

**The role of circuit managers in the professional development of  
principals**

**By**

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**SEPTEMBER 2017**

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I, Sophia Madiekolo Ndlovu, declare that **'The role of circuit managers in the professional development of principals'** is my own work. It has never been submitted in any form for a degree or diploma before in any tertiary institution. Where the work of others has been used, sources have been identified and acknowledged by means of complete references.

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## **DEDICATION**

**I dedicate this dissertation to:**

God Almighty for His mercy all the time

The Lekoro family

My beloved son for his support and encouragement

My husband for understanding during my studies

My mentor for his support, motivation encouragement

My acquaintance for his immense contribution

My supervisor and co-supervisor for their support throughout my studies

## ABSTRACT

The research examined the professional development of principals in their Highveld Ridge East, H/Ridge West, Bethal, Lekwa West circuits. The purpose was to investigate the role of the circuit managers in the professional development of their principals. The main driver of the study was that in the current climate the emphasis is on student performance, and school leaders are held accountable for the quality of teaching and for how much learners learn. Society expects the principals to be accountable for learner performance and the quality of teaching. In the current national and state policy the assumption is that effective principal leadership is central to student achievement and is in fact the most powerful force for improving school effectiveness and for achieving excellence in education.

The argument is made that according to the National Education Policy Act of 1996 and the National Policy Framework for Teacher Education, the Department of Education gives guidelines and points out the importance of teacher development. The study then investigates the role of circuit managers in the professional development of principals. The main research question and sub-questions were used to understand the participants' perceptions and experiences of the phenomenon that is professional development.

The methodology adopted in this study is qualitative which seeks to understand how circuit managers execute their responsibilities with regard to the professional development of principals. Data was collected by means of semi-structured interviews which involved three principals and four circuit managers.

Literature revealed the need for circuit managers to be more empowered with skills to develop and support their principals. The misunderstanding about professional development leads principals to be unclear of the boundaries between their daily management tasks and professional development. Curriculum assistance and guidance were regarded as professional development.

**Key Words:** Professional development, circuit manager, mentoring, principal, schools, curriculum

## **GLOSSARY OF TERMINOLOGY**

ACE (SL)	Advanced Certificate in Education (School Leadership)
CBCI	Content-Based Collaborative Inquiry
CGI	Cognitively Guided Instruction
CPD	Continuous Professional Development
CPTD	Continuing Professional Teacher Development
DAS	Developmental Appraisal System
DBE	Department of Basic Education
DoE	Department of Education
IQMS	Integrated Quality Management System
NEPA	National Education Policy Act
NPFTED	National Policy Framework for Teacher Education and Development
NPQH	National Professional Qualification for Headship
PAI	Principal Australian Institute
PAM	Personnel Administrative Measures
PD	Professional Development
PED	Provincial Education Department
PLC	Professional Learning Community
PMS	Performance Management Systems
PSAP	Public School Accountability Program
QELi	Queensland Educational Leadership Institute
RSA	Republic of South Africa
SACE	South African Council of Educators

SASA	South African Schools Act
SGB	School Governing Body
SMT	School Management Team
SQH	Scotland Qualification for Headship
US	United States
USA	United States of America
WSE	Whole School Evaluation

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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

Professional development as stipulated in the Employment of Educators Act (EEA), 76 of 1998 (RSA, 1998a) is a requirement for teachers and principals at schools through the process of Integrated Quality Management Systems (IQMS), 76 of 1998 (RSA, 1998c). IQMS as the strategy for professional development needs to ensure that principals manage their schools efficiently. In the current climate where South Africa is moving to an open education system for all, the emphasis is on school improvement through effective and efficient school leadership and management. Circuit managers and school leaders are held equally accountable for the quality of teaching and for how much learners learn (Steyn 2008:889).

This study seeks to investigate and describe the role played by circuit managers in the professional development of principals. As has been indicated in numerous studies, (Bush and Oduro, 2006; Mestry and Singh, 2007; Bush, Kiggundu and Moorosi, 2011) in South Africa principals are appointed on their experience. There is no formal qualification on management required. This is also true of circuit managers. Circuit managers are the direct supervisors of the principals in their circuits, and it is therefore expected of them to be responsible for their principal's professional development (Personnel Administration Measures (PAM), RSA, 1998b). According to the Department of Basic Education, gazette no. 36324(3) of 2013, the basic duties that the circuit office performs are:

- (a) Communication – The circuit managers are responsible to liaise between the district and the schools. They ensure that all instructions, circulars and policies from the district office are sent to the schools. .
- (b) Management support – The circuit managers visit all schools to offer management support. The principals and deputy principals are guided by the policies on how to support their educators.
- (c) Administrative support – The circuit managers provide administrative services to the schools. They ensure that learners at schools are registered and that the files

are sent to the circuit and district for data capturing. Allocations of funds are distributed to schools every new financial year. Circuit managers monitor that expenditures are sent to the circuit weekly and that schools send their reports to circuits every month.

- (d) Training – The circuit managers facilitate training for the development of principals, School Management Teams (SMT) and School Governing Bodies (SGB). Principals are developed every month in their principals' meetings, SMTs are developed each term in management and curriculum issues and SGB members are trained in sessions in different categories such as policies, management and finances.
- (e) Monitoring – Circuit managers monitor the functionality of schools, ensure the correct allocation of educators and the correct number of classes. They ensure that the time-tables are correct and that the time allocated is in line with the policy and the fair distribution of subjects.
- (f) Curriculum support – Circuit managers provide curriculum support to grade R practitioners and educators. Circuit managers ensure that curriculum reports are submitted to the circuit as stipulated.

The Personnel Administration Measures document, (RSA, 1998b) commonly referred to as PAM also states some of the circuit manager's functions as follows: (1) to identify the needs and design support programmes that are in line with policies (2) to participate in staff development programmes and (3) to develop educators during their evaluation programme for professional growth

These two documents provide the study with the foundation to investigate the role of the circuit managers with specific reference to their role in professionally developing principals within their circuits. The task stated in PAM (1998b) that they should "continue to implement and participate in staff development programmes" is the most important one covering the rationale for the investigation.

As far as policy is concerned, circuit managers are at the forefront in terms of ensuring that principals are developed professionally so as to acquire skills and knowledge on how to improve their leadership and management in schools. The importance of the professional development of educators, which includes school principals, cannot be

underestimated. The National Education Policy Act (NEPA) (RSA, 1996a) states that it is essential to provide basic skills, values and knowledge to educators in ensuring the success of education. The knowledge, skills, and beliefs that principals are required to keep abreast of in the changing South African and international educational environment must be developed and nurtured through continuous professional development (Steyn 2011:43).

According to the National Education Policy Act (RSA, 1996a) and the National Policy Framework for Teacher Education and Development in South Africa (NPFTED) (RSA 1996b), both National and Provincial education departments "...are obliged to provide an enabling environment for the preparation and development of educators to take place", (RSA, 2007). An important aim of the National Policy Framework for Teacher Education and Development is to increase the quality of teaching and to provide suitably qualified educators (RSA, 2007). This policy also identifies the Continuing Professional Development for Teachers (CPDT) which attempts to develop educators' conceptual knowledge and skills through professional development to become productive citizens (RSA, 2007).

Steyn (2011:44) argues that the workload given to schools principals is demanding and requires accountability. On one hand principals are accountable for school management and learner performance, while on the other hand circuit managers are accountable for the tasks listed in the gazette (DBE, RSA, 2013) as well as those listed in PAM (RSA, 1998b). How are principals accountable for leadership and management? Muse and Abrams (2011:49) state "accountability requires new roles and new forms of leadership carried out under careful public scrutiny while trying to keep day-to-day management". This affirms the role on the organisational roles and responsibilities of the district when it emphasizes the collaborative work of circuit managers and principals and states that circuit managers are "to give management and professional support, and help schools achieve excellence in learning and teaching" (DBE, RSA, 2013).

Muse and Abrams (2011:49) argue that in the current government policy the assumption is that efficient principal leadership is at the centre of student achievement, and that the principal is the force for school effectiveness and for obtaining excellent results. This is corroborated by Cranston (2013:130) when he states that some

countries run professional development programmes for newly appointed and for experienced principals for the express purpose of improving learner attainment.

This study focuses on investigating and describing the role of circuit managers in the professional development of principals by involving circuit managers in the Gert Sibande district, specifically the Lekwa West, Highveld-Ridge East, Highveld-Ridge West and Bethal circuits of the Mpumalanga province of South Africa.

## **1.2 DEFINITION OF TERMS**

### **1.2.1 Circuit Management**

The organogram of the Education Department is structured in such a way that the top layer is the national level, followed by the provincial structures. The provinces are further divided into districts. The Mpumalanga Department of Education currently has four districts. The districts are further divided into circuits. Circuits are managed by circuit managers who are the immediate managers of the principals of schools.

Circuit management is an organizational structure with a responsibility to exercise significant authority in dealing with staff, school principals and School Governing Bodies (SGBs) within the circuit. (DBE, RSA, 2013:26). It is at this level of the provincial structure that this research is focused in order to investigate the role of circuit managers in the professional development of principals.

The Government Gazette no. 36324 (3) 2013 defines a circuit manager as "...the head of a circuit office (who) executes prescribed functions which have been allocated by the District Director or the Head of the Provincial Education Department (PED)" (DBE, RSA, 2013). Provinces use different names for the head of the circuits, as presented in the table that follows:

**Table1.1: Names given to heads of circuits in different provinces**

<b>Province</b>	<b>Name</b>
Eastern Cape, Limpopo, Mpumalanga	Circuit Manager
Free State	School Management Governance and Development (SMGD)
Gauteng	Institutional Development and Support Officer (IDSO)
North West	Institutional Support Coordinator (ISC)
Western Cape	Institutional Management and Governance (IMG)

### **1.2.2 Professional development**

The Department of Education, like all organizations public or private, has an important obligation towards its staff, namely that of developing them as they continue to offer their services to their employers. In order for the organization to continue delivering its mandate it needs to ensure that all its staff members are capable of performing their duties in an efficient manner. What then is professional development and what forms can professional development take in education? A number of academics have conducted a number of studies around professional development in education and have come up with different definitions according to their preferences. Professional development, say Steyn and van Niekerk, (2005:131) “relates to lifelong development programmes that focus on a wide range of knowledge, skills and attitudes in order to educate more effectively”. Desimone (2009:182) defines professional development as “any activity that is intended partly or primarily to prepare paid staff members for improved performance in present or future roles in the school districts”, while van Tuyle and Reeves (2014:114) believe that principal preparation and development programmes develop instructional leadership capacity which ensures that schools are led by effective principals who receive on-going coaching and continuous career-long professional development.

The definition of professional development that best addresses the purpose of this study is that of Steyn and van Niekerk (2005:131) which views professional development as a lifelong development programme focusing on a large scale of knowledge, skills and behaviours in order to educate learners more effectively. For a school principal to be able to satisfy this requirement, professional development should be a priority. Similar to Steyn and van Niekerk's definition of professional development, Elman, Illfelder-Kaye and Robiner (2005:365) state that "professional development is an on-going process through which an individual develops an understanding of professional identity by integrating the broad-based knowledge, skills and attitudes with his or her values and interests".

For the purposes of this study, professional development is defined as a developmental process whereby knowledge and skills are acquired through purposely designed programmes to meet the professional needs of individuals who, in the case of this study, are school principals.

### **1.2.3 Principalship**

Principalship is an organizational concept defining a structural position that centers on instruction (Mendels, 2012:54). The principal is the senior teacher and serves as the head of the institution. His or her main task is to ensure that learners are learning and educators are teaching at their best (Mendels, 2012:55). The leadership of a principal is an essential ingredient for ensuring that every child gets the education they need to succeed. Maile (2012:205) argues that South African principals are not properly trained for their job while principalship is a special position which requires specialized training.

The general trend in South Africa for a principal is to be a teacher first, be promoted to a departmental head, deputy principal and then to principal. Usdan, McCloud and Podmostko (2000:2) state that today's principals have to do more than they did in the past. They point out that the crucial role that a principal of today plays is to serve as a leader for learner learning and to improve the quality of schools. Hussin and Al Abri (2015:91) argue that effective leadership and management is not a guarantee for appointment as a school principal. It is therefore important for principals to undergo professional training programmes. Principals must know both academic content and

pedagogical techniques in order to attain improved student achievement (van Tuyle & Reeves, 2014:121).

### **1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT**

As alluded to in the introduction, policy in South Africa dictates that circuit managers as the immediate supervisors of principals are responsible for their professional development (PAM, RSA, 1998b; RSA, DBE, 2013). Circuit managers are responsible for a number of functions directly linked to the support of principals, staff and SGBs as dictated by PAM and related policies. However, from the researcher's own experience as both a principal and latterly as a circuit manager, these policies may not always be implemented in practice as they appear on paper. This lack of policy implementation, seen in the light of the importance of professional development for school effectiveness as reflected by Cranston (2013:129) when he states the fact that effective school leadership is essential to improve the efficiency and equity of schools, and that without sound school leadership, quality teaching is unlikely to continue for very long, makes a convincing case for an investigation into the role played by circuit managers in the professional development of principals'. According to Botha (2004:242) not many have bothered to ask the question about who supports and empowers the principals for their evermore demanding tasks once they have taken the post as principal. Who do principals turn to for advice and who do they talk to with regard to the new vision of principalship? According to policy, they should be able to turn to their circuit managers, but in practice, as mentioned earlier, this appears to not always be the case. This study therefore seeks to investigate how circuit managers provide professional support and development to the principals in their circuits.

### **1.4 THE RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY**

The researcher has observed and experienced a number of the challenges that principals are facing regarding the lack of professional development, and believes that this lack of professional development is largely accountable for the apparent inability of some school principals to lead and manage their schools efficiently and effectively (Mathibe, 2007:523). The researcher's observations have led to the assumption that a lack of development and support from circuit managers contributes to some degree to the challenges faced by principals.

According to PAM (RSA, 1998b) circuit managers as office-based teachers are expected to “(i) assess professional development needs by using questionnaires, informal methods and developmental appraisal, (ii) support/plan staff development activities based on needs and which are congruent with the principles and values of the applicable policy frameworks and plans, (iii) and to contribute, to implement and participate in staff development programmes”. This researcher is of the view that principals are members of staff directly under the supervision of the circuit managers and thus their professional development is the responsibility of circuit managers.

A study of this nature has not yet been undertaken in the Gert Sibande district. In the opinion of the researcher, this study will benefit both the circuit managers and the principals in that it will assist them in identifying and describing current professional practices by circuit managers and also possibly identifying areas where additional professional development is required. The study is important because it seeks to investigate the experiences and perceptions of both the circuit managers and the principals on the role that circuit managers play in their professional development. This is done in order to identify current practice and possible needs and improvements to this practice that might be beneficial in future.

## **1.5 RESEARCH AIMS**

The aims of the research are to:

- (a) Provide a general conceptual background for the professional development of principals
- (b) Investigate and describe the role of circuit managers in the professional development of principals
- (c) Investigate and describe some of the challenges faced by the principals in their professional development
- (d) Formulate substantiated recommendations for the possible improvement of the professional development of principals conducted by circuit managers.

## **1.6 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

In order to achieve the above research aims, the following research questions will be answered by means of this study:

### **1.6.1 Primary research question**

What role do circuit managers play in the professional development of the school principals in the Gert Sibande district in Mpumalanga Province?

### **1.6.2 Secondary research questions**

What are the perceptions of the circuit managers of their role and responsibilities in the professional development of principals?

What are the experiences and perceptions of the principals with regard to the professional development programmes they receive from the circuit manager?

## **1.7 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

This study is guided by concepts outlining the prerequisites for effective professional development as detailed by Birman, Desimone, Porter and Garet, (2000:29). The concepts include (1) structural features of professional development which includes form, duration and participation, and (2) core features which include content focus, active learning and coherence. A detailed discussion of this framework can be found in chapter 3.

## **1.8 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

Although a detailed description of the choices available and the decisions made can be found in chapter 3, the section that follows is aimed at providing the reader with an initial orientation to the methodology of the study.

### **1.8.1 Research approach**

The study utilized a qualitative research approach. The researcher selected the qualitative research approach because it allows for the acquisition of new insights about a phenomenon and for how the participants construct meaning through social interaction with their world (Merriam, 2009:13). According to Creswell (2013:32)

qualitative research is an inquiry process where the researcher understands the individual life experience and different organisational cultures to investigate and explores a human and societal problem. A qualitative approach was appropriate because it enabled the researcher to have one-on-one interviews with the participants to establish their perception on professional development.

### **1.8.2 Research paradigm**

Constructivism, according to Creswell (2014:8), is the "...belief that individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work, and that individuals develop subjective meanings of their experiences-meanings directed toward certain objects or things". In this regard, this study adopted a constructivist approach which employed inductive judgement and qualitative research methods in order to determine how participants constructed meaning and knowledge during interactions within the different professional development programmes they participated in. The paradigm assisted the researcher to develop a particular meaning of experiences from participants focused on investigating the role of the circuit manager in the professional development of principals (Creswell, 2013:37).

### **1.8.3 Research design**

McMillan and Schumacher (2014:28) state that a research design is a strategy that describes the procedures of collecting data, that is, data collection methods, data analysis, selection of respondents and research sites. The research design ensures that the evidence obtained from participants during data collection assists in answering the research question. The type of design selected for this research is a case study. Leedy and Ormrod (2014:143) define a case study as "an in-depth study of a case which can be an individual, a group or an institution for a defined period of time". Maree (2013:83) posits that "...a case study is an in-depth exploration from multiple perspectives of the complexity and uniqueness of a particular policy, institution, programme or system in a real life context". In this case study the researcher collected data from school principals and circuit managers in four different circuits. The four selected circuits in the Gert Sibande district of Mpumalanga province constituted the case for the professional development of school principals.

#### **1.8.4 Data collection strategy**

Data collection was mentioned as one of the important components of the research methods. McMillan and Schumacher (2010:408) posit that data collection is accomplished through several techniques and methods. In this study data was gathered before it was analysed and interpreted. The researcher used semi-structured interviews, which allowed for questions to be developed and asked in such a way that they allow further probing of information for clarity (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2009:349). During the interviews the interviewer allowed interviewees to talk freely and openly. Five participants were interviewed at their different places of work. Each participant was asked the same questions and an interview lasted for an hour. The benefit of semi-structured interviews according to Maree (2013:89) is that they are neither fully fixed nor fully free and are commonly viewed as flexible. It was appropriate because it allows participants to be themselves and express themselves in the way they feel without a fixed structure. Before the interviews, documents such as policies and legislative frameworks and minutes of meetings were requested from the participants for scrutiny and to gather more information on the contents discussed during professional development meetings.

#### **1.8.5 Sampling strategies and participants**

Purposive sampling was used in this study to illustrate some features in which the researcher is interested (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014:352). Seven participants were purposely selected from four circuits because of their knowledge and experiences that made them holders of the data that would possibly answer the research questions posed for the study (Maree, 2012:178). The sample consisted of four circuit managers and three principals. The circuit managers selected were those already serving as circuit managers and were anticipated to have knowledge about professional development and experience in the field. The principals were those still serving as principals in the selected circuits who had more than three years' experience.

#### **1.8.6 Data analysis**

Data analysis began immediately after the interviews were completed and this process helped to shape the subsequent data gathering processes as confirmed by (Maree,

2012:18). The content analysis strategy was employed for this study. Cohen *et al.* (2009:475) define content analysis as the process of summarising, verifying, analysing and reporting on the main content of written data and its messages. Content analysis was used to transform raw data into new knowledge. This involved coding which created meaningful categories. The emerging categories were merged into themes (Cohen *et al.* 2009:476). The analysis sought to construct and understand the role of the circuit managers in the professional development of school principals.

### **1.8.7 Ethical consideration**

Research ethics is concerned with how participants are treated, methods of data collection and how data is handled after being collected (Vander Stoep & Johnston, 2009:12). The researcher ensured that participants understood the nature of the research and assured the confidentiality of information. Participants were cognizant of the fact that they could withdraw from the research should they feel that they did not want to continue.

### **1.8.8 Trustworthiness and credibility**

As mentioned above, participants were given the transcripts of their interviews to verify and to check and verify accuracy and interpretation. It was important for the researcher to assess the accuracy of the findings and convince the participants of that accuracy through member checking (Creswell, 2014:201). This was done to obtain their agreement or disagreement on how the researcher had represented them.

Data triangulation methods were used to guarantee the trustworthiness and credibility of the study. McMillan and Schumacher (2014:401) explain triangulation as the “cross-validation” among data sources and data collection strategies in the study. It is the process of examining evidence from different data sources to seek for common themes to support the validity of the findings. The use of different data collection techniques like interviews, document analysis and researcher’s notes ensured the credibility of the data. The recorded interviews and the researcher’s notes were compared and triangulated to build coherent validation for the themes (Creswell, 2014:201).

## **1.9 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

Maree (2012:42) points out that limitations help to show the possible shortcomings and potential weakness of the study.

The researcher acknowledges that the sample used in this study was too small and the results of this research can therefore not be generalised to the entire population of principals and circuit managers, even in just the Gert Sibande district (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014:352).

Some of the participants were wary of answering some of the more 'difficult' questions or probing questions which sought to determine their personal views on their supervising circuit managers, possibly fearing victimization. However, this was overcome by the fact that the interview questions were standardised and all participants were asked the same questions in the same order.

## **1.10 SUMMARY**

In chapter one, the researcher outlined the purpose of the study and the background to the research problem was presented. The problem statement was presented and the rationale, aims and research questions were discussed. The problem statement was the investigation of the role of the circuit manager in the professional development of principals under their supervision. This was further elaborated in PAM issued by the DBE (RSA, 1988b) to clarify the role of the circuit managers. The study in the rationale pointed to the observed lack of professional development of principals and how this is to blame for ineffective school leadership and management. The terms such as circuit management, principalship and professional development were clarified in terms of the context and purpose of the study. An explanation of how the different provinces in the country explain and name the position of the circuit manager was presented with the aim of clarifying their functions.

The conceptual framework was presented and it highlighted the features necessary for effective professional development to take place. The core features and the structural features were introduced in this chapter and an in-depth discussion will follow in the literature review chapter. An international perspective on professional development was noted with the intention of comparing it to the South African context. There was a brief discussion of the research methodology and ethical considerations.

The study used a qualitative method within a case study. The method allows the researcher to use information from the participant's narratives directly as is. The method also allows the researcher to use the experiences of the participants to come to a conclusion on the role of the circuit managers in the professional development of the principals under their supervision. The main data collection method was semi-structured interviews.

The interview questions were structured in such a way that they address the conceptual framework upon which the study was built. They range from the core features to the conceptual features of professional development. The purpose was to evaluate existing professional development programmes with the conceptual framework. The biographies of the participants were part of the questions and covered their experiences in their current positions. The participants were circuit managers and the principals under their supervision drawn from four circuits in the Gert Sibande district. Data was analyzed using the content analysis strategy, which followed immediately after the interviews. This was used to transform data into new knowledge.

## **CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW ON PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND THE ROLE OF CIRCUIT MANAGERS**

This chapter explores the role of circuit managers in the professional development of the principals under their supervision. The researcher understands the reality that principals and deputy principals are professional teachers and that they need continuous professional development. It is for this reason that the professional development of principals is discussed and viewed as being the role of their immediate supervisors- in this instance their circuit managers. Van der Voort and Wood (2016:1) suggest that “it is the role of the Education District and Circuit Offices in South Africa to work collaboratively with schools to improve educational access and to provide management and professional support”. This study sought to explore the exact contributions of circuit managers in supporting principals in their professional development. The leadership roles of principals have evolved in the light of the new administrative responsibilities that have been placed on them. These responsibilities are extremely demanding and bring leaders (principals) into conflict with their staff, organization, and the community (Korumaz, 2016:2).

In South Africa there is currently no formal qualification for the principalship and principals are promoted to this position on the basis of having qualified as teachers and the experience they have acquired in the profession (Legotlo, 2001; Maile, 2012). Van der Westhuizen (1991), Sayed (2004) and Maile (2012) argue that experience in teaching need not be the standard for the appointment of a principal because the principalship position is special and requires specialized training.

Van der Voort and Wood (2016:1) observed that the visits to schools and interactions with school managers on school development issues by district/circuit officials were not happening in many areas across the country, even though the function of the district and circuit offices is “to assist and support schools in delivering their core functions, namely to improve the educational achievements of all learners” (RSA, DBE, 2013). However, Mafuwane and Pitsoe (2014:440) contend that, “circuit managers are in constant contact with school principals and should take a proactive role and provide programmes for the development and support of their principals”.

For this study, the role of circuit managers and the professional development programmes that are provided by the circuit managers were explored in terms of the characteristics of effective professional development proposed by Birman, Desimone, Porter and Garet (2000:29). These characteristics provide a platform which the study adopted as its conceptual framework. This conceptual framework covers the core features and the structural elements required for effective professional development to take place. In this chapter, the general concepts discussed in the literature on professional development, as well as the characteristics of such development and the discourse on its prevalence, successes and failures both nationally and internationally will be explored.

## **2.2 WHAT IS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT?**

Steyn and van Niekerk (2005:131), Elman, Ilfelder-Kaye and Robiner (2005:368) view professional development as a lifelong development programme focusing on knowledge, proficiency, skills and practices in order to educate learners more effectively. Professional development improves the knowledge and skills of educators to enable them to perform effectively in the educational context (Chung-Wei et al., 2010; Pitsoe & Maila, 2012; Hussin & Al Abri, 2015).

Hussin and Al Abri (2015:2) describe professional development as continuing education where people develop their understanding and knowledge to improve their performance in their current position. Steyn (2011:43) argues that in all professions the important element of improvement is based on continuous development professional skills, knowledge and attitudes. I can define professional development as an on-going activity that aims to equip learners with knowledge, skills and the necessary competencies to enhance their professional knowledge.

## **2.3 PRINCIPAL PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AS A KEY FACTOR IN QUALITY EDUCATION PROVISION**

Professional development according to Mukeredzi (2013:6) has become a main theme in the journey for improving education quality, broadly viewed as the growth of individuals in their profession and a long term process that includes regular opportunities and experiences. Ono and Ferreira (2010:63) contend that “professional

development plays a key role in addressing the knowledge gap between teacher preparation and standard-based transformation". According to these authors, the knowledge gap is not so much about knowing what good professional development looks like, but rather about knowing how to get it embedded in the institutional structure of schools. According to Pitsoe and Maila (2012:319) professional development is not a static concept, but is a social paradigm and is fluid in nature. Their statement simply indicates that professional development programmes should be flexible enough to align themselves to the needs of both principals and the educational context of the school, province and/or country.

Hallinger and Heck (2010:95) state that "fifty years of theory and research offers increasing levels of support for the assertion that principalship makes a difference in the quality of schooling, school development and learner learning". However, the surveyed literature describing the educational leadership challenges in South Africa points to an absence of training for school principals and contends that principals are appointed on the basis of their teaching experience and 'common sense' rather than on the level of their competence (Bush & Heystek, 2006:64). In this regard, Pashiardis and Brauckmann (2009:122) state that "leadership development has also become a major area of concern internationally". They also contend that many countries are now focusing on offering relevant training and professional development opportunities to future and practicing school leaders.

The above study reveals that people responsible for professional development programmes are conscious that schools are not stagnant organisations that merely need to be controlled, but organisations that need to be led, and that the leaders of such schools require continuous development. Interestingly, Pashiardis and Brauckmann (2009) also point out as Bush and Heystek (2006) and Rodriguez-Campos, Rincones-Gomes and Shen (2005:316) that "principals in many countries are appointed on the basis of irrelevant and/or insufficient criteria such as their teaching record, their length of service and experience without any higher academic qualifications, rather than on their leadership skills". This finding again highlights the importance of professional development for principals.

Many principals face situations of growing complexity in their daily work - they are expected to manage complex and various tasks while simultaneously complying with

management responsibilities (Steyn, 2011). For this reason, schools need to employ principals who have the required skills to fulfil the expectations that exist within the educational institutions and to manage their schools effectively (Rodriguez-Campos *et al.* 2005:310). According to Steyn (2011:45) successful principals have a strong knowledge base and the ability to process that knowledge for effective leadership. In addition, principals are required to improve their professional skills.

Clair and Adger (1999:1) and Steyn (2011:45) agree that “there is a growing consensus in the literature regarding the elements of effective professional development for principals”. Effective professional development should be incorporated in the principles of adult learning for leaders to increase their intellectual, emotional, inter- and intra-personal capabilities (Duncan, Range & Scherz, 2011:6). From the above discussion it is clear that the provision of effective professional development for principals is growing in importance when one considers the link between sound leadership and management and the quality of education (Robinson, Lloyd & Rowe 2008).

## **2.4 CHARACTERISTICS OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

Mukeredzi (2013:6) contends that there are four characteristics of professional development. Firstly, professional development draws on constructivism which views teachers as dynamic learners in the process of transforming meaning. Professional development is social and continuous taking place through experience and practise, enabling people to learn from and with others. Steyn (2011:44) also states that “professional development is most effective when it is a continuous process that involves properly planned development and follow-up through supportive feedback and observation”. The above statement dispels the current notion of having once-off one-day workshops and professional development meetings.

Secondly, professional development is conceived as collaborative, professional development which occurs through interaction and debate. Steyn (2013:45) also agrees when he indicates that professional development knowledge should be generated and accumulated through collaboration between teachers and leaders. It provides opportunities to discuss criticize and evaluate the processes. Mukeredzi (2013:6) suggests that “there is a need to interact with knowledgeable ‘others’ to

acquire social meanings of important systems and to learn how to utilize them”. Knowledgeable ‘others’, according to him, “are mentors, colleagues and other stakeholders who facilitate and support learning”.

Thirdly, professional development occurs within a particular context. Context should support and contest thinking and assist individuals in becoming effective professionals who are able to deal with and experience real-world challenges. Professional development can be operationalised by means of constructivist learning and can be related to actual situations and the contexts of individual schools (Steyn, 2013:46).

Fourthly, teachers are conceived as reflective practitioners who after obtaining their teaching qualifications will gain more information and understanding, influenced by their prior knowledge and experience. Professional development can be influenced by experiences and knowledge that developed through certain phases (Steyn, 2013:46).

Although not much research has been conducted on the effects of alternative forms of professional development, the research that has been conducted, together with the experience of expert practitioners, provides some initial guidance about the characteristics of high-quality professional development (Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman & Yoon, 2001:917).

Birman, Desimone, Porter and Garet, (2000:29) outline the prerequisites for effective professional development. The concepts follow below:

#### **2.4.1 Structural features for professional development**

Structural features of professional development refer to the type of activities that participants engage in during the programme. They include activities such as workshops, induction, mentoring and in-service training.

##### **2.4.1.1 Form**

The most common type of professional development, especially in South African education, is the workshop. This is the most criticized form of professional development because of its failure to address the actual needs of principals. As a result we have seen a shift away from workshops to mentoring programmes as seen in the ACE School Leadership programme. Induction is one of the approaches that

has gained prominence in the past few years. The problem with induction is that it is seen as a practice best suited to newly appointed principals and teachers as well.

In previous years, the emphasis of professional development in Mpumalanga has been on the implementation of the new curriculum. Since 1994 with the advent of democracy different Ministers of Education have introduced different types of curriculum. These changes have had an impact on the provision of professional development programmes. For many schools, assessment is one of the few generic or pedagogical topics that is addressed during this professional development programme. Even now, schools have to plan for another 'round' of subject based professional development programmes to develop teachers. The crucial thing is that schools should choose the approaches that are suitable for teaching and learning.

There are greater concerns that relate to quality learning that are more than the subjects – how the principal and teachers liaise, the relationship between teacher and the students in a classroom setting; the state of the communication systems in the school; the type of methods used by the teacher to motivate learning; guidance on how to resolve issues. These matters go beyond subject lines and also need professional development time and resources. Making decisions on the best forms of professional development will enable the entire school to benefit from school and individual changes. In short, professional development programmes should be structured such a way that they address the real individual and institutional needs.

#### 2. 4.1.2 Duration

According to Garet *et al.* (2001 921-922), recent literature on teacher learning and professional development appeals for professional development to be continuous. The duration of professional development activities should consist of longer activities that provide an opportunity for in-depth discussion of content, student perceptions and misconceptions. Longer activities are more likely to allow teachers to try out new practices in the classroom and obtain feedback on their teaching (Garet *et al.* 2001: 921-922).

The literature points out that professional learning programmes for principals are supposed to be time rich, providing enough time for learning programmes to be spaced

and intermingled with reciprocal support, in-school applications and reflective encounters (Fluckiger, Lovett & Dempster, 2014:568). The authors argue that the length of time provided in programmes for principalship appears to differ from 6 to 26 months in the programmes they reviewed.

The study will also investigate the timing of these professional development programmes. How much of the management and teaching time is compromised during the implementation of these programmes? How much personal time is used if the programmes are run over week-ends or during school holidays?

#### 2. 4.1.3 Collective participation

“There is a growing interest in professional development that is designed for groups from the same institution. Professional development designed for groups has a number of advantages and working together by participants provides them with opportunities to discuss knowledge (concepts), skills, and problems that arise during their professional development experiences” (Hussin & Al Abri 2015:91).

I also wish to bring into this discussion another dimension of collective participation which is very important in the professional growth of principals in South Africa today. Not only is the collective participation of recipients (principals) important, but also that of service providers. Literature suggests that “professional learning programmes are enriched by the support and engagement of external agencies” (Fluckiger *et al.* 2014: 571). The logic of their presentation is that “when professional learning providers form partnerships with associations, universities and the broader professional world in the development and delivery of programmes, participants are seen to gain from the partnership’s collective knowledge and experience”.

There is this common phrase in education today which drives principals towards leading and managing the schools like a business. This means that principals have to be empowered with some business principles that have relevance in the management of schools, thus the partnerships with other institutions is of vital importance. Rudman (1999:140) makes the point that adults are self-directing and would not want to be told what to do - they prefer to learn from their own experiences. Professional development is likely to bring about changes if it includes everyone, is not imposed but owned by all. In other words, there is a need to build commitment to the innovation amongst

those that have to implement it. It takes time to build this ownership and this needs to be taken into consideration when planning a professional development programme (Birman *et al.* 2000:31).

## **2.5.2 Core features of professional development**

### 2.5.2.1 Content-focus

Content covered during professional development activities varies. Some content or activities are primarily intended to improve knowledge; some are designed to improve general pedagogy. Fluckiger, Lovett and Dempster (2014:566) suggest that “programmes for emerging leaders need to be philosophically and theoretically attuned to both system and individual needs in leadership and professional learning”. The professional development programmes planned should be in line with the policy to empower novice and prospective leaders with knowledge, skills, values and attitudes to assist them to carry out their leadership tasks effectively and efficiently. Another important aspect of content focus is goal orientation. Fluckiger *et al.* (2014:567) state that “professional learning programmes should be goal oriented, with primacy given to the dual aims of school improvement and improvement in student learning and achievement”. They maintain that it is the alignment of practical knowledge and reinforcement of what works that impacts professional practice in ways that make a difference for students. Professional training programmes should make sure that astute leaders obtain a set of strategies to follow the goals with in-depth knowledge and capabilities across various dimensions identified ( Hussin & Al Abri, 2015:91).

### 2.5.2.2 Method of learning

In active learning teachers (principals) are encouraged to be part of essential discussions, planning and preparation as a part of the professional development (Birman *et al.*, 2000:31). Teachers get an opportunity to observe and be observed during presentations, to lead discussions and write reports.

Professional development programmes should enable one to identify a useful strategy more than when attending a normal course. During professional development programmes the emphasis should be on knowledge and understanding that modifies

practice and that allows teachers to analyse the values and beliefs that strengthen that practice.

As Hopkins, Ainscow and West (1994: 41) suggest:

*“All successful change requires an individual response. Often the experience is individually threatening and disconcerting which is why we need organizational settings in schools which support teachers, and students, in the process of change. These settings need first to be organized around the realisation that change is a process that requires individuals to alter their ways of thinking and doing”.*

### 2.5.2.3 Coherence

Birman *et al.* (2000:31) indicates that “coherence specifies the degree to which professional development experiences are part of an integrated program of teacher learning”. Activities should be coherent and reliable with activities built on goals followed by additional activities involving teachers in discussing their experiences. Birman *et al.* (2000:31) also states that activities are also coherent when they support national, state and district standards and assessments. Birman *et al.* (2000:31) remind us that “effective professional development must meet the needs of teachers. It should have, what they call, 'coherence - consistency with their goals, addressing real and daily concerns and building on earlier experiences and learning”.

Steyn (2011:46) argues that “not only must the content of the professional development be relevant to a teacher's day-to-day concerns, but also their experiences in the real world. Professional development must take into account the context and characteristics of the school and its particular students if change is going to occur”. One of the most vital things is to also recognise that teachers will have varying levels of readiness and commitment to take part in reflection and change (Hopkins *et al.* 1994:41). Sometimes, this will rely heavily on a teacher's total outlook and understanding of the area of development. A teacher who may excel in one particular innovation does not necessarily bring the same readiness and level of commitment to another initiative.

The aim of this research is to find out how relevant the existing professional development programmes are that circuit managers are conducting for the principals in the selected circuits in Mpumalanga.

## **2.6 CONDITIONS REQUIRED FOR EFFECTIVE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

Every institution that intends to increase its effectiveness needs to have strategies in place that help it to make its dreams reality. There are many activities that are designed to serve the purpose of professional development. In this section, I will discuss in brief some of the conditions necessary for the effective professional development of teachers. Principals as professional teachers operate in schools under the direct supervision of district offices. This means that the district office has an important role to play in their professional development. Clair and Adger (1999:1) suggest that professional development to improve schooling for all students requires a minimal set of conditions and they list the following conditions as desirable:

- (a) It is of the utmost importance for districts to support coherent and integrated school-based professional development activities. In districts and schools, there are various competing initiatives that drain their resources and weaken their efforts. Unless there is a cooperative and integrated professional development plan that grows out of a district and a focused school vision for student success to which teachers and administrators are committed, workshops will not have any meaning (Mafuwane & Pitsoe, 2014:442).
- (b) It is vital for district and school management to make student, teacher, and organizational learning a priority. Effective teaching and learning for students and adults is fundamental for district leaders and for building up principals. They must be knowledgeable about various tendencies in effective professional development and teaching (Bantwini & Moorosi, 2016:1). To prioritize effective teaching and learning, principals should value time on task, involve the teachers in taking full responsibility for learner education, promote mutual relations with teachers and students, and engage actively in the learning environment of the school.

- (c) There must be enough time and resources for effective professional development to take place. Effective professional development should cover all aspects of improvement and change. Van der Voort and Wood (2016:1) argue that 15 years into democracy there are still dysfunctional schools with low learner achievement as a result of poor management and leadership.

## **2.7 MODELS FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

Various models of professional development incorporate characteristics that are high in quality. Current research and strategies in professional development criticised 'sit-and-get' workshops because they are fragmented, incoherent and isolated from general topics. They suggested teacher/principal-driven efforts to identify and resolve organisational challenges rooted in their everyday work (Ono & Ferreira, 2010:60). According to Fenwick and Pierce (2002:2) three dissimilar philosophical orientations that led the education and professional development of school principals are listed below:

### **2.7.1 Traditional or scientific management**

The traditional or scientific management model is a feature of preparation programmes at tertiary. This model assists principals to pursue coursework of their desired interest; to acquire a higher degree; to improve their administrative skills (Fenwick & Pierce, 2002:2). The scientific model allows principals to be experienced in organisational and behavioural sciences. The principal acquires management principles and guidelines to improve school effectiveness and efficiency (Ono & Ferreira, 2010:60).

### **2.7.2 The Craft Model**

With the Craft Model, the principal is taught by experienced mentors. The principal as a learner is guided through the administrative and managerial functions from a mentor whom she/ he shadows in field experiences (Fenwick & Pierce, 2002:3). The objective of shadowing is to gain experience while observing how the experienced principal deals with issues and responds to challenges, and how the principal engages with staff and other stakeholders. "The observer learns another way of handling school concerns. In the craft approach, the source of professional knowledge is the practical

wisdom of experienced practitioners and the context for learning is a real school setting” (Fenwick & Pierce, 2002:3).

### **2.7.3 Reflective inquiry**

In this approach to professional development, the principal is encouraged to generate knowledge through a process of systematic inquiry. The focus is to create principals who are able to make informed, reflective and self-critical judgements about their professional practice. Here, principals are active participants in their learning and the source of knowledge is in self-reflection and engagement. Encouraging principals to reflect on their values and beliefs regarding their roles as school leaders is the main goal of this approach (Fenwick & Pierce, 2002:3).

There are other professional development models that have gained popularity in South Africa and in other countries. Of particular interest for this study are mentoring and Content-Based Collaborative Inquiry

### **2.7.4 Mentoring**

Mentoring is the process whereby an experienced individual leads and guides a lesser experienced individual towards professional, corporate and personal growth (Stead, 2005:172). Rookie and master teachers are offered an opportunity to learn from one another in a particular way through mentoring (George & Robinson, 2011; Mukeredzi, 2013:6). Mentorship has the ability to assist new teachers learn how to innovatively and effectively meet the daily challenges of teaching. Mentoring takes place around activities such as coaching, classroom observations, collaborative teaching and feedback.

### **2.7.5 Content-Based Collaborative Inquiry (CBCI) and Cognitively Guided Instruction (CGI)**

In CBCI and CGI, teachers collaborate to create a deeper understanding of how their students think about, and understand particular subjects (Fenwick & Pierce, 2002:3). In the same manner, principals can also benefit when they come together and create a deeper understanding of their leadership and management responsibilities. In implementing the above model, facilitators (circuit managers) collect and analyse data,

pose questions about the understanding of principals, share the findings with their colleagues, and work together to create solutions for management.

### **2.7.6 Professional learning in community**

While more emphasis and accountability for school improvement has been placed on the shoulders of the principal, very little has been done to spread the responsibility and accountability to the entire school community. All stakeholders involved in education in a form that is called a school community should place more emphasis on ensuring that everyone learns and forms what has recently been called 'professional learning communities'. The term 'professional learning community' (PLC) defines a process where stakeholders working together share critically and interrogate practices in an on-going, reflective and learning orientation process (De Matthews, 2014:6). A school that operates in this manner engages the whole group of professionals in uniting to learn within a supportive, self-created community. The traditional role of the omnipotent principal is replaced by a mutual leadership structure within professional learning communities (Cranston 2009:1). Cranston (2009:1) believes that proficient learning communities provide an infrastructure to address multiple problems which relate to school improvement. The structure, according to Cranston, brings a context of collegiality which supports teachers and administrators in bettering their practice through learning new curriculum and instructional tactics and methods for meaningful interactions. Staff members have the ability to look deeply into the teaching and learning process and to learn how to become more effective in their work through professional learning communities (Cranston, 2009:3). The characteristics of effective PLCs describes how principals and educators work together to inquire, share their knowledge, engage in leadership, and enhance their community's ability to meet the needs of all students ( Spillane, 2012; De Matthews, 2014).

Msila and Mtshali (2011:4) identified seven sets of learning that offer a beneficial organizer for a learning community:

#### **2.7.6.1 Contextual knowledge**

Effective and successful leaders make connections by developing a firm knowledge and understanding of their contexts. Schools are understood in their particular

contexts. In South Africa for example, schools in rural areas operate differently from urban schools. Former white schools are different from historically black schools. As a leader it is crucial to understand these contexts (Msila & Mtshali, 2011:4)

#### 2.7.6.2 Political acumen

In schools there are people with varying levels of power and different interests, which usually results in conflict. Effective leaders utilise political approaches, such as negotiations, to move schools towards agreed-upon goals (Msila & Mtshali, 2011:4).

#### 2.7.6.3 Emotional understanding

Leaders of learning are able to read the emotive replies of their followers. “Leaders with emotional understanding do however, lead their colleagues into uncharted territory on the change of journey, through the impassioned and critical engagements or critique of ideas, purpose and practices” (Msila & Mtshali, 2011:4).

#### 2.7.6.4 Understanding learning

It is essential for leaders to understand the learning process in order to support learning and promote other’s learning (Msila & Mtshali, 2011:5). PLCs help school communities to overcome obstacles and organisational challenges (De Matthews, 2014:25).

#### 2.7.6.5 Critical thinking

Leaders need to make quality judgements and informed choices for the benefit of their schools. The reason that many schools fail is because the people at the helm are not critical thinkers. “Innovation and creativity which are the lifeblood of leadership for learning, require the ability to ask better questions not recycle old answers” (Msila & Mtshali, 2011:5).

#### 2.7.6.6 Making connections

Leaders of learning need to make connections with all the stakeholders. Stakeholders, both inside and outside the school need to see what is happening in the school. This helps in understanding the school as a holistic organisation. The parents, the community, the district office and business should view the school and see the

interconnections and interrelationships happening in a school (Msila & Mtshali, 2011:5).

#### 2.7.6.7 Future thinking

To be able to communicate a shared vision and a sense of purpose, leaders have to understand the forces that influence the life and culture of a school. It helps to anticipate the future because colleagues will then not be shaken by educational changes and transformation (Msila & Mtshali, 2011:5).

## 2.8 THE DISTRICT ROLE IN PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

A discussion on the role of the district office in the professional development of principals is presented in this section. The role of the district should not be confused with that of the circuit manager. Circuit managers are district officials placed in and responsible for circuit offices (DBE, 2013.) Their mandate in the circuits is directly abstracted from the district objectives and plans, thus their roles are discussed as district roles. Moorosi and Bantwini (2016:1) contend that schools and district goals should be aligned with professional development programmes that strengthen a perfect picture of the district priorities in order for school districts to have the ability to impact student learning.

The district office plays a crucial role in providing the pressure and support needed to improve schools and achieve quality education (RSA, DBE, 2013). The district office provides resources to schools for professional learning, capacitates leaders in education and offers practical support.

Districts help principals and teachers with how to use data to set goals, monitor progress on performance and to analyse data (RSA, DBE, 2013).

The study focuses on the role of the circuit manager as a district official in ensuring and implementing professional development for school principals. According to (Sparks, 2002:66), the success of the school lies in the hands of the principal. Excellent leaders, he contends, are focused on the quality of learning. Many important types of professional development for principals are therefore, in the opinion of Sparks (2002) standards-based and rooted in their day-to-day tasks. Sparks (2002:78) proposes four types of standards that guide principals' learning;

- (a) Standards for student learning: These standards are promulgated by the states and school systems and provide directions for school improvement efforts by helping the school determine its academic strengths and weaknesses.
- (b) Standards for teaching: such as those developed by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards and offer a benchmark against which the principal and teachers can compare their practices, provide a common vocabulary for instructional improvement, and give purpose and meaning to teacher evaluation.
- (c) Standards for staff development: these guide leaders in selecting the content and learning processes for school employees.
- (d) Standards for leadership provide direction for principals' learning. These standards determine what principals should be knowledgeable about and which professional development programmes best suit what is to be learnt.

The work of Sparks (2002) is further confirmed by Fenwick and Pierce (2002:4) when they state that principals' professional development must be well organized, continuous, rooted in their daily tasks and focused on student performance. In addition to hiring the right candidates, districts need to provide principals already on the job with on-going professional development and surround them with teams of experts (Fenwick & Pierce, 2002:4).

## **2.9 INTERNATIONAL APPROACHES TO PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF SCHOOL PRINCIPALS**

Globally, the professional development of teachers and principals is a central factor in determining the quality of education (Hussin & Al Abri, 2015:91). District structures play an important role in ensuring excellent professional development programmes and that teachers and principals gain experience (Moorosi & Bantwini, 2016:1). The section that follows will attempt to highlight a number of international practices in the professional development of principals.

### 2.9.1 Australia

In 2010 the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership was created to promote excellence in the teaching and school leadership profession (Schleicher, 2012:21). The Ministry of Education supported the independent institution in “its role to improve and support national professional standards and school leadership, to implement system of national accreditation of teachers and foster high-quality professional development for teachers and school leaders” (Schleicher, 2012:21). According to Schleicher (2012:21) “the National Professional Standards for Principals came into effect in 2011 and based on three requirements for leadership: vision and values, knowledge and comprehension, personal qualities, social and communication skills”.

In the absence of individual needs and a purpose-need programme, Dempster, Flückiger and Lovett (2012:1) reflect on principals’ leadership learning and argue that attention is not paid to principals’ agency in the pursuit of their own learning. When the standards and capability frameworks of leaders were examined, two limitations were noted; (1) restrictions on what is given prominence - it is crucial to consider who is being served along with how the frameworks may allow or restrict the features of individual leaders and practices. They argue that the content of frameworks is decided by employers and systems, (2) current understanding of the demands and pressures of the future - frameworks should be open for adjustments or additions by individuals to compensate for the particular leadership learning (Dempster *et al*, 2012:1).

The professional development programmes for emerging principals were conducted by the Queensland Education Leadership Institute (QELi) (Flückiger, Lovett and Dempster, 2014:566). The aim of this programme is to attract potential leaders who want to become school principals. They discovered from the feedback of participants that the development was effective. The features identified in the programme were that it takes 12 months to complete and that it was delivered through a blended learning approach. The Principals Australia Institute (PAI) provides leadership developmental programmes and professional assistance for principals (Kilvert, 2013:3). The programme is aimed at current and aspiring leaders including principals, executives and middle management. It is offered as online self-paced modules with flexible timing for completion. It is a principal certification, endorsed by the Australian

Minister of Education, that recognises and strengthens the contributions that the principal has made to the quality of learning (Kilvert, 2013:1) However, it is not a requirement for appointment or qualification for new principalship (Flückiger, *et al.* 2014:566). Flückiger, Lovett, Dempster and Brown (2015:72) contend that internationally there is a need for leadership learning programmes that focus on the enhancement of leaders as leaders of learning.

### **2.9.2 England**

In England, the professional development of the beginner principal and the in-service training is a recognised practice preparing participants for the role of the head teacher. The National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH) is offered by the National College for Teaching and Leadership recognised by the Department for Education (Kilvert, 2013:5). This programme was compulsory but now is voluntary intended for aspiring principals and takes 6 to 18 months to complete (Kilvert, 2013:5)

The revised NPQH has three phases; (1) the candidate to be identified for headship within 18 months and (2) the development programme which includes induction, the completion of core and elective modules; leadership and improvement in teaching, effective school leadership and headship succession. This comprises a nine-day placement supported by a network of trainee head teachers, coaches, work-based learning, conferences and master classes, 50 hours of study with 20 hours of work based study, 15 hours face to face activities on leadership development and 15 hours of reading and reflection, and (3) the competency framework assessment on a work-based task where the trainee is employed, a task in a partnership placement school and the school where the trainee is employed (Taysum, 2013:7-8).

### **2.9.3 The United States of America**

It would be well beyond the scope of this study to provide a detailed discussion of principal professional development across the entire United States of America. This is merely a snapshot to contribute to this discussion of the international perspective for principal professional development. The United States of America (USA) Department of Education promotes the fact that experienced peers should support and guide new managers to adjust and to succeed in management and leadership (Mathibe, 2007:528). When a principal is appointed, continuous learning and skills development

programmes should be conducted in this manner: development of course work; orientation of beginner principals; feedback to principals; conduct cluster meetings for problem solving and facilitate in-service training (Mathibe, 2007:528). According to Mathibe (2007:529) the Leadership in Education Apprentice Design (LEAD) programme that aimed to support principals in the USA is as follows: (1) training - includes workshops on effective techniques to help principals in listening skills and school administration, (2) networking-participation in a principals' academy, creation of district clusters, and (3) coaching management to offer support to newly appointed principals, identification of retired principals who can serve as mentors and inspire principals to form peer support groups.

In strengthening the management and leadership development the School Administrators Association, "Look before you leap" organised a programme of half day seminars to prepare aspiring candidates for principal positions (Schleicher, 2012:23). In cultivating the school leadership in the USA, "New Leaders" known as the national principals' programme, prepares principals for the district and charter schools (Schleicher, 2012:23).

## **2.10 SUMMARY**

In this chapter a literature review was undertaken to understand and explore professional development. Numerous authors have shown that lack of professional development and the absence of training for principals' results in poor school performance (Mafuwane & Pitsoe, 2014). Research has also shown that the principal's role is to improve academic achievements and education quality. Sufficient time therefore needs to be given to the principal's own professional development for in-depth understanding of the profession and improved practise (Kedzior, 2004; Steyn, 2013).

As far as the local situation is concerned, the professional development of teachers has received much attention in South Africa since the dawn of the new democracy in 1994. Much has been written and said about its importance for learner achievement, not only in South Africa, but also world-wide (Muse & Abrams, 2011; Cranston, 2013). The poor administration and leadership of schools in South Africa has indicated the need for the professional development of principals as more attention is given to the

effectiveness of schools as centres of teaching and learning (Mathibe, 2007:529). This chapter also discussed the concepts deemed important in studying the effective professional development of principals. Core and structural features have been discussed as providing a guideline on how to structure an effective professional development programme. The international perspective of the professional development of principals was also discussed to provide a comparative perspective of what each method was able to achieve.

The bottom line is articulated by Mathibe (2007:523) when he states that “principals should be exposed to programmes of professional development in order to ensure that schools are managed and led by appropriately qualified principals who understand the notion of optimum utilisation of educational potential”. This study focuses on the role that the circuit manager plays in ensuring that school principals are well capacitated with knowledge and a set of skills for the efficient leadership and management of schools.

The next chapter outlines the research methodology and design used in the study.

## **CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN**

### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter is structured around the research approach, research paradigm, research design, data collection strategies, sampling strategy, participants and data analysis. It further addresses how ethical issues were considered and also how reliability and validity of the results were assured.

Methodology encompasses the approach, design, methodological limitations, sampling procedures, data collection and analysis (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2009:47). In methodology, data is presented, interpreted, validated and the prospective outcome of the study is specified (Creswell, 2014:184). Cohen *et al.* (2009:47) contend that methodology aims to understand the process of the scientific inquiry process.

### **3.2 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

As alluded to in chapter 1, this study was guided by the following concepts related to effective professional development as detailed by Birman, Desimone, Porter and Garet, (2000:29). The concepts are (1) structural features of professional development which includes (i) form, (ii) duration, and (iii) participation, and (2) core features which include (i) content focus, (ii) active learning, and (iii) coherence.

The diagram below serves to illustrate the use of these concepts to frame the study:

# FEATURES OF AN EFFECTIVE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

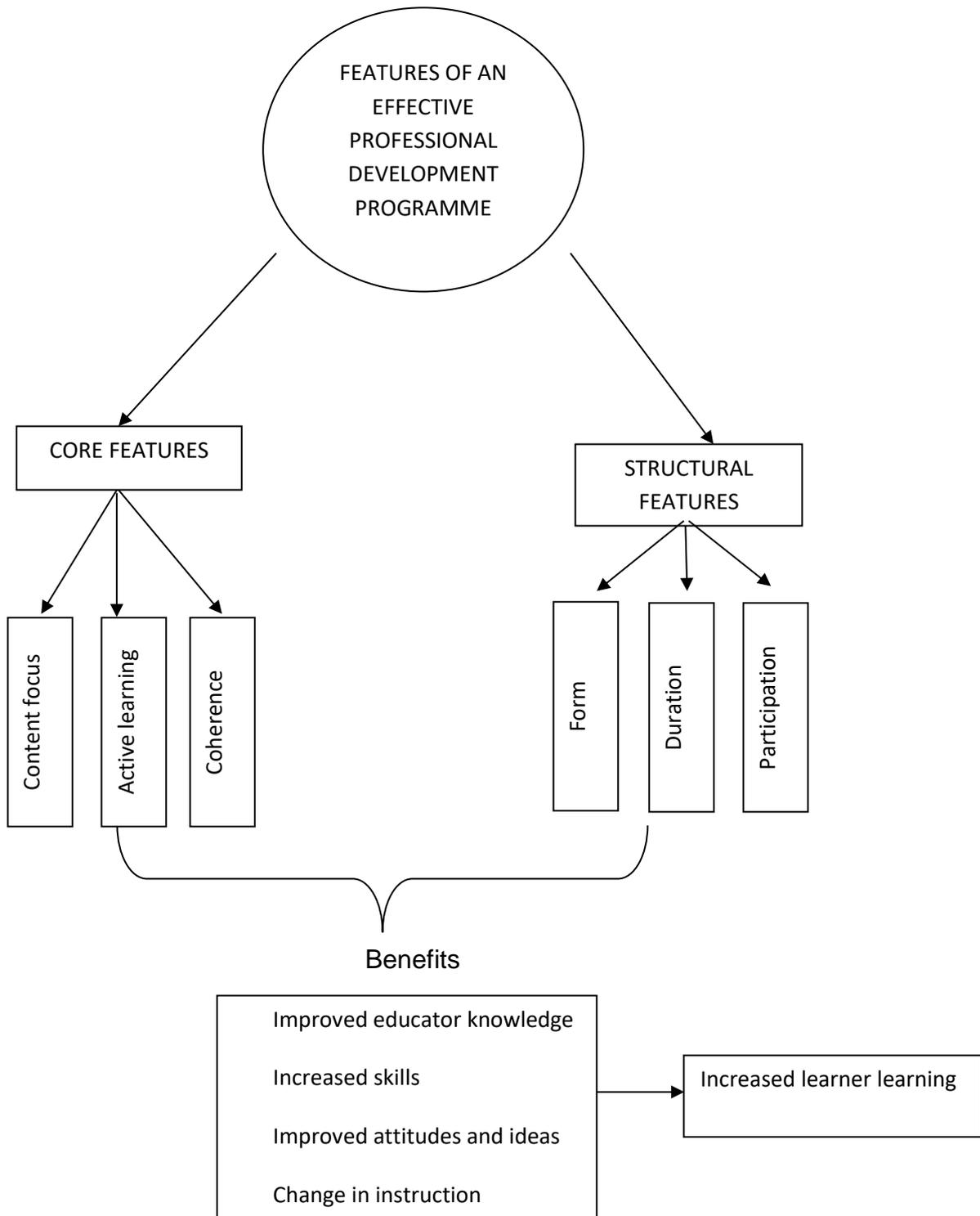


Figure 1.1 Illustration of features of an effective professional development programme - adapted from Birman *et al.* (2000:30)

### 3.2.1 Structural Features

- a. Form - refers to how the professional development programme is designed.
- b. Duration - the time within which the programme is going to be undertaken and completed.
- c. Participation - refers to the type and number of participants in the programme.

Participation also covers the nature of participation whether individually or in groups (Birman *et al.* 2000:29). Professional development programmes of a longer period have extra content knowledge that gives an opportunity for active participation to promote growth and increase learning (Birman *et al.* 2000:30). According to Birman *et al.* (2000:30) professional development activities that include shared learning from the same department, subject or colleagues gives educators the opportunity to discuss concepts and integrate what they have learned to address challenges or develop common instructional goals. Mukeredzi, (2013:6) affirms this when she states that collaborative interaction affords opportunities to interact with knowledgeable people, discuss issues, criticise and acquire knowledge from one another.

### 3.2.2 Core Features

a. Content Focus - the degree to which content focuses on improving individual knowledge (Birman *et al.* 2000:30). Content is considered to be the most significant concept of professional development and hence it covers the understanding of the subject area and how the content is learned (Kang, Cha & Ha, 2013:12). Professional development that is content focused can influence student knowledge.

b. Active learning - the engagement of participants towards active learning (Birman *et al.* 2000:30). Researchers mentioned different ways of promoting active learning during professional development; observing expert students or being observed, engaging in a meaningful discussion, reviewing student work and presentations and mentoring (Birman *et al.*, 2000; Blank *et al.*, 2008; Desimone, 2009; Kang *et al.*, 2013:13).

c. Coherence: How relevant was the programme in relation to the learning and assessment goals of the participants (Birman *et al.* 2000:31). Coherence indicates how professional development programmes are integrated and activities are

consistent with the educator's goals (Birman *et al.* 2000:31). Professional development is more effective when aligned to district goals rather than contradicting one another (Odden, Archibald, Fermanich & Gallagher, 2002:56). Mafuwane and Pitsoe (2014:442) share the view when they argue that unclear and unconnected development programmes can impact negatively on the entire development of schools. They emphasize the coherence, alignment and coordination of the programmes.

These concepts which framed this study were analysed from data both from the interviews and the document analysis. The questions and document items sought to determine the existence of these features from the responses given by participants. The structure of the professional development programme was expected to comply with issues of how it was structured, how long it would last and how the involvement of participants was guaranteed. Failure to have a proper purpose driven programme was seen as disastrous in any professional development programme.

### **3.3 RESEARCH APPROACH, PARADIGM AND DESIGN**

#### **3.3.1 Research Approach**

Creswell (2013:32) identifies qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods research as the three most commonly used research approaches. The researcher selected the qualitative research approach for this study to gain new understanding about the phenomenon of the professional development of principals by circuit managers. According to Creswell (2013:32), qualitative research is an inquiry process where the researcher seeks to understand the individual life experience and different organisational cultures and experiences of the participants. McMillan and Schumacher (2014:344) concur with the above when they state that:

*“Qualitative research begins with assumptions, a world view, and the possible use of theoretical lens and the study of the research problems inquiring into the meaning an individual or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. Qualitative researchers use an emerging qualitative approach to inquiry, the collection of data in a nature setting sensitive to the people and place under study and data analysis that is inductive and establishes pattern and themes”.*

During the interaction between the researcher and the participants, the participants' world was discovered through face-to-face interviews and the data gathered was interpreted by means of qualitative methods (Creswell, 2013:3). The research questions were broad in order to understand the perceptions and experiences of participants. It is thus fair to state that the qualitative research approach was used to understand the thoughts, feelings and experiences of the circuit managers in and about their role in the professional development of principals. Also important was to understand how principals attach meaning and understanding to their own professional development.

The advantage of using the qualitative research approach was that the study gathered the rich and in-depth responses of the participants in the natural settings where they experienced the phenomenon of professional development (Creswell, 2014:185). The interactions between the researcher and participants brought to light the understanding and the interpretations they had of their various roles in professional development. It was not the general characteristics of the large number of individuals that the study was looking for, but rather the interpretations and understanding from a smaller representative group - the circuit managers and the principals.

### **3.3.2 Research paradigm**

The study adopted a constructivist model which employs inductive judgement and qualitative research approaches in order to determine how participants constructed meaning and knowledge related to their various roles in professional development. The concept 'paradigm' is viewed as a "set of basic beliefs" or assumptions that assists the researcher's investigation (Creswell, 2013:35). The basic belief that guided this study was that of "constructivism" which according to Creswell (2014:8) is the "...belief that individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work, and that individuals develop subjective meanings of their experiences -meanings directed toward certain objects or things".

Because the researcher aimed to understand how others (the participants - circuit managers and principals) view and perceive the nature of the world, and make or construct meaning for themselves about what they see and experience, the

constructivist paradigm as defined above was deemed the most appropriate for this study.

### **3.3.3 Research design**

According to McMillan and Schumacher (2014:28) research design is the plan or strategy that describes the procedures of collecting data to answer the research question(s), data collection methods, data analysis, selection of participants and research sites. The research design selected was a case study design. This research design ensures that the evidence obtained from participants during data collection assisted in responding to the research questions. In this case study the researcher collected data from school principals and circuit managers.

Leedy and Ormrod (2014:143) define a case study as a detailed study of a programme or an individual or group for a defined period of time to arrive at a factual description and understanding of the programme, individual or group. In this study, the case of the role of circuit managers in the professional development of principals as it happens in four circuits of the Gert Sibande district of Mpumalanga province was studied and described. The case study design showed who the participants would have to be and where and when they were to be studied. The researcher focused on the principals and the circuit managers in order to understand their perceptions and experiences on professional development programmes. The researcher was concerned with the rich descriptions of events that form part of the professional development of principals by circuit managers.

## **3.4. DATA COLLECTION STRATEGIES**

McMillan and Schumacher (2010:408) posit that data collection is accomplished through a variety of techniques and methods - it is therefore the way in which data is gathered before it is analysed and interpreted. The researcher collected data through interviews, field notes and document analysis, each of which will be discussed in greater detail in the sections that follow.

### **3.4.1 Interviews**

Interviews help in obtaining rich descriptive information that assists the researcher to understand the participants' construction of knowledge and social reality (Maree,

2012:87). Consequently, interviews were regarded as the most suitable instrument for this study because interviews are a tool that is flexible for collecting data using multi-sensory channels such as verbal, non-verbal, heard and spoken communication to be recorded (Cohen *et al.* 2009:349). During the interviews the researcher watched each participant and recorded what was said and done.

The purpose of the interview is to ask questions in order to generate data from participants. To this end, the researcher's questions were developed from the main questions and sub-questions of the study (Cohen *et al.* 2013:349). The use of semi-structured, open-ended interviews (Maree, 2012:87) assisted the researcher to ask probing questions and to clear answers to questions that evoked long narratives. Since this type of interview is flexible it allowed the researcher to obtain rich descriptive data that assisted in understanding the participants' perceptions and experiences of the phenomenon that is professional development (Maree, 2012:89).

McMillan and Schumacher (2014:363) contend that the advantage of this form of interview is that participants are afforded the opportunity to express their own views and perceptions in their own words because responses are open-ended and not confined to set predetermined categories. Semi-structured interviews also ensured the comparability of data. Through the semi-structured interviews the researcher was able to analyse, interpret and compare the participants' experiences in relation to professional development. The interview protocol together with the protocol used to analyse documents is attached as an annexure to this dissertation.

The researcher interviewed three principals and four circuit managers. The interviews were conducted after hours to avoid interfering with their professional work. The interview questions aligned with the conceptual framework guiding this study were helpful in gathering rich data on the experiences and perceptions of the participants. Standardized questions were employed with all participants and the researcher ensured that participants did not deviate from the original questions. The interviewees' responses were audio recorded by the researcher and hand-written notes were captured to support the recordings (Maree, 2012:89). The participants were thanked and were promised the copy of the transcription of the interview to verify the data.

### **3.4.2 Field notes**

During the interview sessions the researcher made notes on her observations of what was happening with regards to the participants' reactions and feelings. This was necessary in order to capture the non-verbal cues which were important in getting to the moods and feelings of the interviewees. These field notes (Creswell, 2014:185) were transcribed as soon as possible after the interviews. The researcher jotted down key words and phrases which were later expanded into field notes. The notes assisted the researcher to comprehend transcriptions and to understand the responses within the given context. The researcher listened to the recordings, reviewed the field notes and reflected on the interviews to assist in the identification of emerging ideas and themes (Maree, 2012:89).

### **3.4.3 Document analysis**

McMillan and Schumacher (2010:361) describe documentary analysis as one of the data collection tools for testing information captured during interviews. The document analysis instrument used during this study (attached as annexure B) revealed additional important information that the researcher could not elicit from participants during the interactive (interview) data collection process. The researcher used (a) policies and legislative documents and (b) minutes of principals meetings and circulars to assist her in attaining the research goals and objectives of the study. The documents which were analysed consisted mainly of agendas and minutes of the meetings principals have had with their circuit managers. The questions that the documents answered were inclusive of the perceptions principals and circuit managers had of professional development and how they experience these programmes.

The protocol used to analyse these documents consisted of items linked to the conceptual framework used in the study. Each document was perused to determine whether (a) the content to be discussed at the meeting was present, (b) there was any coherence on issues discussed from one meeting to the next, (c) participation as assured, and finally (d) whether the issues discussed during these sessions could be seen as part of professional development or not.

### **3.5 SAMPLING STRATEGY, PARTICIPANTS AND SITES**

Maree (2012:79) refers to sampling as the method used to handpick a sample of the population for a study. The researcher opted for a purposive sampling strategy to obtain participants knowledgeable in the focus of the study, namely the role of circuit managers in the professional development of principals. Cohen *et al.* (2011:157) confirm that purposive sampling is used in order to have an in-depth knowledge of the phenomenon being studied, when the researcher is allowed to select particular features from the population that will be helpful on the topic. Four circuit managers responsible for the sampled circuits and three principals of the schools were selected for participation. The circuit managers selected were from four circuits in the Gert Sibande District in Mpumalanga Province. These circuits were chosen because of their history of poor management of schools. The schools were identified as having had the lowest scores in the Annual National Assessment (ANA) tests, specifically in numeracy and languages for the three years from 2009 to 2011.

The principals sampled included one primary school principal and two secondary school principals. The selection of primary and secondary school principals assisted the researcher in understanding the perceptions and experiences regarding the role of the circuit manager in their professional development across the broader spectrum of school types. Primary schools are where the foundation of learning is laid, while secondary schools are where learners are prepared for the final examination of their school careers. At both these stages it is important to have management and leadership that is sound both inside and outside the classroom.

Furthermore the selection was appropriate to get a view of whether professional development is regarded as equally important in both primary and secondary schools in the district. The main purpose for this sampling was thus to determine the role of circuit managers in the professional support they offer to the principals of the primary and secondary schools.

The choice of purposive sampling forced the researcher to think critically about the parameters of the study population and the choice of the sample (Silverman, 2010:141). Purposive sampling means that participants are selected because of the particular characteristics (Maree, 2012:178) that make them the holders of the data required for the study. In qualitative research the inquiry depends on the richness of

information and so the sample size does not determine the research significance (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014:352).

The sample selection is shown in table 3.1 below:

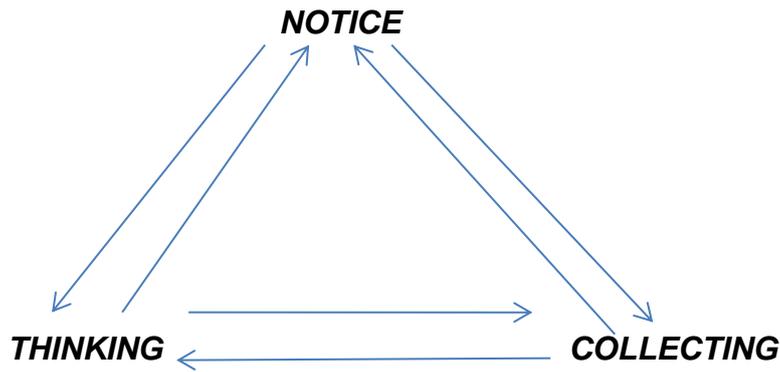
**Table 3.1: Table of participants for each circuit**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Circuit Manager</b>	<b>Principal</b>	<b>Total</b>
Circuit 1	1	1 Secondary school	2
Circuit 2	1	1 Primary school	2
Circuit 3	1	1 Secondary school	2
Circuit 4	1	-	1
<b>Total number of participants: 7</b>			

### **3.6 DATA ANALYSIS**

Data analysis began immediately after the interviews were completed and this process helped to shape the subsequent data gathering processes (Maree, 2012:18). The content analysis strategy was employed for this study. Cohen *et al.* (2009:475) refer to content analysis as the process of summarising, verifying, analysing and reporting the main contents of written data (interview transcripts in this case) and their messages. Content analysis was used to transform raw data into new knowledge. This involved coding that created meaningful categories into which the units of analysis – words, phrases and sentences, were placed, compared categorized and linked (Cohen *et al.* 2009:476). The analysis aimed at constructing an understanding of the role of the circuit managers in the professional development of school principals.

In the process of engaging with the interview data, the following process as described by Seidel (1998:2) provided a better understanding of what unfolded during the data analysis process. Seidel (1998) provides the three simple notes as discussed below:



**Figure 3.2** Indicates a repeating cycle in data analysis and how researchers are often in conversation with their data.

During the analysis process, recordings were listened to several times and during the process, important points and issues were noted and recorded. There were issues that appeared similar in the responses of the participants and those were noted and coded. There were also instances where responses differed from one participant to another from the same circuit and that was noted for analysis and possible further probes.

During the collecting stage information was collated, shifted and sorted into categories. Categories containing similar information were grouped together. The process allowed for sorting the information in order to deduce meanings participants attached to the phenomenon under scrutiny. Information was grouped into themes and categories. This was a difficult and time consuming process since there were conflicting statements from the circuit managers which in many instances were disputed by the principals.

During the thinking stage, the researcher analysed, synthesised and found patterns to make sense of them. At this stage the themes were analysed for meaning. This made it possible for the researcher to identify principals who received support from their circuit managers and those who did not. The principals' understanding of professional development as well as their awareness of what was expected from their circuit managers was ascertained. The understanding of the circuit managers of their roles in supporting principals was also uncovered during this process.

The process is described as 'iterative' - a repeating cycle that returns to the previous point. In order to be certain of the analysed data, the researcher went over the transcripts repeatedly to validate the findings.

### **3.7 ETHICAL CONSIDERATION**

Research ethics is concerned with how participants are treated, methods of data collection and how data is handled after it was collected (Vander Stoep & Johnston, 2009:12). The researcher ensured that participants understood the nature of the research and the confidentiality of the results. The researcher considered the following ethical issues:

#### **3.7.1 Permission to conduct the research**

Permission to conduct the research was requested from the Mpumalanga Provincial Education Department. Permission was also requested from the chairpersons of the governing body of the three schools and also from the four circuit managers (Cohen *et al.* 2011:81). The invitations to principals and the application letters to the provincial education department and circuit stated the topic as well as the aims of the research. Among the conditions, the time within which the interviews would be conducted was explained and assurance was given in terms of compliance with working hours.

#### **3.7.2 Informed consent**

The researcher visited the participants at their different sites to briefly explain what the study was about, what their voluntary participation would entail and their right to withdraw whenever and for whatever reason they wished (Silverman, 2010:155). The sampled principals and circuit managers were invited through letters and were requested to sign letters indicating their informed consent - these letters included information on the nature of the research as well as the conditions for participation.

#### **3.7.3 Confidentiality and anonymity**

The participants were assured of the confidentiality of both their personal details (names, name of school etc.) as well as of the data that was to be recorded (Maree, 2012:41). Participants were informed about their right to withdraw from the study at any time if they felt uncomfortable (Silverman, 2010:155). Participants' responses

were kept confidential and the results were and will continue to be presented in such a way that their identities are protected. The transcripts were treated with the strictest confidentiality at all times, and were kept under password protection on the researcher's personal computer.

### **3.8 TRUSTWORTHINESS AND CREDIBILITY**

It was important for the researcher to assess the accuracy of the findings and confirm that accuracy with the participants through member checking (Creswell, 2014:201). The participants were given the interview transcripts to check and verify accuracy and interpretation. This was done to obtain their agreement or disagreement on how the researcher had represented them.

The data triangulation method was employed to increase the validity of the study. McMillan and Schumacher (2014:401) explain triangulation as the 'cross-validation' among data sources and data collection strategies in the study. It is the process of examining evidence from different data sources to seek for common themes to support the validity of the findings. The use of different data collection techniques like interviews, document analysis and the researcher's field notes ensured the credibility of the data. The recorded interviews, the documents analysed and the researcher's notes were compared and triangulated to build coherent validation for themes (Creswell, 2014:201).

### **3.9 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

Maree (2012:42) points out that limitations help to show the possible shortcomings and potential weakness of the study. Conducting semi-structured interviews was time consuming, as was the process of transcribing the interviews. McMillan and Schumacher (2010:357) point out the possibility for subjectivity, bias and criticism of the interviews for the lack of anonymity during the collection of the data.

The sample was relatively small and the results of this research can therefore not be generalized to the entire population of principals and circuit managers in the Gert Sibande district (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014:352). The circuit managers sampled consisted of only one white female and the rest were black. This has a possible effect of undermining the practices of professional development as found in former model C

schools. Most of the black principals and circuit managers were from a poor management and educational leadership background and did not have much understanding of the phenomenon in question.

Lastly, some of the participants were reticent to answer probing questions which sought to determine their personal views on their supervising circuit managers, possibly fearing victimization.

### **3.10 SUMMARY**

This chapter discussed in detail the applied research design and methodology. The research design used for the study was a case study design and it assisted the researcher to explore the experiences and perceptions of the various roles in the professional development of principals during the data collection process. The research paradigm, data collection methods, data analysis, ethical issues, validity and reliability were discussed in depth. In the next chapter the research findings which emanated from the interviews is discussed in detailed.

# **CHAPTER 4**

## **DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS**

### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

The objective of the study was to identify and describe the role played by circuit managers in the professional development of principals. This chapter presents the data and findings obtained through the semi-structured interviews conducted with three principals and four circuit managers in the Gert Sibande district in Mpumalanga. The first part of this chapter presents a brief review of the data analysis strategies employed in the study. Thereafter follows a description of the participants and a brief review of the sampling strategies employed. After this follows the data is then presented with a discussion of the findings under the headings developed for the interview protocol, namely (a) the participants' (circuit managers) views on their role in the professional development of principals and (b) the principals' perceptions of the circuit managers' roles in their professional development.

In the second part of this chapter, the findings of the study are discussed in relation to the concepts outlining the prerequisites for effective professional development, namely the structural features of professional development including form, duration and participation and the core features of such development which include content focus, active learning and coherence. As mentioned in chapter 3, these concepts were used as a conceptual framework for the study.

### **4.2 LAY-OUT OF THE PRESENTATION OF DATA**

The researcher used content analysis to identify similarities and differences when summarizing data with the purpose of providing knowledge and new insights into the role of circuit managers in the professional development of principals. Data analysis produced the following themes which provided a framework for the discussion of the findings of this study: (a) the role of the circuit manager, (b) forms of professional development, (c) the duration of the programmes, (d) the content of the programmes, (e) the activities included in programmes, (f) the coherence and integration of programmes and (g) the success rate of programmes.

Before discussing the findings, the researcher began by profiling both circuit managers and principals using the data obtained from the first two interview questions which required information on their career paths to their current posts. The participants were coded as indicated below to hide their identities.

**Table 4.1 Participant codes**

Circuit Manager 1	C#1
Circuit Manager 2	C#2
Circuit Manager 3	C#3
Circuit Manager 4	C#4
Principal 1	P#1
Principal 2	P#2
Principal 3	P#3

### **4.3 THE PARTICIPANTS**

#### **4.3.1 Participant Profiles - Circuit Managers**

The career path and experiences of circuit managers is reflected in table 4.2 below:

**Table 4.2 Experiences and career path of circuit managers**

<b>Participant Number</b>	<b>CM years of Experience</b>	<b>Number of schools in the circuit</b>	<b>Career Path to the post of CM</b>
<b>C#1</b>	5 years	33 schools – 11 secondary schools and 22 primary schools	Teacher, senior teacher, head of department, principal, acting circuit manager for 3 years and circuit manager for 2 years
<b>C#2</b>	11 years	27 schools – 6 secondary schools and 21 primary schools	Teacher, principal and a circuit manager for 11 years
<b>C#3</b>	7 years	28 schools – 9 secondary schools and 19 primary schools	Teacher, head of department, principal and a circuit manager for 7 years
<b>C#4</b>	4 years	25 schools - 7 secondary schools and 17 primary schools	Teacher, deputy principal, principal, acting circuit manager for 2 years and a circuit manager for 2 years

#### **4.3.2 Circuit manager’s experiences and career path**

The first circuit manager to be interviewed (C#1) outlined her career path as having started as a teacher, head of department up to principal. This is how she described her progression:

*“After that I went to a permanent post for four years and I became a senior teacher, became HOD, and principal and then Mr X, the CES Circuits coordinator came to my school and asked me to act in the post as the*

*circuit manager was ill and then I acted for three years and he eventually resigned, I applied for the post” (C#1).*

The leadership and management experience seemed to have played a role in influencing the participant to take up the position of circuit manager.

Circuit manager (C#3) went up to the rank of a circuit manager in the same manner as circuit manager (C#1) and said;

*“I think I started as an ordinary teacher like everyone else and then I moved..., since 1986, then I moved through the ranks I became HOD,.... by then I started the school which err...I think that gave me a platform to be circuit manager because my school did very well.... And when the post for circuit management was advertised, I applied... I was encouraged to apply based on my performance at the high school. I went for the interviews and I got the post. Since then I have been there until now” (CM#3).*

Teaching, leadership and management experiences were likely the driving force which encouraged the recommendations and appointments of the circuit managers into their current posts.

The findings from circuit managers reveal that prior management experience played an important role in their career paths. Their management experiences were acquired when they served as departmental heads, deputy principals and principals at their previous schools.

The interviews revealed that in the case of the four circuit managers, they had between four and eleven years' experience in their positions. The experiences of the circuit managers as well as their career paths to their current positions reflected in table 4.2 and in the interviews paint an interesting picture. Firstly, the circuit managers participating in this study appear to have had relatively short career paths, with three of the four missing the opportunity to serve as deputy principals, which leaves them with little experience of the positions they skipped. Secondly, it appears as though the circuit managers participating in this study have relatively little experience in terms of

years in the positions they hold, and it may therefore be argued that they lack a measure of experience and management capacity. This appears to contrast sharply with Birman, Desimone, Garet, Porter and Yoon's (2002:90) contention that "experiences that are consistent with goals and aligned with standards" should be incorporated in professional development.

#### 4.3.3 Participant Profiles – Principals

The experience and career path of principals is shown in the table below:

**Table 4.3 Principals experiences and career paths**

<b>Participant Number</b>	<b>Years of Experience as Principal</b>	<b>Career Path to the post of Principal</b>
<b>P#1</b>	20 years	Teacher for 10 years, head of department (HOD) for 5 years, deputy principal (DP) for 5 years and principal for 20 years
<b>P#2</b>	20 years	Teacher for 7 years, HOD for 5 years and principal for 20 years
<b>P#3</b>	13 years	Teacher for 10 years, HOD for 4 years, DP for 2 years and principal for 13 years.

#### 4.3.4 Principals' experiences and career paths

The first principal (P#1) interviewed - the head of a former Model C school (a school that was previously reserved for white communities only during the *apartheid* era) - started as an ordinary teacher and was then promoted through the ranks to head of department, deputy principal, senior deputy principal and then principal. This principal indicated that during his tenure as principal at the current school a number of policies were not in place to guide him, nor was there anyone to show the way:

*"When I started here, it was an Afrikaans medium school there were a lot of challenges and a number of basic policies were not in*

*place. So the first few years we had to put in a lot of energy into writing policies on different stuff". (P#1)*

Principal (P#2) had twenty-years' experience as a principal. Like the others, he started as an ordinary teacher then became head of department and later, principal. This principal is leading and managing a school located in a township, a settlement in an urban area reserved for black communities, commonly referred to as a school in a disadvantaged community. The difference between the two principals is that the first principal served as deputy principal and thereafter as senior deputy principal and later principal. It can therefore be assumed that principal (P#1) is more experienced than principal (P#2).

The third principal (P#3) interviewed had thirteen years as principal of a primary school and also started as an ordinary teacher, head of department, deputy principal, acting principal and later principal. Principal (P#3) spent two years as an acting principal and therefore had an opportunity to practice principalship before the actual appointment.

Out of the three principals interviewed, two principals had served for twenty years as principals and one had served for thirteen years. In terms of their career path to the principalship posts, there were notable differences between them, and the principals revealed their experiences differently - one had moved from the head of department straight to principal and the other two had moved from the head of department via a deputy principalship to a principalship.

It was important for this study to investigate the experiences of the participants in their career paths as principals and circuit managers as well as their career paths to their current positions, because Rodriguez-Campos, Rincones and Shein (2005:311) argue that the experience acquired in education and the leadership posts occupied prior to that of principal are essential for a capable head of an institution.

#### **4.4 THEMES THAT EMERGED FROM THE DATA**

##### **4.4.1 Theme 1: Circuit managers and their role in professional development**

The question was structured in such a way that the participants, both circuit managers and principals, could elaborate on their existing knowledge of what the roles of circuit managers are in the professional development of principals. Circuit managers were

asked: *What role do you as the circuit manager play with regard to the professional development of principals in your circuit?* It was important to discover how circuit managers themselves saw their contributions towards the professional development of their principals. This was to provide more clarity on their knowledge and awareness of the important task that they perform. If they were aware of the responsibility, then how did they approach it, what informed them on the content, context, duration and coherence of the programmes? The following discussion presents the views and perceptions of circuit managers regarding their roles in the professional development of their principals.

From the responses it was discovered that some circuit managers were aware of their roles and were also able to identify the needs of principals for the purposes of professional development as stated in the Personnel Administration Measures (PAM) (RSA, 1998b). Circuit Manager (C#1) indicated that he/she identifies the principal's needs during school visits. The circuit manager said:

*"I look at what the managers' (principals) needs are as I visit them at their schools, and find that each principal is a person on his own" - "I help them to manage curriculum" (C#1)*

From the above citation, the circuit manager understands the roles and responsibilities as explained in the Personnel Administration Measures (RSA, 1998b) that during staff development, the assessment of professional needs is crucial for capacity building. This is in line with effective leadership presented in Steyn (2011:45) who emphasised that the identification of needs and providing support for professional growth is important. The circuit manager mentioned that she also provides support in curriculum management for the principals.

*"I support them with curriculum delivery and management" (C#2).*

This response from the circuit manager indicates that he/she is supporting the principals with curriculum delivery and management. The comment does not clearly indicate that the manager is aware of other roles of the circuit manager in the professional development of the principals. Supporting with curriculum delivery only does not cover the need for capacity development on the part of the circuit manager and the principals concerned.

The circuit manager (C#4) very direct in responding to the question, but also showed a measure of withdrawal from the actual responsibilities entrusted to his/her office. The roles and responsibilities stipulated in Personnel Administration Measures (PAM), (RSA 1998b) were shared and implemented through circuit teams. The following statement indicated the existence of developmental teams within the circuit that assisted the circuit manager.

*“As a circuit we have developmental teams responsible for development of managers on curriculum, human resource development, governance and administration” (C#4).*

The responses of circuit manager (C#3) were in line with PAM (RSA, 1998b) where it states that some roles and responsibilities of circuit managers are to provide guidance to institutions on policy formulation and to offer support in terms of the IQMS process. Principals were developed in terms of policies seeing that they (the policies) play an important role in schools. Principals were also encouraged to identify areas of development in their Professional Growth Plan (PGP) quarterly and reflect on them through the Integrated Quality Management System (IQMS).

The circuit manager (CM #3) said:

*“I think I am playing a critical role... and get my understanding and then be able to assemble my principals take them through the policies...” I always encourage them to do PGP from IQMS” (C#3).*

There is confirmation from circuit manager 3 (C#3) of the role to be played in the professional development of principals. The circuit manager mentioned the necessity of first understanding the contents of any document or policy that was to be taken to the principals. The use of the term ‘critical’ indicated the level of consciousness the circuit manager had in the role to be played.

The circuit managers’ approach towards professional development was important because they practically assess the situation in the schools and determine what needs to be done.

Principals were required to respond to a question probing their knowledge on the role of their circuit managers in their professional development. Different perspectives emerged from the principals' responses to the question posed, namely; *What role does your circuit manager play in terms of professional development of principals?* Principal 1 (P#1) was positive about the role of the circuit manager in developing them professionally as principals. He cited a peer support group which was established by the circuit manager to allow principals to discuss among themselves and to assist one another in designing solutions to their challenges. This flies together with Mukeredzi (2013:6) when he states that professional development draws on constructivism. It focuses on people's subjective experience and allows them to learn from others in a certain way. This principal was made a peer group leader and was chosen by the circuit manager. In his response he stated that:

*"I was the chairperson of the peer group, at the beginning when this peer group was still on I think I benefitted and was developed because I had this new opportunity although it was an instruction, it was an opportunity as well. (P#1)*

The principal appreciated that in the beginning they benefitted and were developed. The peer groups were held after the principals' meetings. The chairperson would give other colleagues a specific assignment to present about school management. After the presentation, other principals shared the good practices and commented on matters for improvement. However, this structure did not last long enough to produce positive results as it later became clouded with union related issues. The circuit manager was pro-active in this approach as a means of involving the principals through the leadership of one of their colleagues in identifying and tackling common issues.

Principal (P#2) differed from principal (P#1), and was not hesitant in disputing the existence of any role played by the circuit manager in his circuit. His statement was simple and said:

*"Naturally circuit managers do not play any role in the development of principals. I actually consider them as "circuit messengers" actually,*

*because they act as conveyors of information from districts to schools. I do not see them playing any role in the development of principals” (P#2).*

This principal did not mince his words in denying any role played by circuit managers in the development of principals. When probed further on his position, he mentioned that the only institution he saw as developing principals was the teacher development unit as well as other sections of the district office. The monthly meetings held by circuit managers with the principals were according to him nothing close to professional development;

*I think this one is a bit tricky because, naturally circuit managers they do not play any role in the development of principals. I actually consider circuit managers as circuit messengers actually, as I will call them because normally they are, they only act as conveyors of information from districts to schools. Now, circuit managers per se, I do not see them playing any role in the development of principals (P#2).*

He saw the monthly principals’ meetings as a forum for discussing circulars and policies, which according to him could easily be done while sitting comfortably in the office. He does not regard it as professional development.

*Normally in principals meetings we are discussing circulars that naturally you will be able to interpret in your office as a principal. You know that is how I view it. Most of the time you will find that in these meetings you end up saying I should have been in my office doing my work. I do not need the interpretation of somebody else. The Professional Development of principals to me is not very clear. (P# 2)*

Principal (P#2) seemed to have a different view of what the other principals and circuit managers regarded as professional development. In closing, he mentioned that to him professional development is clearly something different from what circuit managers are doing during principals’ meetings. In his view professional development was conducted by the district officials when they workshopped with principals.

Principal (P#3) differed from (P#2) when he said that in his understanding the role of the circuit manager was important during circuit principals’ meetings as it involves the

promoting and sharing of good ideas. The support visits done by the circuit manager also assisted them as principals in the development of their schools. During these meetings the circuit manager encouraged them to share good practices among themselves in the circuit instead of reading through circulars in their meetings. The principal said:

*“Circuit manager always encourages that in our principals meetings we always share good practice than just to discuss circulars only. He always visits schools to make sure that whatever is being discussed at our meetings is being implemented”. (P#3)*

The responses of circuit managers acknowledged some of their roles on the professional development of principals. Circuit managers mentioned few of their roles as compared to the expected roles and responsibilities in PAM (RSA 1998b). Circuit management in the context of the structure of education in South Africa is seen as the office closer to the school and should serve as a link between the schools and the district office (Government Gazette, 2013:26). The circuit manager is in charge of all educational programmes within his/her circuit. The professional development of principals and teachers forms part of the responsibilities of that office as stated in Personnel Administration Measures (RSA, 1998b). As instructional leaders, they are expected to ensure that all policy issues are carried out by schools as efficiently as possible. The principals within the circuits are expected to know them and be aware of their roles and functions and that they are the next level of support from the district office.

Two principals were in agreement with collaborative learning that took place in their circuit. Mukeredzi (2013:6) emphasizes the importance of interaction with colleagues to acquire knowledge and collective understanding of systems that are essential and how to use them. This indicates that collaboration can have a meaningful role in creating and sharing professional knowledge. One principal disagreed with the two principals when he mentioned that in most of their principals' meetings they discuss circulars. This shows that circuit managers are either not aware of all their roles and that they are not implementing their roles in the same way.

#### **4.4.2. Theme 2: The form of the professional development programmes**

The aim was to discover the way in which these activities were structured. The question was: *What form do professional development activities you participated in take?* Professional development activities can be in different forms such as study groups, mentoring relationships, inductions and many others like the common workshops in which most programmes are structured. Birman *et al.* (2000:29) suggest that it is paramount to change from less effective traditional approaches like workshops to more reformed approaches such as coaching and mentoring. A two day workshop is less effective than a five day workshop with more content focus and active learning. Circuit managers were pro-active in professional development when they encouraged the experienced principals to mentor the newly appointed principals. Mentoring allows the novice principal to learn from the experienced principal and helps them to innovatively and successfully meet their daily encounters (Kedzior, 2004:3).

All the participants in the study who confirmed that they had undergone some form of professional development with their circuit managers cited workshops and principals' meetings as the most common form that these programmes followed. The principals mentioned that they did not get as many workshops from circuit managers as expected. Instead they got them from their unions and other departments. They only saw justice in the principals' meetings that were held every month.

This is what one principal said:

*"The training I got was from my union. In the past we had workshops regarding educational law, I cannot remember when was the last one, many years ago. If you talk about the department of education we have principals meetings" (P#1).*

The response highlighted that the principals' meeting is the form of professional development in their circuit. Principal (P#2) confirmed that the professional development programmes he knew of were those that were offered by the officials from the district office. He made it clear that they took the form of workshops and said:

*“... to those workshops conducted by circuit managers, I will say therefore my contributions at this point will be almost zero. For instance when we are having a workshop we would have the district official” (P#2).*

This response from the principal also confirms that the workshops conducted were mostly from outside, not from the circuit managers.

Circuit managers' responses differed from the responses of principals when they mentioned that they use meetings, workshops and seminars to develop the principals in their different areas of development though with the seminars it is not clearly spelled out what was done during those sessions. One circuit manager mentioned that they hold the bi-annual strategic planning meeting and go out for team building. He stated that:

*“We do have workshop on curriculum management and seminars” (CM#2).*

*“There was a workshop on curriculum management and control from National Office, and then circuit managers trained principals” (CM#3).*

*“It is mainly workshops and principals meeting. We go out to team building and strategic planning sessions for development, review what happened in the year and come up with new plans” (CM#4).*

The workshop was the common form of developmental programme conducted by circuit managers. The importance of changing the form to activities such as mentoring, networking and study groups is emphasized in professional development for increasing knowledge and active learning (Birnam *et al.* 2000:29). Drawing from the circuit managers' responses it shows that things are not done the same way in different circuits. There was neither alignment nor coherence of programmes and the district office did not provide any guidance. Mafuwane and Pitsoe (2014:442) concur with the above statement when they argue that circuits 'do their own thing' and that this may lead to unrelated development programmes which can have a negative impact. Circuit manager (CM#1), followed a different approach from the traditional workshop model when she confirmed that she visited principals at their schools and ascertained their developmental needs. She then attended to them on-site and planned to attend to

them in groups. She mentioned that the advantage of one-on-one was beneficial to those principals who were not talkative in meetings, and that she was able to discover their challenges during the sessions. She said;

*“I find it sometimes very important to be one-on-one to see where the shortcomings are, and assist where the school is lacking” (CM#1).*

Circuit manager (CM#3) stated that she did things differently, but on further investigation, it was evident that the presentations she mentioned as different were actually done in a workshop mode. Workshops have a tendency to be ineffective at times when poorly organised and conducted (Birnam *et al.* 2000:29). Most if not all workshops have a weakness of lasting for a few hours a day and mostly after school hours when participants are exhausted.

The following discussion reports on the duration of these professional development programmes circuit managers conducted for principals as a form of professional development.

#### **4.4.3: Theme 3: The duration of programmes**

The duration of any programme aimed at developing principals was viewed as important in determining its effectiveness. The question asked was: *How long did these professional development programmes last?* The question aimed at discovering the length of these programmes. Principals and circuit managers confirmed that these programmes were conducted over a short time, extending over a few hours a day. Birnam *et al.* (2000:30) indicates that programmes with long hours give more time to content knowledge and chances for active participation than shorter duration programmes. The training ranged between two to three days. As was discussed earlier, these programmes were incorporated in the normal monthly principals' meetings. The following comment by principal (P#1) was worrying to say the least:

*“I have been to a training session many years ago, I remember, and that was, we went there it was a two day training on a disciplinary hearing and staff like that and that is what I can remember. Then there was a financial workshop which was also a two day workshop during the July holidays that was about ten years ago. Which was not very*

*satisfying of course the finances at our school are quite different from the finances at other schools, the basics was such the same but unfortunately they give a lot of time for questions and then it became boring” (P#1).*

Two important issues could be deduced from the above statement in terms of the duration of the programme. Even though two days was significantly longer than the normal duration of most of these workshops, the fact that it was conducted during school holidays tampered with the mood of the principals. It ended up being viewed as boring even though the content was desirable and important. It also revealed that the principals were not getting frequent training if it was ten years ago. Steyn (2011:43) emphasizes that continuous professional development is a critical part of growth and assists in acquiring new skills and gaining new knowledge.

Circuit manager (CM# 2) responded to the question as follows;

*“This is a continuous, on-going professional development programme does not have time because it depends upon the need but usually the duration if I have meetings is one-day workshops and contact sessions will not be more than four hours, unlike when you coach, it can be a few minutes”.(CM# 2).*

Effective professional development programmes are, as stated above, continuous and on-going. If these programmes were short, the important thing is, was it effective? Professional development has more impact when it is well planned, systematic and content focused (Steyn, 2011:44). Were the programmes seen as relevant to the professional development needs of these principals considering the duration and the challenges they are experiencing in their schools?

The responses to the interview questions revealed that the participants’ knowledge of professional development was framed within programmes such as one or two day workshops, training sessions provided by the department, unions, courses from private companies, monthly meetings and workshops which included role playing sessions conducted by circuit managers. Principals responded that their meetings usually take six hours and the workshops took one to three days maximum. Principals’ responses:

*“For instance the one on Life skills, I remember it took about three days it was Friday, Saturday and Sunday” (P#2).*

*“For instance when we are having workshops, normally there would be a specific topic we would be developed on and of course we would have the district official who have been workshopped before, principals would be coming together to be workshopped on that, it would normally take a day, two or three days at the most” (P#2)*

*“It depends on the programme are never less than two hours maximum 2 hours or more depending on the programme. The SGB we are having tomorrow is scheduled between 8h00 to 16h00” (P#3).*

The responses indicate that activities held for a shorter period had less content focus and active learning. Participants sometimes may hesitate to tamper with their time beyond the school day for professional development programmes. The SGB workshops were longer as they were conducted on weekends.

#### **4.4.4 Theme 4: The content of the programmes**

The next question looked into the content focus of these programmes during professional development, and was asked as follows: *What is the content focus of these professional developments?*

This theme explored the content taught during the professional development programmes conducted by the circuit managers and other delegated officials to the principals. Principal (P#1) and (P#2) responded that the programme they attended was based on HIV and workshopped how to formulate HIV/AIDS policies at school and how to handle the affected teachers. One principal made the following statement:

*“I remember specifically the HIV programme that was presented by people coming from Pretoria, which was not related to the department of education” (P#1).*

While another said:

*“Let me give an example of the workshop that I attended. It was a Life Skills workshop on HIV & AIDS- now that was one work-shop that I attended. That was the only content workshop I have attended over three days” (P#2).*

The above extract shows a gap in understanding the type of content needed in professional development programmes. The principals expected to be developed in managerial skills that will assist them to improve their schools. The workshop lasted a long time addressing issues on life skills which, according to the principal, were not related to professional development. This suggests that principals do not get specific professional development that enhances their capacity to improve on their managerial skills. The HIV workshop did not address the core duties of the principal; hence it was the only one he/she remembered.

The principal also mentioned the curriculum workshop they attended as part of the development. One of the major duties of school principals as stipulated in Personnel Administrative Management (PAM), (RSA1998b) is curriculum management and administration. They are therefore expected to know and understand the curriculum policies and how curriculum should be implemented that is, its content, assessment strategies and its management. One of the interviewed principals stated:

*“There are also workshops targeting the SMTs those that have to do with management especially curriculum management. Workshops for governance targeting principals” (P#3).*

Circuit managers' responses concur with principal (P#3) when they mentioned that most of their content focus was based on curriculum. They looked at issues like content delivery, curriculum monitoring tools and policies. They said:

*“Say if is about assessment or finances we teach them what the schools need. On curriculum issues we look at management files to be in line with Caps, for policies homework policies, etc. and the school improvement plan” (C#1).*

*“There will be about curriculum and policies.....so basically the content of most of these programmes will be curriculum, management and administration” (C#2).*

*“The primary focus is on making them to understand the curriculum and be able to manage it. So the content was proper policy interpretation on progression, assessment and understanding the IQMS” (C#3).*

From the above responses it is noted that where principals’ development has been observed, the nature of development in most cases seems to be skewed in the sense that it focuses on only one sector of a principals’ responsibilities, namely curriculum. It neglects other responsibilities of principals like management, financial, administration, governance.

Circuit manager C#4 responded differently from the other circuit managers and principals, he did not mention curriculum management. He used experienced principals to mentor novice principals. The circuit manager said:

*“It is basically their roles, job descriptions but we try to make it practical and go through it step by step. We outline administrative duties practically and give examples in terms of experienced principals” (C#4).*

Mentoring is the best effective method of professional development, where mentors use their knowledge and experience to guide and teach others (Kedzior, 2004:3). A mentor is a knowledgeable and experienced person that gives advice to the mentee at a professional level to help him/her improve and learn.

#### **4.4.5 Theme 5: The activities included in programmes**

The theme explored the kinds of activities that took place during professional development programmes. The question asked was: *What kind of activities do you engage in during these programmes?*

Principal (P#2) responded to the question as follows:

*“The activities includes the topics that the principals must discuss with the facilitators and then of course the principals will articulate their*

*expectations from the topic, we engage in discussions once the topic is started, it depends on the facilitators' approach during the day. Like normally whatever method she/he is using to conduct the work-shop, the principals should naturally respond and take part in those discussions, group discussions" (P#2).*

From the above statement it is clear that the principals are given a topic for discussion and the methods of discussion are determined by the facilitator and the principals should respond naturally. This approach seemed dictatorial to the principals as they had no say in the choice of the discussion topics. The statement below by the circuit manager confirms the activities that took place during the professional development programmes.

Circuit managers responded as follows in answering the question:

*"When we get there I grouped them into different groups then I give them all the questions. So then now they sit and handle the questions themselves. What do you understand by curriculum monitoring and control? They will be able to say, this is what I understand, do you think we should do it, Name all the people and the role they should play? They are responding and I know that at the end they indicate now that this one and this one and you will be amazed because they actually understand it and the role that each person must play and indicate how they must do it" (CM#3).*

*"They participate in sharing ideas, team work and group work" (CM#2).*

*"Usually we give them scenario to work and ask questions" (CM#1).*

The elements of mentorship and induction were discussed by circuit manager (CM# 4) as follows:

*"We have got teams that becomes presenters together with myself, that depends on which item are we dealing with. If it is an HR, workshop dealing with the development of educators, the principals who are at the team will be presenters, others will be workshop and others will be role players. We also develop common tool and strategies of the circuit, those*

*others on the floor will become role-players. All the newly appointed SMT members are identified as a principal of a feeder or that school where we appointed a new principal, that principal becomes the mentor of the new one. Then we call them together in terms of induction, we induct them and we assign a mentor to assist the new principal in terms of how we work as a circuit” (CM#4).*

This implies that the circuit manager understood that effective professional development is embedded in different activities during programmes adapted to meet a specific context. The principals in this circuit were offered an opportunity to participate effectively in the different areas of leadership and management of schools. This is in agreement with Steyn (2011:43) when he indicates that active involvement of principals in learning and development enhances leadership skills. There was also an opportunity for them to mentor newly appointed school management team members. In the process, principals were developed in terms of presentation skills which are necessary in the daily execution of their tasks and communication with staff members.

#### **4.4.6. Theme 6: The coherence and integration of programmes**

The objective of the question was to assess whether the professional development programmes were coherent, integrated, focused on content and involved active learning or not. Birnam *et al* (2000:31) posit that coherence in professional development should integrate experiences and activities that are constant with teachers’ objectives. The question asked was: *Do you feel that the different professional programmes complemented one another?* The following statement from one of the principals explains how the new curriculum was received by schools:

*“When CAPS was introduced we had other structure that was in now how do we connect CAPS at that point in time...how do the two come together then set a base for the new content and connect to everything we did before. Each time there is continuity” (P#2).*

In the same vein, principal P#3 agreed on the cohesiveness of these programmes - the principal said:

*“There is coherence as I said, there is management, leadership those are always very important aspects, discipline whatever session or workshop you find it is a continuation...” (P#3).*

Principals confirmed that there was coherence of professional development in curriculum and its implementation was in line with the policy. What they learnt during these professional development programmes was consistent with policies, their knowledge and beliefs. They acknowledged a smooth transition from previous to current knowledge in the implementation of a new curriculum, policies and skills.

On the question of coherence, the principal believed that there was coherence and he said:

*“There is an on-going focus on academic related matters that is what happens. During each and every principals meeting, we have academic related, the uplifting of academic performance in schools is a constant point on our agenda” (P#1).*

The response shows that activities were coherent, built from the previous activities and are consistent with principals’ goals. In the meetings the academic performance was discussed.

Circuit manager #1 confirmed that there was coherence in these programmes and supported her argument and stated:

*Sometimes we talk about the school management plan and the year plan and the term plan will be, but the next time we will talk about the assessment plan and how to... So those will complement one another and take step by step and you end up with class visits, IQMS, QLTC you will command those again, they complement one another and you bring together your finances after that and your SGB. Since the new SGB was elected they will be developed soon by the district and amongst them there are principals who have been selected who will be trained to train the different school principals, (CM#1).*

*“Programmes must be monitored and evaluated for its impact so that you will be able to monitor its continuity on a regular basis and avoid overlapping of similar programmes” (CM#2).*

*“Every month each principal must give a monthly report on all the activities we plan for that year... then we evaluate them” (CM#4).*

The responses of circuit managers revealed that their current planning when they do their school management plan and year plan, emanated from the previous plan. The programmes were monitored and evaluated for their effectiveness and the improvement of leadership outcomes.

#### **4.4.7 Theme 7: The success rate of programmes**

The theme explored the most successful programmes that participants reflected on in their responses. The participants were asked this question: *Which programme do you consider to have been the most successful?*

Principal P#1 was articulate in stating programmes which he felt were successful and had impacted on his practice as a principal.

*“Those who were specifically related to my job as principal of the school were the handling of disciplinary issues of staff members for example, it is not a problem that I often have, but it was very successful - I learned a lot although I am not using it very often, I have them and if I run into a problem with the teacher or employee who is not in line with what is expected then I know what to do. The financial training was also good because it is part of my day to day... Each and every day I have to spend time on financial related matters, whether it is a budget or parents, school fees or expenditure that was not planned or budgeted for or staff like that. I know what to do and the training was very practical” (P#1).*

Principal #2 was more concerned with curriculum and found those programmes to have been successful when compared to the rest. She put it this way:

*“The one on the implementation of CAPS, I think as a school we are able to implement it as expected. Another programme is that of the HIV/AIDS that one was well handled as well. I think I can cite the two, but naturally most of them. Each time we have been to a work-shop, we came to our school and we were able to implement” (P#2).*

Principal P#3 commented:

*“Workshops and meetings on leadership and management, to me I find them outstanding and I would never miss any of them if the opportunity allows” (P#3).*

The principals responded differently on their views of successful programmes. This shows that there is no common goal from circuit managers during the professional development of principals. The district should empower and guide circuit managers on matters of development and support. Mafuwane and Pitsoe ( 2014:440) concurs with the above statement when they state that circuit managers should be capacitated with more knowledge to coach, supervise and develop the principals to increase learner performance and managerial skills.

Circuit managers regarded curriculum and management as the most successful programme when they mentioned that:

*“The most successful so far will be the management of schools” (CM#1).*

*“Those of monitoring and the peer mentoring have been more efficient” (CM#2).*

*“Training school management teams on curriculum management and implementation. The one I will say were more successful are the ones where we were training the SMTs on a Curriculum control giving them their roles and responsibilities on curriculum control” (CM#3).*

*“In terms of Curriculum Management, you know the auditor general has identified Curriculum Management as a challenge in most schools” (C#4).*

The participants agreed with the role and responsibilities stipulated in Personnel Administrative Measures (PAM) which states that circuit managers should “monitor the

effective management, administration and governance of schools. They must facilitate curriculum delivery through support in various ways” (RSA, 1998b). The responses as indicated above identify management, curriculum management and mentoring as the successful programmes. Mafuwane and Pitsoe (2014:441) highlighted curriculum monitoring and provision of management support to schools as important performance areas that are attached to the Circuit Managers.

#### **4.5 FINDINGS OF THE STUDY**

From the preceding discussion of the data under the themes as they were developed from the conceptual framework - the structural features of professional development, namely (1) form, (2) duration, and (3) participation, and the core features which include (4) content focus, (5) active learning and (6) coherence - the following findings have been identified:

- (1) Finding 1 - Circuit managers view curriculum management as the main tool in PD for the support of principals
- (2) Finding 2 – Workshops are the most common form of professional development for principals
- (3) Finding 3 - Although other aspects also enjoy attention, curriculum management is the main focus of professional development programmes
- (4) Finding 4 - Principals feel the professional development programmes are too short
- (5) Finding 5 – Professional development programmes display a variety of different teaching and learning approaches
- (6) Finding 6 – The relevancy and coherence of professional development programmes is disputed.

These findings, together with a number of recommendations that flow from these findings, will be discussed in detail in chapter 5.

#### 4.6 SUMMARY

The participants responded to twenty questions from the interview protocol. Data was transcribed and categorized into seven themes. Each theme was discussed with a brief summary.

The principals' responses showed that most of the professional development programmes were presented by people from the district, head office and other organisations. The circuit manager usually held principals' meetings where most of the development took place. The professional development offered to principals was not continuous hence P#1 responded to say that the last workshop he attended was ten years ago. Mafuwane and Pitsoe (2014:442) in their analysis of school development and support mention that the district needs to ensure that professional development is linked to school-based activities and the district goals. Both circuit managers mentioned traditional workshops that lasted for two to three days and meetings as the common form of professional development. Steyn (2013:6) argues that an effective professional development should be on-going allowing active participation and learning from others.

The circuit managers mentioned the importance of managing the curriculum and the keeping of a management file. The management file serves as a reflective journal to be kept at the school by the principals. It was not clearly spelled out how circuit managers plan their developmental programmes and what guides them. Circuit managers operated differently in their circuits. There was no element of common vision from the district. One circuit manager responded by indicating that she visited all her schools, taking stock of everything happening and what was not happening. She also confirmed that she developed the principals as the need arose. The circuit managers' responses shows a gap in their understanding of all their roles and responsibilities as stipulated in the Government Gazette and Personnel Administrative Measures (PAM), (RSA, 1998b).

It was noticed that all circuit managers indicated that their principals were developed on curriculum management and delivery. Circuit manager (C#2) conceded that principals' professional development was important and said that supporting principals was key to the success of schools and improved learner performance. Waters and

Marzano (2006:12) discuss some responsibilities that are connected to learner achievements which circuit managers are in a position to provide leadership on:

(a) Collaborative goal-setting: Circuit managers are expected to provide leadership in terms of communicating the educational goals of the district to the principals and communities. This is a collaborative exercise which involves a variety of stakeholders in and around the schools within their circuits. School principals are most important in this exercise.

(b) Non-negotiable goals for achievement and instruction: Collaborative goal-setting will give rise to setting goals for curriculum achievement and instruction. These are goals that guide the staff members, and include specific achievement targets for the circuit, for individual schools and ultimately the entire district.

(c) Monitoring achievement and achievement goals: Effective circuit managers constantly support school progress towards attainment of instructional goals that continue to be a powerful force behind the circuit's activities.

The above statements confirm that circuit managers play a vital role in school growth and support to establish positive school cultures that will bring about change in management and learner performance (Mafuwane & Pitsoe, 2014:440). Circuit managers are representatives of the district at the circuit level and therefore have the responsibility of supporting schools and principals in their daily leadership and administrative tasks. They are empowered with additional authority over the school principals and act as their immediate supervisors (Government Gazette, 2013:29). This therefore means that their role is important in the leadership development of their principals. Most circuit managers had had an opportunity to serve as principals of schools and therefore had the advantage of knowing what was lacking and what needed to be done in terms of capacity building to enhance leadership performance in schools.

In the view of the researcher, school development and professional development are two different activities that are bound together by context and purpose. Professional development is a necessity because of the contexts and challenges for school leaders, especially in this era. The National Education Policy Act (RSA, 1996b) states that

educators, including principals, should attend professional development workshops of at least eight hours annually for their own growth. A professionally developed principal has the ability to develop teachers in the school. This results in the development of the entire school. Pashiardis and Brauckmann (2009:120), on the need for professional development state:

“We live in an era of complexity where the only stable factor is constant change. In this new school environment, there is increasing recognition of the importance of school leadership in supporting change and providing for educational quality. In fact, school leadership has been identified by a number of researchers as a key element in the effectiveness of school organisations.”

This finding flies in the face of what Claire and Adger (1999:1) state, namely that district leaders (circuit managers included) and “principals must have current substantive knowledge about effective teaching and learning for students and adults. They must have knowledge about trends in effective professional development”.

There were few responses which came close to actual professional development programmes that professional development literature suggests. The last chapter will focus on a summary of findings, recommendations and conclusions.

# **CHAPTER 5**

## **DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

The focus of this chapter is the summary of findings based on the research, recommendations derived from the study, and conclusions. The limitations that reveal the shortcomings of the study and its strengths are emphasized. The aim of the study was to explore the role of the circuit managers in the professional development of principals. The findings and conclusions presented in the study answer the main research question: *What role do circuit managers play in the professional development of school principals in the four circuits of Gert Sibande district in Mpumalanga Province?*

### **5.2 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

As revealed in chapter 4, six findings for this study can be identified, namely (1) circuit managers view curriculum management as the main tool in PD for the support of principals, (2) workshops are the most common form of professional development for principals, (3) although other aspects also enjoy attention, curriculum management is the main focus of professional development programmes, (4) principals feel the professional development programmes are too short, (5) professional development programmes display a variety of different teaching and learning approaches and (6) the relevancy and coherence of professional development programmes is disputed. What follows is a detailed discussion of each of these findings in terms of the literature discussed in chapter 2.

#### **5.2.1 Finding 1 - Circuit managers view curriculum management as the main tool in PD for the support of principals**

The study revealed that circuit managers viewed professional development as a tool to support principals in managing the curriculum in their schools. Curriculum management was the most common area of development identified by both circuit managers and principals. This was also confirmed in a study by Mestry (2017:6) where participant's responses on professional development were that most of the

development programmes arranged by education districts deal mainly with curriculum changes. This is one of the worrying areas exposed by this study, since curriculum seems to take priority instead of professional support. An overconcentration on curriculum was viewed by participants as one of the problematic areas because it overlooked the other important areas such as personal development, intra and interpersonal relations, technological development and many other important areas of development. One circuit manager stated that she was able to identify the needs of principals first before he or she provided training. The needs she claimed to have identified were skewed in the sense that they were largely informed by the level of the schools' academic performance which stems from curriculum management.

### **5.2.2 Finding 2 – Workshops are the most common form of PD for principals**

Birman *et al.* (2000:29) point out the significance of changing the form of professional development programmes and suggests workshops, conferences, mentoring, study groups and networking as the most effective for professional development programmes. Therefore it was important to investigate the form in which these programmes were conducted.

Circuit managers confirmed that workshops and principals' meetings were a common form of the developmental programmes they conducted in their circuits. All participants interviewed mentioned workshops as the common form of the development conducted for the principals. They said that principals also participate in the workshops conducted by the district and head office. According to Birman *et al.*, professional development programmes should change form to increase knowledge and foster meaningful change.

### **5.2.3 Finding 3 – Although other aspects also enjoy attention, curriculum management is the main focus of professional development programmes**

Content focus should target activities that improve the understanding of content knowledge and skills (Birman *et al.* 2000:30). Probing further into the content of the professional development they were providing to principals, the responses from the circuit managers revealed that they concentrated on issues of assessment, finances, curriculum issues and the general management of the schools. Circuit manager CM #2 put it this way:

*“The primary focus, like the department has always said that principals are always found wanting in terms of curriculum monitoring and control, the primary focus is to make them understand the curriculum and be able to manage it and report accordingly”.*

The above response was echoed by the next circuit manager, CM#3 who said:

*“Basically the implementation of policies, systems and procedures that must be put in place, so basically the content of most of these programmes will be curriculum management and administration”.*

Principals confirmed that they had received professional development in policies as well as in the Integrated Quality Management Systems. Financial management also formed part of the content of the programmes. Other principals referred to the workshops they had attended conducted by the district officials and which covered HIV/AIDS and other related diseases which impact negatively on education.

The conclusion drawn from the above was that circuit managers were mainly concerned with curriculum management related activities and did little to develop their principals on other issues outside curriculum matters. The district officials were the ones who provided professional development on other issues outside the curriculum. However, there was a lack of coherence in what the circuit managers were doing and what the district did. This is echoed in Mafuwane and Pitsoe (2014:442) when they argue that districts and circuits are “doing their own thing” and unfocused support programmes may lead to a negative effect on the growth of the school.

#### **5.2.4 Finding 4 - Principals feel the professional development programmes are too short**

Birman *et al.* (2000:30) suggest that longer duration activities are more beneficial and more content focused than shorter activities. On the duration of these programmes, both circuit managers and principals revealed that the workshops took one day to three days at the most. The principals meetings lasted for five to six hours. Other workshops were conducted by district and head office officials which also lasted for three to four hours. It has been a common practice for these professional development programmes to be conducted during school holidays and after working hours when principals are tired from the day’s work. The concerns raised by principals were that

the hours spent during these programmes were insufficient and they preferred longer contact time. This could be seen as a positive and relevant request by participating principals because professional development could not be measured in hours, but is a continuous process which can take months or even years to accomplish.

#### **5.2.5 Finding 5 – Professional development programmes display a variety of different teaching and learning approaches**

Collective participation assists participants to interact with one another and share their knowledge and experiences (Birman *et al.* 2000:30). Most of the activities that participants engaged in included group discussions, role play, team work, mentoring and presentations. The presentations were regarded as another form of professional development since principals were expected to present most of the time. Group work facilitated skills such as working in teams, and co-operation among groups. One of the circuit managers highlighted that among the activities which formed part of the professional development was the allocation of subsections of topics like human resources, labour issues, physical resources and governance, to the principals. Each principal would then research his topic and present it to the group of principals. In this way the circuit manager is developing specialists in various fields.

One circuit manager stated that he/she holds bi-annual strategic meetings and team building sessions with the principals in order to address issues of professional development. It was therefore noticed that the way things are done varies from one circuit to another. One of the circuit managers indicated that he/she utilised the services of peers in a mentorship format to identify areas of development. Mentoring according to Kedzior (2004:3) and Van Tuyle and Reeves (2014:121) may have a significant impact on teachers that embrace increased knowledge, improved retention, better attitudes, increased feelings of efficiency and control. The use of experienced peers benefits other peers in the form of learning from each other.

#### **5.2.6 Finding 6 – The relevancy and coherence of professional development programmes is disputed**

Professional development programmes are coherent when they are consistent and aligned to the district, province and national activities (Birman *et al.* 2000:31). Relevance and coherence were important to investigate during this study. With these two concepts the researcher wanted to see how relevant the programmes were and

whether they complemented each other. Circuit managers were confident to say the programmes were relevant to the developmental needs of the principals. On the other hand, principals were not so confident about the relevance of these programmes. Others indicated that some of these programmes were a waste of time as they were of no assistance to them or to their schools. The study revealed that programmes were not always coherent and circuit activities were not aligned to district activities. Examples of a lack of coherence were cited in the training on HIV/AIDS and the next day or week was a workshop on governance.

### **5.3 THE PERCEPTIONS OF PRINCIPALS TOWARDS THEIR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

The participants had different perspectives in responding to the question. Participants indicated that they had peer support groups that encouraged them to learn from one another. They also stated that they were given a chance to share good practices in their meetings. One participant mentioned that according to him there was no professional development offered by the circuit manager. Instead in their meetings they discussed circulars. According to him, developmental training by district officials is mainly aimed at curriculum delivery rather than direct support and development.

Workshops which were conducted in the afternoon were not regarded as effective because of time constraints. Instead, they were viewed as information sharing sessions.

Participants mentioned that the forms of professional development they got from the circuit manager were mainly principals' meetings and workshops conducted by either the district office or head office. Some workshops were perceived as professional development opportunities but others did not directly address their professional needs. This is also stated in Steyn (2011:45) when he highlights the fact that needs-based professional development helps in evaluating and identifying the programmes needed. These programmes are then relevant to the professional development needs.

Principals found that workshops and sessions which dealt with issues affecting their daily activities were the most relevant and beneficial. These included those that dealt with labour relations and management of HIV/AIDS.

The duration of workshops and meetings were from one to three days. According to the principals the time was too short for them to acquire the necessary knowledge and skills. Steyn (2011:44) echoes the belief that professional development should be a continuous process and not a once off programme. The study revealed that the content taught during these professional developments concentrated on curriculum management and leadership.

It was also discovered that although the programmes were useful and helped principals, they were not aligned to their assessment and expected performance standards. When one looks at the assessment items for managers in the IQMS tool, none of those issues were addressed during these programmes.

Due to the observed responses and perceptions of the principals, the researcher suggests that the following recommendations could provide principals with an effective professional development programme.

## **5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS**

The following recommendations were derived from the findings of circuit managers and principals on the role of the circuit managers in the professional development of principals. They are not suggested as solutions to the myriad of professional development challenges in the participating circuits, but could provide a blueprint for future design of these programmes.

### **5.4.1 Coherence and Alignment of programmes**

It is recommended that there be an alignment between district and circuit professional development activities. Districts should draw up programmes and communicate them to circuits for common vision and alignment of school development plans. Programmes that are coherent, aligned and well-coordinated ensure a positive effect on the whole school development (Mafuwane & Pitsoe 2014:442).

### **5.4.2 Different learning approaches**

The district and the circuit managers should provide different learning approaches such as collective participation, mentorship, coaching and support networking when

conducting their professional development. Different approaches encourage participants to be meaningful during discussions ((Birman *et al.* 2000:31).

#### **5.4.3 Continuous professional development**

The recommendation is that professional developmental programmes should be continuous not once off programmes (Steyn, 2011:44). Continuous development allows active participation and learning from others. Programmes should be well planned and follow-ups done through supportive feedback for further learning.

#### **5.4.4 Curriculum viewed as the key**

Curriculum must not be the key content during the professional development of principals. It is recommended that principals should be developed holistically to be able to carry out their duties as leaders at schools. Professional developmental programmes should be conducted for professional growth. Professional development is more effective when a programme acknowledges participants' needs and develops a person where there is a gap (Steyn, 2011:45).

#### **5.4.5 Content focus**

It is recommended that circuit managers need to create a platform for principals in deciding the content of their developmental programmes. Professional development should not be generic. Content focus should address specific knowledge that empowers them in their leadership role. Literature posits that the content of professional development programmes should vary to improve the content knowledge (Garet *et al.* 2001:928).

#### **5.4.6 Form**

It is recommended that professional development programmes should be conducted in different forms such as mentoring, coaching, networking and study groups instead of workshops only. Short workshops are criticized for not having enough duration to enhance the understanding of participants (Birman *et al.* 2000:31). Study groups, mentoring and coaching often take place at the workplace thus enabling activities of

a longer period and encouraging the mutual participation of clusters from one circuit or department (Garet *et al.* 2001:921).

## **5.5 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

There are some aspects of the study that may have narrowed the findings. One of these was the cohort of circuit managers and principals chosen for the research. This group consisted of four circuit managers and three principals. Three of the circuit managers have recently been appointed to their posts and did not have enough experience to have learned about the professional development of principals. This may have had a negative effect on the representation of circuit managers that this study sought to interview. The three principals did not have an understanding of exactly what professional development was about. The fact that the study concentrated on a few circuit managers and principals in the Gert Sibande district of Mpumalanga means that the findings cannot be generalised to the entire district and/or province.

The intention of this study was not, however, to make generalisations to a larger population of circuit managers and principals, but rather to relate the results to the contexts within which they were generated.

With regard to the nature of the research, it should be noted that it did not set out to specifically explore professional development and therefore should not be regarded as purely a 'professional development' study.

## **5.6 FUTURE RESEARCH**

Future research could be undertaken on the following areas within the circuits, districts and provinces:

5.6.1 The degree to which the professional development of principals is aligned to their developmental needs as listed in their Professional Growth Plan in the IQMS. Before professional development takes place, the Professional Growth Plan needs to be looked at to identify the needs of participants.

5.6.2 Future studies could explore the selection of suitable professional development programmes for principals as managers of schools. Participants indicated that other programmes were not suitable for principals but for teachers.

## **5.7 SUMMARY OF THE STUDY**

The purpose of the study was to examine the role of circuit managers in the professional development of principals in their circuits. Circuit managers are district officials responsible for the management of education in their circuits. Van der Voort and Wood (2016:1) suggest that it is the role of education district and circuit offices in South Africa to work collaboratively with schools to improve educational success. Since circuit managers are not directly responsible for the provision of education in schools, they are expected to provide professional development support to principals who are directly involved in curriculum management in schools.

There are a number of challenges in schools which are directly associated with poor management and leadership by principals. Korumaz (2016:2) confirms that principals as leaders have demanding responsibilities placed on them even though they did not receive professional training in colleges or universities which prepared them for principalship. Thus it is expected that after taking up their positions, some form of professional development is to be done to assist them to cope with their challenges. As a result, circuit managers as their immediate supervisors are tasked with ensuring that there is efficiency and effectiveness in their practice. The Department of Education (2013) states that the function of the district and circuit offices is to assist and support schools in delivering their core functions.

The study explored how circuit managers contributed towards the professional development of their principals. The Personnel Administration Measures (RSA, 1998b) document states that the professional development of principals is one of the responsibilities of a circuit manager. The study explored different perceptions highlighted by principals regarding how they saw and interpreted the activities conducted by their circuit managers in response to their roles in professional development.

This section of the study sought to report on whether circuit managers did engage, or sought to engage, principals in any forms of professional development. The study

reports on whether principals did receive professional development during their interactions with their circuit managers. The investigation highlights whether circuit managers knew of this responsibility, and if so, how they approached it and what informed the content, context, duration and coherence of the programmes.

Using qualitative research within a case study design, the study explored the interpretations and experiences of participants and the importance of professional development. Four circuit managers and three principals from Gert Sibande district were part of the study. One-on-one semi-structured interviews were used to collect data. After data was collected, content analysis was used to analyse it. The purpose of the study was to understand how principals perceived their professional development from circuit managers and whether or not circuit managers conducted these programmes. Rodriguez-Campos, Rincones-Gomez and Shen (2005:311) posit that effective professional development is essential for principals to improve their performance after acquiring the new knowledge from the developmental programmes.

## **5.8 CONCLUSION**

The problem the study investigated is how circuit managers supported their principals professionally. This was supported by literature indicating a gap in the professional development of principals in South Africa. This has led to beliefs that the performance of students is directly linked to the effectiveness of leadership and management of schools.

To conclude the discussion it is important to reflect on the main research question and provide an answer. The question was '*What role do circuit managers play in the professional development of principals?*' From the discussion it became clear that circuit managers had little information on their role in this regard. Those circuit managers who claim to have done something towards professional development were actually guiding principals on how to do their daily tasks. Curriculum management came out as the core function circuit managers prioritised for guidance. The pressure that comes with the improvement of the National Senior Certificate results as well as the ANA results seemed to be the reason for them ignoring professional development.

Principals were unclear about the boundaries between their daily tasks and professional development. Some regarded curriculum assistance and/or guidance as

professional development. They did not even tap into what they stated in their professional growth plans as areas of concern. They were not even maximally involved in the planning and delivery of these programmes. They participated in programmes that did not have relevance to their professional development needs. One principal even changed the name 'circuit manager' to circuit messenger. This was so because he saw them as carriers of messages from the district or head offices.

Data revealed that there is a need for circuit managers to be capacitated to develop and support their principals. From the findings of the study, it seems that professional development should play a role in the development of principals to improve their management and leadership skills. The content, duration and form of these programmes did not match any of those mentioned by Desimone et al. (2000) as key for effective professional development. Recommendations brought forward will assist the study to be investigated further.

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## **ANNEXURES**

**Annexure A:** Interviews Protocol

**Annexure B:** Participant's Consent Letter

**Annexure C:** Circuit manager's Consent Letter

**Annexure D:** School Governing Body Consent Letter

**Annexure E:** Editor's certificate

**Annexure F:** MDE Consent

## Annexure A

### INTERVIEW PROTOCOL - CIRCUIT MANAGERS

#### The Role of the Circuit Managers in the Professional Development of School Principals

Time of interview \_\_\_\_\_ Duration \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Venue \_\_\_\_\_

Interviewer \_\_\_\_\_

Participant no \_\_\_\_\_

#### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to explore the role of circuit managers in the professional development of school principals.

#### **Primary Research Question**

What role do circuit managers play in the professional development of school principals in three circuits of the Gert Sibande district in Mpumalanga province?

#### **Secondary Questions**

1. What are the perceptions of the circuit managers of his/her role and responsibility in the professional development of principals?
2. What are the experiences and perceptions of the principals with regard to the professional development they receive from the circuit?

#### **Assurance of Confidentiality**

All participants are assured that their identity as well as their responses will be regarded as completely confidential at all times and that these will not be made available to any unauthorized user. The participation of individuals in this study is completely voluntary. Should any participant wish to not continue during the course of the research project, he or she will be free to withdraw at any time. Precautions will be

taken to ensure that no participant will be harmed in any way by this research or their participation therein. Every participant will be given an opportunity to verify the transcription of the discussion/ his or her interview.

### **Duration of the Interview**

This individual interview should take no longer than 1 hour (60 minutes). Please note that the discussion will be recorded and then transcribed. Every participant will be given the opportunity to validate the transcription as an accurate reflection of the discussion and of their individual part therein.

Pseudonyms will be utilized in the transcription of interviews, as well as during data analysis and in the reporting of the findings. The data collected in this study will serve for research purposes only and will be treated as confidential. Access to the raw data will be restricted to the researcher alone.

### **Informed Consent**

Kindly remember to sign the consent form at the end of the letter of invitation that you received earlier.

Thank you for your participation.

### **Interview Questions**

1. How long have you been the manager of your circuit?
2. How many schools fall within your circuit?
3. Tell me a little about your career path to this post.
4. What role do you as the CM play with regard to the professional development of the principals in your circuit?
5. What form do the PD programmes that you present to the principals in your district take? (Give examples such as workshops, presentations, short courses etc. if the question is not understood)
6. Generally speaking, how long to these PD programmes last?

7. Who do you invite to participate in PD programmes?
8. How do you select the participants – in other words which factors do you consider when selecting the participants for these PD programmes?
9. What kinds of activities do the participants engage in during these programmes?
10. Describe the methodology of these programmes – in other words, HOW are these PD programmes done?
11. What is the content focus of these PD programmes – in other words, WHAT are the principals taught during these programmes?
12. How do you decide on the content focus for these programmes?
13. Are the principals involved in deciding the content and format of the PD programmes?
14. Who presents these PD programmes?
15. How do you decide who should present the PD programmes to the principals?
16. How do you make sure that the different PD programmes that you plan, complement one another – in other words, how do you ensure continuity or coherence between the different PD programmes?
17. What is your opinion on the relevance of the content of these PD programmes for the principals in your circuit?
18. Obviously you have identified some areas where the PD programmes were efficient and also some areas where they were inefficient. Which kinds of programmes do you consider to have been most successful?
19. Related to the previous question, which kinds of programmes do you feel are less successful?
20. Which form of PD did you find easiest to implement and why do you say so?
21. How relevant do you feel these PD programmes are in terms of the assessment and expected performance standards expected of the principals in your circuit?

## Annexure B

13 April 2015

The Principal

.....

Dear Sir

### **REQUEST TO PARTICIPATE IN THE RESEARCH PROJECT**

I am currently enrolled for a Master's degree in Education Leadership at the University of Pretoria. Part of the requirements for the awarding of this degree is the successful completion of a significant research project in the field of education.

The title of my approved research study is "***The Role of the Circuit Manager in the Professional Development of School principals.***" The purpose of the study is to explore the experiences and perceptions of principals of professional development. It is therefore my great honour and privilege to be able to invite you to become a voluntary participant in this research project.

Please allow me the opportunity to explain the scope and responsibility of your participation, should you choose to do so. It is my intention to gather the information I require for this research project as follows:

- a. Interviewing the principals
- b. The interviews will take 45-60 minutes
- c. The interview will not interfere with the school activities

Please understand that the decision for you to participate is entirely voluntary and that, once you have indicated your willingness to participate, permission for your participation will also be secured from the Mpumalanga Department of Education. Please also be assured that the information obtained during the research study will be treated as confidential, not even the Department of Education will have access to the raw data obtained from the interviews. At no time will either you as an individual or your school be mentioned by name or indeed be allowed to be identified by any manner or means whatsoever in the research report.

At the end of the research study you will be provided with a copy of the research report containing both the findings of the study and recommendations. If you decide to participate in this research study, kindly indicate this by completing the consent form at the end of this letter.

Thanking you in anticipation.

Yours in the service of education,

S.M. Ndlovu

Student researcher

E. Eberlein

Supervisor

## LETTER OF CONSENT

### VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION IN THE RESEARCH PROJECT ENTITLED

#### **The Role of the Circuit Manager in the Professional Development of School principals**

I, \_\_\_\_\_, hereby voluntarily and willingly agree to participate as an individual in the above-mentioned study introduced and explained to me by S.M Ndlovu, currently a student enrolled for an MEd Leadership degree at the University of Pretoria.

I further declare that I understand the aim, scope, purpose, possible consequences, benefits and methods of collecting information as they were explained to me by the researcher, as well as the means by which the researcher will attempt to ensure the confidentiality and integrity of the information she collects.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Full name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## Annexure C

13 March 2015

The Circuit Manager

\_\_\_\_\_ Circuit

Gert Sibande District

Mpumalanga

Dear Sir/ Madam

### **REQUEST TO PARTICIPATE IN THE RESEARCH PROJECT**

I am currently enrolled for a Master's Degree in Education Leadership at the University of Pretoria. Part of the requirements for the awarding of this degree is the successful completion of a significant research project in the field of education.

The title of my approved research study is "**The Role of the Circuit Manger in the Professional Development of Principals.**" The purpose of the study is to explore the experiences and perceptions of principals of the role of circuit managers in their professional development. It is therefore my greatest honour and privilege to be able to invite you to become a voluntary participant in this research project.

Please allow me the opportunity to explain the scope and responsibility of your participation, should you choose to do so. It is my intention to gather the information I require for this research project by conducting individual interviews lasting approximately 45 to 60 minutes with principals and with circuit managers they fall under.

Please understand that the decision for you to participate is entirely voluntary and that, once you have indicated your willingness to participate, permission for your participation will also be secured from the Mpumalanga Department of Education. Please also be assured that the information obtained during the research study will be treated confidential, not even the Department of Education will have access to the raw

data obtained from the interviews. At no time will either you as an individual or your school be mentioned by name or indeed be allowed to be identified by any manner or means whatsoever in the research report.

At the end of the research study you will be provided with a copy of the research report containing both the findings of the study and recommendations. If you decide to participate in this research study, kindly indicate this by completing the consent form at the end of this letter.

Thanking you in anticipation.

Yours in the service of education,

S.M. Ndlovu

Student researcher

E. Eberlein

Supervisor

## LETTER OF CONSENT

### VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION IN THE RESEARCH PROJECT ENTITLED

#### The Role of the Circuit Manager in the Professional Development of School principals

I, \_\_\_\_\_, hereby voluntarily and willingly agree to participate as an individual in the above-mentioned study introduced and explained to me by S.M Ndlovu, currently a student enrolled for an MEd Leadership degree at the University of Pretoria.

I further declare that I understand the aim, scope, purpose, possible consequences, benefits and methods of collecting information as they were explained to me by the researcher, as well as the means by which the researcher will attempt to ensure the confidentiality and integrity of the information she collects.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Full name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## Annexure D

13 March 2015

The Chairperson of the School Governing Body  
School \_\_\_\_\_

Dear Sir/Madam

### **REQUEST TO PARTICIPATE IN THE RESEARCH PROJECT**

I am currently enrolled for a Master's degree in Education Leadership at the University of Pretoria. Part of the requirements for the awarding of this degree is the successful completion of a significant research project in the field of education.

The title of my approved study is ***“The Role of the Circuit Manager in the Professional Development of Principals.”*** The purpose of the study is to explore the experiences and perceptions of principals of the role played by district officials in their professional development. It is therefore my great honour and privilege to be able to invite you to become a voluntary participant in this research project.

Please allow me the opportunity to explain the scope and responsibility of your participation, should you choose to do so. It is my intention to gather the information I require for this research project by conducting a 45 to 60 minutes interview with school principals and with circuit managers. These interviews will in no way interfere with the school activities.

Please understand that the decision to allow and specifically the principal of your school to participate is entirely voluntary and that, permission for your participation will also be secured from the Mpumalanga Department of Education. Please also be assured that information obtained during the research study will be treated confidential, not even the Department of Education will have access to the raw data obtained from the interviews. At no time will either you as an individual or your school be mentioned by name or indeed be allowed to be identified by any manner or means whatsoever in the research report.

At the end of the research study you will be provided with a copy of the research report containing both the findings of the study and recommendations. If you decide to participate in this research study, kindly indicate this by completing the consent form at the end of this letter.

Thanking you in anticipation.

Yours in service of education,

S.M. Ndlovu

Student researcher

E. Eberlein

Supervisor

## LETTER OF CONSENT

### VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION IN THE RESEARCH PROJECT ENTITLED

#### **The Role of the Circuit Manager in the Professional Development of School principals**

I, \_\_\_\_\_, hereby voluntarily and willingly agree to participate as an individual in the above-mentioned study introduced and explained to me by S.M Ndlovu, currently a student enrolled for an MEd Leadership degree at the University of Pretoria.

I further declare that I understand the aim, scope, purpose, possible consequences, benefits and methods of collecting information as they were explained to me by the researcher, as well as the means by which the researcher will attempt to ensure the confidentiality and integrity of the information she collects.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Full name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date