Institutional Development and Support Officials' support to School Management Teams

By

Sello George Ngwenya

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MAGISTER EDUCATIONIS

In

Education Management Law and Policy

In the

Faculty of Education

At the

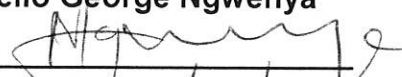University of Pretoria (UP)

Supervised by:

Dr MAU Mohlakwana

2017

DECLARATION

I, **Sello George Ngwenya,** declare that the study titled "Institutional Development and Support Officials' support to School Management Teams" is my own work and that I have acknowledged all sources I have used or quoted and indicated the authors as references.

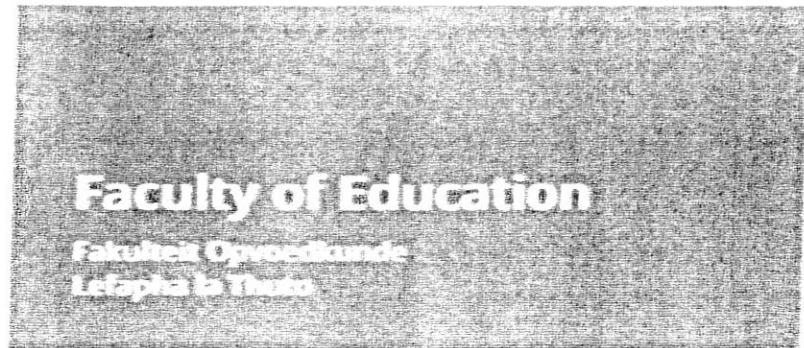**Name : Sello George Ngwenya**

Signed: _____

Date _____ 08/11/2017

ETHICAL CLEARANCE

Faculty of Education

Fakulteit Opvoedkunde
Lefapha la Thuto

Ethics Committee
8 March 2016

Dear Mr Ngwenya,

REFERENCE: EM 15/10/01

Your application was considered by the Faculty of Education Ethics Committee and the final decision of the Ethics Committee is:

Your application is approved.

This letter serves as notification that you may continue with your fieldwork. Should any changes to the study occur after approval was given, it is your responsibility to notify the Ethics Committee immediately.

Please note that you have to fulfil the conditions specified in this letter from the Faculty of Education Research Ethics Committee. The conditions include;

1) *The ethics approval is conditional on the research being conducted as stipulated by the details of all documents submitted to the Committee. In the event that a further need arises to change who the investigators are, the methods or any other aspect, such changes must be submitted as an Amendment (Section E) for approval by the Committee.*

   - *Any amendments to this approved protocol need to be submitted to the Ethics Committee for review prior to data collection. Non-compliance implies that the Committee's approval is null and void.*
   - *Final data collection protocols and supporting evidence (e.g.: questionnaires, interview schedules, observation schedules) have to be submitted to the Ethics Committee before they are used for data collection.*

2) *The researcher should please note that this decision covers the entire research process, until completion of the study report, and not only the days that data will be collected.*

3) *Should your research be conducted in schools, please note that you have to submit proof of how you adhered to the Department of Basic Education (DBE) policy for research.*

4) *The Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Education does not accept any liability for research misconduct, of whatsoever nature, committed by the researcher(s) in the implementation of the approved protocol.*

Please note that this is **not a clearance certificate**.
Upon completion of your research you need to submit the following documentation to the Ethics Committee:

- **Integrated Declarations Form (Form D08),**
- **Initial Ethics Approval letter and,**
- **Approval of Title.**

On receipt of the above-mentioned documents you will be issued a clearance certificate. Please quote the reference number: EM 15/10/01 in any communication with the Ethics Committee.

Best wishes,

Prof Liesel Ebersöhn
Chair: Ethics Committee
Faculty of Education

DEDICATION

The realisation and achievement of academic success such as obtaining an M.Ed degree in the life of a human being is influenced by family, friends and other people around you. It is, therefore, important to acknowledge their inputs.

This achievement is dedicated to:

- **The Almighty God** for having provided me with the will and strength to pursue this study to completion and for leading and travelling the lonely road with me.

- My late mother, Raela Violet Ngwenya who provided primary education and planted the seed for education in our family. May her soul rest in peace.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ABSTRACT

The role played by the SMTs and IDSOs in the South African education context is important. Their involvement in the day-to-day development of the learners is considerable. They need to work harmoniously and in collaboration to create an enabling learning environment. The SMTs expect to be supported in their work. Accordingly, IDSOs are well placed to fulfil this role, based on their expertise. This study is underpinned by the four-factor leadership theory of Bowers and Seashore (1960) that entails four distinct factors, namely, support, interaction, facilitation, goal emphasis and work facilitation. This qualitative research design was located within the interpretivist paradigm. The IDSOs and SMTs from three primary schools in the Tshwane South District (Gauteng Province) were interviewed. Relevant documents were analysed. Data were generated by means of semi-structured interviews to enable the probing of the responses.

The findings revealed that the SMTs require support from the IDSOs to fulfil their functions. In most cases, the IDSOs focus on the development of principals only. Consequently, the team chain that may have been strengthened over time is broken. The SMTs expect the IDSOs to play a major role in supporting schools with various aspects of school management, development and leadership including the Internal Whole School Evaluation (IWSE) and in preparation for the External Whole School Evaluation conducted by the OFSTED officials. SMTs see the IDSOs as the principals' supervisors. In practice, the IDSOs do not offer any direct support to the SMTs. Instead, they use the cascading model to capacitate all the SMT members.

The study made several recommendations. The first involves improving the capacity of districts, circuits and clusters through clearer role definitions and relooking at the processes of selection, recruitment and empowerment of the district officials, especially the IDSOs. Principals with expertise and capacity to lead and develop others and with sufficient principalship experience should be recruited.

The department should introduce an upward reporting and feedback system on the IDSOs' functionality for use by the SMTs in relation to the support provided by the IDSOs and accountability sessions can also be held by the IDSOs' supervisors with the IDSOs to ensure that they account for the support provided to each of the schools they are assigned to.

Accounting sessions for all the SMT members also need to be conducted by their schools' IDSOs. Finally, reduction of both the number of schools and the workloads allocated per IDSO in line with the national policy on district organisation and the proper implementation of the national departmental policy on the organisation of districts in its current form by the GDE can lead to the improvement and greater efficiency in the work of the IDSOs.

CONFIRMATION OF THE EDITING OF VARIOUS DOCUMENTS FOR MR SELLO NGWENYA

To whom it may concern

I hereby confirm that I have edited of the dissertation on investigating how institutional development and support officials (IDSOs) support school management teams (SMTs) by Mr Sello George Ngwenya an M.Ed student at the University of Pretoria's Education Department specialising in Education Management and Policy Studies.

I am an experienced language editor and have been working for Unisa since 2006 to date as a mentor, tutor and editor in the Colleges of Education, Human Sciences and the Economic of Management and Economic Sciences as well as the School of Business Leadership. I also do private editing of dissertations and theses for postgraduate students at the Tshwane University of Technology and the University of Pretoria.

I've been teaching academic and communication skills to tertiary students since 1996 and have a masters' degree in general linguistics as well as honours degrees in education and librarianship.

I can be contacted at jansencs@tut.ac.za and carolsusan07@gmail.com and my cell number is 082 9200312.

Carol Susan Jansen

8 November 2017

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

The acronyms and abbreviations that were used in the document are listed below.

CA – Collective agreement

CEM – Council of Education Ministers

CL – Cluster leader.

CM - Circuit manager.

COSATU - The Congress of South African Trade Unions

DIP- District Improvement Plan

DSG – Developmental Support Groups

EEA – Employment of Educators Act 76 of 1998

ELRC – Education Labour Relations Council

EWSE –External whole school evaluation.

GDE – Gauteng Department of Education.

HoD – The provincial head of department

HOD –Heads Of departments (school based)

IDS - Institutional Development and Support

IDSO - Institutional development and support official.

IPS   Improvement plans

IQMS – Integrated quality management system.

IWSE – Internal whole school evaluation.

LTSM – Learning Teaching and Support Materials.

MEC – Member of the executive council of the provincial government

NDP - National Development Plan

NRwS- New Relationships with Schools

OFSTED – Office of Standards in Education.

OSD - Occupation Specific Dispensation.

PAM Document – Personnel Administrative Measures document

PEDs – Provincial Education

PSCBC - Public Service Coordinating Bargaining Council

RCL - Representative Council for Learners

SADTU – South African Democratic Teachers Union.

SDP - School Development Plan

SDT – Staff Development Teams

SGBs – School Governing Bodies

SIP- School Improvement Plans

SMT – School Management Team.

SSE – School Self- Evaluation.

SWOT – Strengths Weaknesses Opportunities and Threats.

THRS - Transversal Human Resources Services.

TIMS – Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study.

SACMEQ – Southern and Eastern African Consortium for Monitoring Education Quality.

WSDP - Whole School Development Plans.

WSE - Whole school evaluation.

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CHAPTER 1
OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

1.1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The South African education system is both multi-layered and bureaucratic. These layers are inter-related and interdependent. One of the most important layers is occupied by officials referred to as IDSOs. They provide the linkage and liaison between the different units in the districts and the schools by referring school matters concerning different units to the heads of the units for them to address (Smith, 2010). Even though, these officials are known as IDSOs in the Gauteng Province, they are referred to as Circuit Managers (CMs) in some South African provinces such as Mpumalanga and Limpopo. CMs are educational leaders tasked with managing a circuit, which is made up of a group of schools that are located geographically close to each other (RSA, 2013). In Gauteng, the IDSOs are educational leaders based at the provincial education departmental level responsible for school support known as district offices (RSA, 2002).

These education leaders and developmental officials function within virtual circuits and clusters in Gauteng. In Gauteng, districts have recently been decentralised and sub-divided into circuits which are further sub-divided into operational clusters headed by cluster leaders formerly known as IDSOs (Walsh, Dale-Jones, Debeila, Martin, Looyen & Molete, 2013; Christie, Sullivan, Duku & Gallie, 2010). Christie *et al. (*2010), anticipate that the geographical clustering of schools had the potential to promote networking between schools as well as the sharing of ideas and good practices. The virtual circuits operate from the central district offices and they are tasked with providing end- to-end support to schools (Walsh *et al*, 2013). The 'education circuit' concept has been in existence for a while now in South Africa, but the introduction of an extra layer between the circuits and schools known as a cluster is fairly recent and may need to be investigated further.

These circuits and clusters, from which the IDSOs operate, are not detached from the district as in other provinces where circuits and clusters operate away from the district offices and assume the full circuit and cluster functions.

Circuits and clusters are supposed to be located within the areas where the schools they service are located, which should result in direct and immediate access to the circuits and support of the officials. The fact that the circuits are virtual has a negative impact on the direct support for their schools as they still have to access the district in order to receive support, which could have been easily accessible if the circuits had been within an accessible distance from the schools. The support of the IDSOs is supposed to be an essential link in the development and improvement of schools (Smith, 2010). However, service delivery and support to schools by the circuits and IDSOs is hampered by schools not being able to access their IDSOs and CMs directly in the shortest possible time because these departmental officials operate from the central district office located far from the schools. The location of the virtual circuits may be a hindrance to the support that is provided by the IDSOs to the schools assigned to them. The layer of the educational structure occupied by the IDSOs, previously known as circuit inspectors or CMs, in provinces like Limpopo and Mpumalanga, currently provides support, development and monitoring to schools, and they can therefore not be underestimated and under-valued.

IDSOs are supposed to interact with and provide support to various stakeholders within the schools in order to ensure that schools are supported and developed (Smith, 2010). Observing their operations from a distance, I am of the view that they are also expected to lead and provide turn-around strategies for schools that under-perform through direct support to their SMTs. Smith (2010) argues that the IDSOs are tasked to perform school development and support functions for the entire school including the SMTs and school governing bodies (hereafter referred to as SGBs).

Ebersohn (2008) concurs with Smith (2010) and mentions that the IDSOs have an oversight and monitoring responsibility regarding the overall functionality of the school and they have to work as a team to ensure that schools achieve the departmental standards, goals and objectives of providing quality education to the entire society. If the functions of the IDSOs indicated by Smith (2010) and Ebersohn (2008) hold true, schools should be positioned well to improve their academic performance, identify their goals, facilitate the work of the SMTs and staff members and operationalise their plans under the leadership of the principal and supervision of the IDSOs as an external support structure.

The above-mentioned functions of the IDSOs are rarely realisable. Often, schools find themselves working on their own due to lack of support from these district officials as argued by Raath (2012). In that regard, there is no functional synergy between different schools, their IDSOs and the districts, communication is sparse and academic support is non-existent. Consequently, support and development gaps have been created by the lack of synergy in the operations.

This study aims at focusing on the strategies used by IDSOs in supporting the SMTs and highlights the challenges and successes experienced by both the SMTs and IDSOs in realising the ultimate objective of school improvement through the provision of support. The study is based on the premise that transformation, educational reform and decentralisation accompany school-based management (SBM) to bring about change and improvement in schools (Botha, 2013). At school level, school-based management is led and directed by the School Management Teams (SMTs). In support of school-based management, Bush, Joubert, Kiggundu and Van Rooyen (2009) claim that the management of teaching and learning, which is the core function of a school, is supposed to be a shared responsibility within the SMTs. In the same vein, Wallace (2002) further supports the importance of school-based management by stating that the SMTs should have the ability to work together effectively for the creation of a shared SMT culture. The SMTs as the nucleus of operation, support and development in their schools, should be knowledgeable and competent in the areas in which they function, but they need constant and continuous support and development.

SMTs are geared to make decisions, determine the curriculum direction and introduce systematic changes in their schools. These teams are responsible for the leadership and management of the schools. As school leadership teams, the SMTs engage in the planning of activities aimed at fostering the attainment of the organisational goals and realisation of their visions (Morgeson, DeRue & Karam, 2016). In short, they are accountable for the overall performance and achievement of their schools. Among their key functions, they take responsibility for leading the drawing up of the School Improvement Plans (SIPs) as required by the Whole School Evaluation (WSE) policy Christie *et al.* (2010).

These responsibilities make the SMTs the central structures that drive operations in their institutions and make SMTs accountable for the management of their schools. A great deal of support is needed in order for the SMTs to carry out their responsibilities effectively. Jones (2012) expresses similar views by indicating that team leadership in schools has a potential to make a positive difference in the process of teaching and learning. The sharing of school leadership lightens the task and makes it possible for the school to realise its purpose without any hindrance. It is, therefore, imperative for schools to seek expertise in various areas of leadership through proper recruitment and selection of SMT members. Principals, as school leaders, must be able to inspire their SMTs to strive to reach greater heights in leading their schools through visionary leadership (Jones, 2012). According to Christie *et al.* (2010), good principals craft visions for their schools and they get other members, including the SMTs, to buy into their visions and ensure that the vision becomes a shared vision that directs their schools. They are supposed to master a plethora of skills ranging from financial management, policy implementation and organising, to staff motivation and team leadership (Jones, 2012).

In performance of their functions, schools need external support to succeed and prosper. The school leaders require continuous development and support in order to lead their schools with distinction. The required support and monitoring functions are provided by the district offices (RSA, 2002). Christie *et al.* (2010) argue that schools can perform well if they can be provided with consistent quality support by districts and circuits. The education district offices are located in various regions to provide external support to schools through various sub-directorates including the Institutional Development and Support Officials (IDSOs). District offices, as the hub of support for schools, are expected to exert an effort to raise the standards and the quality of education provision. The districts are required to employ experts that should be able to provide support in school leadership, school management, governance, the development of curriculum staff and financial planning (RSA, 2002) and ensure the successful implementation of departmental policies and regulations. These are areas in which the SMTs and IDSOs play a key role by virtue of having been recruited to provide school leadership, management and support of teaching and learning.

IDSOs are officials who are based in the districts and have currently moved to the virtual circuit offices. The IDSOs are meant to provide the support and development required by the SMTs for the effective performance of their leadership and management functions. Based on this, it becomes arguable whether the management and leadership of the schools should still be located in the position of the principals. In the current era, some researchers have contended that, indeed, the responsibility of leading and managing a school as an organisation, can no longer be left in the control of an individual, but needs the contribution of an SMT with a shared vision and shared objectives (Christie *et al*, 2010).

On the basis of the above statements that highlighted the leadership role of the SMTs and the support required from the district and the IDSOs, the purpose of this study was to investigate how the IDSOs provide support to the SMTs to enable them to manage, lead and develop their schools to enable them to function effectively. The focus was on how the SMTs understand the role of the IDSOs in providing them with support and how the IDSOs, in turn, understand their role of supporting the SMTs with their management functions in the Tshwane South District, Gauteng Province.

1.2. PROBLEM STATEMENT

A study by Raath (2012) on the principals' experiences and expectations of the role of IDSOs in supporting Gauteng schools revealed that principals had varied perceptions regarding the functions of the IDSOs. Raath (2012), however, concurs with Smith (2010) and Ebersohn (2008) that IDSOs are vital for both maintaining high leadership and management levels and also creating a supportive environment that will result in the provision of quality educational programmes. It is important to note that the SMTs play a key role in leading and facilitating interaction and work of teachers and learners in their phases and departments. It is extremely important that they should be supported by the departmental officials in various aspects of school leadership and management.

As mentioned above on page 2 paragraph 1, IDSOs seem to experience challenges with supporting their schools. SMTs do not seem to receive the support of the IDSOs assigned to schools as a collective. Support that is provided by IDSOs to schools seems to be afforded only to the principals which leaves a chasm in the development and support for SMTs. This study investigates whether SMTs are supported by their IDSOs and how support is provided. Although the above researchers have concurred that the key functions of the IDSOs entail the support for and development of schools, especially the SMTs, I have observed that there has been limited or no visible support for SMTs from their schools' IDSOs, which has resulted in the absence of visible improvement and development in schools.

My observation on the lack of evidential support and development for the school management has been confirmed by Wallace (2002) and Ebersohn (2008). Research has established that teamwork is critical for the functioning of the SMTs and they have to operate as a team (Wallace, 2002) in order to fulfil their responsibility of providing good school management and leadership in their schools, so that the much-sought-after quality education can be achieved. In support of team functioning, Ebersohn (2008) avers that site-based management advocates teamwork and emphasises participation in management. Although the SMTs face substantial pressure, they have to maintain a united front and forge ahead with the management of their schools as a team.

The contribution of Wallace (2002) and Ebersohn (2008) raise concerns about the exclusion of SMT members from the IDSOs' support and engagements with principals. The practice of excluding other SMT members from the IDSOs' support sessions defeats both the purpose and value of team work. The broader participation of the individuals within the management team could be beneficial for the leadership and management of the school (Ebersohn, 2008), while the lack of such participation may imply that the SMTs are deprived of important information and the support of their IDSO officials, which are offered solely to the school principals. The relationship between the Circuit Manager (IDSOs in provinces such as Mpumalanga and Limpopo) and the schools is cordial (Clarke, 2008), however, the actual practices of IDSOs, in reality, suggest otherwise.

In my view, it is only the relationship between the principals and the IDSOs/ Cluster Leaders (CLs) that is cordial as the engagement between the Circuit Managers (Previously known as circuit inspectors) and principals usually excludes the SMTs as observed in the real school operations. The presence of the above-mentioned issues depicts an absence of engagement between the IDSOs and the SMTs which suggests an absence of support for the SMTs from the IDSOs and other district-based officials. If there is any support, it has clearly not resulted in much noticeable development in some schools. This study has identified a gap in literature regarding support provided to SMTs by their IDSOs and has thus sought to engage in vigorous research to fill that gap.

The main and secondary research questions below formed the basis and framework of the study. These questions were meant to guide the study.

1.2.1. Main research question

The study poses the following (main) or primary research question:

How do the Institutional Development and Support Officials (IDSOs) support the School Management Teams (SMTs) in the development of their schools?

1.2.2. Secondary research questions

The four research sub-questions were:
- How do the SMTs understand the roles and functions of the IDSOs?
- How do the IDSOs perform their functions of supporting the SMTs with developing their schools?
- What are the challenges and successes experienced by the IDSOs when performing their roles and functions?
- What strategies do the IDSOs use when supporting the SMTs?

1.3. RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

New challenges and interests are now emerging in relation to the roles and functions of the recently established institutional support and development units located in education districts in South Africa (Clarke 2008). Although the IDSOs are supposed to provide support and development to schools, it appears that no policies and regulations were agreed upon between the labour unions and the Gauteng Department of Education as an employer of the IDSOs regarding the work of the IDSOs. In the research by Smith (2011), one IDSO referred to the IDSOs as generalists who basically support their schools in whatever form of challenge or difficulty they experience. In support of Smith's (2010) findings on the nature of district operations, McKinney (2009) found that the professional identity and roles of district officials were ambiguous. This was aggravated by the absence of job descriptions for officials such as the IDSOs and a lack of internal capacity to provide support (McKinney, 2009). The Education Labour Relations Council (ELRC) seems to have been unable to secure an agreement between labour and the employer on the functions and roles of the IDSOs with regard to supporting the SMTs.

Researchers such as Raath (2012) and Sembirige (2009) have observed that there is limited research in existence on the roles and functions of the IDSOs. These authors agree on the need for more research and role clarification regarding the IDSOs or school inspectors' functions with regard to supporting principals and SMTs with work facilitation, curriculum management and people management in their schools.

Being positioned externally to the school, the IDSOs are able to observe the school from a distance and provide progressive comments, views and support to the internal stakeholders, especially the SMTs. The controlled and well-managed intervention and support of the IDSOs for SMTs carry the potential to turn the schools around from poor to good, good to best, and from best to excellent schools. Having worked as a curriculum information analyst official, based at one of the fifteen districts in the Gauteng Province and interacting regularly with the IDSOs, this researcher's personal observations and experience attest to the fact that the IDSOs do not implement their documented functions.

The IDSOs argue that they do not have job descriptions and they function as generalists as reported by Smith, (2010) even though several documents issued by the ELRC and the Department of Education such as Collective Agreement 01 of 2008 (RSA, 2008b), Gazette 300 of 2013 (RSA, 2013a), Circular 25 of 2008 (RSA, 2008a), Circular 51 of 2006 (RSA, 2006), outline their functions. They are allocated a large number of schools, and although some are willing, they still strive to provide satisfactory support and development to the schools they are responsible for. This results in the neglect of some of the schools in terms of development and support provision, especially for the SMTs. With regard to the interaction between the SMTs and the IDSOs, the SMTs may be receiving limited support or no direct support from the IDSOs at all. This is corroborated by Clarke's (2008) argument that principals are the only SMT members who meet the IDSOs at the schools and they engage in various aspects of the school operations, which impact on the work of other SMT members who are excluded from discussions with the IDSOs during their schools visits.

The IDSOs claim to be responsible for the support and development of school management, but in reality, they focus exclusively on compliance-related matters (Smith, 2010) at the expense of support and monitoring. They tend to focus their support and attention predominantly on the principals of schools although various documents like the Collective Agreement 01 of 2008 (RSA, 2008b), Circular 25 of 2008 (RSA, 2008a) and Circular 51 of 2006 (RSA, 2006) refer to them as a support and developmental officials for the SMTs. Instead, the other SMT members are briefed by the principal about the issues raised with or by the IDSOs after visiting the school and engaging with the principal.. This behaviour and operation of the IDSOs and the principals cannot be generalised to all the schools in the province. This anomaly was investigated in this study.

1.4. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study investigated how the IDSOs supported the SMTs in school development. The study can bring about a better understanding of the roles and functions of the IDSOs. The SMTs will have realistic expectations on the support provided by the IDSOs in relation to their functions.

This study will also raise an awareness of collaborative relationships that will form foundations for learning and the empowerment, autonomy and credibility of SMTs in future. The national, provincial and school policies that are inclusive of the directives related to complex administrative issues of school development, management, governance and leadership may be reviewed and improved as a result of the findings of this study. Furthermore, this study aims to find relevance in the body of knowledge in the education and policy studies which focus on the societal developmental.

1.5. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

A few limitations of the study were identified. The first limitation was the generalisability of the findings of the study. The aim of the study was not to generalize the findings but to draw deep onto available information on the practices of IDSOs in their role of supporting SMTs. The findings do are not generalizable but they may be transferable to other schools and districts.

Furthermore, the selection of the three least-performing schools may not necessarily reflect the lack of or availability of the IDSOs' support for the SMT members in the high performing schools. The other limitation was the .size of the sample as the study was limited to only three schools out of three hundred-and-eight schools in one district in the Gauteng Province which consists of fifteen (15) districts. This limitation was circumvented by using semi-structured interviews that probed for deeper responses. In addition, documents were also analysed to corroborate the findings.

1.6. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

In support of what Creswell (2013) explains about research designs providing specific direction for research procedures, a qualitative case study design was chosen in order to focus on how the IDSOs support the SMTs in selected Tshwane South schools in the Gauteng Province. This was reflected in the discussion below, in particular, where the intention of the research was to study the participants in their natural social settings (Wimpenny, in Savin-Baden & Major, 2010).

Case studies are concerned with a lively description of events and focus on understanding the perceptions of individuals or groups (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). This lends itself to the participation of the IDSO and the SMTs as, together, they will lead schools to a situation where the participants are able to discover practical solutions and meaning of support.

The relationships and processes in the schooling system are interconnected and interdependent. A case study carries the potential to result in a better understanding and utilisation of the concepts such as support, work facilitation, team interaction, goal emphasis, change and improvement in the school management arena. In practice, as indicated in the problem statement, the researcher presumes that the IDSOs and SMTs are both aware that there is a distinct lack of support for the SMTs and that this situation is impacting negatively on the provision of high quality education desired by education authorities and communities.

1.7. RESEARCH PARADIGM

This study follows the interpretivist paradigm which is seen as an approach to qualitative research (Goldkuhl, 2012). The central focus of the interpretive paradigm context is to understand the subjective world of individual experiences (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). Interpretivism is based on the belief that human beings construct and interpret knowledge and meaning from experiences and from an understanding between events, people and things, to generate a better understanding of the phenomena under study (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011).

In this study, meaningful knowledge was created through interpreting information from the SMTs by determining how they were being supported. This study interpreted the work process of the IDSOs and studied the interaction facilitation among individuals (Creswell, 2014). The interaction between the IDSOs and the SMTs, between the principals and the IDSOs and between the principals and the SMTs were studied and interpreted by researchers such as Raath (2012), Mestry and Khumalo (2012), Smith (2010) and Bush, Joubert, Kiggundu and van Rooyen, (2009).

The four-factor theory of leadership links well with the sets of meanings that were yielded by the insight into and understanding of people's behaviour (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011). In this study, the insights and understanding of the SMTs and IDSOs provided information on the support provision by the IDSOs to the SMTs.

1.8. POPULATION AND SELECTION OF PARTICIPANTS

Qualitative researchers need to have a plan for site and participant identification for the research they wish to undertake (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). The research sites in this study were the township primary schools in the Tshwane South District, The population consisted of the IDSOs and the SMTs of the selected schools who were the main sources of the data required. The township schools have been most affected by lack of development and thus the need to investigate whether they are supported by the IDSOs.

Purposive sampling was used to select the participants for a specific purpose, which is that SMTs and IDSOs are the sources of the required data (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). To focus this study, one least performing primary school in the 2015 district assessment processes was selected from the three township circuits. All the SMT member levels and the IDSOs of the three schools were selected as samples in order to have diverse views and representativity in the sample.

1.9. DATA COLLECTION

The researcher embarked on a qualitative research study, which was aimed at understanding and explaining the phenomena in question, that is, how the IDSOs support the SMTs. The use of a single instrument would not have provided sufficient, accurate, trustworthy and credible data and therefore, the data collection plan entailed crystallising multiple techniques of data collection instruments (Creswell, 2009). Accordingly, this study used semi-structured interviews and document analysis to collect the data.

The researcher intended to collect data that were rich, trustworthy and credible and therefore combined data drawn from different sources and from different people and triangulate them by means of semi-structured interviews and documents.

1.9.1. Semi-structured interviews

The main purpose of the interview was to obtain information or individual views from the participants who had experienced the phenomena being studied (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Flick, 2011; Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). Semi-structured interviews were employed to collect the data. Semi-structured interviews entail flexibility of the interviewer in terms of ordering the topics considered in the study and allows the interviewees to develop ideas and speak openly and widely on the questions asked by the researcher (Denscombe, 2004). This study managed to probe the interviewees to elaborate on their views confidently regarding the questions asked. The three IDSOs and nine SMT members were interviewed to obtain relevant, in-depth information on the IDSOs support and development processes for SMTs.

Permission to audio-record the interviews was obtained from the participants (Raath, 2012 & Denscombe, 2004). The mood in a semi-structured interview is relaxed and may result in the researcher obtaining relevant and meaningful data from the respondents Semi-structured interviews are meant to be open-ended to allow for the openness of opinions and expressions. In that regard, probing was utilised effectively to allow the participants to relate well to the topic.

1.9.2. Document analysis

The use of documents provides evidential proof of the practices and processes followed in the school or institution under study. Documents can be both public and private (restricted access or secret and classified) records that can be obtained from the research sites and used by the qualitative researcher (Denscombe, 2004). Documents are the data sources accessible to the imaginative and resourceful investigator and should be readily available at an institution or in the possession of the SMTs, IDSOs' or the CMs' offices.

The minutes of meetings, for instance, have outlined how the process pertaining to supporting and developing SMTs is handled. In the interest of the crystallisation of data, documents were used to corroborate the evidence from other sources.

The researcher made an effort to access the relevant documents and evaluate their authenticity and credibility before using the documents (Denscombe, 2004). This researcher sampled documents that are supposed to be used by IDSOs and SMTs in their day-to-day operations and in supporting their schools. It is expected that any school that functions normally must readily have the documents sampled for this study.

The following documents were requested during the data collection phase. They included but were not be limited to:

- Relevant circulars (Addressing the functions of the IDSOs) were requested to enable the researcher to determine the depth of available information on the roles and responsibilities of the IDSOs,

- Monthly plans and reports of the IDSOs were required to provide information on the actual operations of the IDSOs,

- Job descriptions and job allocations of the IDSOs enabled the researcher to locate the functions and responsibilities of the IDSOs in relation to the SMT support and helped to discard the unrealistic expectations from the SMTs,

- Logbooks serving as records of the IDSOs' visits were used as a source of data to confirm SMT support by the IDSOs. These were analysed to determine the frequency of the IDSO visits to schools and how the process of support was handled in different schools,

- Project plans on various school support and development programmes enabled the researcher to determine the depth of the SMT support with school development projects,

- The minutes of meetings and empowerment sessions between the SMTs and the IDSOs. These documents allowed the researcher to get a glimpse of the contents relevance of their discussions in the meetings,

- Internal and External Whole School Evaluation (IWSE and EWSE) reports of the schools were used to provide information on the role played by the IDSO in the WSE processes.

1.10. DATA ANALYSIS

During the analysis of the qualitative data, the data were grouped into categories, patterns and themes (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006) that enabled the researcher to make sense of the collected data. The four-step qualitative data analysis approach employed by Lord and Hutchison (1993) was used to analyse and interpret the data. The process included the following steps:

- Transcription of the notes collected from the semi-structured interviews;
- Coding of data using keywords as a way of identifying common areas and variations;
- Identification of common and varied patterns and categories within groups;
- Identification of themes which linked with or explained data on the phenomenon under study, namely, support.

The researcher's data collection plan entailed crystallising multiple data collection instruments consisting of the researcher as a data collection instrument, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis. Fraenkel and Wallen (1990) point out that fieldwork and interview data should be checked on a daily basis. This researcher first coded the incidents and bits of information. These were coded into tentative conceptual categories. As soon as the first set of data was obtained, I conducted a parallel analysis with   collection of data because these activities inform and support each other (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001).

1.11. QUALITY CRITERIA

Trustworthiness pertains to the quality and worth of the findings that determine the extent to which people are persuaded to trust the research findings. Trustworthiness can be used as a gauge for ensuring that the research findings are genuine and worth attending to (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). Cohen *et al.* (2007) have identified different types of triangulation and this study employed the methodological triangulation. To ensure the trustworthiness of the data collected, the researcher applied triangulation by using multiple data collection methods and interviews with the IDSOs and SMT members, and the analysis of a variety of documents.

The researcher also kept a journal by making field notes during the study and analysed recorded information during data analysis.

1.12. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The main ethical issues that were observed for this study included obtaining the necessary permission (Creswell, 2014) from the various sources, including the University of Pretoria's ethics approval and permission from the IDSOs and SMT members as human participants (Hinckley, 1995, in Maree, 2011). Permission was obtained from the DGE for the research participation of schools under their jurisdiction. Written approval from the school and district authorities to access and utilise documents relevant to the study was obtained. The consent of the participants was acquired. The researcher indicated to the participants in advance that they were not coerced into participating in the study. The researcher observed all the ethics protocols, including issues of confidentiality, anonymity, respect of teaching time and protection from harm.

1.13. STRUCTURE OF THE STUDY AND OUTLINE OF THE CHAPTERS

This study is organised into five chapters as follows:

Chapter 1

Overview of the study: This chapter provides the background to and orientation with regard to this study and states the problem and purpose of this study. The rationale of this study, its aims and research questions were also described. Lastly, the limitations and significance of the study were addressed.

Chapter 2

Literature review: This section explores the concept of 'support' and how other researchers and authors have contributed to the concepts of 'Inspections in schools,' 'functioning of' and 'support for SMTs,' district office and IDSOs. Collaborative and shared leadership will also be discussed in this chapter.

Chapter 3

Research design and methodology: This chapter provides details of the methodology used in the study. The design of this study, data collection and sampling for the study is discussed in detail. Issues such as triangulation, ethical considerations and quality assurance are dealt with in this section of the study.

Chapter 4

Data presentation, analysis and interpretation: This chapter focusses on the presentation of collected data, data analysis and interpretation of the data.

Chapter 5

Findings, conclusion and recommendations: This is the chapter in which the study is summarised and concluded. The chapter indicates the findings from the analysed data and conclusions are also drawn. The conclusions and recommendations are made regarding the provision of support for SMTs by their schools' IDSOs.

1.14. CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter has provided a clear outline of this study. Explicit introductory and background statements were provided. A clarification of why the study had to take place and the rationale behind this research was made. In addition, a brief account of the research design and methodology were given as well as the study demarcation. The next chapter looks at the contributions of literature on school inspections, team management, the functioning of SMTs and the support provided to SMTs by the IDSOs.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter explores the history of school inspections and the current trends in the South African inspectorate and education leadership space. Emphasis is placed on the inputs of experts, authors and researchers on the clarification of concepts such as: 'school inspections', 'school districts', 'institutional development and support', 'school management', 'school leadership', 'support', 'school development' and 'school improvement'. The discussion in this chapter focuses on the policies or legislative frameworks guiding the functioning of the IDSOs and the SMTs. The researcher draws on the knowledge and research findings of other researchers and authors in the area of the functioning of IDSOs and SMTs. The chapter also pays attention to global, continental and local inspection contexts and practices. The leadership responsibilities of the IDSOs and SMTs are addressed in this chapter.

The literature is explicit in explaining the role of the IDSOs in providing support to the entire school and SMT members (Raath, 2012; Smith, 2010). The rationale behind having the IDSOs as a support structure for the SMTs is based on the notion that for schools to be effective in delivering quality education, they require strong leaders and efficient support systems (Schleicher, 2012). Bush (2008) views school leadership as critical to the development of their institutions. The IDSOs as school leaders representing the Department of Education are supposed to play a major role in supporting and developing schools with the management of teaching and learning, leadership development, assessment, teacher development, planning and overall performance as explained by scholars such as Raath (2012), Smith (2010) and Clarke (2008).

The SMTs, as school leaders, have to work together with the IDSOs to ensure the effective functionality of the school systems. Led by their principals, they have to provide a sense of direction to their schools (Day & Sammons, 2016).

The SMTs and the districts, through the circuit management and the IDSOs, have to work as partners, although the IDSOs occupy a higher hierarchical level in the school system. As partners in education provision, they need to be inspired by a shared vision, which should translate into high quality teaching and learning. However, it does not seem as if this role is easily attainable (Van der Berg, Taylor, Gustafsson, Spaull & Armstrong, 2011) by the IDSOs due to obstacles that include poor support of schools by the education bureaucracies and districts **(**Christie *et al*, 2010**).**

The clarification of school support inspections and the national inspections in various countries conducted by the Office of Standards in Education (OFSTED) officials were also elucidated in the literature. Hlongwane and Mestry (2013), Thobela and Mtapuri (2014), and Nkonki and Mammen (2012) have all identified a gap in the functioning and operations of the teams and structures within the schools. Gaps may also exist in the operations of IDSOs in relation to support and development provision to schools. The current and historical operations of the IDSOs are completely different from the operations of former school inspectors.

Thobela and Mtapuri (2014), and Nkonki and Mammen (2012) have also realised the propensity of school leaders to refuse to devolve power to other people in the schools because they argue that the power to manage and run the organisation belongs solely to them. This practice, in this researchers' view, can be attributed to the distinct lack of support and capacity that the IDSOs should be providing to school leaders and SMTs to ensure that they gain confidence and understand their roles and functions.

Instructional, shared and distributed leadership as recent approaches to school leadership, were also looked into with regard to school leadership and management. Grant and Singh (2009) argue for the effective use of distributed leadership in school management which enables the support and development to filter through the various levels of the school structure.

This study's focus is on the support provided by the IDSOs to the SMTs and how they help them to develop their institutions, and therefore, it is vital for support to be discussed in brief.

2.2. INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND SUPPORT - THE ROLE PLAYERS IN EDUCATION SUPPORT

The education district offices and the IDSOs are the key providers of support to schools. They are supposed to create a supportive and motivating environment intentionally (Hocine & Zhang, 2014) for the provision of high quality education. To outline the support function of the IDSO to the SMTs and the schools clearly, it is imperative to first clarify the term support. Knapp, Copland, Honig, Plecki and Portin (2010) assert that "support" means different things to leaders occupying varying positions. Support is seen as the provision of resources to assist leaders to carry out their pedagogical improvement work (Knapp *et al*, 2010), while Mashau, Steyn, Van der Walt and Wolhuter (2008) link support with services that bring about development and influence growth. Furthermore, Mashau *et al.* (2010) view education support services as a critical aspect of education provision, and they cite Steyn (1997) in describing education support services as functions that are aimed at enhancing teaching and learning.

The districts are expected to provide functional support to schools (Christie, *et a*l., 2010). The IDSOs as the district representatives are expected to provide leadership and managerial support to the principal, the SMT and the institution, and they have to oversee the progress made towards achieving the departmental objectives (Raath, 2012). One of their roles includes policy provisions that refer to the School Self Evaluation or the Internal Whole School Evaluation. The IDSOs, therefore, have to conduct monitoring and evaluation to get a view on the maximum functioning of the schools they are assigned to. The IDSOs have the power to hold the SMTs to account for the failure to perform satisfactorily, which is not necessarily, the case currently.

The literature mainly refers to principals as instructional leaders, while it ignores the instructional leadership role of the SMTs, which is one of their critical functions as the leaders responsible for driving curriculum and instructional practices in schools. The SMTs have to be highly competent in the management of instructional processes and providing support to their subordinates.

Van Deventer and Kruger (2011) have identified some basic elements of instructional leadership of the principal which include the management of the curriculum and instruction, supervising teaching and monitoring learners' progress and promoting an instructional climate in the school. SMTs carry these functions out and should, therefore, be seen as instructional leaders as well. Accordingly, leaders have to function more like employee supporters than supervisors (Hocine & Zhang, 2014). They have to provide employees with support and help them grow and develop.

The principals have to know the strengths and weaknesses of their staff and develop strategies to support them (Day & Sammons, 2016). IDSOs as the principals' supervisors need expertise in this area to enable them to support the principal in cases where they are unable to deal with the performance challenges. Much as it is vital for principals to have a good understanding of instruction, the IDSOs have to possess a good understanding of instructional leadership in order to provide support to the SMTs, which should filter down to the classroom and influence learner performance outcomes. Their interests must extend into the classroom as they have to account for the performance of their schools ultimately, which is determined by what happens in the classroom, namely teaching and learning. The IDSOs have to become instructional leaders.

The IDSOs and SMTs need to have expert subject knowledge and understanding of the current curriculum in order for their schools to deliver quality education. Furthermore, they should be able to influence the quality of learning and teaching positively, which is the core of educational practice and the primary purpose of schooling (Christie, *et al.,* 2010).

Mashau *et al* (2008) invoked the National Education Policy Investigation (NEPI) (RSA, 1993) in indicating that educational support services are critical in education and that these services cover and address all the problematic areas encountered by role players in education. One of the major roles of IDSOs' is to provide support and development to schools, especially for the SMTs in their managerial functions. The roles of IDSOs are consistent with the forms of support identified by Knapp *et al* (2010).

Lord and Hutchison (1993) have identified three main types of support which are key to the process of school development, namely practical support, moral support and mentoring. Research conducted by Lord and Hutchison (1993) confirmed that the building of people's strengths was crucial when facilitating personal support, empowerment and development. They also support the notion that mentoring is significant in the process of support. In the process of supporting the SMTs, the IDSOs need to build on their personal strengths and knowledge and expertise base.

Development and support are planned activities, which do not just take place willy-nilly and haphazardly in organisations. Sullivan and Associates (2013) indicate that leadership development and support are life-long and continuous processes. These activities are not a once-off activity, but they are processes that should be continuous and result in improvement of various aspects of school operations such as learner performance, school development, realisation of departmental expectation of provision of high quality education for all, and impact school leadership, management and development. In support of Sullivan and Associates, Davidoff and Lazarus (1997) also view support and development as a continuous, unending process and that considering the rate at which development is taking place especially in the developing countries such as South Africa, there is a need for organisations such as schools to transform and develop at a satisfactory rate because they cannot afford to be static.

Van der Berg *et al.* (2011) are steadfast regarding the need for support to schools. The possibility of schools' support may be complicated by Smith's (2010) study, which indicates that district officials (including the IDSOs) are frustrated and demoralised by a lack of coordination and planning at all levels of the education system. This indicates a link between planning and support and it implies that support cannot be implemented haphazardly. Davidoff and Lazarus (1997) further posit that school development and support for the people in the school, including SMTs, need to be holistic and touch on every aspect of the school life, including policy development and implementation, discipline, safety, teaching and learning, infrastructure development, leadership, management, organisation of phases, parental involvement and support, learners' support and curriculum as proposed by the WSE policy.

De Clerq (2007) recognises the value of WSE as an evaluation and developmental policy and adds that it can be utilised as an accounting and support tool for schools, but she argues that WSE in its current form, is unlikely to achieve the objectives it is intended to realise in education accountability, development and support. School improvement and development is a slow and challenging process that occurs over time (Davidoff & Lazarus, 1997) and should involve self-understanding and thus the importance of the WSE processes, which will help the people in the organisation to understand themselves, know their needs and plan how and when they will address their school's development needs. A concern on the rate of school improvement and development is the inadequate provision of support by the education department (Dirks, 2013).

Authors and researchers such as Davidoff and Lazarus (1997), Van der Berg *et al* (2011), Smith (2010) and Sullivan and Associates (2013) all view support as a very critical aspect in the school leadership and management space. It is clear from the above-mentioned researchers' contributions that SMTs, as the core and pivot of the functioning of schools need to be supported, and this cannot be compromised any further if schools are to achieve the high-quality education provision demanded by the Department of Education and society. SMTs have been identified as one of the categories of educators to be targeted for development and support in the short term through the implementation of the Integrated Strategic Planning Framework for Teacher Education and Development in South Africa (DBE, 2012).

The IDSOs have to work with the key offices in the districts with regard to the identification, implementation and ratification of school developmental needs and support strategies for the school managers in their circuits. The IDSOs functioned as inspectors in the past and it is therefore, important to touch on the functions of inspections briefly. A brief background of the inspections, the South African school inspectorate system, the origin of IDSOs and their relation to inspectors is given below.

2.3. BRIEF HISTORY OF SCHOOL INSPECTIONS IN EDUCATION

South Africa, as a growing democracy, has continued to engage with developments occurring across the globe over the years, which include school inspections. Countries such as the United Kingdom and Wales (MacBeath, 2006; Hasani, 2007), Zimbabwe (Mapolisa & Tshabalala, 2012) and the Netherlands (Janssens & Van Amelsvoort, 2008) have used school inspections over many years and are maturing in the area (MacBeath, 2006; Hasani, 2007) and therefore, developing countries, such as South Africa, can learn from them and in some cases, also make use of policy borrowing to improve on their practices.

According to McNamara, O'Hara, Lisi and Davidsdottir (2011), 'school inspection' is one of the concepts that constituted a central theme in educational policy debates over a long period of time. Janssens and Van Amelsvoort (2008) define school inspection as the process of periodic, targeted checking undertaken in education to provide informed and independent verification, and to confirm whether the quality of schools complies with the national and local performance standards, legislative frameworks and required professional standards, and the students and parental needs. This definition was in complete contrast with what was experienced in South Africa during the years of apartheid. In that era, school inspectors were autocratic and heavy-handed and their support and developmental roles were not. It is notable that their role was not oriented to provide support and development. The school inspectors were extremely subjective and highly imposing (Nkambule, 2010).

During the apartheid era, the inspectors were regarded as bureaucrats with unlimited control and they used radical methods to coerce principals and teachers into carrying out instructions (Booysen, 2010; Nkambule, 2010). The management of schools and decision-making was, therefore, state-controlled and directed towards state goals and oppression of the majority denying them an opportunity to obtain quality education. Christie *et al.* (2010) confirm the complete autocratic control of the apartheid regime inspectors who saw principals as stooges of the state who had to take instructions without questioning. The top-down approach of management and decision-making was used by the inspectors. A more detailed discussion ensues below on school inspections.

2.3.1. School inspections in South Africa

Currently, both locally and internationally, school inspection is seen as a system of periodically monitoring schools aimed at evaluating schools thoroughly and determining whether the schools' performance is in line with departmental standards or not and providing support. Before 1994, South Africa experienced an imposed inspectorate system, which wreaked havoc in education across the country (Booysen, 2010). During the era of the new dispensation is South Africa, the inspectorate system was revised to be more focussed on school support and development through engagements between the new education authorities and unions. School inspectors used a top-down approach in decision making and in the performance of their functions (Booysen, 2010; Nkambule, 2010).

These inspectors bullied teachers and SMTs (Booysen, 2010; Nkambule, 2010). School and classroom visits by inspectors were done randomly and they were unannounced (Booysen, 2010; Nkambule, 2010). This implies that teachers were visited at any time by the inspectors and those who were resistant and stood their ground against such class visits and harassment were identified as troublemakers by the principals and inspectors. They were targeted and dealt with or threatened by the inspectors. Booysen (2010) further posits that the inspectors were used as an instrument of instilling fear in the teachers and for strengthening the principal's authority. The unannounced inspections were sometimes grossly abused and used to humiliate teachers by the inspector's interruption of the teaching and learning process during lessons (Booysen, 2010). The teachers' unions were non-existent and teachers had no recourse when dealing with the gross misuse of power by the inspectors and the education authorities.

As a result of the considerable abuse of inspections, teachers were scared of and frustrated by the dictatorial inspectors. To make matters worse, teachers received no direct and constructive feedback or any report on the inspector's visit (Booysen, 2010). Inspections in South Africa were done by individuals assigned to a group of schools and were abused by those in power to frustrate teachers. The inspectorate was clouded by the negative reputation it carried and the positives, if any, have not been brought out by the researchers.

Teachers resisted any visits by inspectors and the inspectorate with pressure exerted by the newly established teachers' union, the South African Democratic Teachers' Union (SADTU), at the dawn of democracy in the 1990s (Booysen, 2010). This followed the emergence and growth on limited trade union rights granted to black workers in the 1980s and 1990s, which resulted in rapid growth of the number and size of unions representing black workers including teachers (Finnemore, 2009). The Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) was established in 1985 and SADTU joined as an affiliate to strengthen its power in the 1990s.

During this era of growth in unionism, structures such as the Public Service Coordinating Bargaining Council (PSCBC), responsible for collective bargaining between the state as employers and state workers' representative unions, and the ELRC, responsible for collective bargaining on education matters, were established in the 1990s in South Africa. The bargaining between the employer and the teachers' unions resulted in the signing of a series of labour agreements (Christie *et al.,* 2010), which included performance management and determination of the conditions of service.

During the era of ELRC and PSCBC formation, the existence of the democratic, open and supportive Institutional Development and Support Officials' unit in the districts replaced the old regime's dictatorial inspections system. The South African school inspection system was revised in the 1990s and became an inspectorate that would be consistent with global context of inspection through the introduction of the Office for Standards in Education known as OFSTED (Wilcox, 2000). The OFSTED visits in South Africa entail a pre-announced visit by a team of evaluators who perform an external WSE after the school has conducted their internal WSE. Most of the evaluators are at the level of the IDSOs. They focus on nine evaluation areas agreed upon between the state and teachers' unions.

The inspectorate system in South Africa was ultimately destroyed by pressure exerted by the unions. Reacting to the autocratic and bureaucratic inspectorate approach to quality assurance in education, the teacher unions supported their members by refusing to teach in front of an inspector (Rabichund, 2011).

The involvement of teachers' unions was spearheaded by the South African Democratic Teachers Union (SADTU), representing the majority of mostly black teachers in the revision of the school inspections. This resistance led to teachers, through their unions, having full rights and bargaining powers through the bargaining councils such as the ELRCs and PSCBC.

Since the revision of the functions of the inspectors, confusion has marred the area pertaining to the inspections of schools. It is asserted that the IDSOs have continued to function with no clear allocation of functions (Raath, 2012). Furthermore, the IDSOs are required to play a major role in supporting schools with a variety of aspects of school management and leadership including the Internal Whole School Evaluation (IWSE) and in the preparation for the EWSE conducted by the OFSTED officials.

Through the introduction of OFSTED, the South African inspections of schools took a three-tier approach where OFSTED took responsibility for school inspections, standard maintenance and EWSE, while the previous school inspection posts were converted to support and promote institutional development, and thus, the term 'Institutional Development and Support Official'. The last tier focused on School Self-Evaluation (SSE) also known as the IWSE. The three tiers of inspections in South Africa are discussed below.

2.3.1.1. The facets of school inspections in South Africa

There are three facets of inspections in South Africa. The first is carried out by the internal stakeholders at the schools and known as School Self-Evaluation (SSE) or IWSE. The second facet is managed at district level in the form of supervision, support and development of schools. The third facet involves the provincial or national inspections conducted by the Office of Standards in Education (OFSTED) regarded as the EWSE in South Africa. The OFSTED is a standardised monitoring and evaluation process practiced worldwide.

(a) School Self-Evaluation (Internal Whole School Evaluation)

In accordance with the WSE agreement reached in 2003 between the education authorities and labour unions at the ELRC, all schools in South Africa are expected, through the internal stakeholders, to conduct Internal Whole School Evaluation (WSE Policy, 2001), a process that enables them to identify their weaknesses, strengths, opportunities and threats (SWOT) within their institutions and to identify the measures they will take towards addressing their challenges and strengthening the areas in which the schools are doing well. This is aimed at bringing about a positive change and transformation for the better performance and achievement by the schools with minimal pressure from the Department of Education. IWSE has been practiced across the globe over many years. Internal evaluation also referred to as the SSE involves evaluation of the whole school by the internal stakeholders and includes peer-review and school-based reviews of performance (Christie *et al.,* 2010). Implementation of the SSE differs from one institution to another but, In the South African context, it entails, internal school evaluation and is led and directed by the staff development teams (SDTs) which are teams that are elected democratically by the entire staff (WSE Policy, 2001).

The SDTs are supposed to consist of ordinary staff members and SMT members to ensure that the different areas of school operation are addressed effectively. The process of evaluation is coupled with performance measurement that is conducted by internal stakeholders through committees known as the developmental support groups (DSGs) chosen by the evaluees/ appraisee themselves (WSE Policy, 2001). These committees consist of the appraisee's chosen colleague/s at the same level with the evaluee and his/her immediate supervisor. By default, all SMT members would serve as a senior in one or more DSG and, therefore, they need to be competent and knowledgeable on various aspects of evaluation and support. District support is required for the SMTs to be able to perform their performance management responsibility efficiently.

The measurement of the performance process entails an observation class visit aimed at observing and providing recommendations on the teaching approaches and areas that may need development (WSE Policy, 2001).

Findings on various aspects of the evaluee's approaches and skills are made, agreed upon and reported on by the entire DSG and recommendations are made for development and support of the evaluee. The DSGs draw up a professional growth plan (PGPs) for the evaluees based on their findings from the observations and support sessions they had with the evaluees (WSE Policy, 2001). The PGPs of all the evaluees at different levels are supposedly infused into the SIPs, which are supposed to be used for the development and support of the entire school which may include self-initiated support by the evaluees, the school's own internal self-propelled support initiated within the school and external support from the district and circuits. These would be inclusive of three developmental levels, namely, professional and personal development initiated by the evaluee, the school and by the Department of Education.

The IDSOs serve as the principal's immediate supervisor in the DSGs (WSE Policy, 2001). Accordingly, the IDSOs are expected to conduct the evaluation of the principal and compile reports that should be submitted to the SDTs for intervention, support and infusion into the SIP. The process of IWSE feeds into the development of the SIP by the schools. It should also impact on and inform the school's development planning by the stakeholders.

(b) District-based school inspection (IDSOs)

This study focusses on the district-based inspections now seen as support, development and monitoring for schools. The South African district-based inspection is supposed to be handled by IDSOs as the district officials responsible for institutional development and support who were converted from Inspectors to IDSOs in the 1990s. In terms of the documentation outlining their functions, the IDSOs are responsible for supporting and monitoring schools (Smith, 2011). This tier of evaluation is conducted by the district-based IDSOs and it may be regarded as a local but external supervisory inspection aimed at identifying and addressing challenges experienced by schools directly. The IDSOs are assigned to work directly with a school and to provide direct support. The district-based monitoring and support visits entail visits by the district inspectors/ IDSOs to schools (Booysen, 2010) to conduct inspections to identify both challenges and successes and to provide support to the schools at the level of the district offices (Smith, 2011).

The district-based inspections approach is also used in Uganda (Sembirige, 2009), and other African countries such as South Africa and Tanzania. Globally and nationally, it is realised that districts are a "neglected layer" in the school system (Smith, 2011). Despite being neglected, districts are a pivotal part of the education setup in Gauteng. Narsee (2006) notes that district officials need specialised training to enable them to perform their monitoring and support functions. At this level, the inspection is focussed on both monitoring and school support, although the districts were found to lack internal capacity, which hinders the realisation of their support function with regard to schools (Smith, 2011). Narsee (2006) contends that tension still exists on the functioning of districts as providers of professional support to schools as they are administrative units functioning as control inspectorates. The districts and circuits have to be provided with the capacity to enable them to provide high quality professional support.

(c) OFSTED (National/ Provincial inspections)

The WSE provides for External Whole School Evaluation which is also termed OFSTED Evaluation. The EWSE follows after the Internal WSE or SSE has been conducted. The term 'OFSTED' is used across the globe in defining and interrogating the inspections (Rabichund 2011). As indicated earlier, countries such as the United Kingdom, the United States, the Netherlands, to name a few, use the term OFSTED in reference to their school inspection system.

The introduction of OFSTED, Office of Standards, mandated to monitor and evaluate schools' performance in South Africa, is beginning to bring about change in the educational landscape for the better and the evaluation framework has been welcomed by the stakeholders and seems to be making a positive contribution to school improvement (Rabichund, 2011; Mji, 2011). The districts and IDSOs are tasked with providing support to SMTs with implementation of developmental areas identified during the OFSTED and EWSE process. Districts through their IDSOs and SMTs are expected to ensure proper implementation of the EWSE recommendations.

2.3.1.2. African context of school inspections

Mulkeen (2006) asserts that most African countries have inspection services that are often limited by the poor environmental and economic conditions in these countries such as isolation, flooding, and poor infrastructure. Mulkeen (2006) reports on five African countries' education systems and focusses on rural-urban differences, namely: Lesotho, Zimbabwe, Ghana, Tanzania and Uganda. Mulkeen (2006) observe slight variances in these countries' inspectorate systems with regard to the number of visits of the inspectors to schools, the quality of support and guidance provided by the inspectorates and resource allocation for inspections. Starting with South Africa's neighbours, Lesotho, Mulkeen (2006) found that the Lesotho inspectorate was hindered by challenges of transport availability (economic) and a lack of expertise of the inspectors assigned to perform inspections in the schools.

Mulkeen (2006) also found that school supervision in Zimbabwe was done through inspections and control in the early 1990s (Chibvonga, 1995 & cited by Mapolisa and Tshabalala, 2012). These supervisions were conducted by teachers specifically employed to carry out specific functions in accordance with clearly defined requirements of management and these were autocratic, dictatorial and tense (Chivore, 1996 & Mapolisa & Tshabalala, 2012).

The Zimbabwean inspections were focussed on scrutinising or examining classroom practices for faults and errors. Instructional supervision is conducted by heads of schools, some of whom are inexperienced as they do not have sufficient experience in supervision (Mulkeen, 2006). A recent study conducted in three Zimbabwean education provinces on school inspections found that the inspection and supervision of the schools in Zimbabwe is firmly in the hands of the head of the school and that provincial and district officials give guidance but keep the distance and they are not directly involved in inspecting the schools (Mapolisa & Tshabalala, 2012). It was also found that at the time, the majority of principals did not understand clearly and pay attention to the concept of 'instructional supervision' and instead, they focussed on current and pressing issues such as financial management at the expense of instructional supervision (Mapolisa & Tshabalala, 2012).

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The Ghanaian participants criticised the quality of inspections conducted in their schools on account of the quality of the inspectors and a lack of expertise while Uganda was found to aspire to have school inspections at least once a term but this was hampered by a lack of resources such as transport (Mulkeen, 2006). The Tanzanian system required each school to be inspected at least once every two years, which was possible for urban schools but was challenging for rural schools because of the same environmental and economic factors such as the poor infrastructure, financial challenges and transportation (Mulkeen, 2006).

Sembirige's 2009 study also reveals that the district Inspectors did not fulfil their roles as custodians of education quality control as there were both limited resources and a lack of logistical support for the inspectors. The study concluded that educators still valued the role that the emphasis on inspections could play in helping them improve their classroom instruction through support and that inspectors failed to perform their functions of providing professional support effectively to teachers with regard to classroom instruction (Sembirige, 2009).

To improve the quality of school inspections in the Mukono and Buikwe Counties, Uganda, it was recommended that sub-county inspection committees should be formed to monitor and strengthen the inspections in the sub-counties and that senior managers (SMTs) of schools should establish a working relationship with the district inspectors to ensure provision of a qualitative and consistent inspections that would yield results (Sembirige, 2009). The similarities in the studies conducted on school inspections in Africa point to school managers seeing value in inspections and cooperating with the inspectors. The studies further point to standards and professionalism that are not up to global standards. Therefore, there is a need for a critical review of inspection programmes and processes with a view to improving the professional functioning of inspectors and the production of high quality inspections feedback and reports (Sembirige, 2009). The above scenarios may be a pointer to the need for revision and improvement of the school inspectorate systems in some African countries and the need for capacity building of the inspectors prior to their assignments to perform inspectorate functions. Better logistical arrangements are necessary and more resources need to be dedicated to the inspections if they are to be made to work.

2.3.1.3. Global context of school inspections

Globally, researchers such as Macbeath, (2006); Hasani, (2007) and Raath, (2012) found that the United Kingdom (UK) and Wales also experienced a transition in the inspectorate system during the 1990s as was the case with South Africa. The role of school inspectors was revised into shorter and sharper inspections that were merged with the collection of self-evaluation reports, which served as a basis for future inspections (MacBeath, 2006).

The implementation of the Education Schools Act of 1992 and the introduction of the National Curriculum brought about the transformation of the schooling inspectorate system in both England and Wales (Raath, 2012; Hasani, 2007). The UK OFSTED, a non-ministerial government agency responsible for national school inspections and WSE was introduced to administer the quality assurance with regard to school inspections and the improvement of standards in education (Raath, 2012).

Raath (2012) further argues that the OFSTED model used for inspections in the UK was the most comprehensive ever introduced in that country as it covered almost all aspects of a school's functions. The OFSTED has played an important role in shaping the approaches of schools to improvement and accountability in England (Day & Sammons, 2016).

A new policy on inspections aimed at ensuring "New Relationships with schools" (NRwS) was introduced in 2005-6 and the NRwS acknowledged that inspection in itself, does not capacitate schools to bring about an improvement but it placed self-evaluation at the centre of school improvement (Raath, 2012), which would allow schools to speak for themselves and have a voice so that they could be heard and raise their own issues (MacBeath, 2006). In this case, schools would have a platform to respond to the findings and recommendations of the evaluation team, raise issues of concern and also clarify those that may not have been captured or understood well by the evaluators. Countries such as China and Greece actually borrowed the NRwS self-evaluation model and used it for the improvement of their education policies (Raath, 2012).

The unique aspect that distinguishes the United Kingdom inspections from those of other countries is that the inspectors in the UK are contracted by OFSTED and they are conducted by inspection teams that are trained and accredited by the Office of Standards (Hasani, 2007), and these teams, led by a registered inspector (RgI), undergo rigorous inspections training to pass a competency and registration assessment, and thereafter, they are contracted to perform inspections after acceptance of their tender by OFSTED (Hasani, 2007). The UK system of inspections has similarities with the inspections of the Flemish inspections that are also conducted by autonomous bodies (Hasani, 2007).

Lastly, inspections in the Netherlands are completely different from the South African and UK approach. They are based on the Dutch Supervision Act of 2002 (Janssens & Van Amelsvoort, 2008) and it is done through proportional supervision in which the regularity and nature of inspections are based on the school's quality and the potential risks of the dropping of the quality of education. Poorly performing schools facing a potential drop in the quality of performance are targeted more often, and they are visited more regularly (Janssens & Van Amelsvoort, 2008).

2.4. SCHOOL MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP

There is an overlap between the term leadership, management and administration (Bush, 2006). 'Management' and 'administration' are concepts that address the same issues. Bush (2006) further indicates that these terms are used to refer to managing, but the use of each term has been linked with the various continents, for example, the UK, Europe and African countries prefer to use the term 'administration', while the US, Canada and Australia use 'administration' to refer to the areas of management. According to Sullivan and Associates (2013), a great deal of attention has been afforded to management development with less attention on leadership in South Africa. There is a clear distinction between management and leadership, however, school leadership and school management need to be given equal balance and should be clearly understood in order for the schools to function effectively and for them to realise their vision and goals (Bush, 2006). Leadership is seen as instrumental in performance improvement through the direct engagement of the people while management is seen as running the daily functioning of the school.

According to Christie *et al* (2010), leadership focuses on exercising an influence and setting the direction and it can be exercised by more than one person in an organisation. In support, Hocine and Zhang (2014) concur that leadership is the ability of the leader to influence the people being led with regard to the realisation of the set organisational goals and objectives.

The SMTs set the direction in the phases for which they are responsible throughout the school, and they have to exercise an influence over their teams to ensure support for the strategies they employ in the realisation of their mandates. Thus, the SMTs are seen as leaders. They have to provide leadership in their phases and within the entire school. Sullivan and Associates (2013) define school leadership as the combination of knowledge, skills, attitudes and actions which are enablers of effective learning and teaching to take place in schools. They further observe that the roles of school leadership and management teams have not been clearly defined. Role clarification for school leadership requires attention from policy makers and authorities in education.

It is further noted that the identification of HODs and the deputy alongside the principal as the school leadership teams confirms the leadership role of the entire SMT and this implies that the leadership of the school is not solely located in the position of the principals. The leadership role of the entire SMT is downplayed in most schools and the traditional approach of the principal standing as the sole leader remains unchallenged and unchanged. To change this, the SMTs would need to be proactive and challenge this position and push for change and campaign for a contemporary approach entailing SMTs leading as teams.

Principals report directly to the IDSOs who set the tone and direction for their clusters of principals. IDSOs have an influence within their school clusters and they are responsible for taking decisions and providing leadership and direction for their clusters of schools. The decisions they take are implemented in schools. This confirms their position as leaders of schools who are located outside the schools. The leaders' function is to do all that is required for the success of their teams and their organisations (Morgeson, Derue & Karam, 2010) because they are under extreme pressure to ensure improvement within their schools (Day & Sammons, 2016).

Management on the other hand, is concerned with the structures and processes through which the organisational goals are set and realised (Christie *et al.*, 2010). Importantly, managers are responsible for the development of sound systems for managing their organisations. It involves planning, organising, leading and controlling known as 'POLC' inside the institution. The function of managing and leading a school is assigned to the school principal and the SMT with the support and supervision of his/ her immediate supervisor, IDSO, based at the district office and managing a cluster of principals in a circuit. There are multiple theories and models of management and leadership (Bush, 2006). Bush (2006) has identified six management models, namely: collegial, political, formal, subjective, cultural and ambiguity while the leadership models are managerial, participative, transactional, post-modern, contingency and moral. Bush (2006) indicates that these six models of educational management are individually linked to the leadership models.

This study is focused on the management and leadership of the IDSOs and the SMTs and may be interested in two linkages of these models. The formal management model linkage to the managerial leadership model while the collegial management model is linked to the participative leadership model. This is informed by the increasing modern day demands for school leadership to be collaborative and distributed across the school involving leaders, followers and the situation or environment (Mbugua & Rarieya, 2014; Spillane, 2005). The formal and collegial management models may contribute to the participative nature of the SMT operations.

The study on the support provided to SMTs by IDSOs focused on the collegiality model of education management and the linkages to participative leadership, and the recent distributive and shared leadership approach. The collegiality approach to leadership conforms to the wide distribution of influence and power within the organisation and opposes the approaches that see the principal as a single heroic leader (Bush, 2006). Collegiality is consistent with participative, shared and distributed leadership. It is democratic and the decision-making processes in participative and collaborative leadership involve the people within the organisation. Participative and shared leadership has potential to increase collaboration and result in school effectiveness (Bush, 2006).

2.5. SCHOOL MANAGEMENT TEAMS' REQUIREMENTS FOR SUPPORT

Block (2009) asserts that educational quality in historically black and previously disadvantaged schools has not shown any significant improvement since South Africa's political transition. A variety of concerns have arisen from the above statement. According to Christie *et al.* (2010), the quality of leadership in a school and its organisational capacity impacts the whole school and classroom performance. Therefore, the challenges in accounting for the lack of development or the slow development of many of the schools, especially those located in the townships, informal settlements and rural schools over the years, can be attributed to the failure of school leadership or in school governance or maybe districts' supervisory and support functions such as the IDSOs. It seems that there are no proper systems for accountability by school leaders and IDSOs resulting in failure in the system.

The principals, SMTs and the IDSOs of failing schools have retained their positions over the years despite dismal performances and the poor realisation of departmental targets. With proper accountability processes, incompetence and general laxity in school leadership would be nipped in the bud. Although schools are allocated IDSOs at district and cluster levels, school leaders and managers seem to be receiving minimal or no support from the districts with regard to the execution of their functions. The lack of support is resulting in a lack of growth and development for SMTs. This state of affairs is partly due to the districts engaging in conflicting planning, which places conflicting demands on their officials and the district officials' lack of motivation and misplacement (Christie *et al.*, 2010).

Noting the challenges of conflicts, the Gauteng Department of Education developed a model that would streamline the operations within the districts, circuits and clusters. The model on district reorganisation, implemented by Gauteng presumes that schools can be improved through consistent support from the relevant and correctly placed district and circuit officials (Walsh, *et al.*, 2013). The district development model entailed the strengthening of school management, leadership and administration (Christie *et al.,* 2010). The model intended to bring about leadership development in schools through coaching and support, which would enable the principals and their SMTs to perform their functions with distinction.

This model was designed to introduce the streamlining of districts and to have them trained to oversee the circuits that could have oversight of the clusters. Clusters resulted from a division of circuits into smaller areas that were geographically located for the improved networking of schools and the sharing of good practices (Walsh *et al.*, 2013). The IDSOs were placed as the custodians of the clusters instead of circuits, thus, the positions of CMs that were a level above the IDSOs, were created. The recent discourse on functioning of IDSOs found that IDSOs have claimed to have no clear job descriptions that outlined their functions of leading and managing school leaders clearly. The study by Raath (2012) on the principals' experiences and expectations of the role of IDSOs with regard to supporting schools in Gauteng, revealed that principals had varied perceptions of the functions of the IDSOs. However, they concurred that the IDSOs are vital for maintaining high leadership and management levels and for creating a supportive environment that will result in the provision of quality educational programmes.

The bone of contention in education management and leadership pertains to whether the IDSOs' inability or unwillingness and negative attitudes with regard to offering support to school managers and leaders could be the result of an absence of job descriptions and their functions (Raath, 2012). Since the SMTs play a core function with regard to facilitating the interaction and work of teachers in their phases and departments, it is extremely important for them to be provided with support. However, over the years, there has been limited support for SMTs, which has resulted in the absence of visible development in their schools. The Department of Education in Gauteng devised a plan to use circuit support teams as the arms of support (Christie *et al.*, 2010).

The SMTs who are unable to curb the general lack of learner discipline, which impacts on the teaching and learning process negatively (Mestry & Khumalo, 2012). As indicated earlier, other aspects contributing to signs of an absence of support for SMTs included schools that were operating without annual, weekly and monthly plans or assessment plans. Assessment was done randomly and did not produce any tangible results and the learners' performance was not reported properly to the parents. Furthermore, there were no principal and SMT class visit reports or any minutes of SMT and phase/ departmental meetings.

There is also a general perception of poor understanding of policies (Joubert, 2010). Some schools experienced a lack of understanding and/or knowledge of the legal duty of care resulting in teachers and SMTs being charged for learners' injuries (Mahlangu, 2016) due to negligence and dereliction of their duties. Other aspects reflecting a lack of support included teachers not planning for their daily and weekly activities, going to classes unprepared and an absence of SIPs or poorly developed SIPs (Nieuwenhuis, 2010). Poor time management was reflected in the frequent late coming of learners and teachers, poor management of attendance by both staff members and learners resulting in high levels of absenteeism. Moreover, the perceived lack of emotional support for teachers from the SMTs and principals resulted in high levels of emotional exhaustion and burnout for teachers (Brouwers, Evers & Tomic, 2001) also resonate with an absence of support and monitoring.

Van der Berg et al. (2011) recommend that the SMTs and principals must have a good understanding of their roles pertaining to managing and leading curriculum delivery and the capability to fulfil these roles and create a conducive teaching and learning milieu. The Department of Basic Education is also concerned with the lack of leadership capacity in schools and districts. The DBE introduced Action Plan 2014 aimed at improving school management and school functionality and provide leadership and management capacity to school leaders (Christie *et al.,* 2010).

The presence of the above-mentioned issues may constitute dysfunctionality of schools and lead one to wonder what the IDSOs do when they visit schools if the above issues are prevalent in schools perennially. The challenges raised above may point to an absence of support and monitoring systems for SMTs from IDSOs and districts who are supposed to provide support and development for SMTs (Smith, 2010). It may further be posited that some of these challenges are born out of a purposeful and wilful neglect and dereliction of duty by SMTs, IDSOs and districts. If support is provided to the SMTs by district officials, especially the IDSOs, it is minimal and it has clearly not resulted in much noticeable development in most township schools. The stark reality is that the SMTs, as the pivotal point of the functioning of schools, need to be supported by the district offices if schools are to address the issues raised above.

2.6. THE ROLE OF SCHOOL MANAGEMENT TEAMS IN SCHOOLS

In South Africa, all the teachers including those that are office-based educators such as the IDSOs and subject facilitators are employed in terms of the Employment of Educators' Act 76 of 1998 (EEA 76 of 1998) (RSA, 1998) which provides the guidelines regarding the teachers' conditions of service, discipline, retirement and discharge of educators and any other matters connected in this regard. The Personnel and Administrative Measures Document of 2000 as amended (PAM document) (RSA, 2000) outlines the terms of conditions of educators' employment in support of Section 4 of the Employment of Educators' Act 76 of 1998. The revised Personnel Administrative Measures (PAM) is applicable to all educators, classroom-based and office-based, in the public service.

The revised PAM was published by the Minister of Basic Education in Government Gazette No. 396684 on 12 February 2016 (RSA, 2016). It covers conditions of service, as well as employment matters, pertaining to teachers. PAM determines that the SMTs should consist of the principal, deputy principal, heads of departments (HODs) (RSA, 2000) and be responsible for managing and providing directional leadership, work facilitation, goal facilitation and support in the school. The duties are divided according to the position of employment. Section A of PAM (RSA, 2000) addresses issues such as the norms and guidelines, workloads of teachers (school-based), their duties and responsibilities and rank designations.

The purpose of various positions of SMT members are discussed briefly below as indicated in PAM. First, the Heads of Departments (HODs) are employed to engage in classroom teaching predominantly and to ensure effective and proper functioning of their departments. They are also expected to provide and organise relevant and related extra-curricular activities. The HODs have to promote the proper administration of subjects, phases or departments for which they are responsible. They also provide administrative support at the school. The deputy principal serves as the principal's assistant in managing the entire school and promoting the education of all the learners in their schools. He or she has to maintain total awareness of the administrative functions and procedures in the school.

The principal is employed to ensure the optimal management and functionality of the school and to ensure compliance of all in the school with relevant legislation, regulations and personnel administration measures. The SMTs have to work together as a team to promote the education of the learners in a manner that is consistent with the prescripts of applicable policies. Principals are responsible for the professional management of the school as provided for in Section 16A of the South African School's Act 84 of 1996 (RSA, 1996). The HODs, deputy principals and principals are all teachers, and therefore, they may all engage in classroom teaching that will help with their instructional leadership. They differ in terms of post levels and workloads.

HODs are on post level 2, while the deputy principals are on post level 3, and principals vary from post level 2 and move up to post level 4 depending on the size of the school in terms of learner enrolment and staff complement for which they are responsible. They have to work together as a team to ensure the realisation of departmental expectations on the provision of quality education for all learners. They are tasked with collaborating to ensure that the academic performance of the school meets the minimum standards and outcomes including procedures for assessment as determined by the Minister of Education in terms of Section 6A of SASA (RSA, 1996). To realise and fulfil their functions, the SMTs need to be led by effective and intelligent leaders but Ncgobo (2012) cautions that South Africa has preferred an approach in which expert teachers are promoted to leadership roles, and yet this does not guarantee their effectiveness and success as leaders.

It is arguable that being an expert teacher does not always translate into expert leadership. It is, therefore, not guaranteed that a good teacher can become a good head of department, deputy principal or principal. School leadership involves the art of directing a school to do the right thing at the right time, which entails influencing people to do what is right for the organisation. Management is what is required to ensure that the school does the right things right or functions well, and this involves control (Davidoff & Lazarus, 1997; Day & Sammons, 2016). The SMTs as school leaders are under considerable pressure to improve and sustain high level performance by the teachers in the schools.

According to Macbeath (1998), leaders are at the forefront of the action in their organisations, which is where they receive their sternest tests implying that principals as school leaders are supposed to be at the centre of the action in their schools overseeing and deciding on the direction their schools takes. The SMTs find themselves in the thick of action at their schools as well. It is, therefore, vital for principals to work closely and collaboratively with their SMTs as the leaders of their schools in order to realise the goals of their schools. Working against the SMTs would render the school's leadership non-collaborative and lead to disjointed operations.

Research conducted by Van der Merscht and Tyala (2008) on SMTs as implementers of participative management within schools support the notion of participative team leadership, team interaction and recognition of SMTs as a pivotal point of the leadership and management of schools in the global world. Schools succeed or fail because of the management teams that should be held accountable for their schools' performance as they have to ensure that other staff members in their various phases and departments perform their functions.

Wallace and Hall (1994) state that the principal holds the highest and most critical role in the SMT, and therefore, the teams in the school such as the SMTs will not function fully and productively without the commitment and leadership of the principal. This is based on their position of authority that enables them to devolve or withhold power including sharing of decision-making and allocating tasks and responsibilities to the other team members. The withholding of power by the principal is a stumbling block to schools and people development and contributes immensely to the lack of growth and change in schools. The SMTs have to be empowered to exercise their leadership and management functions.

2.7. SCHOOL MANAGEMENT TEAMS AND DISTRIBUTION OF LEADERSHIP

Rabichund (2011) posits that recent educational legislation and policies in South Africa require school managers who can work in democratic and participative ways to establish relationships and ensure the effective provision of quality education. Such practices require the leadership at school to be distributed. The schools are multifaceted, and therefore, a single style of leadership will not function completely for the leaders to realise their goals.

Use and adjustments of multiple styles of leadership are recommended for leaders and in accordance with the needs and motivation (Hocine & Zhang, 2014) of the people being led and the situation. According to Angelle (2010), one of the leadership approaches currently applying to organisations, is distributed leadership. Distributed leadership has been at the fore of the school leadership literature and she argues that while there has been much discussion, there has been little research and evidential proof in the literature of the full usage of distributed leadership.

District authorities and practitioners of school leadership need a model of distributed leadership practice from an organisational perspective (Angella, 2010). Distributed leadership moves beyond the single charismatic and heroic leader who reforms an organisation to the idea that leadership is shared by many individuals in the organisation (Angelle, 2010). Collaboration in leadership can function as the foundation for the development and empowerment of others (Fontannaz, 2016).

School principals have to explore the ways in which they can encourage and develop a culture that supports team collaboration and encourage emergence of a team spirit (Fontannaz, 2016). Organisational trust is the foundation necessary for the elements of successful distributed leadership that is effective communication, collaboration, joint problem solving and truthful reporting. Distributed leadership carries the potential for growth of an institution. Through distributed leadership, collective decision-making can be promoted, school matters can be discussed openly and it can enable establishment of functional teams, attitudinal change and development of trust.

The lives of organisations are centred around teams and teamwork (Morgeson, DeRue & Karam, 2010). Hlongwane and Mestry (2013) explain teamwork as an extremely critical building block in the accomplishment of the organisational goals. Teamwork should be at the heart of distributed leadership. A school in which a collaborative culture exists that recognises participatory decision-making and vision sharing with a set of operational values proves to build a good quality organisation with a wealth of knowledge. The use of distributed leadership can produce SMTs that work well and provide good opportunity for generating and sustaining high levels of teaching and learning and effective communication between SMT members that permeates to the staff and the stakeholders.

2.8. SCHOOL MANAGEMENT TEAMS AS INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERS

According to Honig (2012), educational leadership research often underscores the important role of principals who function as instructional leaders and the intensive supports embedded in their jobs. I hold a different view to this position as the principal's role as an instructional leader is actually overplayed at the expense of other SMT members whose functions deeply entrench instructional leadership. The SMT members are direct curriculum managers and they report to the Deputy Principals or directly to the principal. They account for teacher performance and learner performance and manage activities within their departments.

SMTs are leaders in their own right and they carry the full instructional leadership responsibilities in their schools. The functions of leading and managing the schools are carried out by the school principal and the SMT. They undertake and execute the management tasks in the school which include planning, organising, leading and controlling (MGSLG, 2008; Booysen, 2010 & Botha, 2013). For the district offices and IDSOs as support agents from outside to sufficiently support the principal and the SMT, they need to possess administrative, leadership and managerial skills.

2.9. CAPACITY AND SUPPORT FOR SCHOOL MANAGEMENT TEAMS

The school management echelon can be divided into three categories, namely: junior management consisting of classroom-based teachers on post level 1, senior teachers and master teachers, while middle management consists of heads of departments (HODs), and the senior management is made up of the principal and the deputy principal. Training programmes and departmental development frameworks for leadership have been focussed on the principals. Bush *et al.* (2009) refer to the HODs as the cornerstones for improving teaching and learning, which include spending more time on the analysis of results, working with their teams in the development of departmental improvement plans, monitoring of teacher classroom records, establishing direct observation of teachers' classroom practices and teaching and setting improvement targets for the teachers in their departments or phases.

The middle managers are key operators in the functioning of their schools. It is therefore, important for them to be provided with capacity building and training in leadership and management as well (Mampane, 2017). Major challenges face the HODs as middle managers and members of SMTs regarding the performance of their duties that have become complex and challenging requiring continued and constant support. Bush *et al.* (2009) reflect that the HODs in areas such as Mpumalanga and Limpopo failed to fulfil their functions. These HODs monitored teachers' work and conducted class visits aimed at checking and reporting on progress in the classrooms but these were meaningless as their reports were contradicted by the teachers with regard to the quality of their observations. These indicate limited capacity and a lack of skills to manage the functions they have been employed for and reflect on the incapacity of the SMTs to lead and manage the schools. It is, therefore, crucial for the HODs or middle managers to be capacitated as they are supposed to provide leadership and support to their subordinates and effect the enforcement of departmental policies (Mampane, 2017) on performance and development.

Bush *et al.* (2009) concluded in their research that higher standards in education can be achieved only by developing the capability of the education leaders and teachers. Mampane (2017) supports the stance on leadership and management support for middle managers by indicating that the knowledge and skills that the HODs acquire from the training sessions and programmes carry the potential to result in lifelong personal growth and development. The skills, knowledge, values and attitudes (SKVAs) gained can be cascaded downwards to their subordinates as development and capacity building. SMTs with no capacity will certainly find it extremely difficult to provide support to their subordinates and colleagues.

The challenges regarding incapacity would be picked up by the IDSOs if they focused on the SMTs' functions and school performance. These would then ensure that this reflects on the schools' improvement and developmental plans (SIP and SDP). Such challenges reflect on the role that should be carried out by the IDSOs in supporting SMTs. Capacity-building workshops and training conducted or facilitated by the IDSOs would be necessary for the SMTs to be in a position to manage their phases with confidence.

It is important, therefore, for the SMT members to be inducted into and developed for their roles and functions (Bush *et al.* 2009) by the IDSOs to ensure that they do not have the wrong idea of what is expected of them. It has become a norm that school leadership functions as a pillar for the improvement of school performance and achievement and it is vital for the school leaders to receive continuous training and support regarding leadership. The need for support and capacity building of the school leaders is supported by Heystek, Nieman, van Rooyen, Mosoge and Bipath (2008). Heystek *et al.* (2008) think that since the school's purpose is to provide education to learners in their communities, which is a massive responsibility, it is vital for the SMTs and staff to receive constant and continuous capacity building and development in various aspects of the school operation and consider alternative strategies.

Heystek *et al.* (2008) have identified a few areas that can be considered concerning the capacity building of the staff and SMTs, which may include in-service programmes, internal and external programmes, networking, coaching, collaboration, twinning and clustering of schools and SMTs. These areas are important for development of all school leaders and not only the principals. However, it is indicated that historically, mentoring and on-the–job training for principals have not been prioritised and that since 2000, most states in the United States have adopted mentoring requirements for newly employed principals (Mendels & Mitgang, 2013). The need for continuous mentoring for newly appointed principals has not been prioritised in South Africa. Mentoring and coaching need to be provided to SMTs by the IDSOs.

It is notable that more capacity building is accorded to the school principals at the expense of the other SMT members. That may be because the Department believes that if the principals are well empowered, and they will be able to empower their subordinates and fellow SMT members. Various district counties are identifying leadership standards that are appropriate and applicable to their contexts. These standards clearly spell out expectations in relation to competencies and conduct of school leaders (Mendels & Mitgang, 2013).

The South African Department of Education has followed suit and developed a policy on the standards for principalship motivated by the need to develop the competencies and behaviours of school principals (Marishane, 2016). These standards are viewed as representative of the quality of principal that is envisaged by the Department. The DoE's standards listed eight key areas regarded as fundamental for principalship and these were: leading teaching and learning, providing the direction and growth for the school, managing the quality of teaching and learning and ensuring accountability and empowering the staff and others including management of the schools as an organisation, working with and for the community, management of human resources in the school and managing and advocating extra-mural activities (Marishane, 2016). These areas are broken down into sixty-four different actions that principals have to exercise (Marishane, 2016).

It is clear that the functions are complex and the principals require the support of their SMTs in order to fully and properly execute them, although SMTs have not received any capacity-building. The daunting task of managing and leading a school is confirmed by the above, which also confirms the need for the SMTs to be functional and competent as a team. The IDSOs as the principals' supervisors have to ensure that the key areas listed in the standards for principals are addressed satisfactorily to benefit the schools. If they are not competent and knowledgeable in these areas, they may not be able to properly monitor the implementation by the principals, resulting in failure.

The same standards could be introduced for the empowerment of the immediate supervisors of the principals, because it is equally important to build the capacity and competency of a cohort of knowledgeable IDSOs who will function effectively as a link between the department and schools. However, there are no research studies that confirm that this area is prioritised by the Department. In effect, there has not been much capacity-building and training for the IDSOs although they are supposed to manage the principals and provide leadership to a group of principals and schools. From the literature on leadership and management development, it is evident that there is no mention of deputy principals' support and development although these SMT members are located in a position where they have to grow into the level of principalship.

Some deputy principals find themselves thrown into the deep end when they are requested to act in the principals' position when the principals are away. It is clear, therefore, that no succession planning concerning school leadership is considered and prioritised. This gap has serious implications for organisational and leadership sustenance and may require attention.

2.10. EMPOWERMENT OF SCHOOL MANAGEMENT TEAMS

Hocine and Zhang (2014) recommend the empowerment of employees by the organizational leaders. Hlongwane and Mestry (2013) define empowerment as a process of development and growth that enables employees to take independent decisions and to have a sense of ownership in the workplace. They posit that in a school context, empowerment occurs when the principal shares the decision-making authority with other staff members delegated with particular tasks to perform. This stance is supported by the inputs of Van Deventer and Kruger (2003).

Hlongwane and Mestry (2013) suggest that school leaders need to decentralise power and authority among teacher teams by means of releasing authority from the higher levels of the school hierarchy to the lower levels in which teacher teams can be empowered. School teams, especially the SMTs, can be empowered when they are delegated with leadership responsibilities and decision-making authority (Hlongwane & Mestry, 2013; Rabichund, 2011). According to Mahlangu (2014), empowered stakeholders become responsible for their actions and they are able to take accountability and more responsibility for their actions. The empowerment of school leaders meant to enable them to provide management and administration of schools through teams is articulated clearly in official education documents such as the SMT Handbook as guides for the functioning of the key teams such as SMTs, staff development teams and school based support teams (Van der Mescht & Tyala, 2008).

The SMTs have to be empowered by the circuits and districts, while the IDSOs have to be empowered by their immediate superiors in circuits and the districts. These teams will be able to account for various responsibilities that they have been assigned to.

If properly empowered, IDSOs and SMTs will be able to work together in promoting interaction and teamwork at school and ensure that work is facilitated properly within the different departments and phases so that they can realise the school's goals. According to Hlongwane and Mestry (2013), teams can be more empowered when they are used in a horizontal or flat structure of a team-based organisation characterised by fewer hierarchical levels.

2.11. SCHOOL MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP SUPPORT

The SMTs need urgent support in order to facilitate the improvement of teaching and learning in their schools through supporting and providing development opportunities for the teachers they are responsible for. It emerged at the Teacher summit held in 2009 that the South African education system has failed to achieve the highly sought improvement in teaching and learning (DBE, 2012). One of the turn-around strategies could be the effective use and capacitation of the IDSOs in provision external leadership, support and development to a group of schools.

The district central office is identified as the key support provider (Honig, 2012). The central office is where the IDSOs operate. IDSOs are supposed to be knowledgeable all-rounders and possess exceptional leadership and management expertise in the various aspects of school operations and functions. The research findings indicate that support has not received sufficient attention from the education authorities. As a developing country, South Africa has inherited an approach to education that emphasised compliance and control over support for schools (Narsee, 2006). IDSOs have been assigned to schools as support and development officials, but their actual practices have been more on monitoring than support and development.

The researchers such as Naidoo (2005) and Christie *et al.* (2010) have raised concerns about the departmental strategies that compromise support provision for school development. They asserted that supervision was the focus of the education officials at the expense of support provision. Support for SMTs and schools, in general, has been neglected by the education authorities. Currently, education district officials such as the IDSOs still struggle with balancing support for schools with compliance and control.

2.12. SMTS' UNDERSTANDING OF THE ROLES OF IDSOS' FUNCTIONS

The Department of Education official documents such as the Kwazulu-Natal Department of Education's SMT Handbook, recognise the existence and key functions that the SMTs are supposed to play in the management, administration and leadership of their schools (Clarke, 2008). However, the observed practices on the ground are such that the SMTs' function is over-shadowed by that of the principal because the leadership, management and administration of the schools are solely in the hands of the principal who is actually supposed to function as part of the SMT. Despite the poor success rate of a single leader in school management, it is still common practice for only one member of the SMT, the principal of the school, to receive the IDSO's support and development.

Almost all aspects of school management and leadership fall in the terrain of the principal and the SMTs. They have to ensure that daily basic operations of the school are carried out systematically. These functions are stipulated in the Whole School Evaluation Policy. These functions, however, need the support and approval of the IDSO and School Governing Body. Collaboration is required in school leadership (Fontannaz, 2016) in order for the team players to realise their allocated responsibilities and surpass them. The collaboration is not just school-based but it extends to the IDSOs who are support officials for schools. IDSOs need to have a good understanding of occurrences in their schools and collaborate with the internal stakeholders in handling issues that require support. Whatever occurs in the school must be known by their IDSOs to enable them to take appropriate action in support of the schools.

The IDSOs function within districts as part of the District Management Teams (DMTs), which serve as the centre for school support. The role of the district as a centre of support is discussed below. School development and support for the people in the school, including SMTs need to be provided holistically and touch on every aspect of school life including policy development and implementation, work facilitation, staff interaction and discipline, safety, teaching and learning, infrastructure development, leadership, management, organisation of phases, parental involvement, learner support and curriculum as proposed by the WSE policy.

2.13. DISTRICT OFFICES AS PROVIDERS OF SUPPORT

The departmental strategies put districts at the centre of monitoring and support for schools. The strategy was given impetus by the introduction of the GDE's strategic plan 2015-2020, which justified ensuring that support is provided to schools in line with the National Policy for Organisation, roles and responsibilities for district offices as provided for in Government Gazette 300 of 2013 (RSA 2015). The requirement for school support by districts is further strengthened by the National Development Plan (NDP), which requires effective support and monitoring of schools to improve their functionality and performance (RSA, 2015).

According to Epstein, Galindo and Sheldon (2011), the pendulum of opinions from various researchers and authors have swung back and forth over the years regarding the importance of district leadership in school support, development and improvement. In recent times, there has been consensus on the poor state of support provided by district offices to the institutions responsible for providing the core business of the Department of Education. Lack of district support and monitoring are the common problems plaguing South African schools (Taylor, 2008). Taylor (2008) also added a voice to concerns raised regarding the lack of support provided to schools by district offices, especially by the IDSOs, who are supposed to be the key providers of support and development to schools.

Van der Berg *et al* (2011) added another dimension to the lack of support by districts arguing that the South African education districts are weak in their functioning and need attention as they predominantly provide an oversight and monitoring role. They further contend that the monitoring and support functions of districts must be clearly outlined and clearly understood. Recruitment strategies and capacity-building for district officials including the IDSOs, formerly known as school inspectors in South Africa, is a grey area that requires urgent consideration and action. Van der Berg *et al* (2011) support the argument that capacity issues should be addressed in the designation of the functions of the district offices. Stringent measures, recruitment and training of school inspectors for their inspection function is prioritised in countries such as the United Kingdom (Hasani, 2007), which does not seem to be the case in Gauteng, South Africa.

Van der Berg *et al.* (2011) further elucidate that in South Africa, districts are often ineffective in providing support to schools as they predominantly focus on monitoring functions. Van der Berg et al (2011) recommend that there should be careful consideration and clarification between support and monitoring provided by the districts. Mathibe (2007) indicates that the managers of circuits, who by virtue of their appointment become immediate supervisors of principals, are appointed to the positions without having first become principals. This leads to a multitude of leadership, managerial and support deficiencies.

In Gauteng, there is a layer of management between the CMs and the school principals, which is referred to as Clusters. The emergence of clustering in Gauteng Province is discussed below. Over the years, there has been inadequate provision of education support (Mashau *et al*, 2008), which is a worrying factor as one research finding after another identifies this challenge, but no action or very little seem to be done to improve this state. McKinsey's (2007) report on a successful education system recommended that districts should provide targeted support to schools in order to improve practices, facilitate communication and sharing of information between authorities and the schools and ensure that schools share best practices (Van der Berg *et al*, 2011).

District offices in Gauteng are direct education customer level delivery sub-units emanating from the decentralisation of the provincial education authority and they function as a direct link between the provincial office and schools (Raath, 2012). Although plagued with many challenges, the role of the education district leaders in school support cannot be underplayed. District leadership is acknowledged as a very important layer for school development and improvement. IDSOs as district leaders have an important role in school reform for improved education provision.

This expectation is still maintained even when district offices are plagued with multiple difficulties, which include staff shortages resulting in heavy workloads for the officials such as IDSOs and curriculum delivery facilitators, shortages of resources and restricted autonomy in decision-making, which is located in the office of the Provincial Head of Department (HoD) (Naidoo, 2005; Narsee, 2006).

With all the difficulties they experience, IDSOs are still expected to provide administrative and developmental support to schools and this leads to inefficiency and failure to achieve the sought-after high-quality education provision. The education districts will definitely not be spared when the lack of development, proper administration and growth in schools is looked into. They have a responsibility to provide general support and oversight for overall school functionality which includes among other functions:

2.14. REORGANISATION OF THE GDE

According to Hechanova and Cementina-Olpoc (2013), globalisation and technology are continually exerting tremendous pressure on organisations to transform. Institutions including businesses and educational organisations strive to evaluate and re-evaluate themselves with an aim of improving organisational performance and achievement of their goals. The organisations rethink their visions and missions, strategies and structures, and reorganise themselves for their betterment.

South Africa has also followed global trends as Rabichund and Steyn (2014) indicate that the previous decade has seen a great deal of interest in changing the quality of education positively both nationally and internationally. Bubb and Earley (2009) add that the interest in improving the quality of education resulted in introduction of new educational reforms through government policies, which focused specifically on school improvement of the education system. It has however been cautioned by Jacobs, Witteloostuijn and Christe-Zeyse (2013) that organisational change is not a simple process and is risky. However, the success and failure of the transformation process of an organisation lies in the hands of the drivers of the reform (Hechanova and Cementina-Olpoc, 2013). Organisational change is mostly more complex than the change initiators conceptualised (Jacobs, Witteloostuijn and Christe-Zeyse (2013).

The Gauteng Department of Education entered the fray of reorganisation around 2010, emerging with a radical strategy that was aimed at three key areas: provision of support for system-wide improvement, establishment of clear and collaborative relationships, and improvement of teaching and learning (Walsh *et al,* 2013).

Noting the departmental strategies, which should be leading to better achievement, Van Der Voort and Wood (2016) question why schools continue to fail and underperform despite having districts and circuits as support structures. They clearly state that districts and circuits are mandated by the national Department of Education to support schools. Education in Gauteng operated at the district level for a while despite the mandate to have circuits and ensure that schools are supported at both levels.

The districts in Gauteng Province were recently restructured to operate through circuits and clusters and resulting in the revision of the term 'IDSO' and the roles and responsibilities of the IDSOs. The reorganisation negatively impacted on the work of IDSOs and other middle managers, whose functions were affected. Reorganisation is not just a smooth process as it involves humans and the experience of transformation can be very difficult for the individual staff members in the organisation (Hechanova & Cementina-Olpoc, 2013), especially those on whose work the reorganisation impacts negatively. Hlalele and Mashele (2012) concede that decentralisation is not aimed at merely devolving power and authority to lower levels of the bureaucracy, but it is strategically intended to bring about efficiency in the system.

The lower levels such as circuits and clusters have limited decision-making powers and they are not policy developers but policy implementers. Education authorities base their restructuring of provincial and district education on the need for the improvement of education management, supervision and provision but there is insufficient empirical evidence on the effects of school clustering on the quality of teaching as was the case in Namibia (Pomuti, 2009). On the other hand, Hlalele and Mashele (2012) flag Lim and Fritzen's (2006) argument that decentralisation is able to improve the quality of teaching and increase innovativeness and efficiency. It should, however, be noted that if it is not implemented with caution, decentralisation may have unintended consequences especially if it is applied uniformly across diverse administrative cultures (Hlalele & Mashele, 2012).

The successful implementation of decentralisation may also be determined by contextual factors in the area where implementation will take place. It is also dependent on various factors including the availability of resources and reception of the change by the people affected by the change. This may be the case in Gauteng's reorganisation model that was adopted from other provinces and refined for implementation.

The cluster-based school management approach was adopted by the Namibian education authorities in 2000 where they decentralised the management of school supervision and in-service training to clusters (Pomuti, 2009). Restructuring is basically a feature of decentralisation. The study revealed that potential threats of the clustering approach were the scarcity of resources, reluctance to share resources and submission to the authority of school inspectors and school principals. The study further revealed no notable differences between the teaching methods of teachers who received support from the clustered organisations and those who were not affected by the restructuring into clusters (Pomuti, 2009). The study recommended clarity on the roles and responsibilities of key implementers and concluded that cluster-based management reforms do not necessarily translate into improved teaching and learning.

The reorganisation of districts in Gauteng resulted in decentralisation from districts to virtual circuits and clusters within the districts and these were managed by the CMs and cluster leaders respectively (Walsh *et al*, 2013), thus effectively devolving power from the district directors to the CMs. The CMs were tasked with the responsibility of providing end-to-end educational and administrative support to schools in a circuit which includes ensuring that school management functions are handled efficiently and effectively (Walsh *et al*, 2013). The cluster leaders have been given the responsibility to manage and lead a group of 10 to 15 schools supervised by the Circuit Managers (CMs) (Walsh *et al*, 2013). The CMs are actually the supervisors of the IDSOs who are supposed to be the principals' managers. Most of the CMs were transferred to the positions of circuit management with no experience of principalship or of being IDSOs, yet they are expected to ensure that the principals and IDSOs perform their school leadership and management functions with efficiency.

Owens and Valesky (2011) contend that leaders must be able to manage, lead and consequently transfer the skills of leading and managing to the managers working under them. However, this was obviously not considered in the case of Gauteng. Walsh *et al.* (2013) lists three support roles allocated to the CMs in the realigned GDE structure. The first role of the CM is a direct supportive role, which focuses on their core tasks, which may not be delegated. The direct support roles of the CMs include: governance, support for the SMTs and curriculum management, working with the RCLs, ensuring a functional IQMS and the implementation of the policy. The second and third roles may be coordinated by the CMs for implementation by other district personnel. They also have a coordination role that may entail the galvanising of support for schools. The third and last role entails the facilitation of human resources and finance matters, which are dealt with by the Transversal Human Resources Services (THRS) and the finance and administration personnel respectively.

It is further indicated by Walsh *et al.* (2013, 68) that the cluster leaders (CLs) are supposed to be "at the coal face of service delivery to schools". They are tasked with identifying schools' needs and designing support strategies. They are supposed to facilitate and coordinate support from the district by elevating matters to the district through the Circuit Managers' office. The cluster leaders basically function as messengers and information carriers between schools and the CM. The success of the structure of clustering schools requires a streamlined strategy for the management of the functions. This applies to the districts, circuits, clusters and schools.

2.15. FRAMEWORKS AND STRATEGIES FOR DEVELOPMENT OF SMTs AND IDSOs

Sullivan and Associates (2013) stipulate that leadership development strategies are geared towards the characteristics, tasks, responsibilities and roles that support effective learning and teaching. In South Africa, fragmented leadership development programmes are spread across the different provinces and offered by various providers (Sullivan & Associates, 2013), but they had little impact if any on the leadership development that could be measured and which could yield the required performance by school leaders.

Matthew Goniwe School of Leadership and Governance (MGSLG), an agency of the GDE was tasked with developing a leadership development programme or strategy that could improve school and district leadership. The Advanced Certificate in Education (ACE) in School Management and Leadership was introduced by MGSLG (Sullivan & Associates, 2013) in collaboration with the University of Johannesburg to school leaders and it was used as a vehicle to develop school leaders. The programme was fully funded by the GDE in its drive to ensure that school leadership improved. Concern about the various programmes is situated in the fact that the content and approaches used in these programmes are not contextualised to the South African educational leadership environment and conditions (Christie, 2010 as cited by Sullivan and Associates, 2013).

In the South African context, leadership development could be directed through district support, the use of coaching and mentoring and the use of communities of practice (Sullivan & Associates, 2013). The development of leaders has to focus on all levels of leadership within the schools and in the districts and circuits to ensure that all levels within the educational bureaucracy are capacitated. Raath (2012) posits that the nature and quality of leadership and management provided by the IDSO is pivotal to school development, improvement and effectiveness.

The work of the IDSOs is driven from the provincial education head office's Institutional Development and Support (IDS) Directorate, which determines the policy and implementation strategies for institutional development and support. As previously mentioned, realising the need for legislation that could determine uniformity in the functioning of districts, circuits and officials such as the IDSOs, the government released a gazette in 2013 outlining the organisation, roles and responsibilities of districts (RSA, 2013a). Planning, support, oversight, accountability, and public engagement were four distinct areas identified by the notice as the major roles of the education districts and circuits, from where the IDSOs operate (RSA, 2013a). Raath (2012) further argues that if schools are to provide the best possible education, they require effective leaders and managers. This implies that schools need strong, well-informed and competent IDSOs and SMTs in leadership and management positions.

Dreyer (2017) argues that legislation alone will not suffice to bring about changes in education leadership and quality provision for all. Dreyer (2017) further contends that creative ways should be explored to ensure willingness to embrace and implement improvement strategies. The GDE has a leadership development framework developed by the MGSLG (Sullivan & Associates, 2013). Most recently, the GDE's strategic planning, namely, 2015-2020 strategic plan and the National Development Plan (NDP) determined that schools and teachers are to be supported by competent district officials and the Department of Basic Education's schooling 2025 document calls for the improved regularity and quality of monitoring and support provided by district-based officials. It is clear that the functions to be performed by the districts cannot be left in the hands of incompetent and unqualified officials as this will compromise the provision of support and the development of schools and the functionality of the district offices.

It is therefore necessary for a leadership development programme for the IDSOs and other district officials. There is also a push for the development and support through the Medium Term Strategic Framework (MTSF) of the GDE for district offices to be functional and able to support schools. The IDSOs have been seen as the officials responsible for school support and development and that they should actually be held accountable for the performance and development of schools they are responsible for in their districts and circuits. Circular 51 of 2006 (RSA, 2006), outlining the roles and functions of the IDSOs was released by the Gauteng Department of Education (GDE), however, this was not agreed upon by the parties sitting at the ELRC, and therefore, it was not signed.

Due to the failure of the implementation of Circular 51 of 2006 (RSA, 2006), the GDE enacted another circular regarding the functions of the IDSOs in 2008. Schools in Gauteng were provided with guidelines for institutional planning and development in the form of Circular 25 of 2008 (RSA, 2008a), which determined that the IDSOs should monitor the implementation of the School Development Plans (SDPs) continuously and provide the required support to principals, teachers and SGBs to ensure the achievement of goals regarding the delivery of high-quality education (Mashau *et al.*, 2008).

The SMTs are further omitted in the legislated provision of support by the IDSOs, which could be interpreted by the IDSOs as an indication that they may not interact directly with the SMTs, and this may result in the maintenance of the *status quo* concerning school support. According to Circular 25 of 2008 (RSA, 2008a), the main function and responsibility of the IDSOs is to provide support to their cluster of schools with the compilation of the SDPs and SIPs. These functions of the IDSOs in the circular are in contradiction with the position of the new structures of the GDE advocated by Walsh *et al.* (2013) which states that the cluster leaders elevate matters to the circuit manager for interventions. Despite the promulgation of Notice 300 of 2013 (RSA, 2013a) and circulars addressing the functions of IDSOs, there has been no observable support and development provided for the entire SMT by the IDSOs but instead support is offered to the principal alone. This argument is strengthened by Clarke's (2008) assertion that CMs (used in place of the DSOs in provinces such as Limpopo and Mpumalanga) work on a reactionary basis and visit schools and engage principals to address issues that need immediate attention at the institution without being guided by any policy.

2.16. SMTs AND THE IDSOS IN SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

There is concurrence among researchers that school management and leadership have evolved from centralised to decentralised systems where distributed and shared management and leadership have found a space. These are consistent with the collegiality model of management that is linked to participative leadership (Bush, 2006). Various types of leadership are used inter-changeably in the leadership of a school depending on the situation in which the leaders find themselves at a particular point in time. Accordingly, Jones (2012) argues that highly effective team leaders apply a variety of leadership styles to fulfil the requirements of the situation encountered.

From the literature on leadership, this study identified values that could be derived by the SMTs' and the IDSOs' from shared and distributed leadership in the leadership and management of schools. School leaders including the IDSOs, principals and the other SMT members are expected to share and distribute responsibility in the execution of their leadership roles within their schools.

These leaders are expected to inspire, motivate and appeal to staff through an array of skills and behaviours which communicates the value of staff to their schools (Mahlangu, 2014). The sharing and distribution of leadership within the organisation can improve the morale of the staff that is brought about by the leader's efforts and a willingness to integrate others fully in the core functions of their school (Mahlangu, 2014). The distribution of leadership throughout the organisation and confidence in others will lead to development of leadership talent with the focus on accountability, relationships, Ubuntu and leadership styles. The leaders need to be highly skilled regarding the distribution of leadership and have a good understanding of delegation and reporting. In the SMTs, the HODs focus on curriculum delivery and management while the principals and deputies attend more to the operations of the school (Sullivan & Associates, 2013).

The SMTs are also expected to exercise instructional leadership. They must have a good understanding and knowledge of the curriculum, and teaching and learning practices (ELRC, Collective Agreement 1 of 2008 (RSA, 2008b), GDE Circular 51 of 2006) (RSA, 2006) in order to support the teachers and learners in the provision of high-quality education in their schools. According to De Villiers and Pretorius (2011), schools should be run as organisations that reflect the values of democracy, openness and transparency through the exercise of recent forms of leadership such as shared and distributed leadership. To achieve this, school leaders need to monitor the extent to which they exercise instructional leadership in the departments and/or phases for which they are responsible. Their performance and competency with regard to guiding academic instruction at schools is of paramount importance for the success or failure of the learning and teaching processes (Marishane, 2016).

The district central office administrators have a major task of consistently providing support to school leaders in order to improve their instructional leadership skills (Honig, 2012). As the central office administrators, IDSOs are tasked with the responsibility of developing the instructional leadership skills of school leaders. The IDSOs have to help the principals to learn how to strengthen their instructional leadership role (Honig, 2012). Mendels and Mitgang (2013) assert that the supportive role of the central office officials is vital.

The SMTs working with an IDSO with a vested interest in the instructional responsibilities who is able to provide oversight and curriculum support will be pressured to pay a great deal of attention to the delivery of high-quality teaching, learning and assessment in their schools. This practice will result in the improved instructional achievement across the school. Van der Merscht and Tyala's (2008) research on school principals' perceptions of team management confirmed that the formalisation of the SMTs by the Department of Education made it possible for the workload of managing the school to be spread among staff members. However, they also found that there were tensions and challenges that suggest that team management is not yet entrenched in some of the schools in which the research was conducted. Furthermore, Van der Merscht and Tyala (2008) believe that training programmes on leadership, management and academic programmes need to focus on the working, functionality and management of teams, and they recommend the use of organisational development as the key training aspect as it is aligned with participative management and teamwork.

A challenge that was realised in the study conducted by Van der Merscht and Tyala (2008) was the inescapable perceptions of principals, that they are solely accountable to the authorities as provided for in SASA 84 of 1996, Section 16 (RSA, 1996), which led to situations in which the principals sometimes acted independently and disregarded the inputs of the other members of the SMTs.

2.17. IDSO PARTICIPATION IN THE INTEGRATED QUALITY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM (IQMS)

Appraising the school leaders can help improve their leadership practices (Schleicher, 2012). This implies that appraisal of the school leaders need to take place at all the levels in order for school leadership to improve. The South African appraisal system, the Integrated Quality management System (IQMS), allows for appraisal across all levels in the education system. The IDSOs as the school support and development officials play a very key role in monitoring the implementation of departmental policies by the schools. This includes ensuring that the IQMS and WSE policies are known, understood and implemented as mandated by the Department of Education (Booysen, 2010).

The SMTs are pivotal in the implementation of the policies of the department and their schools' policies. Steyn (2011) supports the views of Hlongwane and Mestry (2013), and Thobela and Mtapuri (2014) that school principals play a vital role in the implementation of departmental policies within their schools and for the development of teachers and the teams in their schools. Schools with weak SMTs are bound to fail even if they may have strong and effective principals. In general, principals use the SMTs as a vehicle for entrenching the school strategies and for implementing their visions. Therefore, visionary principals would strengthen their SMTs first and ensure that they move together in tandem as they entrench their vision and implement the requirements of the department. The IDSOs seem to be unsure of the direct role they have to play with regard to supporting the implementation of the IQMS. They are responsible for overseeing the implementation of the WSE, which constitutes a serious responsibility which may not be realised with ease.

Teamwork is critical to the process of IQMS as the entire process needs to be led by the staff development teams and the WSE coordinators. The evaluees elect a colleague and an immediate supervisor to form their developmental support group who will evaluate them (Hlongwane and Mestry, 2012; Letlhoo, 2011).. However, Mji (2011) contends that this is not the case in practice as most schools rig the process and just submit documents that are not informed by the IQMS process. Booysen (2010) supports the argument by Mji and indicates that the SMTs only planned for compliance with the IQMS processes and resulted in no real development in the school which reflects that IDSOs have not been hands-on in terms of processes of policy implementation and thus the existence of gaps in this area. IDSOs can ensure that the appraisal recommendations are infused into the SIP and into the district improvement plans (DIP) for consideration by the office responsible for teacher development.

2.18. SMTs AND IDSOS AND SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT PLANNING (SDP)

According to Hocine and Zhang (2014), the leaders should set performance goals, objectives and standards for their organisations. They should also guide and coordinate the organisational efforts towards achievement of the set objectives. The goals and objectives of an organisation direct its developmental plans.

Schools have to develop their WSDPs for short, medium and long term in line with the departmental strategic goals. Whole school development planning is a process that is aimed at bringing about the improvement of every aspect of the school and it is led and directed by the SMTs (Van der Voort & Wood, 2016).

Van der Westhuizen (2007) identified eight areas that form the focus for SDP and these include: agreeing on the vision and mission of the school, conducting the SWOT analysis, identifying the priorities, setting targets, putting an action plan in place (Develop the SIP, allocating responsibilities to role-players and time-frames, implementation and monitoring of progress and evaluation of the implementation and review Schools are also expected to conduct their profiling and develop a document known as a school profile which outlines who they are. The profiles, SIPs and SDPs of schools have to be received by the district office (Walsh *et al*, 2013) through the IDSOs. However, Van der Voort and Wood (2016) raise concerns about the role of the district offices in supporting schools with development of whole-school development plans.

The districts have been found wanting in the area of school support as the district officials have been found to be incompetent and uninformed on various school leadership matters. The researchers are also concerned with the perennial absence of SIPs and DIPs. With the recent introduction of circuits and clusters in Gauteng, it is highly likely that cluster improvement plans and circuit improvement plans would be influenced by schools' development plans. Poorly-developed WSDPs and SIPs may result in poor quality and uninformed interventions by districts, circuits and clusters.

The model developed by Van der Voort (2016) to support the SMTs can be of great value with regard to helping schools to develop and implement their WSDPs. The model has three stages, namely: the preparatory stage, the implementation phase and the final phase referred to as the maintenance and dissemination phase. The model can be beneficial to ensuring the production of functional and usable WSDPs. It has to be acknowledged that the functions of IDSOs are cumbersome and complex. The development of the WSDP and circuit and cluster management plans also feature in their functions.

2.19. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK - THE FOUR-FACTOR THEORY OF LEADERSHIP

This study is aimed at investigating how the IDSOs support the SMTs, and the four-factor theory of leadership introduced by Bowers and Seashore (1966) is considered suited to help the researcher to identify and collect the relevant data and for analysing the findings of this study. The important role of the IDSOs and SMTs in leadership is linked to the four-factor theory of leadership which outlines aspects of leadership.

The four-factor theory of leadership by Bowers and Seashore (1966)

The four-factor leadership theory, illustrated below, was utilised in this research to investigate the recounts of the experiences as well as the roles of the IDSOs when supporting the SMTs to ensure that noticeable development takes place in their schools. It was also used to confirm that the four factors influence the operations of SMTs in the performance of their leadership and management responsibilities. Taylor (1971) identifies Bowers and Seashore (1966) as the researchers who advanced integrative direction in leadership definition. The IDSOs have to lead the transformation in their schools in terms of bringing about the improvement of the school. Organisational leaders and organisational development experts and researchers link the challenges and problems faced by organisations to the speed and complexity at which change and transformation is taking place (Davidoff & Lazarus, 1997). It is posited that most leaders do not cope with the speed at which change is occurring.

This theory identifies four distinct factors that are cornerstones of leadership, namely: work facilitation, support, interaction facilitation and goal emphasis (Bowers & Seashore, 1966). The cornerstones of this theory are discussed below. In this theory, support entails conduct that enhances another person's feeling of self-worth; *interaction facilitation* reflects behaviour by one person that encourages others to close and develop mutual relationships; *goal facilitation* focuses on the stimulation of enthusiasm for meeting organisational goals; and *work facilitation* involves engagement in planning, controlling, coordinating and providing resources to ensure that the organisational goals are realised.

The four-factor theory of leadership applies to the activities of group members (Taylor, 1971), such as SMTs in schools as well as to the activities of a formal, designated leader like the IDSO. The IDSOs are formal leaders and they are designated to perform the functions of supporting schools by interacting with them. Leadership is central to educational quality and the leadership of schools is consistent with the four-factor theory as it focusses on providing support to others, identifying and pursuing identified goals and the recognition that collegiality is seen as a major contributor to effective leadership. Collegiality entails teamwork and interaction which is one of the four factors.
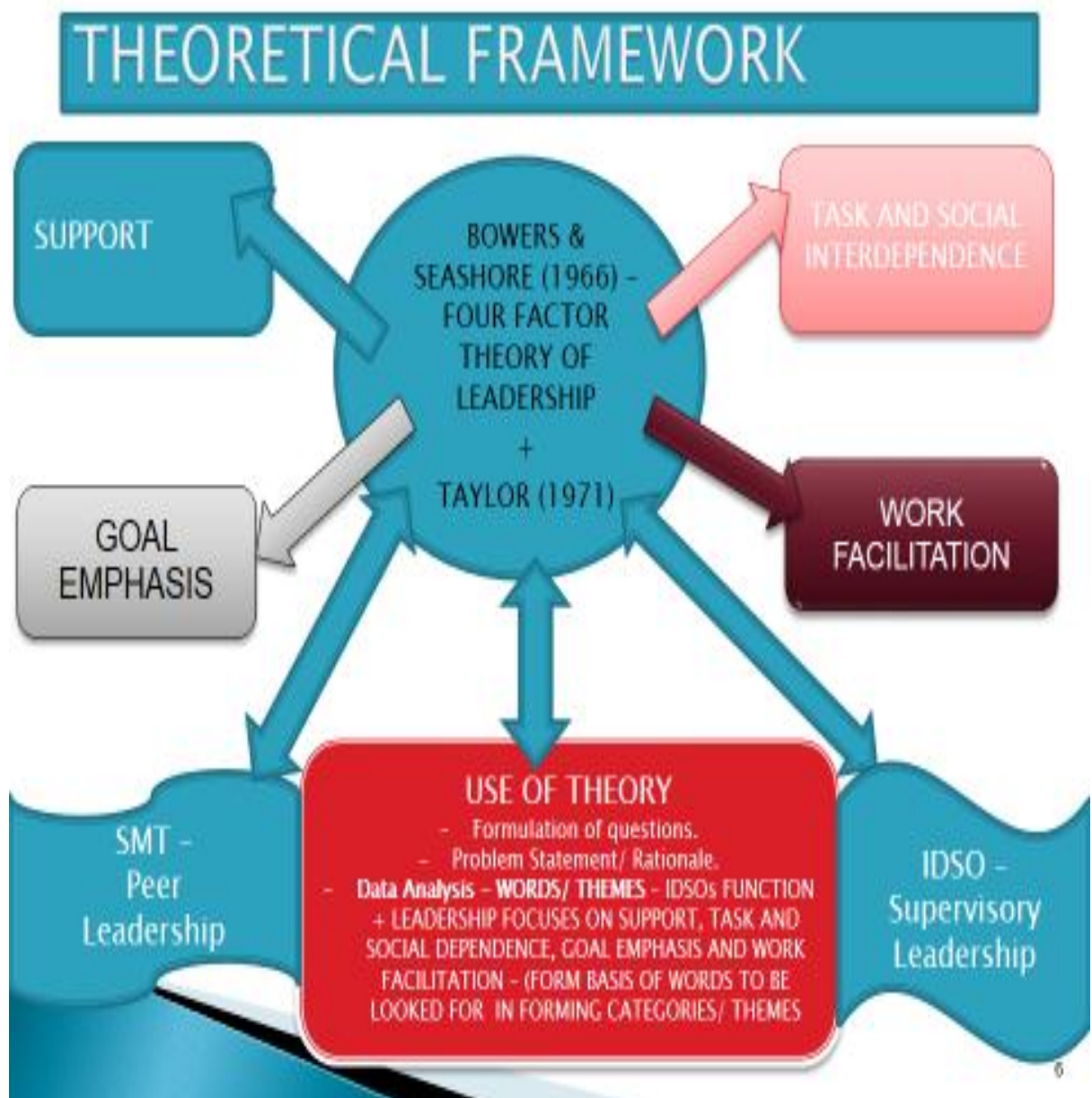
Figure 1 –The four-factor theory of leadership (Bowers & Seashore, 1966)

According to Schleicher (2012), school leaders define the school's goals during their planning, and they have to drive the school practices to ensure that these are attained. The SMTs and IDSOs as school leaders fulfil a key role in the school planning processes. The school leaders contribute and provide strategic direction, guidance and assistance to the SGB and SMTs in the processes of developing their SDP.

Bowers and Seashore (1966) observe the importance of task interdependence and frequent social interdependence in an organisation as aspects that enable a team working together to realise the objectives of the organisation. In an ideal situation, regular interaction with the IDSO would take place, which would help the district to keep track of the progress made by individual schools towards the realisation of their mandates. This theory addresses the support provided by the IDSOs at different levels such as the strategic planning level where goal identification and goal-emphasis are done by the schools' stakeholders, namely, the SMT which includes the principal, SGBs and teachers. Schools usually invite the IDSOs as the departmental officials to give input and provide support with work facilitation and planning.

After the strategic planning of the school, the work ensues and the SMTs ensure that the work is facilitated throughout the school and that interaction takes place in various departments and phases.. In this regard, monitoring and support sessions lead to interaction between the IDSOs and the SMTs. Strategic planning maps the direction that the school is taking. The institutional leaders have to be skilled with regard to finding innovative ways to get the institution and the people to strive towards achieving its objectives (Jones, 2012). The leaders need to inspire a shared vision which is exciting and full of possibilities for growth and development (Hechanova & Cementina-Olpoc, 2013). The leaders have to model the way for the other staff members. Bowers and Seashore (1966) observe the importance of task interdependence and frequent social interdependence in an organisation as some of the aspects that enable groups of people working together to realise and attain the objectives of the organisation. The establishment of the SMTs could have been aimed at ensuring that different groups of people in various departments and phases were led in such a way that they could provide good quality education by the heads of departments at phase level and by the principal and the deputy principal.

There is a great deal of social interaction and interdependence in the operations of the school. In many instances, task and social interdependence apply in the school context. In relation to the four-factor theory of leadership, the SMTs function as administrators and managers in the schools and they have to fulfil certain administrative duties that include five functions of planning, organising, commanding, coordinating and controlling. Accordingly, the SMTs need to be trained and empowered to effectively perform their functions.

The principal's immediate supervisors, IDSOs, are expected to provide supervisory leadership and support to the SMTs and the entire school including the SGBs. They have to oversee the progress made towards achieving the departmental objectives and policy provisions. These leaders are expected to bring about changes and improvements in their institutions. Institutions across the globe work hard to improve their organisations and most organisations are effecting wide-ranging transformation to prepare children better for the changing challenges of life and work (Schleicher, 2012). These changes are driven by the organisational leaders. Change is inevitable and should be embraced by organisational leaders and stakeholders if they wish to move forward at the same speed with the world and provide high quality education that conforms to world standards. Districts and schools have to keep up with change and develop themselves because a lack of development will lead to their demise.

Organisations are competing with others (Hechanova & Cementina-Olpoc, 2013) in their operational space, and therefore, they need good leaders to keep their operations at levels that both satisfy and attract clients. Through well managed change, organisations are able to improve their efficiency, processes and structures (Hechanova & Cementina-Olpoc, 2013).

2.20. Summary

This chapter has addressed important matters related to the role played by the IDSOs and SMTs with the aim of improving schools. Mention was also made of support from other district officials regarding the enablement of SMT's development.

A historic overview of different eras of school inspections leading up to the current activities were elaborated and the four-factor theory of leadership was discussed and linked to support provided by IDSOs for SMTs. It emerged from the literature discussed above that the areas of school leadership and management can no longer be placed in the hands of one person, the school principal, but need to be shared and distributed within the school. Accordingly, the SMTs play a critical part in the management and development of the school. It also emerged from the literature that organisations across the globe are constantly reviewing themselves and transforming and bringing about change in their structures and practices.

Change is a necessary and inevitable process in education development, which results in either centralisation or decentralisation. The Gauteng Department of Education (GDE) reorganised their structure to decentralise authority from the districts through the introduction of circuits and clusters. The decentralisation was meant to give greater autonomy to the circuits and clusters, thereby reducing pressure on the districts. The clustering of schools in Gauteng was intended to provide end-to-end support and promote school development with regard to schools in the province. The reorganisation added to the bureaucratic levels in the accountability layers of the GDE and made it more difficult for schools to receive direct service and resources. With this reorganisation, the circuits have to compete for resources (Walsh *et al*, 2013), while relying on the circuits for resourcing. However, the financial and human resources functions remain centralised and still reside with the district office.

The IDSOs were placed at the centre of this reorganisation as they are the drivers of support at the cluster-circuit level, despite their resistance to the change. IDSOs are a core part of the district's support to schools, especially to the SMTs and SGBs. It is important to note that the IDSOs have to be knowledgeable and competent in their role of leading and supporting schools. Schools need the versatile, fluid and expert leadership of the IDSOs. The chapter was concluded with discussion of the four-factor theory of leadership. This theory applies appropriately to the functioning of the IDSOs in relation to the schools to which they are assigned and to the perceived support they should be providing to the SMTs, SGBs and the entire school and its immediate communities**.**

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1. INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, the researcher reviewed international and local literature on school inspections, SMTs and IDSOs' functions, support roles of the districts and the IDSOs. The four-factor theory of leadership was also discussed and linked to the leadership and support function of SMTs and IDSOs. This chapter focuses on research design and methodology and lays the ground for the analysis of data in Chapter 4. The chapter outlines the data collection processes followed in the study. Ethical considerations relevant to the study are highlighted and the chapter concludes with discussion of the ethical considerations observed throughout the study.

The researcher ensured that the quality of information obtained is as far as possible, credible and trustworthy because these are crucial aspects when validating the data collected. The processes followed in this chapter enabled him to gather in-depth data on the support provided to SMTs by IDSOs. The researcher's assumptions, research skills and practices formed a basis for the choice of research design and these influenced how I collected data (Nieuwenhuis, in Maree, 2011).

3.2. RESEARCH DESIGN

A research design describes the manner in which the research was conducted (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006). This study focuses on how IDSOs support SMTs in Gauteng and the research design that is most suited for this research is a case study. The intention of the research was to travel along with the participants in their natural social settings (Wimpenny, in Savin-Baden & Major, 2010). A research design can be described as a plan or strategy used by the researcher to focus on the underlying philosophical assumptions, specifically identifying relevant respondents and selecting the data gathering techniques to be used in the study and the data analysis required for the study (Nieuwenhuis, in Maree, 2011).

Case studies have become extremely widespread in social research (Denscombe, 2004). They are concerned with the lively description of events and focus on understanding the perceptions of individuals or groups (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). A case study lends itself to participation of the IDSO and the SMTs and leads to a situation where the participants are able to discover practical solutions and meaning of support in their schools.

Case studies recognise and accept that there are many variables operating in a single case, and therefore, permit the use of multiple sources and multiple methods (Cohen *et al.*, 2011; Denscombe, 2004). They are also able to establish cause and effect, and address questions of 'how' and 'why' (Cohen *et al* 2011). Case study research is best positioned to address issues related to the experiences of SMTs and IDSOs with regard to the process and value of school support and development. A case study focusses on relationships and processes within social settings which tend to be interconnected and interrelated (Denscombe, 2004). IDSOs and SMTs are expected to form a formidable relationship, which forms a foundation premised on trust.

This research was carried out in the naturalistic real-life environment situation of the participants and in the real world of the participants (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001; Denscombe, 2004), the district office in the case of IDSOs and the schools in the case of SMTs. Case studies may be applied in studies where enquiries into the interaction of people, processes or events are explored (Creswell, 2009). Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) and Denscombe (2004) see a case study as a portrayal of a particular situation and the thick, in-depth description of the lived experiences, thoughts and feelings about the experienced situation. This research delved into the experiences of how the SMTs find the support of IDSOs so that they can improve their work in schools. The relationships and processes in the schooling system are interconnected and interdependent. This case study can have potential to result in a better understanding and utilisation of concepts such as 'support', 'work facilitation', 'team interaction', 'goal emphasis', 'change' and 'improvement in the school management arena'.

3.3. RESEARCH PARADIGM

Bourgeois (2011) asserts that the desire, need and drive to understand and explain the world around human beings is innate, therefore, human beings strive to create knowledge that helps them to understand the world and nature much better and with more insight. In this study, knowledge and understanding of the SMTs and IDSOs was interpreted and the interpretation led to a better understanding of their leadership functions and how support can be maximised to make the schools better places for the performance of their education provision function.

A paradigm can be seen as a frame of reference used by the researcher in organising the research processes (Babbie, 2007). Research paradigms provide a philosophical framework that underlies research decisions and actions. This study followed the interpretivist paradigm that is seen as an approach to qualitative research, which is typically adopted with the intention of appreciating and understanding the phenomena being studied deeply (Goldkuhl, 2012; Creswell, 2014). In concurrence, Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011) indicate that the central focus of the interpretive paradigm context is on understanding the subjective world of individual experiences. I utilised the interpretivist paradigm in this research and this was informed by the emphasis it places on the way human beings assign meaning to their lives and the fact that human behaviour is influenced by legitimate reasons and their prioritisation of agential perspectives (Morrison 2012), which, in his view, emphasises the narrative (words) rather than numerical explanations.

Interpretivism advocates for the unobtrusive techniques of data collection such as the interviews (Maree, 2013). Data were interpreted after they had been analysed thoroughly. The use of the interpretive paradigm enabled the researcher to dig deeper for the individual SMTs and IDSOs' understanding of their functions and areas that needed to be appreciated and improved. This was done through the use of interviews that enabled the researcher to draw information lying deep within the individual participants through their open responses to the interview questions (Cohen *et al.*, 2011).

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The interpretive paradigm is concerned with the understanding and viewpoint of the individual (Cohen *et al.*, 2011). This paradigm applies to the study because the focus of the study is the interpretation of the views and understandings of individual IDSOs and SMTs on support. The interpretive worldview granted this researcher an opportunity to construct an understanding of the SMTs' understandings of how they are supported by the IDSOs as they outlined the processes followed in their schools when interacting with the IDSOs during the interviews. The interpretive paradigm allowed the researcher to interact with the individuals and to understand their interpretations of the environment around them (Cohen *et al.*, 2011). The participants outlined issues such as work facilitation by the SMTs in their schools, goal emphasis by the SMTs and IDSOs and support provided by the IDSOs to the SMTs. These served as essential for enabling the researcher to understand and interpret the school support environment and processes.

Interpretivism is based on the belief that human beings construct and interpret knowledge and meaning from experiences and from relationships between things, people and events to generate a better understanding. In this study, useful knowledge was created through interpreting information from the SMTs and IDSOs on how the IDSOs support the SMTs. The interpretivist researcher in this study interpreted the work process of the IDSOs and studied the interaction facilitation among individuals – the IDSOs and the SMTs, between the principals and the IDSOs and between the principals and the SMTs (Creswell, 2014). The IDSOs, each representing a circuit and SMTs from schools possess knowledge of how support is provided to the SMTs by the IDSOs and they are able to create meanings about the phenomena of support and empowerment and how best that can be achieved. Interpretation of the inputs of the IDSOs and the SMTs can lead to a new understanding and approaches in their work of leading and supporting schools.

3.3.1. Assumptions

Assumptions in qualitative studies are based on the interpretive philosophy that assumes an interactive and shared social experience that is interpreted by individuals (MacMillan & Schumacher, 2006).

Regarding the IDSOs' support for SMTs, this researcher has made these assumptions:

- The school is a bureaucratic structure controlled and supported by bureaucratic district offices which house the IDSOs;

- SMTs as school leaders and managers are in need of developmental support and empowerment from the education authorities, especially the IDSO. The IDSOs are expected to support the SMTs to enable them to provide good quality education in order to achieve good results.

The SMTs require the support of the IDSOs in order to manage their massive responsibility of delivering quality education effectively to their communities. The district itself is expected by both the provincial department and basic education department to support schools and to monitor and support schools to enable them to account for the high quality required of them. Thus, the IDSOs and other officials are directed by the district and circuit leadership to engage schools and report on the progress of every school and to hold them accountable for non-performance.

In practice, as indicated in the problem statement, I presume that the IDSOs and SMTs are both aware that there is a distinct lack of support for the SMTs and that this situation impacts negatively on the provision of quality education pursued by education authorities and communities.

3.4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Methodology is defined by Morrison (2012), as the theory or set of ideas about the relationship between phenomena of how knowledge is gained by the researchers in the process of researching and why it is necessary. With particular reference to this study, Punch (2014) describes a qualitative research methodology as an empirical research method in which the collected data are not numerical but rather entail a thorough engagement of the participants with the required insights and knowledge of the phenomena being studied. This kind of research approach uses words to describe and make sense of the participants' lived experiences, emotions, meanings, traits and characteristics (Silverman, 2013).

There are two major research methodologies, namely quantitative and qualitative. This study will focus on the qualitative research approach. The qualitative research approach is most frequently used when conducting research in the social sciences and is interactive. This approach is meant to obtain in-depth insights from the research participants. In this case, the use of a qualitative approach was to dig deeper for the insights of the SMTs and ODSOs regarding the support and development of the SMTs and schools. As the enquirer, this researcher interacted with the participants and the documents that provided data. The concepts of 'population' and 'sampling' are discussed below.

3.4.1. Population and sampling

Qualitative researchers need to have a plan for site and participant identification for the research (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). The research site is selected to locate people to be involved in the study and it should be one where the viewpoints or actions are likely to be present and can be studied (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). The research sites in this study were township primary schools in the Tshwane South District, one of the five Tshwane-Gauteng (TshwaGa) regions of the Gauteng Department of Education, which is made up of a total of fifteen districts. These served as the site for the case study. The researcher opted for this site because of its accessibility and easy mobility as he is based at this district. The choice of this site allowed the researcher sufficient time to conduct the research and easy access to the participants (McMillan and Schumacher, 1993).

The district office is where the IDSOs are based in terms of their work stations. The schools were the sites where the data collection took place, while the population consisted of the IDSOs and SMT members of the selected schools. The Tshwane South District is the biggest in the Gauteng Provincial Education Department. There are five circuits consisting of a combined 321 schools in the Tshwane South District. The circuits are each managed by a circuit manager (Walsh *et al*, 2013). Each circuit is further demarcated into three clusters made up of at least ten to twenty schools consisting of the various types of schools, public, special and independent, and each cluster is managed by an IDSO who is responsible for the development and support of the schools in their clusters.

Key informants are individuals with special knowledge, status or communication skills and expertise in the field being studied who may be willing to share that knowledge and expertise with the researcher (Goetz & Le Compte, 1984). The IDSOs and the SMTs were the key informants in this study. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) indicate that in purposive sampling, participants and cases may be handpicked by the researcher on the basis of their possession of particular characteristics sought by the study. Purposive sampling permits the use of small groups of a population likely to possess the knowledge and experience on the phenomenon being studied (McMillan & Schumacher, 2007, and Babbie, 2007). In this study, purposive sampling was used to select the participants. Flick (2011:77) stated that "purposive and theoretical sampling are the techniques better suited for qualitative research".

Purposive sampling was used to identify the circuits in which research was conducted. Purposive sampling was chosen for a specific purpose as the SMTs and IDSOs were the sources of the required data (Cohen *et al.*, 2011). The SMTs and IDSOs possess knowledge and information of what the research is focused on. The criteria for selection considered the township circuits, namely: Mamelodi, Atteridgeville and Eersterust with the schools that had the lowest performance among the under-performing schools in the district in the 2015 Annual National Assessment (ANA) results. Cancellation of the ANA led to revision of the focus of this study. The revision included the least performing primary school in the 2015 district assessment processes per circuit. The researcher earlier indicated that very little school development was observed in the township schools and thus the interest in investigating how SMTs are supported by IDSOs in the township circuits and school.

ANA is the standardised national assessment for languages and mathematics in the exit grades of the South African education system, namely: Grades 3, 6 and 9 (RSA, 2013). Various reports such as the TIMSS and SACMEQ have put South Africa among the worst performers in international tests and in terms of our own internal measurements such as the ANA and the matriculation results. The ANA were discontinued in 2015 due to pressure from the teachers' unions. The sample consisted of a total of fourteen SMT members and three IDSOs. Three HODs declined to participate.

The IDSOs are supposed to support and develop schools (Smith, 2011), therefore, they should have a thorough knowledge of how the SMTs are supposed to be supported by the office of the IDSO, which is the information sought by this study. The SMT members possess information on how the IDSOs supported and developed them and their schools. SMTs were likely to provide in-depth and quality information on the data required by this study (Cohen *et al.*, 2007). The inputs of the sampled participants were not necessarily representative and their comments were not generalizable. The primary purpose of this sample was not to generalise but to collect in-depth information from the participants who were knowledgeable in the area of IDSO support for the SMTs (Cohen *et al.*, 2011).

3.4.2. Data collection and documentation

The researcher embarked on a qualitative research study, which is aimed at understanding and explaining the phenomena in question, that is, the roles of the IDSO in supporting of SMTs. The use of a single instrument would not provide sufficient, accurate, trustworthy and credible data, therefore, the data collection plan entailed crystallising the multiple techniques of data collection instruments (Creswell, 2009). The selection of the research data collection instruments was informed by the various advantages they held for this research and their applicability to the research design. The rationale for selecting the data collection instruments for this study is discussed in the paragraphs below. This study used semi-structured interviews as well as a document analysis to collect data. The researcher's data collection plan entailed crystallising multiple techniques of data collection instruments consisting of the researcher as a data collection instrument, semi-structured interviews and document analysis.

3.4.2.1. Semi-structured interviews

Interviews entail a two-way conversation in which the interviewer asks the interviewee questions in an attempt to elicit the data and learn more about the interviewee's ideas, beliefs, views, opinions and behaviours (Niewenhuis, in Maree, 2011). In short, qualitative interviews entail the interaction between the interviewer and interviewee using the interviewer's plan of inquiry (Babbie, 2007).

The main purpose of the interviews was to obtain information during the individual views from the participants with experience of the phenomena being studied (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Flick, 2011). Semi-structured interviews were employed when collecting the data, as they entail the dexterity and flexibility of the interviewer with regard to the selection and ordering of topics and ability to allow the interviewees liberty to address issues emanating from the researcher's study context (Denscombe, 2004). Semi-structured interviews outline the set of issues to be explored with each participant (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). During the semi-structured interviews, a good number of questions that covered the intended scope of the interview and an interview guide served as an orientation for the interviewer (Flick, 2011). This form of interview enables the researcher to listen and identify new lines of inquiry that are directly related to the phenomenon under study and allows for exploration and probing.

The researcher used semi-structured interviews to obtain information from the participants as they responded to the interview questions. The mood in a semi-structured interview is relaxed and may enable the participants to provide more in-depth information that can result in the researcher obtaining relevant and meaningful data from these interviews. The participants were at ease and comfortable, which rendered an environment that is conducive to data collection. These interviews permitted the interviewees the freedom to express their views and opinions on the matter under investigation (Creswell, 2009).

The semi-structured interviews were thus used to obtain information from the perspectives of the IDSOs and SMT members from the three schools identified as sites for the research. The three IDSOs and nine SMT members were interviewed to obtain more relevant, in-depth information on the IDSOs' support and development processes for SMTs. The permission to audio-record the interviews were obtained from the participants (Raath, 2012; Denscombe, 2004).

3.4.2.2. Document analysis

The second form of data collection the researcher used was accessing the documents available at the school and in the possession of the IDSOs that should be readily available at an institution. The researcher needs to evaluate the authenticity and accuracy of the records before using them for data collection because not everything that is documented is factually correct (Niewenhuis, in Maree, 2011). The documents provide evidential proof of the practices and processes followed in the school or institution under study. The documents are both public and private (restricted access or secret and classified) records that could be obtained from the research sites and used by the qualitative researcher (Denscombe, 2004). Documents are data sources accessible to the imaginative and resourceful investigator and should be readily available at an institution or in the possession of the SMTs, IDSOs' or CMs' office. Minutes of meetings, for instance, were perused to determine how the process pertaining to the support and development of SMTs is handled. In the interest of the crystallisation of data, documents could be used to corroborate the evidence from other sources. The researcher made an effort to access the documents and evaluate their authenticity and credibility before using them (Denscombe, 2004).

The documents that were used for the collection of data for this study included the job descriptions and job allocations of the IDSOs from the relevant circulars and the OSD Document, Collective Agreements 1 of 2008 (RSA, 2008) that addressed the functions of the IDSOs, minutes of meetings and empowerment sessions between the SMTs and the IDSOs, weekly and monthly plans and reports of the IDSOs and SMTs and plans on various school support and development programmes. The minutes of the SMT meetings were analysed to determine how the process of support was handled in different schools. The log book (incident record book) kept by the school in which important internal and external decisions and visitations were recorded were needed. Impactful incidents and visits and their purpose by the partners, stakeholders and departmental officials were recorded and the book was kept securely in the principal's office/ school's strong-room) and records of the IDSOs' visits were also read and analysed. Other documents relevant to the support provided by the IDSOs to the SMTs provided by the school or the IDSOs were read and analysed.

3.4.3. Data analysis

Creswell (2009) and Cohen *et al.* (2011) describe a data analysis process as a process through which the researcher makes sense out of the data collected and it involves analysing, reducing and interpreting data during the research process. The analysis of qualitative data entails organising data into categories, patterns and themes (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006). Mtsweni (2008) invokes Maykut and Morehouse's (1994) position that a data analysis should be done concurrently with the data collection process to enable the researcher to shape the research as it continues as was the case in this study. According to Nieuwenhuis in Maree (2011), most qualitative researchers do not treat data collection and data analysis processes as two separate processes, but see them as an ongoing, cyclical and iterative (non-linear) process because these studies are guided by the criterion of data saturation (the point where no new ideas and insights are generated).

The four-step qualitative data analysis approach employed by Lord and Hutchison (1993) was used to analyse and interpret the interview data. The process included the transcription of the recordings and notes collected from the semi-structured interviews; the coding of the data using keywords as a way of identifying common areas and variations; the identification of common and varied patterns and categories within groups; and the identification of themes, which link or explain data pertaining to the phenomenon under study.

I kept a research journal in which the information collected from each of these documents was recorded clearly in the researcher's journal for use when the data were analysed. Some of the information obtained from the documents corroborated the data obtained from the interviews. Field notes were also kept. Notes were made of the various occurrences in the school including interviews and passive observations of the practices within the institutions. Notes were also made from the documents that the researcher analysed. He also used a voice recorder during the interviews and this was handled in a meticulous manner to avoid any unauthorised access that could compromise the study. It is also important to note that the permission of the participants was sought by the researcher prior to recording them in the interviews.

The recordings were used as a source of data for transcription. Although voice recorders were used to record the interviews, it was also important and helpful to take notes during the interviews. These notes helped to confirm the interview data and also to review of the answers and ask additional questions at the conclusion of the interviews. The recorded interviews and notes were transcribed, which was a cumbersome and time-consuming task however, this made it possible to extract in-depth data from these interviews.

The analysis process was started soon after generating the first set of data from the collected documents and interviews. This process ran parallel with the collection of data throughout because each activity (the data collection and interim analysis) informed and drove the other activity (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001). The incidents and pieces of information were coded into tentative conceptual categories by the researcher. The analysis of data generated from fieldwork, interviews and observations should be reviewed daily.

3.5. QUALITY CRITERIA (TRUSTWORTHINESS AND CREDIBILITY)

3.5.1. Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is based on the quality and worth of the findings that determine the extent to which people are persuaded to trust the research findings. Trustworthiness was used as a gauge for ensuring that the research findings were genuine and worth attending to (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). Cohen *et al* (2007) identify different types of triangulation and this study employed methodological triangulation. To ensure trustworthiness of the data collected, triangulation was applied by using multiple data collection methods and sources, which included interviews with the IDSOs and SMT members, and analysis of a variety of documents. A journal was also kept and notes made during this study, while use was also made of a voice recorder and use was also made of the recorded information during data analysis.

The researcher intended to collect data that were rich and which would be obtained from credible and relevant participants, that is, the SMTs and the IDSOs.

Therefore, the credibility and trustworthiness of the data collected were of the utmost importance and thus, the researcher needed to select the appropriate strategies for collecting the data. The trustworthiness of the data collected was seen as the acid test of the researcher's data analysis, findings and conclusions (Nieuwenhuis, in Maree, 2011), and therefore needed to be handled with absolute care. The trustworthiness of the data was used as a procedure to demonstrate the accuracy of the research findings to the user/ reader of the research information (Creswell, 2009).

The collected data were credible, dependable, applicable and conformable (Cohen *et al,* 2007). The researcher spent a period of three months in the field (Creswell, 2014), which enabled him to develop an in-depth understanding of how the IDSOs supported the SMTs and conveyed information about the research site and the participants. This gave credibility to the research.

3.5.2. Credibility and validation of the data

Credibility checks were also done to ensure that the findings originate from the collected data and to ensure that the findings and conclusions resulted from the data collected. I did my best to use strategies for validation, which could demonstrate validity and accuracy of the data to the reader (Creswell, 2009). This was intended to ensure that the provided data reflects as close as possible the real-life experiences and occurrences on the phenomenon being researched. After concluding the data collection process, I conducted member checking to verify and confirm the accuracy of the data provided by the respondents as recommended by Creswell (2012). Member checking was done wherein participants were given the specific descriptions, themes or the draft reports for them to check their accuracy. This researcher showed the transcripts, field-notes and records to the participants for them to correct any errors that may have occurred in these documents and records.

During follow-up interactions and engagements, the participants were requested to clarify and verify the data gathered in previous interviews and this strengthened the validity of the data. The researcher prevented researcher bias through self-refection that created an honest narrative (Creswell, 2014).

The participants were informed that prior to the finalisation of reporting, they were going to be requested to provide oral or written comments on the report for the researcher to note the inputs and use them when finalising the research report.

3.6. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The researcher avoided generalising the findings because the aim of this qualitative study was to delve deeper into the phenomenon pertaining to support for the SMTs by the IDSOs. The study was also aimed at interpreting the understanding of the participants as reported by them. This study was limited to only three schools out of three hundred and eight schools in one district in the Gauteng Province which consisted of fifteen districts. The aim of this study was not to generalise the findings of the study to other districts in Gauteng or any other province still using the IDSOs in their system, but to identify and interact with the salient features of support provided by IDSOs to the SMTs of the schools they are assigned to.

Non-participation by three HODs was a worrying factor as they could be the participants holding rich and in-depth data on how SMTs are supported by IDSOs. They may have denied this study more quality responses. Furthermore, the use of a case study in only three schools in Tshwane South, emanating from a district consisting of 321 schools may raise questions about the reliability of the information and therefore limit the generalisability of the findings of the study. However, the findings may be transferable to other schools across the province with similar conditions as the sampled schools. The selection was informed by time, accessibility and cost. The final limitation was that the selection of three least-performing schools in the identified district may not necessarily reflect on the IDSO Officials' support for the SMTs in the high performing schools.

3.7. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The main ethical issues that were observed by the researcher for this study included the following: obtaining the necessary permissions (Creswell, 2014), ethical clearance from the University's Rules and Ethics Committee and the consent of the participants. The IDSOs and the SMT members are human participants (Hinckley, 1995 in Maree, 2011), thus the researcher obtained the necessary permissions prior to embarking on the research process. The researcher ensured that high ethical behaviour was observed and maintained by himself and all the participants (Creswell, 2009).

3.7.1. Necessary permissions and access to documents

The researcher ensured that prior to conducting the fieldwork, the study was approved by the Management of the Faculty of Education at the University of Pretoria through permission provided by the University's Ethics. The study was approved by the Gauteng Department of Education (Letter of Permission is attached as **Annexure 6).** Approval was also obtained from the District Director of Tshwane South District for access and utilisation of documents relevant to the study.

3.7.2. Protection of participants from harm

The study anticipated no harm with regard to the participants and the researcher took all the possible precautions to protect the participants in the study from harm or any form of danger. The research was non-maleficent and posed no psychological, emotional or physical harm (Oliver, 2003; Denscombe, 2004). Flick's (2011) recommendation with regard to using a voluntary written agreement signed by the researcher and the participants in research was adopted, however, the participants were not forced to sign any consent forms (Creswell, 2014). I have secured the data and I will abide with the data protection principles (Denscombe, 2004).

3.7.3. Confidentiality and anonymity of participants and Privacy

The participants were assured of the anonymity and confidentiality.The identity and personal information of the participants was kept private and confidential.

The research report does not divulge their names or identity and pseudonyms were used in the report and throughout the research process. Information obtained from the interviews has not and will not be shared with any member of staff or management and will be kept confidential by the researcher. The report will be available in the university repository and accessed upon request.

The results and findings were only used for purposes of the study. These will not be availed to any unauthorised person without prior written permission of the participants. I operated with integrity, honesty and respected the rights, dignity and autonomy of the participants as recommended by Denscombe (2004). Furthermore, I showed respect for the research sites and only visited them after receiving approval to enter the site. I ensured that teaching and learning was not disrupted at all (Creswell, 2014).

3.7.4. Voluntary participation and the right to withdraw

The participants were informed that their participation in the study was completely voluntarily and that they may withdraw from participation at any stage of the study without facing any penalty whatsoever. In this study, three HODs refused to participate, and no form of punishment was meted out. The consent of the participants was obtained and they were not coerced into participating in the study.

3.7.5. Safe-keeping of research records

The interviews were recorded with the permission of the participants. The records and transcripts were kept and stored safely by the researcher. These were only accessed by the researcher, his supervisor and critical readers. Information of that nature may only be disclosed upon obtainment of the permission of the participants or as determined by law (the electronic and manual records were stored safely and they will be kept for a period of three years and thereafter, they will be destroyed).

3.7.6. Professional research standards

The ethical and professional standards were adhered to during and after the research process. Serious unethical conduct or contravention of ethical research principles may be reported to the University of Pretoria's Ethics Committee. The participants were informed that by consenting to take part in the study, they agreed to be interviewed at least once for a period not exceeding 45 minutes by the researcher outside teaching and learning time.

3.8. SUMMARY

This chapter described the research design and methodologies the researcher used to make sense of and interpret the SMTs and IDSOs' understanding of the support offered by IDSOs to SMTs. The qualitative case study applied to this investigation was appropriate and enabled the researcher to get rich and in-depth data on the understanding and experiences of the participants. The data collection process was triangulated through the use of multiple data sources of information. The researcher was immersed in the investigation as the participants were interviewed and documents were read and analysed.

The data analysis process was also discussed briefly. This researcher looked into the data quality validation as well and addressed the issue of ethical conduct and specified everything that was done to protect the participants from harm and exposure. Lastly, the limitations of the research were outlined.

The next chapter focusses on the analysis and interpretation of collected data.

CHAPTER 4

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

4.1. INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter discussed the research design and outlined the research methods employed in the study. The sampling and the data collection methods were also explained. In this chapter, the data analysis will be dealt with regarding the data collected from the three selected schools through interviews with the SMTs and IDSOs. Documents were also collected and analysed. The two sets of data were then triangulated while the purpose of this study was kept in mind at all times. During deliberations on the analysis, the relevance and application of the data were laid bare.

The main question was: How do the IDSOs support SMTs in the development of their schools?

The research participants were expected to respond to the following secondary research sub-questions:

- How do SMTs understand the role and function of IDSOs?
- How do the IDSOs perform their functions of supporting SMTs in developing their schools?
- What are the challenges and successes experienced by the (IDSOs when performing their roles and functions?
- What strategies do the IDSOs use in supporting SMTs?

The thematic analysis of the data followed. In some instances, the contents of the interviews were paraphrased in an attempt to attain a direct understanding of the participants to the attention of the readers. A brief contextual background and analysis of the three IDSOs and schools looking at the school type, school location, organisation including the management, educators and learner population and performance (MacMillan & Schumacher, 2010) is given below.

4.2. BRIEF PROFILES OF THE IDSOS AND THE PARTICIPATING SCHOOLS

The section below briefly focused on the profiles of the IDSOs and the impact this could be having on leadership and management support.

4.2.1. Profiles of the IDSOs supervising the participating schools

The profiles of the IDSOs responsible for the participating schools were analysed to determine the impact of the managerial, professional and academic background of the IDSOs on the provision of support and development to the SMTs and schools. These are tabulated below:

Table 4.1 – Summarised profiles of the IDSOs

Profiled area	IDSO 1	IDSO 2	IDSO 3
Work Experience as an Educator	Lecturer at a further FET institution for four years	Post level 1 educator for five years and a college lecturer for two years.	Post level 1 educator for five years.
Experience as an SMT member	HOD in an FET college for six years. Senior Education Specialist (SES) for two years.	Head of department for six years. SES (senior education specialist) for nine years.	Head of department for two years. He has not been a Deputy Principal.
Experience as a Principal	Principal (Campus Manager) of an FET College for one year and then he was promoted to the position of IDSO.	Has neither been a principal nor a deputy principal. Coordinator of a FET curriculum unit in the district office as a deputy chief education specialist (DCES) for four years.	Principal of a primary school for five years.
Experience as an IDSO	The participant's experience as an IDSO's spans a period of ten years.	Transferred to IDSO from Coordination of Curriculum and has been an IDSO for three years.	He has been serving as an IDSO for eleven years.

Profiled area	IDSO 1	IDSO 2	IDSO 3
Qualifications	Artisan Fitter, HED, ND (Management), and B.Ed (Honours – Education Management), ND (Engineering), B Com (Financial Management)	BA (Education), BA Honours, Masters (Public Administration).	Diploma in Education, B.Tech (Education Management), M.Tech (Education Management)
Number of schools	13 schools consisting of public secondary and primary schools.	13 schools consisting of public secondary and primary schools.	34 schools made up of public secondary, primary and independent schools.
Reorganisations experienced	Experienced at least two rationalisation processes	Experienced one reorganisation of the GDE.	Experienced two rationalisation processes.

IDSO 1 had been a lecturer, HOD and a principal in FET colleges which put the IDSO in a good position to provide quality leadership and management support to technical schools as he had experienced the management and leadership functions at various levels in the technical education sector. The IDSO possessed a post-graduate degree qualification in Education Leadership and Management equipping this IDSO appropriately for leadership and support. The number of schools allocated to IDSO 1 was 13 that was a manageable number although challenged by the research participants as they argued about the many challenges experienced by schools in the townships, which required constant interventions and support. The IDSO had been in the field for a long time and had surely gathered sufficient expertise and understanding of the IDS functions.

IDSO 2 was new to the position of IDSO and still required constant guidance and support from the education superiors. The IDSO had neither been a principal nor a deputy principal but had been a college lecturer, a senior education specialist (SES), a post that is equivalent to the post of deputy principal and served as a DCES, which was equivalent in level to a principalship post.

The IDSO had occupied various levels, which provided experience of educational leadership at district level, however, a principal provide direct experience of management and support for the entire school starting from the principal to class-based educators, while office-based education leaders such as SESs only provide learning area focussed leadership and not the school–wide support that is done by the deputy principals and principals. IDSOs moving into the position of institutional development and support from a principal level would possess direct school leadership and management experience unlike office-based officials. IDSO 2 is academically sufficiently qualified with a post-degree educational leadership programme qualification which put the IDSO in good standing to provide leadership support based on the expertise gathered through the educational leadership qualifications.

This IDSO had not been a deputy principal. Moving through the management ranks in education can result in the educator building up experience, expertise and knowledge of various management levels and skipping a level results in a gap in the managerial experience in school leadership. With insufficient experience at various management levels, the IDSO may have some challenges with providing support to other school leaders and managers.

IDSO 3 had been a principal for five years and, therefore, he could be in a position to support principals and their SMTs. The IDSO had also worked as an IDSO for a lengthy period which puts him in a good position to understand the functions assigned to the position of IDSO in terms of supporting SMTs. The IDSO is academically well qualified with an M.Tech degree in Education Management to provide support to school leaders. The IDSO had 34 schools and these are too many to enable provision of quality support.

The impact of being responsible for 34 schools had the potential to impact badly on motivation, job satisfaction, morale and performance of the IDSO. The schools could not be visited at least once a month if distributed for one school visit per day and that would make the work of the IDSO extremely difficult.

The allocation of such a high number of schools to an individual IDSO would be burdensome and may be viewed as factor in the failure and non-performance of the IDSO, which could be viewed as constructive dismissal when the IDSO fails to manage the workload and faces incapacity charges. Indeed, the schools allocated to IDSO 3 were at a disadvantage regarding support and development.

Gross imbalances regarding the number of schools allocated per IDSO is shown in **Table 4.1**. This had a direct impact on the support they would be able to provide to SMTs and their schools. The researcher's view is that it is important for educators to go through the various ranks and levels to gain experience and knowledge of the various levels in the educational hierarchy. Another key factor is that having occupied the various positions in school leadership and management and possession of management qualifications can enable IDSOs to draw on their own experiences when encountering issues while executing their managerial responsibilities.

All the IDSOs should be able to conduct at least two visits per school in a month for engagement and follow-up on the implementation, which will have an impact on the compliance by schools. The visits will also allow the IDSOs time to interact more closely with the entire SMT on critical matters regarding their schools and enable the SMTs to understand the key roles they have to play in the performance and achievement of their schools.

4.2.2. Contextual background of the participating schools, their SMTs and the IDSOs

A total of three schools were selected in the Tshwane South District, in the Gauteng Province to participate in the study. To protect their identity, the schools were given the following pseudonyms: **School N, School R and School T**. The contextual backgrounds of the three schools are tabulated and summarised to give the reader an idea of the classification, and resourcing elements of the schools based on the information.

Table 4.2: Summarised profiles of the schools

Area profiled	School N	School R	School T
School location	Located in the Eersterust area, an old township located between Mamelodi and the City of Pretoria where Coloured South Africans are predominant.	Located in the West of Mamelodi. The oldest area in Mamelodi where the residents are predominantly Black.	Located in the Saulsville township, towards the West of Pretoria. An old residential area in Atteridgeville.
Quintile and Fee-status	Fee- paying school – Quintile 4	No-fee school. Quintile 3	No-fee school. Quintile 2
Learner Population	1243 learners translating to LER of 37.66	497 learners. LER of 41.42	649 learners LER of 38.18
Staff complement	33 educators including 7 SMT: Principal, two Deputy Principals and four HODs.	12 Educators including 3 SMT: Principal and two HODs. There is no deputy principal.	17 Educators including 5 SMT: Principal, Deputy principal and three HODs.
Resources and activities	The school is resourced. satisfactorily	The school is poorly resourced.	The school is not very well resourced.

4.2.2.1. Location of the schools and quintiles

According to Mestry and Ndhlovu (2014), post 1994, the South African government had the challenging task of focussing on bringing equity to all South Africans and redressing the inequities brought about by the historical race-based imbalances in the country. In addressing these challenges, they introduced national norms and standards for school funding (NNSSF) with five quintiles determined by a variety of factors including household income, location of a school and the relative poverty levels of school's neighbourhood to differentiate between the various beneficiary levels (Branson & Zuze, 2012). Most of the township schools experience dire poverty and they range between quintiles 1 and 3 while a few schools are incorrectly classified as quintile 4. All the sampled schools in this study were located in townships on the outskirts of the city of Pretoria. Various communities view the quality of education in townships as education of poor quality and rather prefer to send their children to schools in the city leaving the schools to compete for the remaining learners.

Most of the city schools are seen to be performing far better than the schools in the townships. School R and School T were classified as no fee-schools and the learners in the schools derived more benefits from the government's redress programmes. The learners from these schools were transported to and from their schools by the department from areas with a high population and fewer schools. Their learners also received departmental food from the national school nutrition programme (NSNP) at the schools. School N which is located in Eersterust had the highest number of learners which might have been due mainly to the lower number of learners leaving the township.

As a fee-paying school, school N received a lower financial subsidy per learner than the other two schools but they received more money from the fees paid by parents allowing them to use the fees for developments outside the areas of the departmental ring-fenced funding. Mestry and Ndhlovu (2014) conclude that the extreme inequality in education is still prevalent despite the strides made by the government in funding the poorer schools a little more than the affluent schools.

4.2.2.2. Human resource staffing and learner population

The nationally accepted ratio for primary schools for the allocation of educators to schools through post establishments is 40:1. The Learner: Educator Ratio (LER) is one of the common indicators used in education planning and it has been maintained constantly at an average of 33:1 over the past five years in Gauteng (GDE, 2014). The ratios of learners to educators in the three schools were all above the 33:1 figure which implies that they all had a manageable number of learners which obviously put educators in a better position to impact positively on the learner performance and provide more individual attention to their learners. School R did not qualify for a deputy principal due to the lower numbers of learners and this put a great deal of pressure on the principal regarding the management of school operations. The principal of school R school was faced with the challenge of carrying the load of leading and managing the school with little help from the HODs.

School N has two deputy principals and the principal was assisted with most of the management functions which were distributed to the deputy principals leading to a more stable school and a better functioning SMT. One deputy principal was allocated to manage curriculum delivery and the other focussed on administrative issues leaving the principal with sufficient time to focus on the leadership of the school.

4.3. DATA ANALYSIS AND SYNTHESIS

Data analysis is described by De Vos, Strydom, Fouche & Delport (2009) as a systematic process that involves ordering, structuring and making sense of the collected data. The data collection plan entailed crystallising multiple data collection instruments which consisted of the researcher as a data collection instrument, semi-structured interviews, and a document analysis. The fieldwork and interview notes were reviewed daily and the information was updated on the data analysis document. McMillan and Schumacher (2010) and Lord and Hutcheson (1993) concur that the generic qualitative data analysis process entails the preparation of data, the coding of the prepared data leading to establishment of categories, themes and developing patterns.

I started with thematic analysis as soon I had gathered the first set of data and this process ran parallel with the data collection process because each activity (data collection and interim data analysis) directed the other activity (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). As this was a qualitative research, the aim was to identify patterns, features and themes that could provide in-depth and thick information on the phenomenon under study. I then conducted a thematic analysis involving the four-step qualitative data analysis approach employed by Lord and Hutchison (1993) to analyse and interpret the interview data. The four-step process included:

4.3.1. Transcription of the recordings.

At this level, as the researcher, I listened to the recorded interviews over and over with the deliberate intent to internalise and make sense of the responses of the research participants who were interviewed.

When satisfied with the quality of the recordings, I immediately started with the transcription of the interview data as this is an extremely cumbersome process during which the interviews were transcribed word-for-word and sentence by sentence. The process involved the conversion of the audio-recorded data into text (Creswell, 2012). After completing the transcriptions, the transcribed data were searched for the linkages between the inputs of the various interviewees.

A reasonably large amount of non-standardised data was obtained from the interviews and documents and from the researcher's participation in the research. He immersed himself in the data analysis. Creswell (2012) recommends that the researcher should read, read and re-read the through the transcribed data to familiarise himself with the contents of the collected data. The data were reviewed several times and finally units, categories and recurring themes were identified, which were crucial for understanding how the SMTs were supported by their schools' IDSOs as recommended by Denscombe (2004).

4.3.2. Coding of the collected data

According to Schumacher (2010), data coding should start with the identification of small segments of data and in that regard, this researcher first coded incidents and bits of information into tentative conceptual categories. He then extracted keywords and phrases from the data and colour-coded these as a way of identifying common areas and variations in the collected data. The interview data were analysed through coding the responses elicited from the participants into similar ideas and themes. The SMT members and IDSOs of the three sampled schools were targeted for participation. The participants were given pseudonyms and codes for the purposes of anonymity and protection of the schools, the SMT members and the IDSOs, as explained in Chapter 3 and as prescribed by the ethics authorities (p. 93). Colour codes were assigned to each participant for ease of identification of their inputs during analysis of the collected data. The aim was to ensure the anonymity of the school identity and to protect the participants. It was necessary to go back to the field with the themes and explanations determined during data analysis to check their credibility against the reality and to engage the IDSOs for further clarity regarding some of their inputs.

4.3.3. Identification of common, varied patterns and categories within groups

After finalising the coding, the common and varied patterns and categories were identified from the data by dividing these into manageable categories and then the emergent themes were drawn from these categories.

4.3.4. Identification of themes

The researcher selected colour-coded categories which linked or explained the data on the support provided by the IDSOs to the SMTs and these were grouped into themes. The links were based on commonalities in the meaning extracted from the categories. The development of the themes was also guided by the purpose of the study.

4.4. ANALYSIS OF THE DOCUMENTS

To analyse the raw data collected from the documentation, content analysis was applied, which involved breaking the texts down from the documents into smaller units made up of words, sentences and paragraphs again adhering to Denscombe's (2004) recommendation for document analysis. The words, sentences and paragraphs were coded meticulously in line with developed categories and then these categories were linked to other categories, themes and interconnections occurring in the data (Denscomber, 2004). While the researcher was analysing the data, he also interpreted the analysed data continuously to determine the findings and make recommendations. The themes that emerged are discussed below.

4.5. DISCUSSION OF THE THEMES THAT EMERGED FROM THE INTERVIEWS

A set of questions were prepared and posed to the participants. The interviews and responses of the participants were recorded by the researcher and notes made to support the interviews. The interviews were transcribed and analysed. In summary, keywords were drawn from the responses of the research participants and these were categorised and themes emerged during the ongoing analysis process.

The available documents were also perused with the intention of obtaining more information about the support provided by the IDSOs to the SMTs. Based on the analysis the keywords, categories and themes that emergent from the interviews and analysis of documents were tabulated in Table 4.3.

Four interesting themes emanating from the questions asked by the researcher could be drawn from the interviews with individuals in the SMTs and the IDSOs of the three schools that were interviewed and the documents analysed. These four themes are tabulated and discussed in-depth below with a focus on the keywords indicated in the table to zoom into the activities and interactions between the IDSOs and the SMTs and the level and quality of support provided by the IDSOs and received by the SMTs.

Table 4.3 Emergent Research Themes

Section	Theme Number	Theme	Keywords
4.5.1.	Theme 1	Mutual understanding of the role of IDSOs.	- Whole school development. - Functions - Planning - Curriculum delivery
4.5.2.	Theme 2	Support strategies used by the IDSOs for supporting the SMTs and schools.	- Strategies - Cascading - Top down - 9 Focus areas
4.5.3.	Theme 3	Challenges and successes experienced by the IDSOs when supporting the SMTs as viewed by SMTs.	- Challenge - Success
4.5.4.	Theme 4	Changes on the work that the IDSOs do and the impact thereof on support provided to SMTs.	- Re-organisation - Change

The literature was used to support and substantiate the discussions and findings. The direct inputs of the participants (referred to using their pseudonyms in bold) and quotes marked by the use of italics are looked into.

4.5.1. Theme 1 - Mutual understanding of the role of IDSOs

As a starting point, it became clear that the data clarified the roles and responsibilities of the SMTs and IDSOs. Further clarity was required to determine the SMTs and IDSOs' understanding the roles and functions of IDSOs in supporting the SMTs. The key words that guided the determination of the theme were: roles and functions, planning and curriculum delivery support of the IDSOs and SMTs.

In the analysis of the research interview data, responses to the question below were obtained, analysed and interpreted: *"How do the SMTs and IDSOs understand the role and function of the IDSOs?"*

As indicated in section 1.2, it is discussed that the GDE is a bureaucratic structure made up of many layers and it is important to understand the functions of the various layers in the bureaucracy. The layers include the school-based staff, the SMTs in this case and office-based staff that include CMS and IDSOs. Considering that the SMTs and IDSOs are the core of our study and discussions, the roles and responsibilities of the SMT and IDSOs were briefly looked into as a basis for entrenching understanding of the importance of this structure in school management.

To better understand the support expected by the SMTs from the IDSOs, it is important to discuss the SMTs' responsibilities for which they expect to be supported by their schools' IDSOs. It is also important to understand the roles of the IDSOs that entail support for SMTs. The situation of poor support for the SMTs by the IDSOs prevails despite the duties of the IDSOs being communicated by the department through circulars and district memos.

The principal is the accounting officer and carries more of the functions and HODs do not perform the full leadership functions as their focus is more on the management of their departments. The principals were dominant in identifying the areas with which the IDSOs could provide them with support. The key support functions extracted from CA 1 of 2008 (RSA, 2008) include: providing professional leadership and guidance to schools with strategic planning support; support and cooperate with the principals, staff and SGBs in WSD.

Additional functions include supporting and guiding schools with policy formulation, analysis, policy implementation, monitoring, evaluation and financial management. Other functions are curriculum planning and the implementation, utilisation and monitoring of budgets and resources in order to meet the school objectives and support them with maintaining proper records and accountability; The rest of the duties include liaison with other educational offices for the purpose of coordination; supporting and planning staff development activities and assisting schools with capacity building programmes for the SRCs, SMTs and SGBs. These duties seem to have been crafted as an in-between function for CMs and DCESs resulting from the change from circuit management to district management in education. This has been a considerable challenge because no clear functions and responsibilities could be allocated to this important layer in education support and development. CA 1 of 2008 (RSA, 2008) further states unambiguously that the CMs should be trained in effective support and supervision and the use of checklists as management tools. This implies that the IDSOs have to be well-informed, knowledgeable and possess expertise in the field of circuit management and be able to provide support and development on all the aspects identified as responsibilities of the CMs.

With regard to the functions identified above, the SMTs were asked about their functions that could require the support of their IDSOs. They clearly highlighted the areas where they required support from the IDSOs. The kind of support they required should encompass functionality of the entire school. This confirms the key position that IDSOs held in relation to the full operation of schools. Below are some of the key areas that they view as requiring the support of their IDSOs.

The duties and responsibilities of the SMTs and IDSOs were looked at with the intention of determining and locating the areas in which they required their IDSOs' support and development. The SMTs confirmed their functions in line with the provisions of Collective Agreement CA 1 of 2008 (RSA, 2008), Resolution 7 of 1998 (RSA, 1998) (Workloads of school-based educators) and Resolution 8 of 1998 (ELRC, 1998). These functions were implemented through GDE Circular 129 of 1998 (RSA, 1998). The duties and responsibilities of SMTs as obtained from the CA 1 of 2008 (RSA, 2008) are numerous and the key functions of the individual post level are combined into the functions of the SMTs and these are briefly discussed.

CA 1 of 2008 also outlined the duties and responsibilities of the SMT members at various levels and those of the deputy chief education specialists (DCESs) and CMs, the two posts into which the IDSOs can be classified depending on a person's interpretation. Despite SMTs having a great deal of responsibility to handle the development of their schools and the staff members, Monametsi (2015) reveals that SMTs do not have a clear understanding of their role in professional development of their subordinates due to lack of training in the area of people development. This requires the intervention and support of IDSOs, CMs and the district officials if the development of the schools and the educators is taken seriously. The functions for which the SMTs are responsible and which require the support of the IDSOs are discussed below.

(a) Whole school development and planning

According to Van Der Voort & Wood (2016), the SMTs have a responsibility to manage and implement whole-school development in their schools. Whole-school development is a very critical area of the school operations which is aimed at improving a variety of aspects within the school inclusive of academic achievements, infrastructure and security among other responsibilities (Van Der Voort & Wood, 2016). The SDP and SIP are the two most important documents aimed at helping map a developmental plan for a school and SMTs need to be supported and guided with SDP and SDP. SMTs argue about the non-involvement of IDSOs in their planning and demand for school plans. Collective planning by the SMTs and their IDSO is critical in ensuring that all are well informed of the schools' plans. **NDP** indicated that *"SMTs need support with whole school planning and development, maybe if I can talk about the school improvement plan"*.

Whole school planning and development is key to the strategy adopted by the schools. The strategic plan provides the direction the school will take in the short to mid-term of its operation (Mbugua & Rarieya, 2014). Strategic planning is a collaborative process that is long term, analytical and visionary and it requires the combined leadership of the IDSOs and SMTs. Progress indicators will be identified and progress measured against them at the time of progress determination. The SMTs all concurred that the IDSOs could play a key role in guiding them with their strategic planning .

The IDSOs could support the SMTs with planning and guide them with reporting as expected by the department **(Input of NP).** Research by Mbugua and Rarieya (2014) revealed that most schools' strategic planning processes failed to be collaborative because the stakeholders approached the process disjointedly and they did not share the vision.

According to Besen, Tecchio and Fialho (2013), leadership plays a role in innovation and the drawing up of strategies for their organisations. These strategic plans enable the organisations to locate the specific needs and developmental areas within the organisation. In terms of school operations, the SMTs find themselves faced with the important task of drawing up the developmental plans which is a key area that requires support and development from the Department of Education representative dealing directly with the schools who are their IDSOs.

Mbugua and Rarieya (2014) insist on the need for the sensitisation and training of stakeholders in strategic planning prior to embarking on the process as failure to achieve this, may result in a failed strategic planning process. It is therefore vital for senior staff such as the IDSOs and SMTs to have a thorough knowledge and understanding of the term "strategic planning" and what it entails. A variety of plans including strategic planning, SDP and SIP sessions could be guided and led by the IDSOs. The participation of the IDSOs in the processes of planning strengthens the link their functions share with the four-factor theory of leadership.

The SMTs explained that they were predominantly responsible for the leadership and management of the schools and that they had to oversee and ensure the smooth running of their schools **(Input of TDP).** They identified their functions that included planning and organising the activities of their schools. They also indicated that they were responsible for controlling, leading and monitoring the implementation of the plans and achievement of their schools' objectives.

SMTs also claimed to be responsible for evaluating the successes and failures of their plans and reviewing these with the intention of improving on the realisation of the purpose assigned to their schools. These functions were clearly articulated by **TDP,** who spoke broadly about the SMT functions, which included: *"checking the school functions in organising, monitoring, coordinating, controlling and ensuring implementation of policies, checking on the finances of the school".*

(b) Curriculum delivery and curriculum management

School leaders are tasked with ensuring school improvement and learning outcomes. This requires effective leadership and management (Bush, Kiggundu & Moorosi, 2011). School leaders are supposed to provide instructional leadership within their schools and ensure that the quality of teaching and learning is of high calibre. The SMTs expressed strong sentiments about the need for their IDSOs' support which they had not been receiving. They were responsible for the management of teaching and learning. The SMTs handled the subject allocation with regard to the teachers in accordance with their fields of specialisation, subject teaching, timetabling, assessment management and reporting. It was noted that some of the HODs understood that their functions were limited to the classroom and educator support in the subjects or phases for which they were responsible.

NH2 indicated that her job entailed, *"Giving guidance with the different subjects that I am responsible for."* **RH** added that *"We basically support the various educators".* **TDP** confirmed the need for them to be supported in relation to curriculum management and curriculum delivery as a collective.

(c) Policy formulation and implementation

The SMTs identified the implementation of educational policies and the legislation from the department and support with the performance of their management functions as SMT members as another key area in which the IDSOs could support them **(NP).** This could be done by discussing and bringing information to the attention of the SMTs regularly on newly-developed and revised policies and current developments and trends in education.

The SMTs were key role-players in the formulation of various policies in their schools. They participated in the development of school policies and monitored the implementation and observation of the school policies **(Input of NP).** The leadership role of the SMTs in policy implementation was highlighted by **TH1** who stated that: *"As an SMT member, first of all we have to implement the policy and the legislation".*

SMTs are responsible for the management of the different subjects and each of those requires the development of an operational policy and the process of formulating such policies are led and directed by the HODs who are SMT members. The SMTs had to lead and guide the staff members in their departments with regard to the development of usable and appropriate class management policies. The SMTs also worked closely with other stakeholders in the development and formulation of the school policies such as the schools' codes of conduct, LTSM policies, finance policies, language policies and other key policies. The SMTs also had the responsibility of enforcing the school policies in the schools **(Input of NP)**.

They had to ensure that the policies were observed and implemented in their schools. Indeed, they required training and capacitation with regard to policy formulation strategies and approaches. Opportunities need to be created through the IDSOs office for exposure of the SMTs to the policy processes. Policy development and implementation workshops and support sessions could be organised for the SMTs. The IDSOs should also be able to avail departmental policy documents and guidelines to SMT members for them to learn more about policy processes.

(d) Appraisal – IQMS including IWSE and staff development

As managers, the SMTs were responsible for the staff appraisal processes directed by the IQMS and PMDS policies and processes **(Input of NH1 and TH2)**. SMTs form the core of the SDTs, which were the driving committees of the IWSE and IQMS processes in the schools. The SMTs were also key to the developmental support groups (DSGs) as they served as the selected supervisors of the evaluees.

TH2 confirmed the role of the SMTs in the IQMS and WSE by stating that: *"We ensure that there is appraisal through IQMS and we ensure that the school conducts Internal WSE".* The IDSOs could see to the proper formation and functionality of the IQMS structures in their schools and oversee the processes **(Input of NP).** The principal's immediate senior, the IDSOs, is the senior in the DSG of the principal. The IDSOs have to ensure that quality IQMS processes are conducted for the entire staff including the principals and signed off their appraisal documents. The support of the IDSOs could come in handy in the training of the SMTs in ensuring efficient and effective appraisal processes and staff development. According to Sullivan and Associates (2013), the GDE has developed a leadership development framework through one of its agencies, MGSLG. To show how serious the GDE is about leadership development, they have included the need for district leadership development in the GDE's Strategy 2015-2020 for them to be able to promote the development of school leaders. In this way, the SMTs could be supported by the IDSOs through the provision and recommendation of staff development programmes in line with the schools' needs assessments.

The IDSOs are well positioned to enable the PMD and Teacher Development Units to actualise their schools' SIPs and ensure that proper and well-structured support is provided to their schools. The SMTs see themselves as educator supervisors **(NH2)** and they are key role-players in the provision of development and support to the educators in their departments and within the entire school. They need to be developed and supported for them to be able to provide high quality leadership in their schools and development for the entire school population.

(e) Discipline, conflict management and labour peace

RP identified two critical areas in which the support of the IDSOs is required. SMTs would like to be developed with regard to handling disciplinary processes and maintaining labour peace in their organisations. **RP** notes *"IDSO support can be handy in educator discipline section, because that is where we find there are a lot of problems".* The second area that could be supported was conflict management and resolution. **RP** further mentioned that: *"We need support with conflict management and the management of the disciplinary processes".*

(f) Resource management and allocation

As an area included in the WSE, the IDSOs are responsible for oversight, monitoring, management and accountability of schools' resources effectively. The IDSOs should check the utilisation of resources and accountability and their by SMTs regularly.

Resource and assets management have serious financial implications and must therefore, be handled with care and be given special attention in order to ensure accountability, equitable distribution, proper and responsible usage by the recipients of the resources. Dirks (2013) identifies certain challenges in education which require attention regarding the usage and management of resources. These include the poor management of school resources, which are not used efficiently as well as a lack of transparency and accountability in the procurement and management processes.

The SMTs acceded to a lack of adequate skills to manage school resources in their schools and they indicated a need for the IDSOs' support with regard to resource planning, procurement and the management of LTSM **(Input of TP)**. A lack of resource management skills can result in dismissal as it relates to the finances of an institution and the misuse and non-accountability for the resources can constitute an offence.

If school managers can be found to have failed to manage their school resources properly and are charged, they may plead for lenience on the basis of a lack of support and skilling from the district. Resource planning falls under the domain of the SMTs and grade leaders, but the procurement and other managerial processes fall under the domain of the SGBs and, in some instances, the SGBs and SMTs do not agree on the procurement resulting in poor resourcing and poor utilisation of the financial resources the department has allocated to the schools.

The management process with regard to the planning and distribution of resources requires budgeting and financial management skills, which may require the IDSOs to engage with the relevant units at the district office to provide the necessary support to avert the misappropriation and misuse of funds which may result in disciplinary processes and the dismissal of employees.

The IDSOs could play a major role in ensuring that the procured resources and LTSMs are accounted for and by engaging their colleagues in the circuits responsible for LTSMs and resource allocation to provide support and development to the SMTs in their schools. The SMTs have to ensure that the resources are taken care of and retrieved to avoid the repurchasing of resources that schools purchased previously. Proper records of all the schools' resources and assets must be kept and managed by the SMTs.

The IDSOs should check the assets and stock register regularly to ensure maximum accountability. The South African School Administration and Management System (SA SAMS) has a module that schools can utilise for recording and maintaining their assets and resources which can minimise and eradicate the lack of accountability for resources currently experienced in schools. The IDSOs can support the SMTs by ensuring that they build a strong case for training the SMTs in the use of the physical resources module and other SA SAMS modules to maximise the accountability for school resources. The IDSOs themselves need to have a good understanding of the SA SAMS for them to be able to persuade their SMTs to utilise the system to reduce the workloads through the use of an electronic administrative product.

(g) Leading and coordinating committees – SBST, assessment and reporting

The SMTs are responsible for the coordination of the various committees **(TH1)** such as School-Based Support Teams (SBST) which are responsible for supporting Learners with Special Educational Needs (LSEN) within their schools. This area requires expert knowledge and skills with which educators and school managers need to be developed and supported. According to **NH1**, the SMTs also lead the School Assessment Teams (SAT), which drive the proper management of assessment of learners' work. This is another key area in which the SMTs could be supported by the IDSOs of their schools with their expert knowledge or getting their colleagues who are specialised to provide support. The deputy principals are seen as crucial elements in the management of committees and monitoring assessment and performance. **TDP** mentioned that: *"Functions of the Deputy Principal entail tracking the learners' performance and monitoring the HODs and files and HOD class visits".*

(h) Teamwork in SMTs

The term "SMT" seems to be more positional. For example, the principals stressed the functions for which they believed they were solely responsible, but also tried to show that their SMTs worked in unison. The principals tend to assume that the leadership and management responsibilities were theirs and theirs alone.

The principals failed to realise that the other SMT members carried some of these functions out both directly and indirectly and this strengthened the argument that they worked as individuals rather than in teams. The principals were insisting clearly that leadership and management were clearly the functions of principals although some of the SMT members noted that they contributed to some of the functions which indicated the lack of collaborative and shared leadership by the SMTs.

NP remarked that: *"Basically, in my capacity as principal, I have a responsibility to provide leadership and management and to guide all school activities as well as the entire SMT, Governance in relation to functions pertaining SASA for servicing the SGB, Financial management, general school administration, curriculum management and resource management".* **RP** agreed with **NP** on the functions of the principal by mentioning that: "*My function is to make sure that the school runs smoothly on a daily basis in terms of the curriculum, policy implementation and in terms of curriculum management".*

The functions of the SMTs were seen to be varied but the deputy principals were found to play the dual roles of supporting and working collaboratively with both the principals and the HODs. They had to ensure that curriculum and assessment were delivered in line with education requirements through proper planning and supporting the HODs and educators who were the curriculum implementers. **TDP** elucidated that some functions of the principals and the deputy principals were shared by the HODs further confirming the need for collaboration by stating that: *"HODs also need to check the curriculum, check the educators' preparedness to deliver their lessons".* The HODs carried the direct classroom support functions and they worked closely with the educators in their phases and departments.

According to **TH1** *"They need to arrange phase meetings with the educators, monitor the educators' files, class visits, and make sure that the curriculum is implemented, they also have to check that Assessment, assessment plans".*

The SMTs claimed to be working as a team but the actual practices did not confirm this team functioning. **RH** claimed that they worked as a team in their school mentioning that: *"We function as a team in the SMT".* This claim could not be substantiated. The same position of SMTs working as teams was claimed by **RP**. **RH and RP** may have been referring to the meetings they held together.

(i)   Sources of job descriptions of the IDSOs

From the analysis, it emerged that only the principals and IDSOs fully understood the roles and functions of the IDSOs which entail supporting their management activities. The other SMT members were only able to speculate the functions of the IDSOs in relation to supporting the entire SMTs. **NP** alluded that the IDSOs were responsible for the support and development of schools including the SMTs and SGBs and that they were supposed to provide monitoring and oversight of schools, which links well with the four factors in the four-factor theory of leadership. The functions of the IDSOs as a support and development official representing the districts in a school support layer in the education bureaucracy are discussed below.

IDSO 2 confirmed the source of their functions by stating as follows: "*In terms of the OSD, Collective Agreement of 2008, I think it is CA 1 of 2008. That is where our roles are actually clarified".* **IDSO 1** added *"In that document, you will find the agreed upon job description of CMs…those job descriptions that are there, are very close to what the IDSs were doing".* The support and development role of IDSOs was also addressed by **IDSO 3.**

According to **IDSO 3**, the work that the IDSOs used to do entailed support and monitoring. **IDSO 3** further indicated that: "*We used to do everything… problems that arose at the schools were attended to by the IDSO. The IDSO was the first person to be called".*

In confirming that they have been performing their functions in line with the district organisation policy, **IDSO 3** categorically stated "*We are contacted to make sure that we provide guidance, we provide support and we also provided **leadership**, especially things pertaining to management*".

IDSO 3 linked the functions of the IDSOs with regard to supporting school managers with the nine focus areas of the WSE as follows: "*In summary, everything that pertains to the 9 focus areas we were then supposed to be responsible for, that is, the nine whole school evaluation focus areas*".

The SMTs' understanding of the IDSOs' functions revealed that the principals were well versed with this area compared to other staff members who were not exposed sufficiently to the IDSOs as indicated below. Only the principals were emphatic about knowing the functions of the IDSOs. **NP** understood the IDSOs to be "*Institutional Development and Support Officers whose functions entail providing support to schools and to all spheres of management and leadership and development.*" **RP** added: "*In my view their function is to support SMT in various activities of the school, probably major development where there are needs.*"

(j) Shared and collaborative leadership of the SMTs

Clearly, the statements above contain areas that can be led and managed by the SMT members as a collective, which implies that the 'shared leadership and SMT' concept can work in schools if implemented by the principals, who hold such power by virtue of their employment. The team needs to work collaboratively to attain the school's goals.

Furthermore, the inputs from the SMTs resulted in the view that the actual practices in schools did not concur with team functioning as each member of the SMT specifically spoke about their individual roles. This suggests that the concept of a 'team in school management' is not sufficiently entrenched and the understanding of SMTs about their roles could not be attributed to functional teams, but each group of the SMTs outlined their functions in relation to their individual classification. The SMT functions were delinked clearly showing that they were not functioning as teams.

The SMTs were just referred to as teams because it is a term used by the education authorities to identify the people who should work as a team in leading and managing the school. The practice of sharing the responsibilities of leading and managing the school would promote and activate 'shared and collaborative leadership' as a contemporary concept in school leadership.

Impressively, one of the principals acknowledged the need for team functioning in the SMTs. **RP** acknowledged that it was important for the functions of the SMTs to be shared among them by stating that: *"The functions are performed together with other members of the SMT as a team."*

The IDSOs approved of the functions of the SMTs, but they were clinging more to the position of separately outlining the role of each level of the SMT as individuals rather than to the teams they were supposed to be. The IDSOs agreed that the SMTs required support in order for them to perform their functions with distinction. There was overwhelming agreement by the SMTs and IDSOs on the need for external support for SMTs from the district. The DBE acknowledges the value of principals and teachers and the need for them to be supported (DBE, 2013). In addition, Bantwini and Mogorosi (2016) maintain that districts have to ensure work collaboration through the circuit offices.

This position affirms that the district offices are the key service points and that they are accountable for school improvement (Bantwini & Moorosi, 2016). The districts and circuits are represented by the IDSOs in school support and engagement. The concept of 'SMTs' is deeply rooted in the distribution of school leadership to a range of individuals occupying various levels in an institution including the SMTs and teachers as aspects of distributed leadership (Monametsi, 2015). It has, however, been noted by Sullivan and Associates (2013) that, in South Africa, the focus has been more on management development than on leadership and that the roles of the SMT members have not been understood clearly. The SMTs are placed most relevantly to ensure the proper execution of the school vision, mission, aims and objectives, thereby ensuring their realisation through the interaction and evaluation of the systems and procedures they have put in place to ensure the delivery of high quality teaching and learning (Ramafoko, 2006).

Despite the structure of the school being hierarchical, some SMT members challenged the practice of principals functioning as sole leaders and they echoed their preference for the actualisation of team management and distributed leadership in their institutions to improve their functioning (Input of NDP).

School systems are so complex today such that one leader cannot meet the demands of the daily tasks and challenges, thus a singular-centric school cannot operate as efficiently as one in which the leadership roles are distributed (Angelle, 2010). The SMTs would have liked to be involved in some of the support sessions and programmes offered by the IDSOs to the school leader. The support should be provided to the entire school leadership and management team which could lead to collective functioning and collective decision-making and leadership. In this regard, **NDP** stated: "*I would prefer that sometimes when they come to schools, they should have a meeting with us or maybe to discuss maybe if we have some challenges as SMTs though we discuss them with the one who takes them forward*".

The SMTs' functions had to be carried out collectively although the principal assumed the final accountability for the occurrences at their schools. They had to be able to hold the members of the SMTs accountable collectively for the general achievement of their schools. As a team, the SMTs would work collaboratively to have shared and distributed responsibility within their schools. The SMTs would henceforth be able to account for occurrences within their schools and departments. This implies that the interactions of the organisational members are key aspects of distributed leadership.

The functions of the IDSOs have now been clarified based on the above discussions. The support of the IDSOs seemed to be directed towards the principals and not the entire SMT even on matters that concerned them. Some of the SMT members were happy with the *status quo* while others wished to see changes and improvement in the way the IDSOs operated in relation to the support offered to schools. To address the disjointed functioning of the SMTs and support directed at an individual member of the SMT, this researcher looked briefly into the need for collaborative and shared leadership of the SMTs. The next section addresses the support strategies IDSOs use when supporting SMTs.

4.5.2. Theme 2 - Support strategies used by IDSOs in supporting SMTs and schools.

The research question to which this theme is related is: What strategies do the IDSOs use in supporting SMTs? The the key words linked to the development of the theme were "Support strategies, cascading, and top-down".

The category that developed from the question was: "How do the SMTs and IDSOs experience the support strategies used by IDSOs in supporting schools". The IDSOs had thorough knowledge and understanding of their support functions. The three IDSOs had been in their field for a long time and they had experienced various departmental structural changes including changes from being known as IDS (Institutional Development and Support) to IDSOs and now Cluster Leaders.

4.5.2.1. The actual practices and strategies used by the IDSOs in supporting their schools as observed and experienced by the SMTs and the IDSOs

Although not completely agreed to by the IDSOs, a number of documents addressing the allocation of job descriptions to the IDSOs were found to be in existence. These included collective agreements, circulars and government gazettes. A collective agreement (CA) is a signed agreement reached between the employers and the employee representatives at the ELRC. Walsh *et al.* (2013) describe circulars as the GDE's interpretation of legislation and regulations and they are neither policy, legislation nor regulations but they serve as the GDE's communication vehicle of managerial instructions to officials, districts and schools.

Although CA 1 of 2008 was effective as of 2008 (RSA, 2008), the CMs only came into existence in Gauteng after the reorganisation of districts in the GDE around 2012 and the IDSOs were not CMs as they still maintained that they were classified as cluster leaders, a level below CMs. The IDSO continued to link job descriptions in Collective Agreement 1 of 2008 (RSA, 2008) with what IDSOs did. **IDSO2** argued that:

"*Generally, those job descriptions that are there, are very close to what the IDSs were doing*" thus they remained convinced that they should be classified as CMs and allowed to continue with their functions as indicated in policy.

Prior to Collective Agreement 1 of 2008 (RSA, 2008), referred to by **IDSO 2 and IDSO 3** above, the Gauteng Department of Education issued Circular 51 of 2006 (RSA, 2006), entitled "Job description of institutional development and support officers (IDSOs)" which clearly stated the functions of the IDSOs as contemplated by the Gauteng Department of Education (GDE).

The sole purpose of this circular, signed by the Office of the then HOD or Superintended-General of the GDE, Mallele Petje, was to provide the IDSOs with a job description and to inform all stakeholders of the range of operations that will be carried out by the Institutional and Development and Support Officers (RSA, 2006). The GDE seems to have always viewed the role of the IDSO as critical for the maintenance and sustenance of high levels of school leadership and management with the capability to create an enabling environment that could result in the realisation of the good quality educational programmes being offered by schools and the Department (RSA, 2006). The Employment of Educators Act 76 of 1998 (EEA) (RSA, 1998) and Collective Agreement 1 of 2008, determined that the immediate supervisor of an employee has a duty and responsibility to develop specific responsibilities and duties for each post on the basis job content as may be applicable (RSA 1998; RSA & 2008). The issuing of the job descriptions by the provincial HoD appears to have been a loophole as the action could be challenged on the basis that this contradicted the very legislative framework they claimed was the framework informing the drawing up of the job descriptions.

The HoD is not the immediate supervisor of the IDSOs and was therefore not appropriately positioned to issue such job descriptions. Further, handling of job descriptions by the various supervisors could result in a lack of uniformity in the functioning of the IDSOs in the different departmental districts. A gap is seen to exist in the area of job description development in the Gauteng Department of Education which is still the case even to this day. The minimum number of training years for appointment into an IDSO position was not indicated in Circular 51 of 2006 (RSA, 2006).

The competencies in Circular 51 of 2006 would mostly be possessed by the principals but principalship was not specified as a requirement although these officials became the immediate supervisors of the principals with authority to discipline them when necessary.

The minimum qualification requirement for employment as an educator, SMT members or office-based officials including the IDS was placed at REQV 13 (Resolution 7 and Resolution 8 of 1998) (RSA, 1998). REQV 13 was the entry level into the teaching fraternity at the time. This implies that the IDSOs could be employed with the lowest qualification level in a managerial function with regard to managing the principals of schools, while some principals had higher qualifications than them. The implementation of Circular 51 of 2006 (RSA, 2006) was effective from 1 January 2007 and the IDSOs and their line managers were supposed to sign their job descriptions, which would make the signed document a legal document enabling the employer to hold the IDSOs accountable for the functions. This apparently did not materialise and the IDSOs continued to function as generalists and continued to claim to have no proper job descriptions.

To strengthen and ensure the implementation of the job descriptions and the functioning of the IDSOs, which was not realising its objectives fully, the GDE issued Circular 25 of 2008 (RSA, 2008) aimed at aligning planning, implementation, monitoring, evaluation and reporting on institutional planning and reporting through the following activities which include the IWSE, IQMS, PMDS, SIP, SDP, academic performance improvement planning (APIP), SGBs' terms of office and EWSE. Circular 25 of 2008 also provided uniform reporting instruments and processes and it would enhance school readiness for the beginning of each year, one of the processes undertaken by the IDSOs at the beginning of each academic term. Through the provisions of this circular, the IDSOs would have the means through, which they could hold schools accountable.

These are clear indicators of the levels at which the IDSOs are expected to support the schools to which they are allocated, despite the work overload and challenges that the IDSOs experience which seem to be receiving no attention from the Department of Education. The organisation of districts, (Gazette 300 of 2013) (RSA, 2013), a document issued by the Department of Basic Education/ National Department of Education attempted to bring uniformity about in the nomenclature of various district posts (Input of IDSO 2 and IDSO 3). To date, the recommendations of the gazette have not been implemented by the GDE and have resulted in major rifts between the IDSOs and their employer, the GDE.

From the above paragraphs, it is notable that the Department of Education has not shown any concern about the dysfunctionality of the IDSO units as the disagreement about the classification has continued for a few years without any resolution and impacted badly on the support and development of schools **(Input of IDSO 1).** However, the GDE continued with constant efforts to streamline the work and determine the functionality of the department, especially the key IDSO unit which was supposed to provide an oversight with regard to the institutional operation, support and development. This is continuing despite the fact that the dispute with the actual carriers of the functions they were streamlining had not been resolved and implementation of the instructions was not taking off on the ground and schools were at the receiving end on non-delivery of support and development.

It is notable from the discussion that the functions of the IDSOs are vast and numerous and they would need to be handled with great care and uncompromised commitment. The IDSOs are fully responsible for making the schools function and the functionality of schools relies entirely on the functionality of the IDSO. If the IDSOs do not function, the functioning of the schools also deteriorates. The actual practices and strategies that the IDSOs used to support schools are discussed below in line with the actual allocated functions discussed above.

4.5.2.2.1. Support strategies used by the IDSOs

The principal identified a salient point that the IDSOs could be available to provide support when invited to the school. **RP** argued for collective planning with their IDSOs as a form of support for the SMTs, thereby implying that, ideally, if planning could be done in advance and in collaboration with the IDSOs, that could ensure that the IDSOs knew about the plans of the schools and the times, the schools had identified for engagement with the IDSOs at the school. **RP** stated that: *"In my case, they are more effective when you contact them rather than when they come to the school making the monitoring… because when they come to school for monitoring they are mostly focused on what is stipulated in the tool".*

(a) Use of the cascading model of support and development

The IDSOs continue to have a cordial relationship with the principals as indicated in Chapter 2 that cites Clarke (2008). The relationship is confirmed by NDP who stated that: "*He normally communicates with the principal and he sits with the principal and the principal will sometimes give feedback to the SMTs.*

The approach used by the IDSOs was confirmed by another SMT member who explained that the IDSOs used a cascading approach to communicate with the SMTs **(Input of NH1).** The IDSOs used a cascading approach, which entailed engagement and discussion with the principal alone and the principal was expected to provide feedback of the IDSO's visit to the SMTs. The IDSOs did not have any direct engagement with the SMTs on matters that concerned their leadership and managerial functions.

The cascading model/ approach used for SMT support was not appreciated by most of the SMT members interviewed **(Input NDP).** The SMTs saw the IDSOs' approach as a way of cutting corners due to the non-availability of time as well as the work pressure resulting from the allocation of too many schools. As the IDSOs focussed more on the principal, they deprived other SMT members an opportunity to interact with them and share their views, needs and expectations.

The use of the cascading approach excluded the SMT members, especially the HODs from discussions with the IDSO even on matters that involved them directly such as curriculum management, resourcing and finance planning which could benefit them and help them improve in the management of areas they were responsible for such as LTSM management and budgeting.

The SMTs saw the visitation of the IDSOs to their schools as an opportunity for the SMTs to express and raise any issues they might have with their IDSO and for obtainment of solutions and guidance. More direct interaction between the IDSO and the entire SMT was recommended by the SMTs. **TDP** raised her discontent with the approach used by the IDSOs by indicating that: "*I am worried about non-involvement of the other SMT members, especially the HODs because the bulk of the curriculum is been done by them*".

NP conceded that there was limited or no direct support for the SMTs and interaction between the IDSO and the SMTs stating that: "*The interventions, strategies and Action Plans are basically directed at the principal who then has to disseminate the information and instructions to the SMT but physically, there isn't much contact between the SMT as a whole and the IDS*".

To indicate that they had not received any support or had any contact with the IDSOs, **NDP** added that: "*The SMT has never sat with the IDSO. We didn't even know that we can invite him to come and sit in our meetings or even in our discussions. We never knew that*".

NP confirmed the cordial working relationship between the school principals and their IDSOs, a relationship which clearly excluded the other SMT members. **NP** indicated that: "*Well, we are working closely with IDSOs. There is a close collaboration with the IDSOs or Cluster Leader of our school pertaining to management issues*". The SMTs, however, argue that the IDSOs had to support the entire SMT and not only the principals. "*The IDSO needs to support the school, not only the principal because the principal is not the only person that is running the school. If ever he comes to support, he must support at least all the stakeholders including the SMT*".

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RH disagreed that the IDSOs were never met by the entire SMT indicating that she had met and interacted with the IDSO of her school. This is an indication that operations across the districts and circuits are not uniform. The practices of schools and IDSOs are not the same, which is a cause for concern.

(b) The use of the top-down approach used by the IDSOs

Prevalent in the support of the IDSOs, was the top-down approach of management and communication where they just gave information to principals and expected them to cascade the information down within their schools and to implement what was prescribed **(Input of TDP).** The inputs of the SMTs were not considered by the IDSO as the system within which they were working was a hierarchical system in which instructions were given from the top management and had to be implemented by those in the system, the SMTs of the schools and the staff. According to **NH1:**
"*They use the top-down communication…the approach can be used sometimes but not always*".

(c) Individualised approach to school support

There was a lack of uniformity in the strategies used by various IDSOs when supporting the SMTs as the interaction between the IDSOs and their schools occurred on an Individual-to individual basis. The SMTs concurred unanimously that the operations of IDSOS differed from person to person or from one IDSO to another implying a complete lack of uniformity and raising doubt about the supervision of the work done by the IDSOs.

Furthermore, the SMTs viewed the IDSOs as operating in isolation- and having no uniformity in their operations although they occupied the same positions. The IDSOs did not have any common goal and operations. Each IDSO was seen to be doing his or her own work according to his or her own plan. According to **NP:** "*Each IDSO has his own way of monitoring and supporting schools, but we also get the instance where manner of professionalism differs from person to person*".

There was an absence of uniform monitoring and school development and support tools and instruments across clusters, circuits and districts and thus the IDSOs functioned in isolation. To find balance and uniformity, the IDSO operations, planning and reporting should be standardised and benchmarked for the IDSOs to enable them to provide the support being directed by the set standards **(Input of NP).**

(d) Hurried IDSOs' visits

The school managers indicated that the IDSOs usually visited schools without an appointment and seemingly lack proper planning and a schedule of work, but they were mostly received well by the principals and the SMTs who did not really have any say in that. **NP** noted that the IDSOs' functions ran on a crisis management basis as the timeframes for the performance of functions were sometimes not friendly from their head office and the IDSOs did not always get the time to perform their duties and it turns out that they were always rushed. The hurried visitation of the IDSOs was sometimes viewed as disruptive for the schools' planned activities by the school managers.

The IDSOs did not provide their planned visit schedules to schools in time for these visits to be infused into the schools' term or annual programmes **(Input of TDP). TDP** mentioned that: "*They come to schools randomly and mostly at very short notice*". The activities of the principals and the entire school were abandoned and reviewed to accommodate the visitation of the IDSOs. When the IDSOs visited, the principal would drop their planned activities and focussed on the IDSO to ensure that the school provided whatever was required by the department. Such practices would throw the schools' plans into disarray and make it difficult for them to catch up with their programmes.

The SMTs did not address the concerns they had regarding the disruptions of their schools during the IDSOs' visits for fear of victimisation and out of avoidance of undermining the authority of the immediate supervisors. **NP** stated that: *"They are accepted because there is a line of dedication and commitment from schools to actually welcome the IDSOs because they are the next level officials who can assist with problems that schools encounter. So, IDSOs are seen as a support structure".*

The SMTs including the principals of schools were not assertive with regard to the IDSOs and they had allowed the *status quo* to continue to exist and disadvantage the SMTs from getting the full support of the IDSOs allocated to provide support to their schools on the pretext that they were always in class when the IDSOs visited the schools. Some of the IDSOs' visits could be scheduled outside teaching and learning time if planned well to accommodate other SMT members **(Input of NDP).** The SMTs indicated that the meetings and sessions with the IDSOs could take place after school or during breaks and that they were prepared to accommodate such meetings for the benefit of their operations and access to information and development.

(e) The IDSOs functioning as crisis managers

The IDSOs were also viewed as officials who only showed up when there was a **crisis and mayhem** at the schools **(Input of NDP).** Furthermore, the IDSOs were seen by some SMTs as officials who dealt with crisis management because they were usually seen at the schools at a time when there were problems and they would be coming to address and normalise the crisis and help with the obtainment of solutions and order that is favourable to education **(NDP).**

One of the principals, **RP** confirmed that they only saw the IDSOs when there were problems at the schools when he mentioned that: "*Some of the staff members have met him (the IDSO) when there are problem*s". My view is that this approach and practice should change as it taints the actual noble function of the IDSOs.

(f) Liaison with other units at the district offices

The SMTs expected the IDSOs, as officials based at the district offices, to be able to collaborate and communicate with their colleagues in other intervention sub-directorates like the Curriculum and Learning Implementation (CLI) unit, teacher development (TD) and performance management and development (PMD) units about areas of support and the needs of their schools that required their intervention and support. The IDSOs should be prepared to serve as the office that liaises with other units in their circuits and across the district. They are well placed to call for interventions and referral to other units to provide support to their schools.

The SMTs acceded to the fact that the curriculum facilitators provided support with regard to the curriculum and assessment implementation and monitoring the performance of educators in various subjects, while their IDSOs had a role to play in curriculum management oversight at the school **(Input of TDP).** The IDSOs should be able to locate areas that required improvement and recommend interventions.

(g) The IDSOs as Instructional Leaders

On the basis that IDSOs had to show a vested interest in the curriculum planning and delivery, the IDSOs themselves should also be seen as **Instructional leaders.** According to some SMTs, certain IDSOs did go into detail in terms of ensuring the quality of the performance of learners by checking the analysed data on learner performance **(Input of RP and TDP).** These IDSOs were supposed to show an interest in curriculum delivery, assessment planning and implementation and engage the curriculum facilitators when necessary. They were supposed to determine the areas where the school was not doing well with the implementation of the curriculum and advise them accordingly by assisting the SMTs with turn-around and improvement strategies.

Curriculum delivery, determined through a school's learner and educator performance is the key area that the schools focus on and it remains a critical area in which the SMTs need to be supported in order for their schools to meet the departmental expectations and veer away from under-performance and under-achievement. The IDSOs were supposed to ensure that learner and educator performance was on par with the departmental requirements. The IDSOs should engage the principals and SMTs on matters regarding the performance of their schools and also hold them accountable.

In terms of Circular 2 of 2015 (RSA, 2015), the IDSOs/ Cluster Leaders were supposed to ensure and manage the focussed support of the curriculum facilitators at under-performing schools. This researcher strongly believes that focussed support with regard to curriculum delivery is supposed to occur at all schools and not only at the under-performing schools.

Although, the IDSOs were not specialised in terms of curriculum support, those who had shown an interest in curriculum matters, seemed to touch a nerve in terms of the improved or acceptable performance in their schools. They had managed to get the SMTs motivated to provide a high quality education in terms of their curriculum expectations as they knew they had to account for their under-performance.

The IDSOs that were not focussed on curriculum management and ensuring high quality delivery of the curriculum, needed to look deeply into this area as it was a key aspect of their functions. The IDSOs had to equip and empower themselves with skills and knowledge on curriculum matters, if they expected to have successful schools. The minimum that the IDSOs could do with regard to the curriculum delivery would be to provide an enabling environment for the principals and their SMTs to engage directly with the curriculum specialists who were employed at district level to provide specialised support and development on the vast array of curriculum matters.

The SMTs believed that the IDSOs were best placed to engage directly with their colleagues and request interventions after they had engaged the school on curriculum matters and identified areas that needed attention. Considering the limited number of curriculum support officials, the direct engagement of the facilitators by the IDSOs would assist to get the school curriculum-related issues and challenges resolved much quicker.

(h) IDSOs in SDP and SIP development and implementation

Van Der Voort and Wood (2016) draw on the input of King-McKenzie when arguing for district support provision to schools through district officials and stress the pivotal role that must be played by the district officials including the IDSOs in the capacity-building of school level staff. The IDSOs have to lead the support provision to their schools and they have to support them with processes like SDP. The IDSOs saw the schools' strategic planning as an extremely important activity that enabled the schools to have a plan of action and targets. Some of the IDSOs participated fully in their schools' strategic planning sessions and contributed to the development of the SDPs and the profiling of the schools. Some IDSOs provided leadership on the planning process as required in terms of their functions **(Input of IDSO 3).**

The IDSOs involvement and participation in the SDP and SIP was limited or not available at all from other IDSOs. The view of the SMTs was that the support of the IDSOs with the schools' development and improvement planning processes (SDP and SIP) would help to enable the IDSOs to be aware of the plans and developmental needs of their schools **(Input of TDP).** They would be able to identify SMT areas that required support. The IDSOs would plan their school support programmes properly based on the SIPs. Since the IDSOs/ cluster leaders/ CMs are tasked with the management of focussed support that should be provided by curriculum facilitators at underperforming schools, they could use the cluster forums to engage and request their colleagues in other units to address matters of interest to them such as the curriculum, performance development and management.

(i) Use of cluster forums and twinning as a support and developmental mechanism

Principals and their SMTs can lead beyond the school walls. The important role of the school leaders involves initiating and ensuring collaboration and engagement with other schools around them (Schleicher, 2012). Jita and Mohele (2014) add that clustering can enhance knowledge and pedagogical content. The interactions can result in the formation of cluster forums that can enable the school leaders to network and share resources to uplift schools with less.

Such interactions have the potential to enlarge the scope of leadership, which could nurture the culture of ensuring the accomplishment of school leadership development across the cluster (Schleicher, 2012). Clustering can lead to extensive sharing and distribution of leadership across the clusters and develop leadership capacity (Schleicher, 2012). Thus far, there had not been any meeting of the IDSOs with the entire SMTs in most of the clusters while meetings with principals had been held at circuit level. The IDSOs and SMTs concurred that cluster SMT forums could be established and that this could work for the development of SMTs as they would get opportunities to engage with the SMTs from other schools and share both their expertise and knowledge, thereby applying the four-factor theory of leadership in their operations.

The clustering of SMTs could also extend to the entire circuit which would expand the networking and beneficiation for the teams. The capacity building of SMTs could be achieved through the twinning of SMTs. The twinning of SMTs could be extremely beneficial for struggling schools. The IDSOs could cluster the SMTs of schools with common problems and encourage the sharing of good practices. The IDSOs could make use of schools that are excelling to pick up struggling schools. **TH1** suggested that IDSOs could "*take School A because it is excelling on the challenges faced by School B, then they will help assist each other… It will depend on the Strategy*". With twinning, best practices and challenges can be located and schools with similar challenges can be grouped and supported together.

TH1 further indicated that: "*For example, if you identify the challenges, you can find that even School B has the same problems… so you can group them together… then after grouping them, you start to look at how you can help them*". **IDSO 3** expressed the strong belief that the establishment of forums within the clusters was one way that could enable them to address and support the entire group of SMT members within their clusters. Currently, some of the IDSOs met the SMTs separately per level to discuss matters of concern in their areas of operation. This would also be one way of reaching more of the SMTs using time efficiently as time to engage individuals was not always available due to work pressure.

At these SMT forums, the IDSOs would be able to fulfil their function of keeping the SMTs informed about current trends in education. There was less frequent support for well performing and moving schools, while the focus of the IDSOs was on schools that were experiencing problems and which required intense interventions. The IDSOs were directed to focus more on dysfunctional schools through GDE Circular 51 of 2006 (RSA, 2006). The IDSOs focussed on schools with more leadership and management problems and schools that were constantly riddled with conflict and internal battles **(Input of IDSO3)**. It is presumed that schools that are performing well have functional leadership provided by their management teams. The major reason for having IDSOs allocated to schools is for them to help schools reach and maintain school performance at the expected departmental standards and bring about change where necessary **(Input of NP)**.

IDSOs have a challenging task with regard to ensuring that under-performing and under-achieving schools are turned around. From the above discussions, it is clearly vital for an IDSO to have been an SMT member, especially a principal before becoming an IDSO as they will have the necessary experience, expertise and knowledge of management that will enable them to have a deeper understanding of the roles of the SMT and how to support them. They would be able to apply the aspects of the four-factor theory of leadership focusing on support and interaction with ease. In effect, they required considerable skills and knowledge that would enable them to provide support with regard to the processes of recruitment and expertise as they would be specialised and experienced in the areas of school leadership, management and development as former school managers.

The functions of the IDSOs include support to and development of the entire school. The SMTs argued that support for their schools by the IDSOs should be provided to the entire SMTs and not only through the cascading approach used by the IDSOs **(Input of NDP)** when visiting schools, where they only met and held discussions with the principals at all times and expected them to deliver the message to the other members of the SMT and staff. They contended that the current practices needed to be reconsidered by the IDSOs if they were serious about supporting the management teams to improve school operations and performance **(Input of TDP).**

(j) The IDSOs as generalists

The IDSOs regarded themselves as generalists because of the extensive responsibilities they had to carry out in relation to the support and development of schools. According to **IDSO2, "***IDSOs used to do everything in supporting and developing schools – Any problem that arose at the schools, we were the first person to be called*". The IDSOs were contacted by the schools to make sure that they knew about all the developments and occurrences at their allocated schools and they provided guidance and support as confirmed by **IDSO 2** when he mentioned that: "*We provide support and leadership… especially things pertaining to management though there were also things that pertained to governance you would ensure that you lend support and assistance."*

(k) The IDSOs as supervisors and support structures for principals

The IDSOs were seen by the SMTS as the immediate supervisor of the principal and the SMTs contended that they only supported and developed the principals neglecting the other members of the SMTs **(Input of NDP) which** was a factor in the determination that the IDSOs focussed specifically on the principal only.

One principal could not recall the IDSOs ever interacting with the entire SMT, which shows that the principals themselves were also concerned with the exclusion of the SMTs in the programmes discussed between them and the IDSOs because they viewed their SMTs as critical role-players in the management of their schools. They did not seem to address the matter of interference and interruption of activities and school plans with the IDSOs maybe to avoid confrontation and victimisation.

TH1 confirmed the views of the SMTs on the relationship of principals and the IDSOs and the cascading of information to the SMTs when she indicated that: "*the IDSOs, they are very close to the principals, most of the information they cascade to the principal and principal will cascade the information to the SMT members and the staff*". The cascading of information from the meetings and sessions with the IDSO is not guaranteed and it depends on the principal. Some cascade the information to their SMTs openly and truthfully at their meetings but some do not give a full account and cascade the information selectively.

The SMTs also regarded the IDSOs as district officials that carried authority to act on the non-compliance by schools. They did not see the IDSOs as providers of support, but instead they saw them as officials who visited schools to crack the whip as **NDP** confirmed by indicating that: "*The only time when I saw this person at our school, was to give the principal grief.*" The position was supported by **NH1** who stated that: "*The IDSO shows up when there are problems, maybe to support the principal*".

IDSO 3 confirmed that some IDSOs were seen as disciplinarians and that this affected the relationship between the IDSOs and schools negatively. The SMTs saw them as officials that were reactionary in terms of occurrences at schools. **IDSO 3** indicated that: "*There are some of the schools that are having this negative mentality that we are there to police and look for the wrong things that they are doing and to crucify them*".

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However, **IDSO 1** confirmed that their attention was directed more towards the principal, but acknowledged that supporting the SMTs was also important but it was not always possible. **IDSO 2** argued that he supported the SMTs regularly as he viewed the support for the SMTs as critical, relevant and impactful and further indicated that: "*Meetings with individuals also play a vital role. I continue to provide the support to the entire SMTs at my schools*". This situation reflected a complete lack of uniformity on the functioning of the IDSOs as their practices seemed to be different.

IDSO 2 added that*: "Sometimes we call the deputy principal but mostly whatever we discuss is discussed with the principal and what comes from the principal is taken as the position of the school*". **IDSO 3** also acknowledged that other SMT members complained about the support that was provided to the principals only and that there was a need for distributed support for the entire SMT.

The IDSOs defended the approach of supporting only being available to the principal by pointing out that they expected the information shared with the principal to filter through to the entire SMT as a leading team at the school but they acknowledged that the transfer of the message they discussed with principals may not necessarily reach the other SMT members exactly as it was communicated.

As the principals' supervisors, the IDSOs had to be informed about all the developments and occurrences within the school **(Input of RP).** The IDSOs made an effort and took time to know and understand the challenges and occurrences that schools experienced through communication with the principals and insisted that the principals report any incidents occurring within their schools. The IDSO had to know everything that went on in the school **(Inputs of RP).**

The IDSOs were supposed to be accountable for the occurrences at the schools for which they were responsible and therefore, they expected regular reporting on such matters by the principals. The IDSOs should, therefore, be knowledgeable on all happenings at their schools. The principals had to report on all the aspects of school leadership and management, learner performance, co-curricular and extra-curricular matters, LTSMs, IQMS and financial matters.

In effect, they had to report the challenges they experienced. **RP** indicated that: "*Everything that goes wrong or right at the school, should go via through the IDSO*".

The SMTs regarded their limited exposure to the IDSOs as a factor that resulted in poor consultation on important matters pertaining to school leadership and management in their schools because vital information was sometimes withheld by the principals. It would therefore be appropriate to have a meeting of all the SMT members with the IDSO (**Input of NDP)**.

(I) Frequency of the IDSOs' support

The level of support provided to the SMTs and exposure of the IDSOs to the SMTs depends on the way the principal and the IDSOs operate. In one school which had been exposed to more than one IDSO over the last five years, the SMT members insinuated that only one of the IDSOs had time to engage with the SMTs, while the rest focussed on the principal specifically using the "hit-and run" and "microwave" kind of school visitations where they would just pass-by to check if all was well and spent very little time at the school. In most instances, the IDSOs' school visits were very short. Most of the visits were focussed on school readiness at the beginning of each term and on verifying functionality of the school. Usually, a verification form provided by the department is used and is uniform for all schools.

From the information above, it emerges that the SMTs, although not sure about the functions of the IDSOs, were concerned about the support and development of the IDSOs being provided to the principals only and not for all the SMT members who required the support of the IDSOs by virtue of their employment in order to be able to realise the function of developing their schools. The relationship between the IDSOs and the SMTs is discussed in the next section.

4.5.3. Theme 3 - Challenges and successes experienced by the IDSOS in supporting the SMTS as viewed by the SMTS

The question that resulted in the theme was: "What are the challenges and successes experienced by the (IDSOs) when performing their roles and functions?" The key words that emerged were challenges and successes. The SMTs agreed unanimously that the challenges faced by the IDSOs in terms of providing support to schools face considerable challenges.

The challenges experienced by the IDSOs when performing their support functions for SMTs seemed to outweigh the successes by far of the IDSOs in the performance of their work. In the next section, the challenges are discussed as seen by the SMTs and the IDSOs as well as the views of the SMTs on how the challenges can be dealt with and the successes experienced in this regard.

4.5.3.1. Challenges experienced by the IDSOs

The challenges experienced by IDSOs are discussed below.

(a) High work-loading

According to the SMTs, the major challenge relates to the workloads of the IDSOs. Both the IDSOs and the SMTs argued that IDSOs were allocated too many schools which made it difficult for them to focus on their support functions as they were overwhelmed.

According to **TH1: "***It seems as if they are overloaded. They have been given too many schools… of which, even when they come to your school, they don't have that enough time… because they have to see a number of schools in a short period of time".* The overloading of IDSOs with too many schools was supported by **RP** as follows: "*Another challenge is probably that you find that one IDSO is allocated too many schools and the schedule does not allow him to be with a particular school at once".*

The situation is that the allocation of schools may differ between districts or circuits. Two of the IDSO only had 13 schools, while one had 34 schools which was an example of an overloaded workload. The amount of work they had to perform in these schools was extremely demanding and they were unable to cope with the work. Heavy workloads may contribute to job dissatisfaction and may sometimes result in work pressure and stress-related illnesses. The heavy workload made it a challenge for the IDSOs to adhere to their planned time schedule and plans as they were constantly called by their schools to come and address various issues that were seen as urgent. In effect, heavy work pressure was experienced by the IDSOs.

TP confirmed that they saw the issue of time and the volume of work that they had as a major challenge which made it extremely difficult to reach all the schools and to support the SMTs directly, which resulted in a cascading model. **TH1** expressed concern about the workload of IDSOs by contending that: "*Instead of being close to the school now, it seems they have been given more workloads of which they are not performing well or they are being overburdened*".

TH2 raised concern about the quality of work that the IDSOs performed in support of the SMTs by indicating that: "*Looking at the number of schools, it may mean that the service that will be given may not be enough*". The number of schools allocated per IDSO determined the quality of support that was provided. The high workloads affected the provision of support to schools by the IDSOs adversely. In some instances, the IDSOs just spent a few minutes at a school before rushing off to attend to other schools.

The IDSOs raised the issue of the allocation of the number of schools as being against the official policy. **IDSO 1** emphasised that: "*Another challenge is the number of schools. Allocation of too many schools resulting in overloading of work which is against the policy on district operations*". **RP** raised concern about the quality of support and time spent at the schools by averring that: "*When he comes to visit a school you will see that he is having a string of the schools where he is going to spend at least 10-15 minutes and no more than 15 minutes… unless if you have just called him that you are having a problem and he must come and address the problem*".

The IDSOs further mentioned that: *"It is not possible for example for you to go to schools, for example, to deal with all areas of the WSE thoroughly"*. The IDSOs contended that some of the functions allocated to them could best be handled by other officials and acknowledged that the quality of work done was not the best that could be offered. **IDSO 2** mentioned that: *"Some of the things we go just on top because of pressure. Basic School functionality is the one area we are capable in, some of this areas should be done by the other people"*.

TP concurred with **TH1** on the poor quality of visitations by the IDSOs by indicating that: *[The] Quality of support may be poor. Sometimes he would be rushing in order to complete the cluster of schools that are under him and it is a lot of work to work with the schools because schools are having different challenges. If he is comes to school x and we are having a lot of challenges… he spends very little time and he has to rush to school B"*.

(b) No job descriptions

According to IDSO 2, the current challenge to the IDSOs' performance of their functions was the lack of a proper job description for them. **IDSO 2** mentioned that *"That is the most and biggest challenge"*. In relation to the non-availability of job descriptions, the IDSOs expressed concern about the confusion that was created, which ultimately resulted in the other district officials expecting that: *"IDSO must actually do everything but unfortunately, one is unable to support schools"*.

One of the principals, **NP** also referred to the problem of the non-availability of job descriptions for the IDSOs who had been on a "go-slow" and only performed minimal functions if called to do so over the last four to five years. Such conduct could be viewed as a neglect of their duties by those responsible for resolving the issues raised as education had been held to ransom for such a lengthy period of time. Schools and the provision of education are the casualties in this battle. Some IDSOs were seen by the SMTs to have neglected their functions wilfully as part of their resistance to the alleged forced change to their job title and possibly to their functions.

Wilful neglect and dereliction of duty were chargeable offences for which the IDSOs could be taken through a disciplinary and corrective process. They were seen as capitalising on the current environment characterised by lack of monitoring and control regarding the functioning of the IDSOs within their clusters, circuits and district.

(c) Confusion on roles and responsibilities

The SMTs were confused about the roles and functions of the CMs and cluster leaders/ IDSOs as they were not sure about the role of each entity. **TP** argued that the confusion brought about by the name changes went deeper as teachers know the cluster leaders as leaders of various subjects in the district who were selected to lead a particular subject on the basis of their leadership qualities, their expertise in the subject and commitment to supporting other educators.

There is a need for the Department of Education to clarify what schools should expect from the CMs and the IDSOs so that schools know what support they should expect from these officials. Some SMT members argued that some of the IDSOs seemed unsure of what they were supposed to do and that the introduction of CMs and the changes to the organisational structure could have been triggered by this. They further argued that the CMs themselves are not very knowledgeable and specialised in the area of leading and managing circuits as they were transferred from other directorates in the districts. In terms of what IDSOs do currently, they are seen as information carriers between the district/ CMs and the school. Their roles are supposed to be taken over by the newly-introduced CMs.

According to **RP,** "*Previously, it was the issue that they normally do not know their functions hence there are the CMs on top of them*". The SMTs argued that the IDSOs resorted to just checking availability of documents and ticking of checkboxes on forms at schools for compliance with the policies, which is not sufficient in terms of their functions. IDSOs must check the implementation of policies and monitor the quality of work done.

The SMTs also see potential problems with regard to the withholding of information by schools from the IDSO because they do not go into detail with their checking and quality monitoring work which may result in them being unaware of the true state of affairs at their schools.

(d) Changes to the classification of the IDSOs

The IDSOs argued that they knew and clearly understood their functions and they had always performed these in support of principals and that the confusion regarding their operations was created by the department by reclassifying them as Cluster Leaders and taking their functions away and allocating these to the newly established CMs.

IDSO 2 mentioned that the confusion was brought about by changes to the recent reorganisation of the GDE. **IDSO 2** stated that: *"It is actually very difficult to answer some of the questions because of the name IDSO".*

The IDSO further argued that: "If we had everything sorted out and we were functioning as we used to do as IDSOs and maybe our title has been changed from Cluster Leader to what we think we are as CMs, then it would be easy for me to understand my role".

(e) Lack of capacity and development

Staff capacity development refers to the processes that improve the job-related knowledge, skills or attitudes of employees (Mahlangu, 2015). Mestry (2017) sees a crucial need for the education authorities such as districts and circuits to introduce capacity development for aspiring and currently practising school leaders to uplift the quality of leadership and management. The IDSOs had to be capacitated in order for them to capacitate their subordinates. In addition, the IDSOs indicated that they had not been receiving any capacity building support from their supervisors or the department.

Capacity training would enable them to improve their skills and knowledge and that would also help them to keep up with constantly improving and changing the environment in education. In relation to providing staff development, the IDSOs pointed out that most of their supervisors did not have any understanding and knowledge of the jobs they did resulting in the lack of support (IDSO2).

IDSO 3 supported this view and stressed the lack of developmental capacity provision by their supervisors indicating that: "*There is no support you can get from that particular supervisor because that supervisor knows absolutely nothing*".

4.5.3.2. Successes of the IDSOs in their functions as seen by the SMTs

It emerged above that the IDSOs had been faced with many challenges but some IDSOs did manage to make a difference in the leadership and management of schools ensuring their functionality and success. However, the SMTs were extremely sceptical about the IDSOs' performance and could not really mention any successes in the IDSOs' performance with regard to support for the SMTs. According to the SMTs, the support had always been given to the principals. However, some SMTs mentioned that there were some IDSOs who were working hard and were fulfilling their functions, but they insisted that only a few of the IDSOs did their jobs as expected of them **(TDP). TDP** contended that there were some IDSOs who were succeeding and stated that: "*I am referring to those that give support because we can also point out that we had a challenge with this and the IDSO has helped us*".

(a) Leadership development for principals

A variety of training and support programmes on leadership may include coaching, mentoring and formal accredited qualifications (Sullivan & Associates, 2013). They define mentoring as a process in which a more experienced employee referred to as the mentor provides guidance and support to a new leader. Among the few areas that were agreed upon unanimously by the SMTs and the principals who conceded that the IDSOs succeeded in providing them with leadership and management development.

The IDSOs were not necessarily succeeding with supporting SMTs but they were seen by the principals as successful **(Inputs of TP and RP).** The IDSOs claimed that they had also managed to succeed in bringing about change in the management and governance of schools.

IDSO 2 argued that "*Finances having drastically improved. Issues of policies, they have begun to understand, how they need to develop policies*". The improved finance management in schools was indicated as evidence of success.

(b) Turning schools around

The IDSOs argued that successes with regard to the transformation of schools from under-performing to satisfactorily and well-performing schools were realised when they functioned as IDSOs, which was prior to the reorganisation of the GDE. According to **IDSO 1**: "*IDSOs were mostly successful before the change in the structure of the GDE. What IDSOs were required to do, they did and most of the schools functioned satisfactorily and some excelled*".

The IDSOs expressed the view that they had done well with assisting schools to improve and maintain high standards and promote accountability through working as teams and the sharing of expertise when they were IDSOs. **IDSO 2** supported their stance by indicating that: "*You know one of the main successes, that you will generally appreciate, is being able to ensure that the school is now being classified as a performing school, especially if they were underperforming… that is success."*

(c) Instructional leadership oversight and support

The principals reported that there were some successes, in some cases, with regard to instructional leadership support **(TP and RP).** The principals indicated that these IDSOs focussed on checking and providing support with the monitoring of the schools' teaching and learning programmes and preparedness **(TP).**

TH 2 agreed that their current IDSO engaged with learner and educator performance by stating that: "*Now, looking at learner performance… Looking at the results and checking how we can improve. There is an improvement even though it might not be enough but looking at his intervention, I can see that we are moving.*"

IDSO 2 added that: "*…another success was ensuring that our principals are able to take interest in in the curriculum issues of their schools. because they always delegated to the deputy principal*".

(d) Ensuring the accountability of principals

There are those IDSOs who held all the SMT members accountable through the principal's office and expected them to report on the performance of the school and their individual departments on a regular basis **(TDP, TP),** although they were not involved when the expectations were discussed as the meeting had taken place between the principal and the other SMT members. The IDSOs usually received the information on the plans and expectations of the schools during their meetings with the principals. According to the IDSOs, they had to be successful in their jobs as the improved performance of their schools was measured and reported on regularly **(IDSO 2).**

In effect, the schools were shaping up. The principals were held accountable and interventions were put in place. It is important to note that the principals were always expected by the IDSOs to account for all the occurrences at their schools and they received support when required **(IDSO 3**). It appeared that some of the IDSOs were in control of the situations at the schools they were responsible for.

(e) Recruitment

The IDSOs also mentioned the management of the recruitment of staff and the SMTs as another success in their operations. Schools were provided with good quality staff members and managers **(IDSO 1).** They indicated that they maintained excellent teamwork and complemented each other in managing the recruitment and interview processes and they were seen to be united.

(f) Strategic planning and team building support

According to Lubinga and Van Dijk (2013) planning is the initial step in the management functions and provides support to all the other functions. They argue that it is a function that is extremely important for organisational success and is coupled with organising. Strategic planning is viewed as the process of selecting the goals of the institution and strategising on how these goals will be put into action by the stakeholders in an organisation to ensure the implementation of the organisational strategies, goals and policies (Stoner, 1982, in Lubinga & Van Dijk, 2013).

In the study, the IDSOs argued that they had succeeded in supporting schools with their strategic planning processes. **IDSO 3** mentioned that they succeeded in transforming schools through providing guided strategic planning guidance and providing support with school team building processes, which resulted in both improved results and performance of their schools **(IDSO 3)**. IDSO 3 indicated that he had had provided guidance through the SMT and SGB team building sessions for schools successfully in his cluster and he arranged sponsored outings with the SMTs of his schools as a form of development and support. The next section focuses on the changes that affected the functioning of the IDSOs in terms of school support and resulted in an *impasse* in education support and development.

4.5.4. Theme 4 - Changes in the work that the IDSOs do and impact on how IDSOs perform their support functions for the SMTs

This theme emanated from the responses of the IDSOs regarding the support functions that had been indicated by both themselves and the SMTs as having worsened from the support provided prior to the reorganisation of the GDE. They addressed issues around the changes brought about by the re-organisation process in the GDE that had a negative impact on the functioning of the IDSOs when supporting the SMTs. The key words that brought about the theme were "change and reorganisation" and the category was policy implementation and organisational change. This section focuses on organisational change, the re-organisation of the GDE and its impact on the operations of the IDSOs in the support and development of schools.

4.5.4.1. Organisational changes pertaining to school support

Jacobs, van Witteloostuijn and Christe-Zeyse (2013), caution that organisational change is a complex process which may result in risks that may jeopardise the purpose of the planned change. This process may fall short of its intended objectives and bring with it costs to the organisation (Jacobs, *et al,* 2013). **NP and IDSO 3** indicated that authorities at the GDE reorganised their structure around 2012 and this impacted on the functions of IDSOs and dissatisfaction rather than the intended synergy in functions and improvement to organisational performance as discussed below.

(a) Reorganisation of the GDE

The SMTs and IDSOs indicated that the structural changes to the GDE organisational structure when the reorganisation occurred around 2012 had a more negative effect than intended **(NP and IDSO 3)**. The IDSOs contested that their functions were now supposed to be performed by their immediate supervisors referred to as CMs, which was confusing to them as they would then have changed their operations.

Interpreting Van der Merwe's (2012) input on school organogram, one can, by inference, indicate that the education departmental organogram reveals how various parts of the department are linked together and the allocation of authority and responsibility of each level. Usually, the reorganisation of an organisational organogram would be aimed at bringing synergy (Van der Merwe, 2012) to an organisation which could have been the plan of the Department of Education when they reorganised, but it ricocheted in the area of institutional development.

The reorganisation brought about changes to the names of some positions in the GDE structure, which included and affected the working of the IDSOs **(Input of NP)**. The IDSO posts were converted to what the SMTs and IDSOs referred to as Cluster Leaders, a term, that the IDSOs argue did not appear in any of the collective agreements and departmental regulations and policies **(Input of NP and IDSO 3).**

According to the IDSOs, most of the provinces did not have structures like those Gauteng had, where the IDSOs were doing exactly what CMs were supposed to do but they did not get recognition as CMs but they were classified differently and as a result, remunerated below the level of the work they were doing.

IDSO1 mentioned that: *"In other provinces, we have people that are specialising in governance, and people who are specialising in something different. In provinces like Mpumalanga, I believe it was more like us in Gauteng, and that is why all those people who were IDSOs have been confirmed as Circuit Managers"*.

(b) The views of the SMTs and IDSOs with regard to the reorganisation

Some SMTs were not fully informed about the recent reorganisation of the GDE or any documents that addressed the changes to the functions of the IDSOs **(NDP).** Although the SMTs do not have full understanding on the reorganisation process that occurred at the GDE, some of them know that a new organogram was introduced which impacted on the functioning of the IDSOs which may have brought about changes to the way in which the IDSOs previously provided support to schools.

Some were aware of the re-introduction of the circuits that had existed in the past and clusters were also included but they were not aware why the changes were brought about and they had not observed any improvement to the school system operations over the period of the change. **NP** declared that the role clarification of the IDSO at this point in time was a contentious issue. However, the principals had knowledge of the changes **(NP, TP)**. Some of the other SMTs were not even knowledgeable about the circuit management teams that were conceptualised and actualised with the reorganisation **(Input of NP).** Improved communication and information flow might be required to address this information vacuum within schools and the Department of Education structures.

According to the three principals and the IDSOs there were no official documents informing schools about the change from IDSOs to cluster leader as well as the transfer of functions except that they did maybe have the organogram of the department **(NP and IDSO 3).** The IDSOs argued that the reorganisation process was not handled properly. They contested from the point of the interpretation of pieces of legislative framework and collective agreement. They contested that the GDE did not implement the provisions of CA 1 of 2008 and that functions they had always been performing were the functions of CMs.

The IDSOs argued that the collective agreement was not fully implemented with regard to the provisions for the IDSOs/ CMs. **IDSO 2** stated that: "*The collective agreement (CA) talks about OSD but it has been implemented in institutions, and also in certain ranks of people in the districts, but for many of Office-based educators it was never implemented*". This has created gaps in classification and remuneration of IDSOs.

(c) Interpretation of the policy on classification of IDSOs

The determinations of the GDE and the ELRC provisions seem to be in conflict. The GDE Circular 51 of 2006 (GDE, 2006) is silent on the workloads of the IDSOs. The workloads of CMs are addressed in Collective Agreement 1 of 2008 and a lesser number of schools are allocated as compared to the current situation in Gauteng **(IDSO 1)**. There is no mention of IDSOs or cluster leaders in the Collective Agreement 1 of 2008 (ELRC, 2008) and in Gazette 300 of 2013 (RSA, 2013). Both the ELRC determinations and the gazetted national recommendations address the position of Circuit manager. This may imply that there is an inconsistency in the operations of IDSOs/ cluster leaders as per provincial work allocation and classification through circulars against the anticipated operations recommended by the National Department of Education (NDoE,2013) in terms of Gazette 300 of 2013.

It is therefore vital to determine the powers of the Provincial Education Department against the powers of the National Department of Education in relation to the policy and legislation on employment matters that may have resulted in inconsistencies across the country. Interpretation of the CA 1 of 2008 by IDSOs may arguably be different from the interpretation of the GDE. The IDSOs' interpretation of the CA 1 of 2008 is that they are supposed to be classified as CMs as they had been performing functions that very closely mirrored what the agreement allocates as CMs' functions **(IDSO 3).** The GDE employed IDSOs as DCES IDS **(IDSO 2)** which may imply that they are only classified by the GDE as DCESs and not CMs. This is a misunderstanding that may require clarification.

IDSO 2 confirmed that they were recruited as DCESs who were responsible for various aspects that are supposedly performed by CMs such as governance, leadership and management support and development when he stated that: "*Initially, IDSOs were known as Deputy Chief Education Specialists responsible for governance and management of schools – to support and monitor management and governance of schools*".

The interpretation of the agreements and legislative framework may be the core of the dispute between the IDSOs and the GDE which has not been resolved over the previous five years. This situation calls for the speedy clarification and definition of the duties and responsibilities of the various officials and development of job descriptions by the GDE which seem to be non-existent at the current moment. There is reluctance to resolve the impasse and the delay may be purposeful.

(d) **Lack of uniformity across provinces with regard to the operations of the IDSOs**

The IDSOs and **NP** highlighted that there was a complete lack of uniformity in terms of classification of the IDSOs as each province had different terminologies. **IDSO 2** confirmed that:

"In the North-West Province, IDSOs are called CMs, other provinces the IPO? So, there were different names used in reference to IDSOs". The IDSO further indicated that: *"The National Department (of Education) came up with a document so that there will be a uniform system to call everyone a Circuit Manager".*

Despite the dispute and changes, the IDSOs had continued to perform the functions pertaining to the school, SGBs and SMT support out of goodwill (Input of IDSO 3). The IDSOs also assisted when requested by the newly appointed CMs, who were the cluster leaders/ IDSOs' immediate supervisor implying that they no longer saw the function of supporting the schools as their function. **IDSO 1** stated that: "*Some IDSOs perform direct support on the basis of the matter at hand when they are at the schools*".

IDSO 2 confirmed the challenge and indicated that the work they had to do was not clarified, but noted that they assisted the CM with managing schools and collecting data. IDSO 2 mentioned that: "*Most of the time, we just collect information and give it to them (CMs) for them to continue with whatever processes and problems that schools have***".**

The IDSOs argued that they were now without any functions and they only function as messengers and information transporters between the CMs and the schools and that they were no longer confident to take any authority decisions as they may be challenged by schools based on the new organogram, which determined that the principals should report to the CMs. The IDSOs across the Gauteng Province, lodged a dispute with the employer at the ELRC on the reorganisation at its inception.

The IDSOs stated that although the reorganisation had been contested, the process went ahead and changes were effected. **IDSO**1 mentioned that: *"Thus far the IDSOs have gone to arbitration, at least three times, and it failed to obtain a solution to the impasse between the IDSOs and the GDE. The schools have been on the receiving end of the impasse over the last five years and the quality of education provision is negatively affected.*

The IDSOs went on a go-slow unofficially and performed minimal functions. They adhered to the normal public service working hours and did not do any work that was outside the working hours although their operations included meeting and supporting the SGBs who were at work at the time that the IDSOs were at work and therefore required time outside the normal office hours. The IDSOs continued to argue that the functions they were performing were the actual job functions of the CMs and as a result they handed the functions over unofficially as the functions of the CMs to their rightful officials **(IDSO 1 and IDSO 3).**

(d) Impact of the dispute between the IDSOs and their employers

The situation regarding the dispute between the GDE and the IDSOs continued for more than four years **(IDSO 3)** and it may have had a negative impact on the execution of the departmental mandates.

The fact that the GDE, as an employer, did not take any corrective measures with regard to the IDSOs, as their employees, as they may have been seen to have breached their contractual terms of appointment over this period was surprising. The failure of the employer to act may also be explained by the fact that the GDE realised that they did not have any leg to stand on in this as the IDSOs held on to the non-implementation of the collective agreements that would have seen them appointed as CMs (OSD, 2008) and were therefore, careful not to find itself facing the wrath of the law for contravention of the labour laws.

Regarding the documentation informing the reorganisation, the IDSOs categorically stated that the GDE did not have any signed legislation regarding the reorganisation approved by the MEC. According to **IDSO 3**, "*The GDE does not have a formal policy on the reorganisation except for the Gold book developed by Mathew Goniwe School of Leadership and Governance*"**. IDSO 3** further contested that IDSOs would like to see the document if it exists. The gold book classifies the IDSOs as Cluster Leaders **(IDSO 1)**. The implementation of the DOE's policy on organisation of districts could minimise and eradicate disputes on the basis on the roles and responsibilities in areas such as Institutional development and support.

The IDSOs would also be given an accurate classification by the employer which would assist with settling the dispute that was tearing education provision apart in the Gauteng Province. The IDSOs were dissatisfied with the representation they had received regarding the changes to their work from the labour unions that represented them in the ELRC **(IDSO 2 and IDSO 3).** Unions representing the IDSOs seem to have shunned the IDSOs as they were now handling their battle by themselves and funding the remediation and intervention processes from their own pockets.

According to **IDSO 1, IDSO 2 and IDSO 3,** the arbitration on the dispute had failed at the ELRC and the IDSOs in Gauteng had lodged a court case known as 'Khasu and 84 others vs the GDE'. The court case of the IDSOs was still in progress **(IDSO1, IDSO 2 and IDSO 3)** and as a result, unless drastic steps were taken to resolve the impasse urgently, the SMTs in Gauteng and their schools would continue to suffer because of the lack of support and development of the IDSOs.

(e) Capacity building for the IDSOs

Leadership development programmes are required for both new and experienced school leaders. According to Sullivan and Associates (2013) school leaders should be required to engage in development programmes and to update their knowledge and skills in leadership practices. These can be in the form of in-service programmes, induction programmes and initial training programmes (Sullivan & Associates, 2013). Induction can assist with introducing the newly-appointed school leaders with school leadership practices while in-service training would respond to specific needs. Stemming from the inputs by Sullivan and Associates, it is of concern that the IDSOs have not received any training on performance of their functions after the reorganisation.

IDSO 3 confirmed the lack of support and training by indicating that: "*I don't remember receiving any training. If you can check my previous Development Plan (PMDS), I have repeated every year areas where I would like to be developed on and none was addressed*".

The IDSOs' supervisors still lacked the confidence to engage them in support and development. The immediate supervisors of the IDSOs were themselves lacking the required expertise, therefore, they were not equipped or trained to perform their supervisory functions driving the functioning of the IDSOs further into crisis. According to **IDSO 1**, their supervisors, the CMs were taken from other units such as the CES: HRD and CES: Policy and Planning/ CES: Extra Curricular Support to become CMs. These officials did not possess any expertise and job knowledge of the IDSO or circuit management field and they have not been provided with any development and support to perform their functions (input of IDSO 1). They have actually been thrown into the deep end and they were expected to perform miracles as they were unsure of the work they had to do and thus, the lack of support for the SMTs (Input of IDSO 1).

(f) **Impact of the change in functioning of the IDSOs on support and development**

The situation of dispute between the GDE and the IDSOs seems to have crippled provision of high quality school support and development by the IDSOs in a multitude of ways which may include certain aspects that are discussed next.:

(f1) Frustration of schools

According to the IDSOs, schools were aware of the changes and they were also frustrated. **IDSO 1** emphasised that schools were the recipients of challenges resulting from the reorganisation. The **IDSO** stated that: "*But at the end of the day, the schools are suffering*". The IDSOs might have been experiencing a lack of motivation as well as feelings of disgruntlement and despondency because of the situation beset with frustration.

(f2) No job satisfaction for the IDSOs

According to Hocine and Zhang (2014), nowadays organisations experience poor supervision and poor working conditions and which are a hindrance to staff motivation and employee satisfaction.

The findings in this study indicate that the IDSOs had a low morale and that they longer experienced any job satisfaction and were also depressed as confirmed through the words of **IDSO 1** that: "*People are actually suppressed and they are unhappy*".

The IDSOs seemed to be experiencing high emotional stress because of the difficulties they faced with regard to their job functions and confusion regarding the changes to their operations and the lack of a proper job description and direct support of their supervisors and their employer, the GDE. Hocine and Zhang (2014) argue that the leaders of today are more concerned with motivating the employees. Motivation is a psychological process that commences with the existence of an intrinsic or extrinsic need that can be transformed into positive behaviour. A lack of this drive may lead to purposelessness and a routine performance by employees.

Hocine and Zhang (2014) cited Simon (1967) describes motivation as a mechanism by means of which a tightly organised goal hierarchy can be created and monitored for success. After careful analysis, it emerged that the IDSOs had lost their motivation, confidence and authority as they felt that they had now been reduced to messengers who carried information between the CM and the school principals with no powers to take any decision as their authority had been shifted to their CMs. In support of the above assertion, **IDSO 1** clearly stated that: "*We just collect information and give it to them (CMs for them to continue with whatever processes and problems that they (schools) have*".

The IDSOs' discontent with the change was expressed best in the words of **IDSO 3** who remarked that: "*If all this years what we were doing is a job description of CMs and we were not being paid at the level of the CMs and now the department sees that there are other people who can do that job better than us, at least they need to recognise the effort that we put in. They need to give us something for all the years for the work we have been, because in other Provinces IDSOs/ CMs were paid much higher than us in Gauteng*". IIn the same vein, IDSO 2 mentioned that: "*The department is taking our own job descriptions (IDSOs) and giving that to the CMs – and all the years we have been doing that*".

(f3) Recruitment, capacity and competency of the IDSOs and their supervisors

The current supervisors of the IDSOs, CMs, mostly became additional to the district establishments after the reorganisation and they were therefore transferred from other units at the districts such as the Human Resource Development (HRD), Policy and Planning (PP) and Curriculum Support Programme (CSP). The IDSO emphasised the lack of capacity, competency and understanding of the job functions of their immediate supervisors by stating that: *"That is a challenge because some of those CMS do not even understand those functions because they were just taken from other units and put in there and therefore you find yourself doing things you were not even supposed to do".*

IDSO 3 argued that proper induction was not done for both the IDSOs and their supervisors. The IDSO supported by stating that: "*It becomes a challenge because proper induction was not done to those people. They come from other units, Units like HR and Policy and Planning, others [were] coming from Curriculum*".

(f4) No performance management and development

The IDSOs were supposed to manage and monitor the implementation of the IQMS and PMDS and conduct the principals' IQMS but they claimed not to have been contracted for their PMDS in the last five years as the contracting required a job description which they still did not have. On non-contracting, **IDSO 3** remarked that: "*We are unable to contract in the process of PMDS because you cannot contract without a job description*".

IDSOs claimed to have received their 1% performance bonus just like any official although the PMDS had not been conducted. According to **IDSO3**: *"The department has its own ways of doing certain things. You will stay for a period of the past four years without doing the PMDS but one year you will just see the 1% and where did they get the PMDS from you don't kno*w".

(f5) No uniformity in the operations of the cluster leaders

According to IDSO 2, no opportunity for meeting and strategising had presented itself due to the dispute, which was affecting support for schools. The IDSO indicated that: "*since the new structure came into operation, we do not meet as IDSOs where we can sit and plan properly on the strategies that we are going to use. Everyone does his or her own things*".

IDSO 2 further claimed that there were no systems in place for support and confirmed by stating that: *"There is no guidance, there is no understanding on what we have to do, but however, the dashboard thing that we have just been developed on will really assist because we will be able to go and support schools on the basis of the data that has been submitted, so we can access in our office and plan our support"*.

(f6) Remuneration

The remuneration of principals is determined by the grading of their schools. The principals of bigger schools manage more educators and they earn higher salaries. The IDSOs who have been principals of bigger schools also earn high salaries than those who have moved into the area of the IDS from the DCES level and lower. The IDSOs were dissatisfied with their remuneration determination as some of them earned far less than the principals they were supposed to supervise.

IDSO 3 mentioned that: "*What is even bad is that in Gauteng, there are some of the IDSOs that are even earning far less than principals*". These were the matters that could have been addressed by their unions at the PSCBC and ELRC during negotiations with their employer, but it did not look like these matters that were addressed which may imply that the working conditions and employment benefits of the IDSOs had not received the attention of their labour representatives.

The next section addresses the findings and discussions from the documents that were analysed.

4.6. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS EMANATING FROM THE ANALYSIS OF DOCUMENTS

As stated in Chapter 3, I made efforts to access documents and evaluate their authenticity and credibility before using them (Denscombe, 2004). In the interest of the crystallisation of the data, documents were used to corroborate the evidence from other sources. The documents were used mainly to corroborate and confirm the inputs of the SMTs and the IDSOs regarding the support IDSOs provide to SMTs.

The minutes of the SMT meetings were analysed to determine how the process of providing support was handled at the three schools. The log book (Incident record book kept by the school in which important internal and external decisions and visitations are recorded) for impactful incidents and visits by the IDSOs. Records of the IDSOs' visits were read and analysed from the log book. The IDSOs' visit reports relevant to the support provided by the IDSOs to the SMTs were read and analysed. The IDSOs' weekly planning and monthly plans and reports were also considered for analysis, while the school readiness and intervention reports were requested to track the level of interventions and support provided by the IDSOs.

Strategic planning, school profiles, school development and improvement documents were requested to determine the extent to which the IDSOs participate in and supported schools with their development and improvement planning. The IQMS, IWSE and PMDS records were scrutinised for approval of the IDSOs.

4.6.1. Observations and findings made with regard to the document analysis:

There were insufficient evidential records to back-up some of the claims of school visits and the SMTs supported by the IDSOs but there was little evidence of support of the SMTs, while there was support for principals. Poor management of the records was observed regarding keeping track of the visitation and support of the IDSOs by schools.

(a) Logbook records by the IDSOs

The SMTs kept their **logbooks** safely in the principals' offices. These were the records from which details of the IDSOs' visits were accessed and used as a source of data. These were analysed to determine how the process of support was handled in different schools. It was realised that the logbook recording had not been maintained as required by some of the IDSOs as they were supposed to complete the logbook after these visitations to their schools indicating the date and purpose of their visits.

Some schools would go for as long as three months without any IDSO record in the logbook, which may imply that there were no records. Log books were signed and completed by some of the IDSOs but the process of signing the logbooks was not consistent. According to **IDSO 1**, "*Reporting is usually logged in the logbook. We do not always write reports – sometimes we just fill in forms like the nine areas, School readiness*".

(b) Minutes of the IDSOs' meetings with the SMTs

The schools kept records of their SMT meetings. The minutes were available but the minutes only reflected the SMT meetings and no record of meetings and empowerment sessions with the IDSOs could be provided. In effect,, there had not been any empowerment sessions between the SMTs and the IDSOs as no records could be found. The keeping and recording of the minutes of meetings with the IDSOs was a weakness at all three schools. All the three schools had no records of minutes of meetings between the IDSOs and the SMT. Meetings are held with the principal and SMTs are not included and no records of such meetings are kept by schools.The fact that only the IDSOs and the principals met and that no meetings and support sessions were held with the other SMT members may be contributory to the absence of minutes of the IDSOs participation in the schools. None of the three schools could provide any evidence of any minutes. Reliance was placed on the log books which were seen as a summary of the records of the IDSOs visits. However, this record did not necessarily cover all aspects of the visit as some may have been confidential.

(c) Job descriptions of the IDSOs

The relevant circulars (addressing the functions of the IDSOs) and other available documents were sourced from various offices and from the IDSOs. These were requested to enable the researcher to determine the depth of the available information on the roles and responsibilities of the IDSOs. These enabled the researcher to locate the functions and responsibilities of the IDSOs with regard to to the SMT support and helped to discard the unrealistic expectations from the SMTs. The documents confirmed that the IDSOs had a support and development function towards the SMTs and not only to the principal. The job descriptions of the IDSOs were seen to have been extrapolated from a variety of documents: Collective Agreement 01 of 2008 and Circular 51 of 2006.

Other documents which were found to address functioning of the IDSOs/ Cluster Leaders and CMs were the Gold book (creating a culture of support : A guide for district officials), Government Gazette Notice 300 of 2013, Circular 25 of 2008 and Circular 2 of 2015. The functions listed in the documents mentioned above are too vast and would require reduction of the number of schools allocated per IDSO to enable them to do justice to the work of supporting and developing schools.

(d) Appointment letters of the IDSOs

Appointment confirmation letters of the IDSOs which they were supposed to have received when they were placed in the circuits during the reorganisation could also provide more information about the revised functions of the IDSOs. These documents were sought to enable the researcher to get a direct glimpse of the contents relevance of their discussions in the meetings - These were not available from all three IDSOs.

The impact of non-availability of job descriptions was again mentioned as a hindrance to development of instruments. **IDSO 2** remarked that "*You know, as I indicated, another problem is that it is very difficult for people to enforce the use of certain things because of a lack of Job description*".

(e) Planning and reporting by IDSOs

The weekly and monthly plans and reports of the IDSOs were supposed to provide information on the actual operations of IDSOs. It was found that some IDSOs had their weekly and monthly plans and reports while some were scanty or even non-existent. There was no uniformity regarding the planning and reporting structure of the IDSOs as they each had their own plans and own formats. This reflected a clear lack of coordination by the IDSOs' supervisors and a lack of uniformity and proper supervision regarding the functioning of the IDSOs/ Cluster Leaders. The IDSOs' school visit reports, mostly records of school readiness verifications were available and signed by the IDSOs.

These were detailed reports indicating the activities that had taken place during their weekly activities, achievements and challenges. The school principals kept the school IDSOs' visit reports in the strong rooms. However, these were not shared with the SMTs. These could assist with bringing the SMTs into contact with information on the IDSOs' visits.

(f) Instruments used by the IDSOs

Copies of instruments used by some of the IDSOs for school visits and support were available at the schools. These were signed and included school readiness checking and a finance control template. In the past, such instruments were developed by the provincial education department for monitoring purposes and instructions were given to the districts for implementation. However, there were no circuit school support and monitoring instruments and the IDSOs indicated that they each used their own approach and template for their school visits. They relied completely on the log book recording.

The issue of common uniform instruments for use by the clusters, circuits and the district was clarified by **IDSO1** when he remarked that: *"We create our own instruments. Then, we used to create instruments as a district. With our CES: IDS – but presently, we do it as a circuit"*. Confirming the absence of uniform instruments across the circuits and the district.

IDSO 2 indicated: *"One document was developed by IDSOs in the unit previously known as the IDS unit in 2013. The second document that I am using was created by finance unit… It was used for monitoring of finances in the schools"*.

In terms of monitoring and support, there was a lack of uniformity and common approach to school support records. Each IDSO used his own recording methods and instruments. In some instances, the school visitations, such as the verification of school readiness were conducted by other district officials instead of the IDSOs which might have been due to the under-staffing and the limited number of IDSOs allocated to the schools. These officials completed the documents and submitted them to the circuit management. The IDSOs did not follow-up and use the findings as a basis for support to the schools.

(g) Strategic planning, SIP and profiles of schools

Strategic planning, school profiles, school development and improvement documents were requested to determine the extent to which the IDSOs participate in and supported schools with their development and improvement planning. The schools had profiles and the SIPs, which had been prepared recently with the guidance of the IDSOs that were signed off by the IDSOs.

The IDSOs also had records of the approved school profiles and also signed the school profiles and the SIPs of their schools although they had not participated in the development of these plans and documents. Project plans on various school support and development programmes were sought to enable the researcher to determine the depth of SMT support with school development projects. School development was only mentioned on the SIPs which were signed by the IDSOs. However, there were no signs or documents supporting the IDSO's participation and contribution to the school's strategic plans and development plans.

(h) IQMS, IWSE and PMDS records

The IQMS, IWSE and PMDS records were sourced to determine the participation of and approval of the IDSOs in the processes covered in these documents. The IWSE and EWSE reports of the schools were supposed to provide information on the role played by the IDSO in the WSE processes.

One school had undergone the WSE process and had recommendations that were issued for intervening and remedying the issues indicated in the findings. The findings had not been addressed and the schools did not have any SDPs but simplified IWSE documents. Schools did not seem to have the confidence to develop their SDPs and relied completely on the SIPs developed from their IQMS processes. There was no evidence of the IDSOs' direct involvement in the processes except for the signatures appended to the principals' IQMS evaluations and the SIP that were filed.

(i) Records of SMT training after appointment – Induction and in-service training

Globally, leadership support and development is prioritised. Countries such as Sweden, Australia and England provide in-service training for school leaders as a form of leadership development (Sullivan & Associates, 2013). There is no documentary evidence of SMT induction, training and support provided by the IDSOs after their appointments. In effect, schools were left to see to it that induction took place within their schools. The responsibility to induct newly appointed SMTs and staff is also a function of the principals. Induction of the newly appointed SMTs is sometimes provided by the Teacher Development (TD) and Curriculum Units (District).

District memoranda inviting SMTs induction sessions were available at the schools. The principals indicated that they handled the induction of the newly appointed SMT members on their own and they acknowledged that they were inducted by their IDSOs upon their appointment but no evidential records could be provided.

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There were no records of feedback to schools regarding the IDSOs' visits received by schools. There is a need for the education authorities to pay attention to the management of support programmes offered to school leaders.

Records of training have to be available and maintained by the employees as proof of their support. Training records are also required for the IQMS to confirm that the identified needs have been addressed by the evaluees and their DSG and the SDT, but no evidence could be provided at the schools studied, although the assurance was given that training had been attended. Schools need to improve their record management, which usually serves as evidence and support documents.

4.7. SUMMARY OF THE ANALYSIS OF SUPPORT FUNCTIONS OF IDSOs FOR SMTS

This chapter focussed on the data analysis process, which looked at the processes followed during data transcription, identification of the key words and categories emanating from the interviews and documents collected for analysis. In addition, information was provided on the participants and the research sites. The chapter also provided a discussion of the emergent themes based on the analysis of the interview and documented data. The participants' voices and inputs were brought into the chapter to share their in-depth perceptions of the support provided to the SMTs by the IDSOs, as well as the challenges and successes arising from the support or the lack of support. A plethora of documents addressing the functions and duties of the SMTs and the IDSOs were also perused and studied and these enabled the researcher to link the documented functions with the actual practices observed in the real world.

Accordingly, conclusions could be drawn that without any doubt, the IDSOs have a responsibility to support the SMTs of the schools, which would make education delivery better. The study managed to infuse the underpinning four-factor leadership theory into the data throughout the process of analysing the support and development provided to the SMTs by their IDSOs. That is, a leader at a higher level of the hierarchy provides support and development to leaders at lower levels.

The four-factor leadership helped the researcher to have a better understanding of how the SMTs are supported by the districts and the IDSOs and how they interact with one another and interpret support.

The IDSOs and SMT members demonstrated a clear understanding and knowledge of their functions and the differences in their post levels. They understood very well that they had to function collectively as a team although their responsibilities were demarcated according to the specific positions they occupied.

The above statement concurs with the four-factor theory of leadership on the social interactions within the organisation for development of the individuals within the organisation. Researchers on leadership today appreciate the view of leadership as a collective effort. The proper practice of the shared and distributed leadership approach can eradicate the practice by principals and the IDSOs from leaving the SMTs out of the developmental sessions and meetings at their schools that involve the activities for which they could account directly than have to receive the information through the principal and have feedback given through the principal. This will be more progressive and lead to more direct accountability by the SMTs.

The inputs of the research participants confirm the applicability of the four-factor theory of leadership that maintains that leaders are expected to handle functions such as work orientation and facilitation, goal identification and emphasis and promote teamwork and interaction in the school (Bowers & Seashore, 1966). By inference, the IDSOs, as leaders, must be competent in handling aspects such as the vision and mission formulation, policy development, work orientation and facilitation, goal identification and emphasis and promote teamwork and interaction in the school. They should be able to work with the school stakeholders in developing their SDPs.

NH2 opined that the leadership support of the IDSOs could have a positive impact on the operations of the schools and that IDSOs could shed light on various aspects of school leadership and development. The promoted the SMTs' need to be taken through induction and support to prepare them and strengthen their confidence and as newly-appointed managers.

Education is not stagnant and it requires continuous development and growth for the SMTs as they have to keep up with the changing environment and demands of the system. In terms of the induction and capacity building programmes, SMTs believe that as managers of the schools, they could benefit from being inducted by the IDSOs in various aspects of leadership and management after appointment.

Principals and deputy principals who have been properly inducted by their IDSOs would be in a position to induct newly appointed heads of departments (HODs) and educators could thus maintain a high level of management and leadership in all aspects of directing the schools. The SMTs and the IDSOs both indicated that the IDSOs need to be supported, trained and capacitated in the performance of their functions by their supervisors in order for the challenges facing the IDSOs in the performance of their duties to be addressed **Input of NP, IDSO 1).** The IDSOs could benefit from being provided with workshops on their functions to bring about consistency in the operations **(Input of TP).**

From the many inputs discussed above, one can conclude that although the SMTs did not have a very clear understanding of the legislated functions of the IDSOs but they did have expectations of being supported by the IDSOs and they were confident that if they could be supported directly by their IDSOs/ Cluster Leaders, their management of schools would improve considerably as they can have a thorough knowledge of the department and direct exposure to the continuing and current developments and trends in education.

This chapter paved the way for a discussion of the findings and recommendations that will be addressed in the next and final chapter. The next chapter is the last chapter of the study and will therefore provide the summary of the study, detail and interpret the findings, draw conclusions based on the findings and make recommendations based on the researcher's findings and interpretation.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

5.1. INTRODUCTION

This study set out to determine how the IDSOs supported the SMTs in the development and overall improvement of their schools. This is the final chapter of this study and it is imperative to summarise the key aspects including the interpretation of the findings and make recommendations based on the findings and conclusions reached. Suggestions for further research in the field of education leadership and support are also given. In this final chapter of the study, the conclusions are drawn from the findings of the researcher as well as recommendations, which can have value for future research. These can have an impact on the current and future state of the provision of support to school leaders and management.

The previous chapter discussed the educational leadership support which can be briefly delineated as the deliberate and focused attempt by a senior official such as an IDSO to lead, manage, guide, develop, mentor, coach and engage with subordinate SMTs in an educational setting. This study intended to share the views of the IDSOs, principals and other SMT members with regard to management support and development.

To obtain in-depth and rich data, the study posed the following primary research question: How do the Institutional Development and Support Officials (IDSOs) support the School Management Teams (SMTs) in the development of their schools?

The four research sub-questions were:
- How do the SMTs understand the roles and functions of the IDSOs?
- How do the IDSOs perform their functions of supporting the SMTs with developing their schools?
- What are the challenges and successes experienced by the IDSOs when performing their roles and functions?
- What strategies do the IDSOs use when supporting the SMTs?

5.2. SUMMARY AND INTERPRETATION OF THE FINDINGS

In chapter 4 (See Page 97) of the study, themes were outlined and analysed with the aim of answering the research questions in Chapter 1 (Page 7). These themes were also evaluated to determine whether the purpose of the study identified in Chapter 1 was realised. The purpose of the study was to investigate whether IDSOs support SMTs with development of their schools.

This was done by summarising and interpreting the findings of this study based on the four themes identified in Chapter 4. The interpretation was in line with the research questions. The reflections on the findings enabled me to come to an informed conclusion and to make recommendations.

The themes that emanated from the interviews and documents analysis interlocked with the research questions and they all responded accurately to the main research question: How do the Institutional Development and Support Officials support School Management Teams in the development of their schools? (See page 7)

.These themes are:

- Mutual understanding of the role of IDSOs.
- Support strategies used by the IDSOs for supporting the SMTs and schools.
- Challenges and successes experienced by the IDSOs when supporting the SMTs as viewed by SMTs.
- Changes on the work that the IDSOs do and the impact thereof on support provided to SMTs.

These themes also addressed the four factors of the four-factor theory of leadership. They articulated support as a key function of the SMTs and IDSOs and put emphasis on the goals of the SMTs and IDSOs. The themes highlighted the nature of interdependence in the various levels of the education department and the importance of facilitation of work through a variety of support strategies used by IDSOs in supporting SMTs to develop their schools.

5.2.1. Summary of findings from the Literature

The findings made from the literature (See Chapter 2) are outlined below:

The work that is done by IDSOs has been an area that carried a negative reputation because of the bad practices that were carried out by the apartheid-era inspectors in black schools (See Booysen (2010) and Nkambule (2010) on pages 25-27). SMTs still see them as inspectors. These officials occupy an important space in the structure which is responsible for support and development of schools.

Furthermore, it has been found that the IDSO level has always been a neglected layer in the department of education bureaucratic structure and as a result of the neglect, the officials assigned as IDSOs do not function fully and they are not happy with their work.

It was also noted that as discussed in Chapter 2, support is important but it is not paid attention to by the officials assigned to perform this function. Further discussion analysis of lack of support for SMTs was discussed in Chapter 4 (See inputs of Van der Berg et al (2011) on page 52 and Narsee (2005) on page 53-4).

Lastly, the IDSOs have been reclassified (See Walsh et al (2013) on page 53) with little or no consultation by their employer, Gauteng Department of Education. This reclassification has resulted in major disagreements between the IDSOs and the Department resulting in a collapse of support for schools.

5.2.2. Summary of the findings from the empirical study

5.2.2.1. Mutual understanding of the roles and functions of the IDSOs

The main finding here is that there is complete confusion on the part of both the SMTs and IDSOs on the functioning of the IDSOs which seems to be fuelled by the dispute between the IDSOs, who are now also known as Cluster Leaders, and their employer, GDE, which was brought about by the current organogram of the GDE.

The summary findings are discussed and interpreted below. In terms of role clarification, this study has shown that the SMTs perform many school leadership and management functions for which they require the support of their IDSOs.

The duties of the SMTs highlighted in the study pointed squarely to the need for the support and development of the IDSOs for the SMTs. These included the direct support and development of the SMTs with the management of the IQMS processes and moderating scores, planning and supporting the staff development and promoting capacity building. Other duties were curriculum delivery through promoting, facilitating and monitoring of the curriculum policies, providing curriculum guidance and monitoring education delivery.

The study further revealed that the roles and functions of the IDSOs were only clearly known to and understood by the senior SMT members, namely: principals and some deputy principals, while the HODs have very limited understanding of the roles and functions IDSOs have to perform. This might have been due to a lack of interest and ignorance as they assumed that the IDSOs were only there to support the principals and not all the SMT members. Only a few of the senior managers of the schools were aware of the legislative documents used in the determination of the functions and operations of the IDSOs. This was a worrying aspect as one would expect school leaders to have an understanding of the work that had to be done by the district and the officials assigned to their schools, especially in terms of support and development.

The IDSOs did not manage to completely perform their support and development functions due to various challenges including having too many schools allocated to them and too many functions, some which could be handled by other directorates and units from the districts and circuits. The SMTs saw the IDSOs as the principals' supervisors because of their direct focus and engagement with the heads of schools. The IDSOs only focussed on the development of school principals and rarely supported the development of other SMT members.

This finding confirms that there was an absolute neglect and exclusion of the SMTs from the support provided by the IDSOs and that the lower level SMT members felt neglected and completely excluded from the support and development provided by the IDSOs. The SMTs were not satisfied with only receiving feedback from the principals after the visit by the IDSO, and they concurred that this situation could be improved by the involvement of the SMTs during some of the IDSOs' visits.

The SMTs would like the approaches of the IDSOs to be revised to ensure that they are also supported. The IDSOs had not offered any direct support to SMTs, instead, they used the cascading model apparently because of their considerable workloads, the non-availability of time and unavailability of other SMT members during their visits which took place during teaching and learning time. The practice of excluding the SMTs from the direct support of the IDSO had resulted in the limited functionality and a lack of development for the teams that were supposed to manage the schools. The IDSOs discussed the areas pertaining to school development with the principals and the SMTs would sometimes be informed duly by the principals about their discussions.

The SMTs would have preferred to have a working relationship and collaboration with the IDSO, which could bring about an improvement in the management and development of schools as they would know and understand the expectations of their IDSOs rather than hearing from the principal at all times. The SMTs insisted that despite their classroom programmes, a schedule should be worked out to accommodate them in interaction with the IDSOs. They were of the view that if the school engagements with the IDSOs could be planned well, direct support for the SMTs could be realised. This requires proper and timely planning and an open relationship and understanding between the IDSOs and the SMTs. The willingness to change is another aspect that is required for changing the current practices.

Regarding the functions of the IDSOs, it was asserted that there was a job description that was not agreed to by the IDSOs. It was noted that more circulars that were released would, in one way or another, prescribe an additional function to the IDSOs. Perhaps the departments need to provide a clear-cut job description for the IDSOs with clear key objectives and the expected work standards.

The determination of job descriptions by the immediate supervisors need to be revised and uniformity maintained with regard to the duties of the IDSOs across the districts and the entire province. The SMTs alleged that there are no formal role and responsibility descriptions of the IDSOs/ Cluster Leaders had been shared with the schools resulting in schools remaining uninformed about the changes and reforms in their work spaces.

Confusion will continue if schools are not made aware of the work and support functions of the district officials, which may result in people just doing as they deem fit without being questioned on how they are doing their work. It is, therefore, vital for such responsibilities to be communicated to the schools. The SMTs have an expectation that all the IDSOs have expertise in school leadership, administration and management as they are supposed to have been former principals and thus they are regarded as the principals' immediate supervisors in the educational hierarchy.

This is, however, not the case as the recruitment of the IDSOs does not list principalship as a prerequisite. This could be another area that may require a review to ensure that the IDSOs have thorough knowledge and understanding of the area of heading a school and providing support to the SMTs.

5.2.2.2. How the IDSOs perform their functions (Strategies)

IDSOs face many challenges in performance of their functions which is worsened by the perceived lack of support and development. Findings made regarding how IDSOs perform their functions are discussed below.

The main finding to emerge in this theme is that there were signs of a lack of a school support system for the SMTs by the IDSOs, circuits and the districts. The foci of the IDSOs' support were the principals of the schools. This is problematic because of the provision that the principal is the only accountable official for his/her school.

All the SMT members need to realise that they have to function as a coherent unit and in many instances, be held accountable for the occurrences at their schools by the IDSOs, circuits and the district. This study revealed that there is confusion with regard to the functioning of the IDSOs, and it affects the entire system negatively. The confusion impacts on the determination of how the IDSOs perform their functions. Currently, there seems to be little progress in terms of the support provided by the IDSOs to schools. Confusion, demoralisation and unwillingness to work seem to be reigning in the functioning of the IDSOs. The functions the IDSOs performed over the years related and referred directly to the general school and SMT support and development.

The IDSOs knew and understood that they were employed to support the entire school but they performed this function on an individual basis because of the disputes with which they were involved with the GDE because of a new organogram. However, whether IDSOs serve as Deputy Chief Education Specialists (DCESs), Cluster Leaders or CMs, their responsibilities involve the support and development on school leadership and management, which is the area of responsibility occupied by the SMTs and not the principals of schools alone. This study found that due to their challenging and cumbersome responsibilities, the IDSOs only focused on the development of school principals and rarely supported development of other SMT members. The IDSOs did not offer any direct support to the SMTs.

The IDSOs were found to make use of the cascading approach with regard to supporting the SMTs and the schools through the principals' offices. They expected the principals to brief and give feedback of the IDSO's visit to all the SMT members, thereby implying that the SMTs were excluded from matters that concerned their functions and operations as school managers and leaders. The cascading approach had bred dissatisfaction amongst the SMTs but this state of affairs had not been challenged by the SMTs because of the assumption that the IDSOs were there to support the principals and not all the SMT members and also due to fear of victimisation and respect for the authority of the IDSO as a departmental representative.

Some IDSOs were seen by the SMTs as having neglected their functions wilfully in support of their resistance to the alleged forced change to their job titles and possibly to their functions. The wilful neglect and dereliction of work is a chargeable offence for which the IDSOs could have been taken through a disciplinary and corrective process by their employer if, indeed, they were acting in contravention of their contracts of employment, but thus far, none of this has occurred. The unnecessary creation of emergencies out of normal situations is experienced due to the poor planning or improper and slow implementation of plans that affect school preparations. With proper planning, the IDSOs and SMTs would know in time what is expected from their schools by the department and include these in their term and annual planning and ensure that the required submissions are prepared in time and submitted as required.

The SMTs were expected to prepare the documents and information within extremely tight timeframes due to pressure from their IDSOs who were also expected to provide the required information and reports at short notice from their seniors. The IDSOs frequently visited schools without making a prior appointment in time, which resulted from a lack of proper planning and a schedule of work. Furthermore, the IDSOs did not seem to have annual and quarterly plans informed by the activities of the past years. Departmental activities should be streamlined throughout the year and follow the same patterns. Such plans could assist with enabling schools to plan in line with the IDSOs' support and visitation programmes. Disruption to school operations was not raised with the IDSOs or circuits by the SMTs but it was an area with which the SMTs were not satisfied and about which they would like to see an improvement. Proper planning could also ease any unnecessary pressure on the SMTs and enable them to produce high-quality reports and information.

The IDSOs tended to work in silos that resulted in a lack of uniformity with regard to the operations of the IDSOs. The IDSOs knew and understood that they were employed to support the entire school but they performed this function on an individual basis. Uniform functions could enable the sharing of good practices and knowledge between the IDSOs who seemed to be working in isolation from their peers. It was revealed that most of the SMT members were not satisfied with the manner in which the IDSOs interacted with and supported the SMTs and they would like to have had more direct engagement with the IDSOs.

The IDSOs' approach to school support and development was interpreted as more of a "hit-and run" and "microwave" style, meaning that it was done quickly and abruptly. When conducting school visitations, most IDSOs would just pass-by to check if all was well and spent very little time at the school. Mostly, there were no planned intensive interventions in place for the SMTs. There was a complete lack of coherence in the operations of the IDSOs that resulted in lingering confusion among the SMTs on the functions of the IDSOs. Due to the lack of coherence, the practices of the IDSOs had become individual and varied and therefore, the IDSOs who were supposed to be doing the same work in terms of their duty allocations used completely different approaches when performing their allocated duties.

They confirmed that they each used their own approaches and strategies, which they deemed fit when attempting to support the schools. They did not have any uniform plans and neither did they share any common goals and operations. In short, the operations of the IDSOs were not standardised across the districts, resulting is each IDSO using his/her own tools for monitoring and supporting for his/her schools.

There were currently no common instruments for school monitoring and support for the IDSOs. The IDSOs used their own tools for school support. The WSE document was the only document, which all the IDSOs were supposed to use when visiting schools but it was not utilised fully. There seemed to be IDSOs who did not support schools at all, while others performed the required functions with limitations. The district and cluster system would require getting rid of such practices and having complete control over the functioning of the IDSOs/Cluster Leaders.

Furthermore, the monitoring instruments used should cut across all the districts and circuits. The SMT members insinuated that some of the IDSOs did not provide sufficient and high-quality support, but there were some IDSOs who paid full attention to detail when visiting and supporting the schools. The operation of the IDSOs with regard to supporting schools completely depended on the personality and attitudes of the IDSOs towards their work. In the uncontrolled and poorly supervised environment that was currently prevailing in the area of school support and development, the IDSOs with their poor work ethics just performed minimal support functions, while others just visited schools willy-nilly just to put in an appearance.

The IDSOs were also found to use a top-down approach of communication and management as they only gave instruction to schools and they were not open to any inputs and suggestion from the SMTs. This may be the result of the bureaucratic nature of the education department. The IDSOs did not run developmental workshops for SMTs. No workshops and developmental support sessions were provided by the IDSOs for the interviewed SMTs over an extended period. Most of the participants further revealed that they had not had any accountability sessions with the IDSOs. Only the principals had to account for the performance of their schools. The accounting sessions tended to pressure the participants to prepare thoroughly for these sessions.

5.2.2.3. Challenges and successes experienced by the IDSOs

Numerous challenges were highlighted in this study with extremely few successes about which the SMTs raised concerns. The major challenge experienced by the IDSOs in relation to supporting the SMTs was the lack of a proper job description outlining their functions and the standards they had to attain. As a result of having no proper job descriptions, the IDSOs claimed that they were expected to perform various functions by schools and other district officials that were not necessarily their functions.

The IDSOs are currently in dispute with their employer due to the non-availability of job descriptions, leading them to unsure of what is expected of them. The provision of a job description is supposed to be done by their immediate seniors who seem to be unsure of what is expected of them as they have not received sufficient support with regard to implementing the changes that came with the reforms in the districts and the GDE structure.

The IDSOs and SMTs identified heavy workloads as a further major challenge experienced by the IDSOs because the high workload made it difficult, if not impossible for the IDSOs to reach all the schools to which they are assigned and to provide high-quality support to and promote the development of all the SMT members.

Both the SMTs and the IDSOs confirmed that the IDSOs were allocated a large number of schools, which resulted in overloading that impacted negatively on the effective support and development of schools. Consequently, they were unable to adhere to their plans due to their heavy workloads. In addition, the IDSOs had congested school visits which were sometime unplanned because all the schools required some form of support, and as a result, they spent less time than they would like to have with the schools, due to the heavy workloads assigned to them. The visits were not as beneficial as they should have been because they had to ensure that they visited their schools within the given timeframes and covered large volumes of required areas, which is cumbersome and demanding. IDSO could provide more beneficial and focussed support to the SMTs if they could have between seven and eight schools at the most, which was not the case currently.

High work volumes were identified as another challenge facing the IDSOs that impacted on their effectiveness. They were expected to deal with all aspects of the school operations but it was impossible for them to give justice to all aspects of school support. Section 36 of Gazette 300 of 2013 (RSA, 2013a) determines that to guard against the maximum limit becoming a *de facto* norm, another norm, in 36.1, is that: In any district, the number of schools per circuit must not exceed 25. Section 36.1 implies that the number of schools that could be allocated per Cluster Leader/ IDSO would be 6 to 7 at most considering the additional post of circuit manager.

The argument of heavy workloads stands resolutely. The allocation of many schools does not allow the IDSOs sufficient time to support the SMTs adequately. Poor planning by the IDSOs and the ineffective utilisation of their time was mentioned as a factor that affected their school visits. The IDSOs needed to visit at least one school per day to provide high- quality support and allow themselves time to give proper and undivided attention to school support.

The absence of evidential minutes and other support and development documents indicating that the IDSOs had engaged with the SMTs reflected poor practices with regard to information management and confirmed the fact that there was a clear lack of interaction between the IDSOs and the SMTs.

However, the log book records in some of the schools reflected that the IDSOs supported principals with their functions. The reception of the IDSOs in schools was found to be a contested area as most SMTs were unimpressed with the approach used by their IDSOs to support and help them develop, as no support and development had taken place. The principals were the centre of the focus with regard to any form of support provided by the IDSOs to schools, resulting in a complete lack of direct support for the SMTs who were supposed to be the engines of their school development and leadership.

Despite the numerous challenges highlighted, some positives were also unearthed in this study and these included the fact that the IDSOs had provided leadership development opportunities for the principals through a variety of empowerment programmes including the induction and mentoring of newly appointed principals.

5.2.2.4. Findings on Changes on the work that the IDSOs do and the impact thereof on support provided to SMTs.

This section focused on the findings that were made regarding Changes on the work that the IDSOs do and the impact thereof on support provided to SMTs. These findings are discussed below:

The IDSOs were displeased with their reclassification from IDSOs to Cluster Leaders. They were unsure what informed their renaming and reclassification. The displeasure they feel is affecting the provision of support to schools. The IDSOs knew themselves as IDSOs and not Cluster Leaders. The term 'IDSO' is still in full use across the department. Departmental communication such as circulars still refer to the IDSOs and sometimes utilise the terms interchangeably. The IDSOs were of the opinion that their peers in other provinces were, in fact, referred to as CMs in line with the national policy. They do not understand why the GDE introduced a level below the CMs, which is supposed to be occupied by them which may also be having financial implications. It was revealed that there had not been any capacity-building for the IDSOs to enable them to keep up with developments in their area of work over many years. The lack of development had a negative effect on the new circuit and cluster recruits who found themselves without any support after being appointed.

As a result of the absence of capacity building, the IDSOs had been starved of the necessary skills and growth required in their day-to-day school support responsibilities. The IDSOs argued that their immediate supervisors were new in the field of circuit management and who, therefore, lacked the necessary skills, knowledge and expertise required in the area of school support and development and had also not received any training and reskilling and therefore, the IDSOs did not have any confidence in the expertise of their supervisors.

The IDSOs experienced job dissatisfaction, a low morale and intense emotional stress because of the difficulties they faced with regard to their job functions and confusion regarding the changes to their operations and a lack of a proper job description. Confusion reigned in the area in which the IDSOs functioned. Not only were the IDSOs demotivated, they were also failing to motivate the SMTs.

5.3. Recommendations

The findings above have potential to worsen the already ailing education system and thus require recommendations that could be considered to improve the current situation and practices.

5.3.1. Recommendations for promotion of mutual understanding of the functions of IDSOs

From the findings, it has become clear that there is a definite and urgent need for changes to the approaches used by the IDSOs when supporting the SMTs. It was also noted that the SMTs did not function in teams and they needed to be supported by their IDSOs. On the basis of these findings, the following recommendations are proposed:

- The SMTs have to ensure that they keep abreast of developments in their areas of work and within the Department of Education. The department communicates clearly through circulars, memos and gazettes to ensure that all the employees know and understand the direction that the department is taking.
- The SMTs, as leaders, have to know and understand the policies and legislative frameworks including the operations and functions of the ELRC and PSCBC, which determine the conditions of employment of departmental employees.
- Changes must be implemented in a transparent manner and with sufficient consultation with the relevant parties.
- The education authorities should organise road-shows to discuss and inform employees about relevant changes.

5.3.2. Recommendations to improve the manner in which IDSOs perform their functions

The following are recommended to bring about an improvement in the performance of the IDSOs:

- Recruitment of the IDSOs should be based strictly on the expertise of the candidates in the area of institutional support and development. Thorough vetting and competency testing for IDSO post candidates should be carried out to ensure that the appointed officials have the requisite expertise and the capacity to provide support to and promote the development of the schools.

- The criteria for the recruitment of the IDSOs need to take the depth of the functions have to perform into account they. Prior experience as a school principal could help equip the IDSOs with the knowledge and expertise required by the position of the IDSO. At least five years' experience as a principal could be included as a prerequisite for appointment to the position of an IDSO.

- The proper and timely planning by the IDSOs can help to improve the short notice visits to schools as well as the disruption of schools' plans.

- The circuit management should provide clear guidelines on the functioning of IDSOs/Cluster Leaders regarding school visits. They also have to develop instruments that would have to be used by all the IDSOs/Cluster Leaders for school visits and for reporting.

- The IDSOs can address various aspects of school leadership and management with teams of managers from their clusters and within the circuits or across the entire district. This could equip the IDSOs with a variety of skills enabling them to share the expertise in their areas and to learn from their colleagues.

- The introduction of an upward reporting and feedback system on the IDSOs' functionality by the SMTs should be done with regard to the support provided by the IDSOs. The system can be used by both the districts and circuits to evaluate the levels of support and development provided by the IDSOs and CMs to the SMTs and schools.

- Accountability sessions should be held by the IDSOs' supervisors with the IDSOs to ensure that they account for the support provided to each of the schools to which they were assigned. Accounting sessions for the entire SMTs also need to be conducted by the IDSOs.

- Detailed uniform reporting standards and reporting instruments for use by the IDSOs and their supervisors should be introduced to push for the IDSOs to be held accountable by their immediate seniors at the district offices as this will push them to visit the schools regularly and also motivate them to have proper reports on how they were supporting the schools. The districts should therefore and not leave the function to individual circuits and clusters.

5.3.3. Recommendations for turning the challenges of the DSOs and SMTs into successes

It is important to improve on the challenges experienced by the IDSOs and bring stability to their operations and ensure the maximising of support to and development opportunities for schools. The following recommendations are made:

- The implementation of the national departmental policy on the organisation of districts in its current form by the GDE will resolve the *impasse* between the GDE and the IDSOs or alternatively, the reform on the functioning of districts, which include that the clusters should be documented and this should be written into a policy. If the GDE prefers and still values the cluster classification of the districts, the correct human resource allocation and clarity of operations should be attended to. Importantly, proper and sufficient communication and consultation should take place.
- There should be an urgent resolution of the *impasse* between the IDSOs and the employer, so that this issue is finalised and so that a decision can be taken on the duties of the IDSOs/ cluster leaders. The PMDS must be signed and a job description must be provided for the IDSOs.
- A reduction in the number of schools and the workloads allocated per IDSO in line with the national policy on district organisation should be effected. This can enable the IDSOs to provide better, direct and more focussed support both to the SMTs and the schools.
- The introduction of uniform operations and service standards for the IDSOs can promote the uniform and effective functioning of their service across the circuits, clusters and the district.
- Improved planning by the SMTs should be carried out that includes the dates of meetings with the IDSOs at various levels of the school.

5.3.4. Recommendations on changes on the work that the IDSOs do and the impact thereof on support provided to SMTs.

The following are recommended to address the changes on the work of IDSOs:

- The implementation of the national departmental policy on the organisation of districts in its current form by the GDE will resolve the *impasse* between the GDE and the IDSOs or alternatively, the reform on the functioning of districts, which include that the clusters should be documented and this should be written into a policy. If the GDE prefers and still values the cluster classification of the districts, the correct human resource allocation and clarity of operations should be attended to. Importantly, proper and sufficient communication and consultation should take place.
- There should be an urgent resolution of the *impasse* between the IDSOs and the employer, so that this issue is finalised and so that a decision can be taken on the duties of the IDSOs/ cluster leaders. The PMDS must be signed and a job description must be provided for the IDSOs.
- Improvements should be done to the capacity of the districts, circuits and clusters through clearer role definitions and relooking at the selection and recruitment processes as well as the empowerment of the district officials, especially the IDSOs as they are the critical links between the schools and the clusters, circuits, districts and the Provincial Institutional Development and Support Directorate.

5.4. IMPLICATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

This researcher strongly believes that this study, investigating how the IDSOs support the SMTs, was able to gain insight into the SMTs' understanding of the roles of the IDSOs with regard to supporting them and the IDSOs' interpretation and review of their support strategies for the SMTs and schools. This study also carries the potential to enrich the knowledge base pertaining to the functions and operations of the IDSOs/ cluster leaders and what the SMTs expect from their IDSOs/ cluster leaders.

The study may be significant with regard to understanding the functions of SMTs and IDSOs, school management support and development, school functioning, school leadership development, school management development and its improvement and support.

This study can also contribute to the proper management and implementation of the reorganisation of institutional structures and to the body of knowledge in education policy and law studies.

5.5. SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

It is suggested that research be conducted on the following topics:

- The impact of constant reforms on district operations and performance.
- The impact of education organisation reforms on the operations of internal school stakeholders.
- IDSOs/ cluster leaders and SMTs as social capital for the improvement of education quality.
- Social capital as a step towards strengthening the SMTs' collaborative and shared leadership.

5.6. CONCLUSION

On the basis of the findings reported in this study, educational leadership support can be defined as the deliberate and focused attempt by a superior such as an IDSO to lead, manage, guide, develop, mentor, coach and engage with subordinates in an educational setting (principals and other SMT members). The intention thereof is to bring about improvement as well as enhanced performance of the individuals and their teams. The support will impact on the performance and achievement of all the stakeholders in their schools.

The introduction of the IDSOs as a support and development layer has not benefitted the schools as intended. The voice of the SMTs had not been heard as they are neglected and not supported by their schools' IDSOs.

Reliance of IDSOs on the cascading model is not working as it resulted in information from the IDSOs not reaching the intended SMTs exactly as presented by the IDSOs. The SMTs will always be dissatisfied with practice of supporting the principal only. IDSOs need to look into this concern with seriousness if they intend to improve the performance of schools. One can conclude that IDSOs are aware of issues surrounding the dissatisfaction of the SMTs with regard to their engagements with their principals but they have not done much to improve on their practices.

The value of this study was revealed in the absence of support for the SMTs by the IDSOs and the districts. Most of the SMT members were not satisfied with the manner in which the IDSOs interacted with and supported the SMTs. More direct interaction and engagement between the IDSOs and SMTs of their schools can result in meaningful discussions that could help them to develop and provide high- quality leadership to the staff in their departments.

This study also managed to highlight the *impasse* that was creating challenges in support of the schools by the IDSOs. The current state of affairs in education is of grave concern for all the people with an interest. The situation regarding the functioning of the IDSOs, the changes that were not communicated and agreed upon properly, call for the authorities to speed up the process of finding solutions to the current impasse with the Cluster Leaders/IDSOs. In effect, school support is currently very limited or absent. Urgent and immediate measures should be employed to turn this situation around to enhance support for SMTs by IDSOs.

The recruitment of the IDSOs should be improved if high quality support and the development of schools is regarded as important by the education authorities. This recruitment must focus strictly on candidates who have expertise in the area of institutional support and development. It can be an added advantage to the school leadership and management to have IDSO candidates that have previous experience as principals and that have spent several years in that position to gain expertise in school leadership, school development, strategic planning, curriculum management, policy management, team work and support provision for their SMTs. The IDSOs have to empower the SMTs with the knowledge of the policies that govern financial management and accountability for finances and resources.

The ability and strategies required to motivate staff are an integral part of the leader's role so that their morale can be boosted, which can help to promote job satisfaction and raise the performance of the staff. Effective leaders and managers of staff should recognise the importance of motivation and job satisfaction. The lack of job satisfaction is linked to staff absenteeism and withdrawal and carries the risk of paralysing the schools' development and support. The data analysed in this study suggested that the formation and utilisation of inter and intra-cluster forums can have a positive impact on the support provided by the IDSOs to the SMTs. Networking and interaction within clusters should be enhanced through the pairing of schools, promoting collaborative accountability, and developing professional networks. Accordingly, networked learning communities should be used to share and transfer knowledge, promote professional fulfilment, capitalise on positive diversity and provide for lateral leadership.

Strong networks are required for the clustering of schools as they have the potential to enable strong branding, a clear moral purpose, clarity, focus and discipline. The IDSOs as the support and development structures for a group of schools could establish a community of practice within the group of schools and encourage interaction and support among these schools. The IDSOs could tap into the expertise of the SMTs in different schools and utilise these for the development of managerial and administrative skills of those who lack a certain type of expertise.

Furthermore, the capacity of the districts should be improved through a clearer role definition and relooking at the processes of selection, recruitment and empowerment of the district officials, especially the IDSOs. IDSOs are the critical links between the schools and the education management offices at the clusters, circuits, districts and the Provincial Institutional Development and Support Directorate. Changes to the classification of posts require continuous support, reskilling and training to enable the employees to adjust to their new responsibilities. The IDSOs should be capacitated to support their subordinates and to hold them accountable for the performance of the circuit. The confusion regarding the classification and expected operation of the IDSOs continues and may need to be looked into in future studies. Policy documents produced by both the national and provincial departments need to be synergised and should also be absolutely clear to avoid confusion among the implementers.

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ANNEXURE 1 – REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH – PRINCIPAL

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Education Management and Policy Studies
Faculty of Education, University of Pretoria
Groenkloof Campus
14 September 2015

The Principal
School: _____

Dear Sir/ Madam

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT SCHOOL

I am an M.Ed student at the University of Pretoria's Education department specializing in Education Management and Policy Studies. The purpose of the study is to Investigating how IDSOs support SMTs (SMTs). Your school has been selected as a participant in the study. I have obtained the approval of the GDE to conduct the study. During the study, I will conduct interviews with the SMT at your school and I will also require access to documents that will provide information on the study. The documents that will be requested for collection of data for this study will include but will not be limited to: Documents on Job descriptions and job allocations of IDSOs accessible to the schools, Relevant circulars (Outlining the functions of IDSOs), Minutes of SMT meetings and empowerment sessions between the SMTs and the IDSOs; Monthly reports of the IDSOs and SMTs; Reports – Internal and External Whole School Evaluation Records of Training provided by IDSOs and The log book records of the IDSOs' visits.

I commit to observe all ethical issues expected of researchers by the Department of Education. I undertake to observe confidentiality and to ensure protection of the participants from harm.

The names of the participants will not be divulged in the reports and pseudonyms will be used in the data analysis process. Participants will be advised that their participation in the study is voluntary and that they may withdraw at any time should they so wish. The consent of the participants will be obtained prior to their participation in the research.

Upon completion of the study, I undertake to provide your office and the District Director with a copy of the research report and to share findings of the study with the participants if necessitated.

I thank you in anticipation of your positive response to my request.

Regards

Sello George Ngwenya
Primary Researcher
0835712582
0722688456
ngwenyasellog@gmail.com

ANNEXURE 2 – REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH – SMTs

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Education Management and Policy Studies

Faculty of Education, University of Pretoria

Groenkloof Campus

14 September 2015

DEAR PROSPECTIVE RESEARCH PARTICIPANT (SMTs)

TSHWANE SOUTH DISTRICT

SCHOOL: _____

Dear Sir/ Madam

<u>**REQUEST FOR YOUR CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH**</u>

You are hereby invited to participate in a study intended to investigate how SMTs are supported by IDSOs of their schools. Prior to your participation, it is vital for you to understand what the research entails and agree to the activities that will be involved in the process of the study. Your participation in the study is completely voluntary and you may withdraw from participation at any stage of the study without facing any penalty whatsoever. Should you consent to take part in the study, you will be interviewed at least twice for a period not exceeding 45 minutes by the researcher outside of teaching and learning time. The interview will be recorded and the records and transcripts will be kept and stored safely by the researcher and will only be accessed by the researcher, his supervisor and critical readers.

These may only be disclosed upon obtainment of your permission or as it may be determined by law (The electronic and manual records will be stored safely for a period of three years and thereafter they will be destroyed). You will be required to respond to questions regarding how you are supported by the IDSO of your school. You will be expected to respond to the questions as honestly as possible or to the best of your understanding. Your identity and personal information will be kept confidential - The research report will not divulge your names or identity – pseudonyms will be used in the report and throughout the research process. Information obtained from the interviews will not be shared with any member of staff or management and will be kept confidential by the researcher. The study anticipates no harm to the participants and the researcher will take all possible precautions to protect the participants in the study from harm or danger. This is an academic research aimed at adding to existing literature, an article may be written by the researcher regarding the study and the research may be published in academic journals and/ or presented in conferences and seminars (Your identity not divulged as indicated above).

The Management of the Faculty of Education at the University of Pretoria has approved the study and this has been supported by the University's Ethics Committee. The study has also been approved by the Department of Education . The findings of the study will be used to contribute to academic literature and you will be provided with a copy of the report should you wish to receive a copy. The researcher will adhere to ethical and professional standards during and after the research process. Serious unethical conduct or contravention of ethical research principles may be reported to the University of Pretoria's Ethics Committee. If you consent to the conditions above, you are requested to sign the consent form below and commit to confidentiality of the research process you will participate in. Your cooperation and participation in this study will be highly appreciated and I thank you in anticipation of your positive response to my request.

Regards

Sello George Ngwenya (Primary Researcher)
0835712582; 0722688456; ngwenyasellog@gmail.com

ANNEXURE 3 –CONSENT FORM (SMTs)

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CONSENT FORM

PARTICIPATION IN STUDY TO BE CONDUCTED BY: SELLO NGWENYA

FOCUSING ON: INVESTIGATING HOW IDSOs SUPPORT SMTs.

I, _____ (NAME OF PARTICIPANT)

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THE STUDY IN MY CAPACITY AS AN SMT MEMBER AT _____ (SCHOOL NAME)

AND I RESERVE THE RIGHT TO WITHDRAW FROM THE STUDY AT ANY TIME I FEEL DISCOMFORT. I WILL NOT BE LIABLE FOR ANY PAYMENTS OR PENALTY.

SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT _____

DATE: _____

ANNEXURE 4 – REQUEST FOR CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE (IDSOs)

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Education Management and Policy Studies

Faculty of Education, University of Pretoria

Groenkloof Campus

14 September 2015

DEAR PROSPECTIVE RESEARCH PARTICIPANT (IDSOs)

TSHWANE SOUTH DISTRICT

SCHOOL: _____

Dear Sir/ Madam

REQUEST FOR YOUR CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

You are hereby invited to participate in a study intended to investigate how SMTs are supported by IDSOs of their schools. Prior to your participation, it is vital for you to understand what the research entails and agree to the activities that will be involved in the process of the study. Your participation in the study is completely voluntary and you may withdraw from participation at any stage of the study without facing any penalty whatsoever. Should you consent to take part in the study, you will be interviewed at least twice for a period not exceeding 45 minutes by the researcher outside of teaching and learning time. The interview will be recorded and the records and transcripts will be kept and stored safely by the researcher and will only be accessed by the researcher, his supervisor and critical readers and may only be disclosed upon obtainment of your permission or as it may be determined by law (The electronic and manual records will be stored safely for a period of three years and thereafter they will be destroyed).

You will be required to respond to questions regarding how IDSOs support SMTs at schools. You will be expected to respond to the questions as honestly as possible or to the best of your understanding.

Your identity and personal information will be kept confidential - The research report will not divulge your names or identity – pseudonyms will be used in the report and throughout the research process. Information obtained from the interviews will not be shared with any member of staff or management and will be kept confidential by the researcher. The study anticipates no harm to the participants and the researcher will take all possible precautions to protect the participants in the study from harm or danger. This is an academic research aimed at adding to existing literature, an article may be written by the researcher regarding the study and the research may be published in academic journals and/ or presented in conferences and seminars (Your identity not divulged as indicated above).

The Management of the Faculty of Education at the University of Pretoria has approved the study and this has been supported by the University's Ethics Committee. The study has also been approved by the Department of Education . The findings of the study will be used to contribute to academic literature and you will be provided with a copy of the report should you wish to receive a copy. The researcher will adhere to ethical and professional standards during and after the research process. Serious unethical conduct or contravention of ethical research principles may be reported to the University of Pretoria's Ethics Committee. If you consent to the conditions above, you are requested to sign the consent form below and commit to confidentiality of the research process you will participate in.

Your cooperation and participation in this study will be highly appreciated and I thank you in anticipation of your positive response to my request.

Regards

Sello George Ngwenya (Primary Researcher)
0835712582; 0722688456; ngwenyasellog@gmail.com

ANNEXURE 5 – CONSENT FORM (IDSOs)

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CONSENT FORM

PARTICIPATION IN STUDY TO BE CONDUCTED BY: SELLO NGWENYA

FOCUSING ON: INVESTIGATING HOW IDSOs SUPPORT SMTs.

I, _____ (NAME OF PARTICIPANT)

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THE STUDY IN MY CAPACITY AS AN IDSO/ CLUSTER LEADER FOR _____ (SCHOOL NAME)

AND I RESERVE THE RIGHT TO WITHDRAW FROM THE STUDY AT ANY TIME I FEEL DISCOMFORT. I WILL NOT BE LIABLE FOR ANY PAYMENTS OR PENALTY.

SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT _____
DATE: _____

ANNEXURE 6 – GDE APPROVAL LETTER