# Knowledge Beliefs and Problem-solving Capabilities among South African School Principals

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**ABSTRACT** A common thread in contemporary research on principal leadership refers to the ways in which principals go about solving complex problems. Research evidence implies that for effective problem-solving to take place, principals should also be aware of their own epistemological beliefs or knowledge assumptions. This concept leads to a model in which the respective link with a principal's ability to solve a complex problem is determined by his or her epistemological beliefs. Research done so far on principals' capabilities with regard to complex problem-solving has very seldom linked this construct with the construct of knowledge assumptions. The purpose of this current study, based on a qualitative exploratory study among a group of school principals in the Gauteng province of South Africa, was to examine the relationship between the two constructs of epistemological beliefs and the quality of thinking during problem-solving activities when participants first thought about a complex and uncertain (ill-structured) problem. An epistemological questionnaire, using a five-point Likert scale, was used as research instrument. Although the results showed that there was not a notable and systematic connection between epistemological beliefs and complex problem-solving among participants, the study provided substantial justification for looking at epistemological beliefs in the study of problem-solving capabilities among school principals world-wide.