research. I was trained as a School Improvement Partner by Cambridge Education. I have knowledge on the topic of strategic planning. Consequently, I ensured that interviews were documented properly and themes were generated from the data collected through a direct iterative process from the research questions to ensure that the findings were an accurate representation of the participants' responses. To add to this process, in the presentation of the findings, the direct spoken words of the participants documented, highlighted their rich depth and breadth of experiences which were then analyzed and synthesized in codes, categories, and themes. Additionally, I ensured that a structured reflexivity processes was adhered in order to document the process of data collection and analysis through the medium of journals. A second reader also ensured the accuracy of my interpretation of the data. I documented the quality of my research by ensuring that the elements of trustworthiness had the constructs of creditability, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

Summary

Based on the themes documented, it can be summarized that principals in high performing primary schools in Trinidad and Tobago lead strategic planning processes designed to improve student performance in literacy and numeracy by:

- leading strategic planning targeted towards school improvement,
- engaging in a continuous focus on literacy and numeracy,
- utilizing data driven decision making for curriculum and instruction,
- institutionalizing innovation and accountability,
- providing leadership driven by context,
- providing resources for literacy and numeracy through stakeholder involvement and partnerships, and
- institutionalizing strategies as an instructional leader to guide curriculum and instruction.

Additionally, the eight principals facilitate change processes in strategic planning designed to address student performance in literacy and numeracy by:

- ensuring successful implementation of teaching and learning strategies for improvement in literacy and numeracy, and
- providing continuous effective professional development programs to support teachers and transform their capacity in practice.

After documentation of data analysis and results, Chapter 5 comprises of an introduction that serves to reiterate the purpose and nature of the study, together with a summary of the findings. Interpretation of the findings is also described, the limitations

of the study as related to trustworthiness, recommendations for further research, implications, and a conclusion are also recorded.

Chapter 5

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore principals' experiences leading strategic planning designed to increase achievement in literacy and numeracy in eight high-performing primary schools in Trinidad and Tobago. This study focused on seven high-performing primary schools from Trinidad and one high-performing primary school from Tobago. The nature of this study was a basic qualitative design. Creswell (2012) posited that qualitative research allows a researcher to explore problems using a direct approach in data collection and analysis in a bid to comprehend the central phenomenon under consideration. The strength of this study was exploring the experiences of eight principals from high-performing schools at the primary level to document how they lead strategic planning, with a specific focus on leadership of successful strategic planning processes that result in improved student performance in literacy and numeracy, and the facilitation of change processes. A basic qualitative design was used to explore the experiences of the participants in their natural setting (see Keen & Marcus, 2018). Data were collected through interviews and were recorded utilizing an iPhone. Key elements of data analysis included coding, use of categories, and themes connected to the data to answer the research questions.

Nine themes related to the research question and two subquestions regarding principals' leading strategic planning processes designed to improve student performance in literacy and numeracy included the following:

- leading strategic planning towards school improvement,
- engaging in a continuous focus on literacy and numeracy,

- utilizing data-driven decision-making for curriculum and instruction,
- institutionalizing innovation and accountability,
- providing leadership driven by context,
- providing resources for literacy and numeracy through stakeholder involvement and partnerships,
- institutionalizing strategies as an instructional leader to guide curriculum and instruction,
- ensuring successful implementation of teaching and learning strategies for improvement in literacy and numeracy, and
- providing continuous effective professional development programs to support teachers and transform their capacity in practice.

Interpretation of Findings

The findings of the study confirmed and extended the knowledge in the field of education related to leading strategic planning that is designed to increase achievement in literacy and numeracy. This confirmation of knowledge was validated by the major finding that the change process at the campus level of the school must include strategies for improving the school. The conceptual framework for this study was Fullan's (1983) change process theory. The theory of change focuses on how change occurs using knowledge as the foundational base grounded on eight organizational factors including leadership focused on curriculum and instruction, district level support, emphasis on student development, high expectations for students, support systems and processes for monitoring performance of staff and achievement of students, continuous staff

development, parental involvement, and promoting a healthy school climate (Fullan, 1983). Four process variables that are embedded within the factors include leadership aptitudes, a value system for stakeholders, intentional communication, and collaborative planning and collaborative implementation (Fullan, 1983). The organizational factors and the process variables are fused and used as an innovation-focused strategy as the conduit to school improvement (Fullan, 1983). This theory informed the study as the change process intertwined with the eight organizational factors and the four process variables provided the foundation for transformation if there is to be improvement in literacy and numeracy. The change process theory provided a cohesive framework for analyzing the experiences of principals from high-performing schools with a focus on how they lead change processes targeting improved student performance.

The confirmation of finding was validated by the evidence-based documentation from the peer-reviewed literature presented in Chapter Two. The findings also extended the knowledge in the field of education related to the principals' experiences leading strategic planning that are designed to increase achievement in literacy and numeracy. The principals' experiences allowed me to document what strategies are used and how planning, implementation, and monitoring are done. The nine themes from the study were analyzed against the background of Fullan's (1983) change process theory and the literature reviewed in Chapter 2.

Leading Strategic Planning Toward School Improvement

Change takes place over time, and change involves the acquisition of new skills through the medium of practice, continuous feedback, and organizational conditions at

the level of the school (Fullan, 1983). These conditions will determine the success of the process, and successful change will be achieved through an interaction of organizational conditions within the internal and external environment of the school (Fullan, 1983). Each individual school needs to develop a vision of its curriculum together with other dimensions of the school to bring the vision into a reality (Beare & Slaughter, 1993; Caldwell, 1997; Handy, 1994). The institutionalization of strategic planning supports the coordination of leadership and management of schools with the aim of improving the quality of teaching and learning (Ewy, 2009; Hodgson & Chuck, 2003; Taylor et al., 2008).

Continuous Focus on Literacy and Numeracy

The role of leadership in schools is essential to ensure that there is strategy building to a new strategic direction. The management and facilitation of the improvement process triggers an effective leader to produce ideas at the highest level of thinking and actions to a deep level of details (Fullan, 1983). The process of becoming an effective leader involves the leader developing new skills and conceptions developed from theory, practice, demonstration, feedback, and support (Fullan, 1983). The aim of the innovation is to ensure sustainability and scalability for future change (Fullan, 1983). Continuous focus on literacy and numeracy by the leadership of the principals of the eight high-performing schools ensures that there is sustainability as is evident by the continuous growth of the schools from mostly effective to excelling. The leadership of the principal in the establishment and maintenance of the vision, leadership of instructional initiatives, facilitation of an environment conducive to teacher development

and student achievement, and stakeholder involvement is important in building the capacity of stakeholders within schools (Hitt & Tucker, 2015).

Data-Driven Decision-Making, Innovation, and Accountability

The use of data-driven decision-making is enhanced through collaboration based on experience, knowledge, and research findings before the innovation is selected for school improvement (Fullan, 1983). The principal's role as an instructional leader needs to be developed to build the capacity of staff, to provide technical assistance, and to provide leadership in the gathering of essential data to plan for continuation (Fullan, 1983). Day, Gu, and Sammons (2016) used a mixed-methods approach to illustrate that schools use transformational and instructional leadership practices to improve the core business of schools, which is to improve students' outcomes. Day et al. found that transformational and instructional leadership of schools is layered and must build and sustain a focus on the quality of teaching and learning. Specific actions must include redesigned leadership of staff teams, improvement in assessment procedures, use of data-driven decision-making and evidence-based decision-making, improved teaching policies and programs, strategically allocated resources, and continuous adjustment and changes to the students' target setting or goals related to teaching and learning (Day et al., 2016). The varied use of data from assessment and reporting procedures identified in Table 2 added value to the statements by Fullan (1983) and Day et al. (2016). The eight principals in the current study documented the types of assessment and reporting procedures used to inform data-driven decision-making, which will add value to teaching policies and programs, strategically allocated resources, and continuous adjustment and changes to the students'

target setting. One principal has institutionalized a data management system that is accessed by principal, staff, and parents. This is an innovative strategy that is paperless yet offers a high degree of accountability.

Leadership Driven by Context

Fullan (1983) synthesized the primary work of Huberman (1991), Stalling (1980, 1981), Showers (1983), and Little (1981) to illustrate the theory of change processes within schools. Huberman engaged in a case study in a school district to monitor a reading instruction program through the medium of a National Diffusion Network. Huberman found that with the aid of strong leadership support in planning for improvement, there was widespread implementation of the reading program as change processes evolved after a period of 6 months through a policy of gradual implementation. The leadership of schools should also possess personal skills including positive emotional intelligence, human relations skills, being considerate to the needs of stakeholders, and communication skills and empathy (Sun et al., 2014). Regardless of the context of schools, leadership must build a personal and professional resilience focused on planning for improvement, the development of the capacity of staff, acquiring and managing financial and physical resources, and maintaining relationships with human resources (Gurr et al., 2014). The eight principals documented varied use of leadership styles as shown in Table 2. Although instructional leadership, transformational leadership, democratic leadership, visionary leadership, and strategic leadership were more frequently documented, authoritarian leadership and laissez faire leadership were also documented by one principal. This principal postulated that because her school is on a

shift system with another school, authoritarian leadership works in ensuring that the mandates of the education ministry are attended to. This principal also noted that at times staff appear frustrated, and laissez faire leadership allows for open communication and feedback. Principals hinted that their leadership styles are driven by the context of the school. Use of strong leadership support, the development of the capacity of staff, positive emotional intelligence, human relations skills, being considerate of teachers' needs, open communication skills, empathy, and maintaining relationships with human resources are also driven by context.

Stakeholder Involvement and Partnerships

One of the eight organizational factors cited by Fullan (1983) is support systems and processes. The codes documented in Table 2 indicate system support in the provision of resources through stakeholder involvement and partnerships. Uzarski and Broome (2018) presented a leadership framework toward implementation of strategic plans. Political, human, structural, and symbolic frameworks were documented as approaches. The political framework is used to align strategic plans to partnerships within the external environment of the school. The human resource framework is used to empower stakeholders, and the symbolic framework aligns with a collective vision, values, and culture (Uzarski & Broome, 2018). The structural framework forms the foundation of the strategic areas for improvement toward implementation (Uzarski & Broome, 2018). The frameworks presented align with the stakeholder involvement and partnerships to support students' achievement in literacy and numeracy in Trinidad and Tobago.

Institutionalization and Implementation of Strategies

These two themes were grouped because strategies as an instructional leader to guide curriculum and instruction and successful implementation of teaching and learning strategies for improvement in literacy and numeracy are interrelated as teaching and learning strategies and constitute one of the core responsibilities of an instructional leader. Table 2 documented detailed strategies used by the principals in their role as instructional leader, including maintenance of a high visibility. Additionally, Table 3 also documented detailed strategies used in the implementation of teaching and learning for improvement in literacy and numeracy. The role of leadership in schools is essential to ensure that there is a strategy building to a new strategic direction. The management and facilitation of improvement process trigger an effective leader to produce ideas at the highest level of thinking and actions that have a deep level of details. The process of becoming an effective leader has an attached meaning that the leader must develop new skills and capacities developed from theory, practice, demonstration, feedback, and support (Fullan, 1983). Further, one out of the eight organizational factors cited by Fullan (1983), entails leadership focused on curriculum and instruction. Ng, Nguyen, Wong, and Choy (2015) posited that instructional leadership can be viewed through the lens of the narrow concept and a broader concept. The narrow concept examines instructional leadership as related to the actions of principals specific to teaching and learning. The broader concept embraces instructional leadership related to implementation and communication of the school's vision, mission and goals, and coordination of the curriculum. It also embraces effective supervision and evaluation of instruction, constant

monitoring of student progress, and protection of the instructional time. Additionally, the promotion of professional development, provision of incentives for teachers, provision of incentives for students, and the maintenance of a high visibility add value to the role of instructional leadership (Harris, Jones, Cheah, Devadason, & Adams, 2017; Ng et al., 2015).

Professional Development Programs

Tables 2 and 3 highlighted how often principals engaged in professional development sessions, together with an in-depth documentation of professional development workshops. Stalling (1980, 1981) engaged in a staff development mastery learning model which comprised a four phased reading program specific to training secondary school teachers to improve the reading abilities of their students. Stalling concluded that through the medium of teacher led groups, and groups led by project leaders who guided the implementation of the reading program through a process of gradual change, there was a positive impact on classroom practice. Equally important, Showers (1983) engaged in a program of coaching and transfer of training which comprised five components: theory, demonstration, practice, feedback, and coaching. Showers concluded that successful change processes ensured mastery of essential skills to guide teaching approaches and the organization of instruction through the peer coaching specific to curriculum and instruction. The most common reference point for professional development is the focus of content knowledge that must be threaded on the transformation of teachers' skills on strategies to develop student thinking. The next essential construct focuses on the collective participation of learning through the medium

of professional learning communities by which teachers extensively discuss their intellectual work in addition to strategies for the development of teaching and learning. Another fundamental construct focuses on program intensity based on the cumulative number of contact hours which serves to be useful when strategies related to teaching and learning are shared. The fourth construct entails the use of subject specific coaches which has its strengths and weaknesses (Kennedy, 2016). Fullan (2011) reminded the leadership of schools that when professional development is built on teamwork and collaboration, the capacity of the teachers become advanced and they become innovators through their collective expertise.

Interpretation of the findings of the study confirmed the foundational concepts of the conceptual framework. Also, the findings confirmed the analysis and synthesis of the peer reviewed literature described in Chapter 2. It must also be noted that the findings extended the knowledge in the field of education, specifically, leading strategic planning that are designed to increase achievement in literacy and numeracy through the medium of the breadth and depth of strategies used in the planning, implementation, and monitoring utilized by the principals leading strategic planning.

Limitations of the Study

One limitation included my biases towards the study mainly because of my previous training as a school improvement partner, and my occupation as a school's supervisor as documented in Chapter One. To overcome this limitation, I ensured that interviews were documented properly and themes were generated from the data collected. I was objective in all my actions in the conduct of the study as I ensured data

triangulation through criterion based purposeful sampling of eight principals, iterative questioning, reflective commentary, member checks, and a second reader. The summary of the results as documented in Table 4 (Appendix C) was shared with the participants in keeping with the Walden University guidelines. Additionally, I do not supervise the principals selected to serve as the participants of the research and thus the consideration of power over the principals was dismissed.

Recommendations

Based on the breadth and in-depth strategies of how principals lead strategic planning processes targeting improved student performance in the eight high performing primary schools, it is recommended that research be conducted to evaluate strategic planning quality targeted towards student achievement in low performing primary schools in each of the eight education districts in Trinidad and Tobago. An evaluation of the strategic planning quality will seek to determine the strategic planning initiatives for school transformation. Specific areas of focus can include: diagnosis of the school self-evaluation, literacy and numeracy initiatives to tackle underperformance, teaching, learning and assessment strategies, the depth of instructional leadership, and professional development. The level of parental, stakeholder, and community involvement can also be explored. Successful implementation of strategic plans provides a blueprint for leadership practices to ensure the achievement of students' value outcomes, including access to quality education (The Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, Ministry of Education, 2015). Strategic planning is a vital planning tool to aid in the sustainable development of schools as it fosters a collective vision through collaboration of

stakeholders in the execution of duties and responsibilities towards students' academic achievement (Antoniou, Myburgh-Louw, & Gronn, 2016; Myende & Bhengu, 2015). Strategic planning is required in all schools in Trinidad and Tobago to address the problem of low student performance in literacy and numeracy. Performance continues to lag in approximately 200 out of 490 or 40% of the primary schools, while other schools with similar demographics are high performing (The Ministry of Education, Department of Education Research and Evaluation, Trinidad and Tobago, 2016).

It is recommended that research be conducted on assessment practices in low performing primary schools. The research should be focused on the areas of literacy and numeracy. The principals in the eight high performing schools documented in-depth assessment practices utilized. The purpose of assessments is to inform stakeholders within education districts about student and school performance in a bid to plan, implement, and monitor interventions for improvement of low performing schools and to ensure sustainability of practice in high performing schools. Additionally, assessments serve the purpose of informing education district leaders and education policy makers about accountability at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels of the education system (Education Commission of the States, 2017).

Implications

Significance to Practice

This study may potentially add value to the professional practice in the development of principals' effectiveness. Specifically, through the lens of successful strategic planning and change processes focused on improved literacy and numeracy. The

body of knowledge documented through the medium of this study, principals at the primary school level may plan, implement, and monitor strategic planning policies to develop students' foundational skills in literacy and numeracy. This may have the potential for student achievement in all subjects across the curriculum. Principals' capacity and capability for leading strategic planning targeted towards student achievement may also be developed, that can promote the opportunity for social change in the education system.

Significance to Theory

Exploring principals' experiences leading strategic planning towards student achievement, advances the leadership practices of principals when planning for the improved academic achievement of students. Anyieni and Areri (2016) revealed that the leadership style of the principal has a great significance in the decision making processes and also influences the implementation of strategic plans. Kai-Wing (2016) postulated that a principal's knowledge of leadership is an influential factor for visioning, networking, and enhancing stakeholders' capability that results in improved academic achievement and general organizational performance.

Significance to Social Change

Sharma and Monteiro (2016) postulated that education empowers individuals and thus, social change can be triggered. Social change will be achieved as the students' foundational skills in literacy and numeracy will cater to improved academic improvement across the curriculum. Further, Al-Haddad and Kotnour (2015) posited that change enablers in the education system encompass knowledge, skills, and competencies,

intertwined with the capacity and capability of stakeholders. Based on Sharma and Monteiro, and Al-Haddad and Kotnour discussion on social change, this study will add value to principals' capacity and capability through the lens of the research participants as they have outlined their experiences leading strategic planning towards student achievement. The codes, categories, and themes identified from the data can be used by principals in low performing schools based on their context, thereby promoting the opportunity for positive social change in the education system.

At a personal level, based on my experiences in conducting this research, I can share the strategies documented by the principals in the high performing schools to principals in low performing schools through the medium of fraternity meetings and principals' conferences in each of the eight education districts with permission from the Ministry of Education.

Conclusion

This study addressed the gap in the literature specific to principals' experiences leading strategic planning for improvement in literacy and numeracy at the primary level. Fullan's (1983) change process theory offered essential theoretical knowledge to ground the study to the purpose and research questions and added value to data collection, analysis, and interpretation of the results. After analysis of the experiences of the principals, the nine themes generated from the data highlighted that they promoted their schools as centers of excellence detailed in the in-depth strategies outlined to build the capacity and capability of teachers. Stakeholder involvement added value to the transformation of the schools to high performing schools. Every principal in the study

promoted himself/herself as a leader of change with on-going responsibilities. Leadership of the dimensions, including the eight organizational factors, and the four process variables of Fullan's change process theory, served as the key factor in promoting the success of the eight high performing schools. This was achieved through management and sustainability of the literacy and numeracy systems and processes institutionalized with the students at the center of the learning cycle. The basis of transformative leadership is to reduce if not eliminate the deficit thinking and inequities in the education system towards the creation of new knowledge frameworks. This new knowledge framework will allow education leaders to lead by providing opportunities for all students to engage in purposeful pedagogies facilitated by high expectations (Shields, 2010).

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Appendix A: Letters of Cooperation



Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION
Educational Planning Division
 Education Towers, No.5 St. Vincent Street, Port of Spain, Trinidad
 1.868.622.2181 Ex.2339

8th March 2019

Mr. Harrilal Seecharan
 Chief Education Officer
 Ministry of Education

Request to Conduct Research at Schools

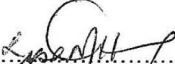
In accordance with the Policy on the Provision of Supplemented Education Programmes/ Activities and the Conducting of Research by External Providers, **Mr. Adesh Ramlal** has submitted his research proposal for review and approval. The research outline submitted has met the basic application format for proposals as laid out in the above policy.

The Applicant is a student at Walden University, pursuing the Ph.D. in Education with Concentration in Education Policy, Leadership and management. His research is entitled "**Principals' Experiences Leading Strategic Planning in High Performing Primary Schools in Trinidad and Tobago**".

The Applicant's underlying reason for developing his study is "to develop principals' capacity and capability in the development strategic planning that increase achievement in literacy and numeracy."

Mr. Ramlal has identified eight (8) Primary Schools throughout the Educational Districts of Trinidad and Tobago to conduct his study (see list attached). I am submitting his application for consideration to be approved, please be guided accordingly.

Yours Respectfully,



Mrs. Lisa Henry-David
 Director
 Educational Planning Division
 Ministry of Education





Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION
Educational Planning Division
Education Towers, No.5 St. Vincent Street, Port of Spain, Trinidad
1.868.622.2181 Ex. 2339

18th March 2019

Mr. Adesh Ramlal
78 Nadira Gardens
Freeport

Dear Mr. Ramlal,

Your request to conduct research entitled "**Principals Experiences Leading Strategic Planning in High Performing Primary Schools in Trinidad and Tobago**" has been approved by the Chief Education Officer of the Ministry of Education.

This approval is granted for the academic year 2019/2020 and permits the researcher to conduct interviews with principals at eight (8) Primary Schools throughout the Educational Districts of Trinidad and Tobago (see list attached).

Attached is a letter of confidentiality, which is to be completed and returned to the Educational Planning Division of the Ministry of Education by the person conducting their research.

Should you require additional information please contact Mrs. Huldah Balchan-Bissoo, Research Officer I, Educational Planning Division at 622-2181 ext. 2339 or email huldah.balchan-bissoo@moe.gov.tt.

Yours Respectfully,

.....
Mrs. Lisa Henry-David
Director
Educational Planning Division
Ministry of Education



Appendix B: Interview Protocol

Re-statement of research questions.

What are principals' experiences leading strategic planning designed to increase achievement in literacy and numeracy? The study will address the following sub-questions:

RQ1 – How do principals in high performing primary schools in Trinidad and Tobago lead strategic planning processes designed to improve student performance in literacy and numeracy?

RQ2 – How do principals in high performing primary schools in Trinidad and Tobago facilitate change processes through the stages of planning, implementation, and monitoring, in strategic planning, designed to address student performance in literacy and literacy?

Re-Statement of the Phenomenon of Interest. The purpose of this qualitative study is to explore principals' experiences leading strategic planning that are designed to increase achievement in literacy and numeracy in eight high performing primary schools in Trinidad and Tobago. This study will focus on seven high performing primary schools from Trinidad, and one high performing primary school from Tobago.

Summary of the Conceptual Framework. Fullan's (1983) Change Process Theory.

Fullan (1983) posited that change process at the campus level of the school must utilize strategies for improving schools. The theory of change focuses on how change occurs

using knowledge as the foundational base grounded on eight organizational factors inclusive of leadership focused on curriculum and instruction, district level support, emphasis on student development, support systems and processes for monitoring performance of staff and achievement of students, continuous staff development, parental involvement, and promoting a healthy school climate (Fullan, 1983). Four process variables that are embedded within the factors encompass leadership aptitudes, a value system for stakeholders, intentional communication, collaborative planning and collaborative implementation (Fullan, 1983).

The Interview Protocol

RQ1 – How do principals in high performing primary schools in Trinidad and Tobago lead strategic planning processes designed to improve student performance in literacy and numeracy?

Questions 1 – 4 serve as rapport questions.

1. For the record, can you share your name, your position, and the name of your school?
2. What is the score of your school's Academic Performance Index?
3. How many years did you maintain your standards at the excelling band?
4. What are your views on strategic planning?

Probes were used based on the response of the participants for questions 5– 23 below.

5. Can you share the focus of the school's strategic plan?
6. Can you describe the strategies that are outlined in the school's strategic plan to develop students' skills in literacy?
7. Can you describe the strategies that are outlined in the school's strategic plan to develop students' skills in numeracy?
8. Can you share the strategies that are used by teachers for analysis of students' results for remediation and continuous improvement?
9. How are the achievements of students assessed?
10. How are the achievements of students recorded?
11. How are the achievements of students reported?
12. Can you describe how continuous assessment is used to identify individual learning needs?
13. Can you identify two leadership styles that you believe have added value to your role as a principal leading strategic plans?
14. What are the school's arrangement for the provision of resources for literacy and numeracy?
15. How is the school's library meeting the needs of the students?
16. What strategies do you use as an instructional leader to guide curriculum and instruction?

RQ2 – How do principals in high performing primary schools in Trinidad and Tobago facilitate change processes through the stages of planning, implementation, and

monitoring, in strategic planning, designed to address student performance in literacy and literacy?

17. How would you describe the strategies your teachers utilize in the teaching and learning process to ensure student development?

18. What support systems are in place to monitor staff performance?

19. How often do you engage in staff development?

20. What type of data do you use as you plan for staff professional development?

21. Could you share the specific focus of the last five staff professional development workshops?

Summary Question

22. Can you summarize your experiences as you lead the strategic planning processes as outlined in this interview?

Appendix C: Summary of the Codes, Categories, and Themes

Table 4

Summary of the Codes, Categories, and Themes for Research Questions 1 and 2

Codes	Categories	Themes
RQ1.	How do principals in high performing primary schools in Trinidad and Tobago lead strategic planning processes designed to improve student performance in literacy and numeracy?	
RQ2.	How do principals in high performing primary schools in Trinidad and Tobago facilitate change processes, through the stages of planning, implementation, and monitoring, in strategic planning, designed to address student performance in literacy and literacy?	

Views on Strategic Planning		
Belief in strategic planning		
Planning for the future	School improvement	Leading strategic planning
In-depth planning	School success	targeted towards school
Change process happening	Improved student	transformation
Goal setting	performance	
Attuning to core values	School development	
	Success for students	
	Organizational planning	
Focus on Strategic Planning		
Needs analysis of school performance	Shortcomings in literacy and numeracy	Continuous focus on literacy and numeracy
Focus on students' strengths and weaknesses	Bridging the gap in literacy and numeracy	
Tracking students' progress on data management system	Monitoring students' performance	
Upgrade reading resources	Literacy and numeracy as key foundational skills	
Improve reading levels	Maintaining students' performance	
Teaching of jolly phonics	Specific strategies to close the achievement gaps	
Use of interesting and suitable reading materials	Strategic focus on teaching and learning	
Numeracy committee/team which serves to provide continuous professional development	Strategic focus on teaching and learning	
Teacher leaders to provide classroom modeling	Literacy/numeracy intervention programs	
Assessment Strategies		
Diagnostic testing	Use of data	Data driven decision making for curriculum and instruction
Use of item analysis	Identification of problems	
Formative tests- weekly, fortnightly, monthly, mid-term	Strategies to close the achievement gaps	
Oral questioning	Analysis of alternative solutions	
Teacher observation	Facilitation of change processes	
Performance tasks		
Checklists		

Projects and scoring rubrics/Project Based Learning	Precision strategies for improvement	
Continuous feedback		
Summative assessments		
Scaffolding strategies		
Standardized tests		
Use of table of specifications in test preparation		
Use of school based intervention team to aid in assessment of students' needs		
Recording and Reporting Strategies		
Weekly reports	Accountability systems	Innovation and accountability
Fortnightly reports	Facilitation of change processes	
Termly reports	Use of precision strategies	
Use of master sheets for recording data	Strategic documentation	
Report books for students		
Teachers' anecdotal records		
Tracking data form		
Tracking record books to include student's behavior, social skills, emotional skills, participation, absenteeism		
Calculation of School Performance Index		
Continuous analysis of students' results with attached reports		
School management system (use of IBIS link)		
Leadership Styles		
Laissez Faire leadership	Leadership styles	Leadership driven by context
Charismatic leadership	Collective capacity	
Instructional leadership	Influence on decision making	
Transformational leadership	Leadership practices	
Democratic leadership		

Authoritative leadership
 Visionary leadership
 Autocratic leadership
 Strategic leadership
 Collaborative leadership

Provision of Resources

Fundraisers
 School funds
 Parental support
 Community support
 Local school board
 Ministry of Education
 Business sector
 Other stakeholders support

Varied partnerships

Stakeholder involvement and
 partnerships

Strategies as Instructional
 Leader

Walk-about
 Class checks/book
 checks/lesson plans checks
 Use of team
 leaders'/experience teacher
 at departmental levels
 Clinical supervision on a
 monthly basis
 Feedback from parents and
 students
 Daily monitoring at
 departmental levels to
 ensure teachers are on task
 Mentorship
 Tracking of instructional
 documents – schemes of
 work, record and evaluation,
 lesson plans
 Evaluation of the data and
 data analysis submitted by
 the teachers for their
 students
 Regular staff meetings to
 discuss their performance,
 how to help students, how to

The role of instructional
 leadership
 Accountability
 Establishing key
 priorities
 Precision strategies for
 monitoring and
 improvement

Institutionalization of
 strategies to monitor teaching
 and learning

be more effective, and
 sharing of best practices
 Mini professional
 development workshops
 Special commendations for
 best practices
 Evidence based best
 practices – sharing of
 research
 Submission of work plans
 by Heads of Departments
 weekly
 Professional development
 sessions at staff meetings
 Lesson demonstrations by
 principal on strategy
 implementation

Strategies Utilized in
 Teaching and Learning
 Differentiated
 instructions/differentiated
 assessment
 Oral assessment
 Independent learning
 Projects/mini projects
 Research on topics by
 students
 Group work
 Peer tutoring
 Presentations/role plays/skits
 Technology integration
 Departmental meetings to
 plan for instructions
 Team teaching
 Identification of teaching
 and learning resources
 needed for the week (pre-
 planning)
 Continuous collaboration
 within departments
 Technology training/support
 for teachers who lack
 confidence

School improvement
 initiative at the core
 business of schooling –
 teaching and learning
 Facilitation of change
 processes

Successful implementation of
 teaching and learning strategies
 for improvement in teaching
 and learning

Use of resources/pictures/
manipulatives for conceptual
teaching

Use of reading strategies –
language experience
approach, direct reading
approach, KWL

Use of comprehension
strategies across the
curriculum

Teacher demonstration

Involvement of parents to
provide reinforcement at
home

Frequency of Professional
Development and Areas of
Focus

Daily – coaching and
mentoring, partial use of
luncheon period

Monthly staff meetings –
discussion of teachers’
performance, strategies to
help students learn more
effectively, sharing of best
practices

Once per term – planning,
monitoring, and
implementation of what was
learnt

Continuous staff
development – best practice
sessions

Staff briefings

Strategic plan development

Technology integration in
teaching and learning

The teaching of math/focus
on problem solving

The teaching of mental math

The teaching of
comprehension

Pursuit of varied
professional development
activities

Visioning towards school
improvement

Effective professional
development programs to
support teachers and transform
their capacity in practice

The development of
comprehension skills
The teaching of creative
writing – narrative
descriptive and report
writing
The teaching of reading
The teaching of Jolly
Phonics
Integration of jolly phonics
Using the thematic approach
Curriculum planning and
curriculum integration
Using teaching and learning
resources
Curriculum delivery,
adaptation, and
implementation
The change process –
handling change and
managing change
Building collegiality
Team building
Use of resources in literacy
and numeracy
Item writing
Preparing a table of
specification
Effective communication
with key stakeholders
Using technology in the
classroom
The referral process
