Primary School Educators' Experiences of Support from Internal and External Sources in a South African School District

by

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DECLARATION

I, Samson Gugulethu Nkambule (student no: 054315405), hereby declare that this thesis, "Primary school educators' experiences of support from internal and external sources in a South African school district", is submitted in accordance with the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) degree at the University of Pretoria, is my own original work and has not previously been submitted to any other institution of higher learning. All sources cited or quoted in this research paper are indicated and acknowledged with a comprehensive list of references.

Signature: _____

Date: 24 January 2018

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to:

- My late mother, Roseline Lukhele for teaching me the value of education early in life. Your dream has finally been fulfilled 'Mhlanti Wendlunkulu'.
- My father, Bednog Nkambule for the unconditional love and moral support and encouragement.
- Jubeck 'MaDube' for the motherly role in my life.
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This is to certify that I, Alexa Kirsten Barnby, ID no. 5106090097080, a full-time language practitioner employed by the University of South Africa and accredited by the South African Translators' Institute, have edited the doctoral thesis "Primary school educators' experiences of support from internal and external sources in a South African school district" by Samson Gugulethu Nkambule.

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ABSTRACT

This study explored how primary school educators expect to be supported and how they experience support from internal and external sources in a South African school district. Support for educators is vital in order to improve basic education in terms of South Africa's long-term development goals and particularly in light of the poor performance of primary school learners in universal benchmark tests. Furthermore, the myriad of curricular changes introduced by the Department of Basic Education have increased the need for educator support in South Africa. A qualitative approach, located in an interpretive paradigm was adopted and a case study research design was employed. The requisite data were gathered by means of interviews, document sourcing and non-participant observation in three public primary schools.

The main finding of the study was that there is limited amount of technical support, aimed at improving the quality of education, while affective aspects, i.e., meeting the socio-emotional needs of educators appear to be neglected. A broad theme that emerged was participants feeling like they are under surveillance; perceiving district officials to be on fault-finding missions when they conduct school visits and classroom observations; and feeling like they are on their own once they return to school from attending offsite workshops. In addition, the participants who served as heads of departments (HODs) reported that their workload prevented them from providing adequate internal support. A key recommendation of this study is that more curriculum instructors and HODs be employed and that they receive adequate preparation in order to provide appropriate support to primary school educators. In addition, it is recommended that the provincial and district officials increase the frequency of their school and classroom visits in order to spend more time supporting primary school educators.

KEYWORDS

educator support, professional development, organisational support, and quality teaching and learning

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ANA	Annual National Assessment
C2005	Curriculum 2005
CAPS	Curriculum Assessment Policy Statements
CASS	Continuous Assessment
CCSS	Common Core State Standards
CCSSO	Council of Chief State School Officers
CEPD	Centre for Education Policy Development
CIs	Curriculum Implementers
CLs	Cluster Leaders
CTA	Challenge to Achieve
DAS	Developmental Appraisal System
DBE	Department of Basic Education
DHET	Department of Higher Education and Training
DoE	Department of Education
DSG	Developmental Support Group
ECDE	Eastern Cape Department of Education
EEA	Employment of Educators Act
EFA	Education for All
ELRC	Education Labour Relations Council
ERTs	External Review Teams
EU	European Union
FET	Further Education and Training
FFL	Foundations for Learning
GET	General Education and Training
GiR	Getting it Right
HOD	Head of Department
IEP	Integrated Education Project
IQMS	Integrated Quality Management System
ITC	Information Technology Centre

JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency
LA	Local Authority
LLEs	Local Leaders of Education
LSEN	Learners with Special Education Needs
LTSM	Learner Teacher Support Material
MDE	Mpumalanga Department of Education
MEC	Member of the Executive Council
MSSI	Mpumalanga Secondary School Initiative
NAPTOSA	National Professional Teachers' Organisation of South Africa
NCLB	No Child Left Behind
NCS	National Curriculum Statement
NDP	National Development Plan
NEEDU	National Evaluation and Development Unit
NEPA	National Education Policy Act
NGA	National Governors Association
NGOs	Non-governmental organisations
NLEs	National Leaders of Education
NLS	National Literacy Strategy
NNS	National Numeracy Strategy
NSC	National Senior Certificate
NSS	National Support School
OBE	Outcomes-based education
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PAM	Personnel Administrative Measures
PATHS	Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies
PEDs	Provincial Education Departments
PGCE	Postgraduate Certificate in Education
PGP	Performance Growth Plan
PIRLS	Progress in International Reading Literacy Study
PM	Performance Measurement

RNCS	Revised National Curriculum Statement
RSA	Republic of South Africa
SACE	South African Council for Educators
SACMEQ	Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium Monitoring Education Quality
SADTU	South African Democratic Teachers Union
SBAT	School-based Assessment Tasks
SDT	School Development Team
SGB	School Governing Body
SIGs	School Improvement Groups
SIP	School Improvement Plan
SMT	School Management Team
STEP UP	Supporting Teachers, Examining Practices, Uncovering Potential
TALIS	Teaching and Learning International Survey
TIMMS	Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study
UK	United Kingdom
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
USA	United States of America
WSE	Whole School Evaluation
WSP	Workplace Skills Plan

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CHAPTER 1

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Educator support is a vital ingredient in the work of education systems across the world. Generally, educators need support as they try to find their feet in the profession; make sense of reform initiatives; and implement policy. Systemic changes bring with it a myriad of challenges that educators cannot face without support.

Support for educators is a broad term with various connotations, overtones and interpretations. UNESCO (2004: 163) defined support as the "provision of study opportunities for teachers, training workshops, support from in-service advisers and inspectors, inter-schools visits and peer consultation in teacher clusters". Wei, Darling-Hammond, Andree, Richardson and Orphanos (2009: 9) defined support as a "formal professional development provided through structured events such as workshops, conferences and school visits as well as job-embedded, professional learning".

Perry (2013: 16) and Dominguez, Nicholls, Storandt and Associates (2006: 3) defined support as a "'detailed action plan for improvement, implementation strategies, monitoring visits and follow-up inspections, professional development, and reviewing student performance". The Policy on the Organisation, Roles and Responsibilities of Education (DBE, 2013a: 11) defined support for educators as the "organisational support, classroom support, educator support, curricular and institutional development and administrative support". All these definitions highlight that support for educators entails mentoring, coaching, professional development and feedback upon lesson observations in order to improve learner performance. The underlying

assumption is that adequate support for educators will lead to improved learner performance.

The political transformation that took place in 1994 in South Africa saw the introduction of a new legislative framework for education, including new statutory bodies and a range of new national policies (CDE, 2015: 5). For example, the Employment of Educators Act (EEA) 76 of 1998 (RSA, 1998) stipulates that employers (office-based educators) have the right to concern themselves with the quality of the work of employees (school-based educators). Similarly, the Education Labour Relations Council (ELRC) document (2008) specifies that school-based educators have a mandate to "participate in agreed school/educator appraisal processes in order to regularly review their professional practice with the aim of improving teaching, learning and management".

The school districts and circuit offices in South Africa have the authority to assist "principals and educators to improve the quality of teaching and learning in their institutions" (CDE, 2015: 5). Similarly, the Foundations for Learning (FFL) Campaign (DoE, 2008: 22) specifies that "education district officials are obliged to visit all schools within the district at least once per term, with more frequent visits to schools requiring stronger support for monitoring, guidance, assist schools to improve their performance and work towards the agreed targets". In addition, goal number 27 of the Action Plan to 2014 states that the objective of the Department of Basic Education (DBE) is to "improve the frequency and quality of the monitoring and support services provided by district offices to schools" (DBE, 2011a: 9).

The national Policy on the Organisation, Roles and Responsibilities of Education Districts (DBE, 2013a: 15) prescribes that education districts and circuit offices are required to conduct "school visits, classroom observation, consultation, cluster

meetings, suitable feedback reports and other means; providing an enabling environment and organising provision and support for the professional development of managers, educators and administrative staff members; and holding education institutions in a district area to account for their performance".

According to Barber and Phillips (2000), support for educators comes from both outside and inside the schools. In this study, the outside and inside structures of support are referred to as the external and internal sources respectively. The ELRC (2008) document clarifies that the external sources consist of employers (office-based educators) including Education Specialists (ES), Senior Education Specialists (SES), Deputy Chief Education Specialists (DCES) and Chief Education Specialists (CES). According to policy, the school management teams (SMTs) and Developmental Support Groups (DSGs) inside schools constitute the internal sources of support for educators in schools. From an international perspective, bodies such as "school advisory services, teacher resource centres, school clusters, counsellors and school inspectors (in their advisory and reporting functions) are established to provide direct professional support to schools" (UNESCO, 2004: 177).

The terms, "educator" and "teacher" are used interchangeably in this study. The South African literature prefers educator over teacher, while the latter is commonly used by the international literature. The South African Schools Act 84 of 1996 (RSA, 1996) defines an educator as any person who teaches, educates or trains other persons or who provides professional educational services, including professional therapy and education psychological services, at a school. In addition, the Employment of Educators Act 76 of 1998 (RSA, 1998) highlights that educators in South Africa are categorised according to their post levels. For example, the term, "post-level 1 educators", refers to those teachers at the entry level of their teaching career. References to international literature use their preferred term.

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Systemic changes bring with it a myriad of challenges that educators cannot face without support. King-McKenzie et al. (2013: 31) and De Clercq (2007: 109) pointed out that it is essential for educators to be supported in every possible way to navigate the complex policy changes required to adapt to the new challenges for educating future citizens. Literature suggests that countries across the world recognise the importance of educator support in order for educators to implement successfully reforms at the school level. In South Africa, the need for support became apparent after a consistent theme of confusion and implementation difficulties emerged among educators as they tried to make sense of and deliver a new curriculum in the aftermath of apartheid.

King-McKenzie et al. (2013: 31) and De Clercq (2007: 109) revealed that educators in South Africa have been bombarded with reform after reform as well as one new education policy after another. To date, four curriculum reviews have been introduced by the DBE within the space of 15 years – between 1997 and 2012. The Curriculum 2005 (C2005) was introduced in 1997, the Revised National Curriculum Statements (RNCS) in 2002, the National Curriculum Statements (NCS) in 2011, and the current Curriculum Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS) in 2012. Steyn and Mentz (2008: 681) highlighted that "not only has South African education changed from a content-based curriculum to an outcome-based curriculum (OBE), but the content, expected means of delivery and outcomes of all school subjects have also been changed". Thus, De Clercq (2007: 109) warned that, "it would be unreasonable to expect educators to adapt to these changes and challenges without direct, deliberate and detailed support".

Literature suggests that support for educators in South Africa mainly takes place during offsite training workshops provided by the subject advisors. However, the majority of the South African studies (Smith, 2011; Mahlo, 2011; Mashau, Steyn, Van der Walt & Wolhuter, 2008; Narsee, 2006; Ramolefe, 2004; De Clercq, 2002;

Sivhabu, 2002) reveal that educators do not receive thorough, appropriate and/or sufficient support, particularly in schools. Similarly, most of the respondents in a study by Mashau et al. (2008: 428) reported that support services are non-existent or unavailable. In the Annual Performance Plan 2014 – 2015 (DBE, 2014: 22), the Department of Basic Education acknowledged that school visits from district officials do not focus on the areas of support. Recently, Van der Berg, Spaull, Wills, Gustafsson and Kotze (2016: 26) echoed this concern by stating that, "teacher support is far from adequate in most public education systems".

The need for educator support takes on added importance due to an increased emphasis on the improvement of the 'quality education for all' in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills during the standardized testing to determine learner performance (UNESCO, 2015: 189). In South Africa, the improvement of the quality and levels of educational outcomes in the schooling system is a top priority of both Government and the DBE (DBE, 2013d: 28). The extent to which these outcomes are achieved are monitored through the administration of the Annual National Assessment (ANA) which was introduced for the first time in 2011 in South Africa to improve the quality of education in primary schools.

However, Frempong, Reddy and Mackay (2013) pointed out that the Action Plan to 2014 document of the DBE is "silent on how schools and education stakeholders should use the ANA data to improve teaching and learning". Legislation and policy, however, simply provide a framework and communicate intent. The reality of providing and receiving support seems to be far removed from legislation and policy. Thus, the primary aim of this study was to explore how primary school educators experience support and how they expect to be supported by internal and external sources.

1.3 RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

Support for primary school educators in South Africa has become essential following the series of curriculum reviews which were "largely dictated by observed low levels of learner performance and inadvertent curriculum implementation ambiguities that made it difficult for teachers to teach effectively" (DBE, 2012b: 6). To date there is a dearth of both national and international research on the support provided to primary school educators to interpret curricular reform and to implement large-scale assessments.

Almost two decades ago, Jansen (1998: 6) described support for South African educators facing curricular reform as "uneven, fragmented and, for many teachers, simply non-existing". Ten years later, Mashau et al. (2008: 420) pointed out that support for educators is a "largely un-researched component of the South African education system". A cursory review of research on education in South Africa showed that such research is mainly focused on the secondary or high school level. The DBE (2013b: 11) acknowledged that "over the past 18 years, attention has been heavily concentrated on the top end of the system (Grades 10–12), particularly on the National Senior Certificate (NSC) examination at the end of Grade 12". This study shifts the focus from the senior grades to the lowest end of the system — Grades one to nine.

Results from the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMMS), the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS), and the Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium Monitoring Education Quality (SACMEQ) showed that primary school learners in South Africa perform below the expected levels of achievement in both literacy and numeracy. King-McKenzie et al. (2013: 25) and Jansen (2011) reported that educators are often blamed for the poor performance of learners in both mathematics and literacy due to inadequate implementation of new reforms and limited knowledge. Jansen (2011) further

suggested that effective intervention and support should be undertaken to improve the knowledge levels of educators.

1.4 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study extends the scope of the existing body of knowledge by exploring how primary school educators expect to be supported and how they experience support from internal and external sources in a South African school district. The findings of this study provide insight into support as desired and perceived by primary school educators. This study has the potential to assist school-based managers, including principals, deputy principals, and HODs to critically analyse and reflect on their roles when supporting primary school educators. The findings and recommendations of this study provide a better perspective on what needs to be done to improve support for primary school educators.

1.5 PURPOSE STATEMENT

The purpose of this study is to explore how primary school educators expect to be supported and how they experience support from internal and external sources in a South African school district.

1.6 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Main question

The main research question guiding this study is: How do primary school educators expect to be supported and how do they experience support from internal and external sources in a South African school district?

Sub questions

The main research question was further divided into the following sub-questions:

a) How do primary school educators expect to be supported by external sources in a South African school district?
b) How do primary school educators experience support from external sources in a South African school district?
c) How do primary school educators expect to be supported by internal sources in a South African school district?
d) How do primary school educators experience support from internal sources in a South African school district?

1.7 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK UNDERPINNING THE STUDY

Educator support in this study was explored within a hybrid framework, consisting of organisational support theory and the policy framework for improving the quality of teaching and learning. The rationale for integrating the theory and policy framework was based on the notion that the different elements of internal and external support for primary school educators were not entirely addressed by either the organisational support theory or the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) policy framework for improving the quality of teaching and learning.

Imenda (2014: 189), highlighted that a researcher may feel that it is not possible to research his/her research problem meaningfully by referring to one theory only or to the concepts contained in just one theory. In such a case, the researcher may have to "synthesise" the existing views in literature on a given situation – both theoretically and from empirical findings. The synthesis may be termed a model or conceptual framework and, essentially, represents an 'integrated' way of looking at the problem in question (Liehr & Smith, 1999).

Thus, Imenda (2014: 189) defined a conceptual framework as an "end result for bringing together a number of related concepts to explain or predict a given event, or give a broader understanding of the phenomenon of interest or, simply, of research problem". Imenda (2014: 189) further indicated that the "process of arriving at a conceptual framework is akin to an inductive process whereby small individual pieces are joined together to tell a bigger map of possible relationships". The framework guiding the study is represented in the diagram below:

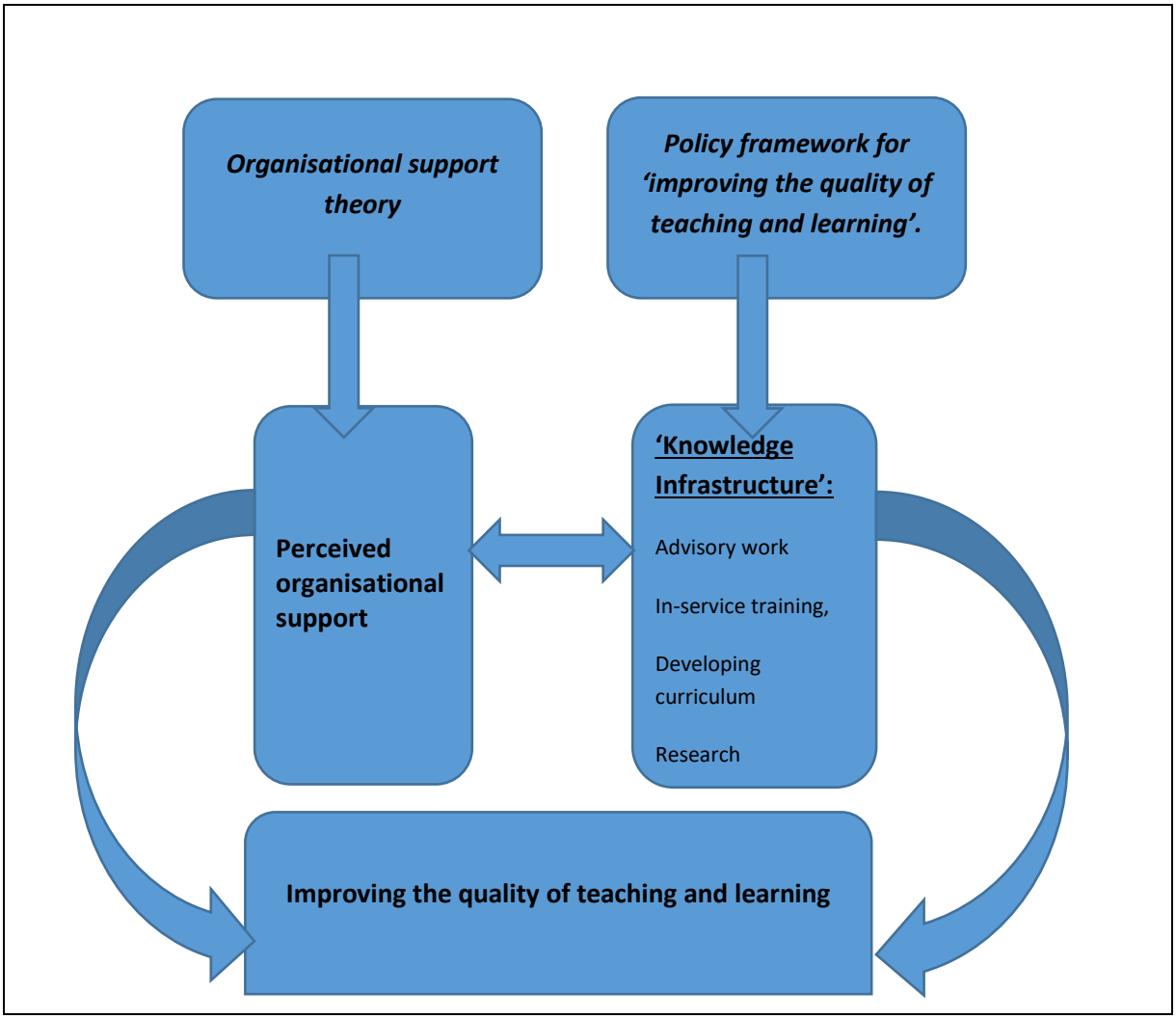

Figure 1.1: A model representing the conceptual framework, which underpinned the study

1.7.1 Organisational support theory

Organisational support theory states that employees develop perceptions of organisational support in response to whether or not they feel that their "socio-emotional needs (such as esteem, supportive and helpful supervision, approval and caring)" are met and the organisation's "readiness to reward increased efforts made on its behalf" (Eisenberger, Hutington, Huttchison & Sowa, 1986; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002; Eisenberger, Cummings, Armeli & Lynch, 1997; Shore & Shore, 1995).

With regard to organisational support, it is assumed that those who feel that their socio-emotional needs are being met will see their employer as supportive of their work. In addition, a willingness to offer rewards for increased effort is a fundamental tenet of motivation theory. As mentioned, the results of high levels of support is an increase in commitment and satisfaction, more positive moods and reduced stress; all indicators of a more productive and satisfying working environment. Organisational support theory was relevant for this study since support of a technical nature is not sufficient; it needs to be complemented by support that is more affective.

Rhoades and Eisenberger (2002) highlighted that employees with high levels of perceived organisational support portray "increased affective organisational commitment, increased performance and reduced turnover". Similarly, Wickramasinghe and Wickramasinghe (2010: 820) affirmed that an "employee's belief about how an organisation values him/her is vital for determining whether any attitudes or behaviours that may benefit the organisation will emerge from the exchange relationship between the employee and employer".

In the same vein, Ransford, Greenberg, Celene, Domitrovich, Small and Jacobson (2009: 510) reported that educators who perceived their "school administration as more supportive reported higher implementation quality of the new curricula,

and positive perceptions of training and coaching were associated with the highest levels of implementation dosage and quality". These authors agree that high levels of support for employees have an effect on commitment, satisfaction, more positive moods and reduced stress, all indicators of a more productive and satisfying working environment.

Ransford, et al. (2009: 510) pointed out that those teachers who perceive low levels of support are the most vulnerable when it comes to the implementation of new curricula. As a result, the rates of stress and burnout are likely to increase, and in turn may influence teachers' effectiveness (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). In addition, Ransford, et al. (2009: 510) stated that teachers with the "highest levels of burnout and the most negative perceptions of curriculum support reported the lowest levels of implementation dosage and quality". This suggests that educators who feel less supported are more likely to perform below the expected standard and may have increased levels of stress and burnout.

1.7.2 Policy framework for improving the quality of teaching and learning

The second conceptual framework guiding this study is the policy framework for improving the quality of teaching and learning, goal number 6 of 'Education for All' (EFA), aimed at:

> Improving all aspects of the quality of education and ensuring excellence of all so that recognised and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills (UNESCO, 2015: 189).

Most countries, including South Africa, subscribe to the notion of 'quality education for all' adopted at world educational conferences of the UNESCO, a special agency of the United Nations (UN). Accordingly, several educational reforms have been implemented worldwide to improve the quality of education. The Dakar Framework emphasised that "governments need to enhance the

status, morale and professionalism of teachers and enable them to participate in actions affecting their professional lives and teaching environments to achieve high quality basic education for all by 2015" (UNESCO, 2015: 196).

Educator support constitutes a vital "framework for improving the quality of teaching and learning" (UNESCO, 2015: 196). A similar view is expressed in the NEEDU report (DBE, 2013b: 13) that "extraordinary efforts are required for districts to exert significant influence over school performance and for school leaders to provide meaningful assistance to teachers". The Dakar framework provides meaningful and understandable criteria to judge the efficacy of support measures for educators, including the elements of the 'knowledge infrastructure', namely, the "advisory work, in-service training, developing curriculum, research, and quality assurance" (UNESCO, 2004: 178) presented in the diagram below:

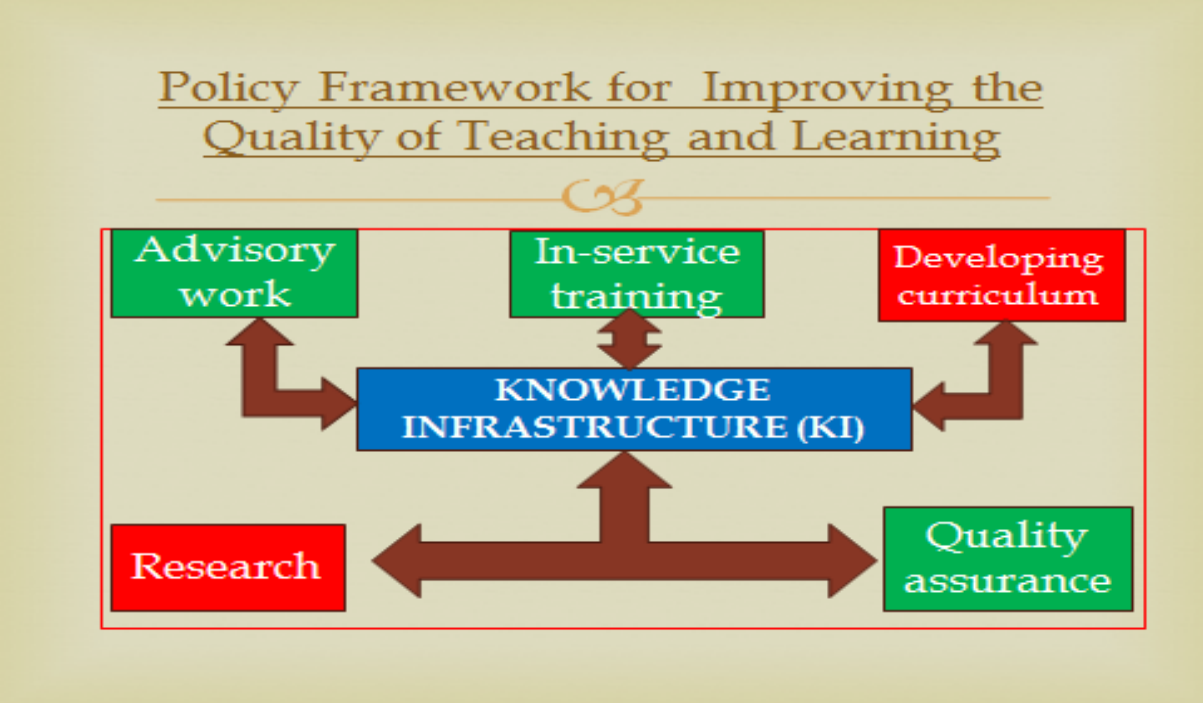

Figure 1.2: A model representing the five components of the knowledge infrastructure (UNESCO, 2004: 178).

1.7.2.1 Advisory work

Advising teachers and schools is an essential activity of professional support and guidance required to "translate the knowledge available from research, local experience, ministry directives and the like into a form that will benefit schools and their teachers" (UNESCO, 2004: 178). This principle of advisory work is of particular significance in defining "professional teaching, conceptualising teacher education and benchmarking quality education for all" (DBE, 2005: 3). In South Africa, subject advisors provide external support and guidance for educators during offsite support workshops and classroom visits. According to the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL, 2012: 2), there is "strong evidence that better appraisal, coaching and feedback leading to targeted development improve teacher performance".

1.7.2.2 In-service training

Ono and Ferreira (2010: 60) pointed out that in-service training of educators is synonymous with 'professional development' or 'staff development'. According to Bolam (1993) and Le Roux (2002: 112), professional development refers to the "systematic and ongoing efforts aimed at enabling employees to acquire new knowledge, skills and attitudes and to attain organisational objectives in a more effective and efficient way". Collins and Ono (2001); Fullan and Hargreaves (1996); and Schwille and Dembélé (2007) clarified that in-service training is conducted mainly during the workshops, seminars, conferences and university or college courses. It is essential that the programmes offered during in-service training be "responsive to specific issues affecting schools, especially in resource-constrained systems where the need for support is often critical" (UNESCO, 2004: 178).

A number of research studies, including Dominguez et al. (2006: 2); UNESCO (2004: 51); Mandel (2000: 11) and Mashau (2000: 418), confirmed that the success of support for educators is dependent on a wide range of professional support

activities offered. Bantwini (2010: 83) is of the view that the "meanings that a teacher attaches to the new curriculum reforms, act as his or her map on the curriculum implementation journey, and these usually determine the success of the education reforms".

1.7.2.3 Quality assurance

Improving all aspects of "quality education and ensuring excellence … in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills" are essential ingredients for improving the quality of 'education for all' (UNESCO, 2015: 189). In South Africa, the principal goal of the DBE is to "improve the quality of basic education, including raising learner test scores in Grades 1 to 9 and enhancing the quality of teaching, school supervision and support" (DBE, 2011c, 2013c).

The objective of raising learner performance in primary schools in South Africa led to the introduction of the Annual National Assessments (ANAs) for Grades 1 – 9 learners in literacy and numeracy (DBE, 2013c: 12). The objective of the ANA is to expose educators to better assessment practices; to make it easier for districts to identify the schools that are most in need of assistance; to encourage schools to celebrate outstanding performance; and to empower parents with important information about their children's performance (DBE, 2013d: 28). Thus, the broad aim is to determine and report systemic performance.

Taylor, Muller and Vinjevold (2003) and Fullan (2001) pointed out that both support and pressure levers are essential for quality assurance and school improvement. The application of both the principles of support and accountability becomes evident when a manager of schools provides support to the schools while, at the same time, demands accountability for any failure (UNESCO, 2004: 181).

1.7.2.4 Developing curriculum and research

This study excludes the last two elements of 'knowledge infrastructure', namely, developing curriculum and research. Developing curriculum is the responsibility of the national DBE, while research is primarily conducted by universities and national institutes.

1.8 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

1.8.1 Research paradigm

This study was conceptualised within an interpretive paradigm. Peshkin (1993 in Leedy and Ormrod, 2013: 140) highlighted that interpretation "enables a researcher to acquire new insights about a particular phenomenon and discover problems that exist in relation to the phenomenon in question". In essence, a paradigm is the way in which individuals view the world and it is informed by assumptions held by the individual.

In reference to the work of Burrell and Morgan (1979), Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2008) contended that researchers working in the interpretive paradigm adopt the ontological stance that each individual experiences social reality differently and the epistemological stance that knowledge is subjective and can be created by individuals. The individual responds to the environment of her/his own volition and is not coerced. Thus, s/he exercises voluntarism. Employing the interpretive paradigm has helped the researcher to elicit rich data from the participants.

1.8.2 Research approach

A qualitative research approach was deemed appropriate for the purposes of this study as it is often "inductive and allows the researcher to describe and understand the particular situations, experiences and meanings of people and groups before developing and/or testing more general theories and explanations" (Fraenkel & Devers, 2000: 253). The qualitative approach enabled

the researcher to describe and understand support from the perspective of the participants' experiences in their own settings.

1.8.3 Research design

Terre Blanche, Durrheim and Painter (2006: 37) maintained that "in making a research design, the researcher must make informed decisions along the four different dimensions", namely, "(1) the purpose of the research, (2) the theoretical paradigm informing the research, (3) the context or situation within which the research is carried out, (4) the research techniques employed to collect and analyse data". These four dimensions were taken into account in this study.

A case study design was adopted for this study based on its provision for the use of multiple sources and techniques during the data gathering process. Nisbet and Watt (1984 in Cohen, Manion and Morisson, 2007: 253) defined a case study as a "specific instance that is frequently designed to illustrate a more general principle". In addition, McMillan and Schumacher (2006: 316) indicated that a case study focuses on one phenomenon in order to understand that phenomenon in depth, regardless of the number of persons or sites.

1.8.4 Research sites and sampling

The study was conducted in three primary schools in one circuit office in the Nkangala school district in the Mpumalanga province. The three schools in the sample were purposely sampled "to gain insight about the research questions based on their typicality or possession of the particular characteristics being sought" (Cohen, Manion & Morisson, 2007: 115).

Only the schools offering the Foundation Phase (Grades 1–3), Intermediate Phase (Grades 4–6), and Senior Phase (Grades 7–9) were included in the sample. School A is a semi-urban school which consists of learners of African descent; school B is a suburban school consists mostly the population of White learners; and School

C is a township school consisting of learners of African descent. Thus, the schools chosen for the investigation represent a cross section of the population, different grade levels and different geographical locations (urban, semi-urban and township).

1.8.5 Data collection methods

The three data collection techniques used to collect the requisite data were the interviews, document retrieval and non-participation observation. The data were collected in three phases. The first phase involved the individual interviews with the principals while the focus group interviews was conducted with the HODs and post-level 1 educators. The second phase comprised the analysis of documents, namely, the school improvement plans (SIPs), whole school evaluation (WSE) reports, and Annual National Assessments (ANA).

The third phase involved the observation of three phase meetings (one phase meeting in each school) and one cluster group workshop for educators teaching Mathematics to Grade 9 classes. The purpose of attending the phase meetings and a cluster workshop was to determine the frequency and the type of support provided to primary educators during these encounters. All the interviews were audio recorded with the participants' permission and later transcribed verbatim for analysis.

1.8.5.1 Interviews

Interviews were deemed an appropriate data gathering technique for the purposes of this study. Cohen, Manion and Morisson (2002: 267) stated that interviews enable the "participants to discuss their interpretations of the world they live in and to express how they regard situations from their own point of view". The participants in the study were the three principals, eight heads of department and nine post-level 1 educators (the South African term used to define teachers on the entry level of the teaching career).

The three principals were selected to participate in this study based on their role as managers of schools, while the heads of departments (HODs) and post level 1 educators were purposively sampled by the principals as information-rich participants. Thus, all the participants selected were knowledgeable about the subject being studied and provided more elaborated responses and prompts on matters affecting the Foundation Phase, Intermediate Phase and Senior Phase.

Individual interviews were conducted with the school principals while focus group interviews were conducted with the HODs and post-level 1 educators. Creswell (2008), as well as De Vos and Fouché (1998), define a "focus group interview as a process of collecting data through discussions with a group of participants on a specific topic or related topics".

Semi-structured interviews were used to obtain information from the participants during both the individual and the focus group interviews. The advantage of semi-structured interviews is that they provide a researcher with an "opportunity to ask questions and record answers from one participant at a time and to decide on follow-up questions based on the responses of the participants" (Creswell, 2002: 215). Each interview session during the individual and focus group interviews, which comprised of semi-structured interviews, lasted between 40-60 minutes. All the interviews were audio recorded with the participants' permission and later transcribed verbatim for analysis.

1.8.5.2 Document analysis

The requisite data was obtained from the documents of the schools. Creswell (2002: 219) defined documents as "public and private records that qualitative researchers obtain from the sites or participants in a study which may include newspapers, minutes, personal journals, and letters". In this study, content analysis was used to analyse the SIPs and ANA results to establish the type of documented support provided to primary school educators.

1.8.5.3 Non-participant observation

Observation of phase meetings was conducted in the three schools to determine the kind of support provided to educators during these encounters. In addition, one cluster workshop for educators teaching mathematics in Grade 9 was attended. The purpose was to establish the kind of support provided to these educators every Monday on the content to teach on Tuesday to Friday.

1.9 DATA ANALYSIS

The data that had been collected from the interviews, documents and observation were subjected to content analysis. Leedy and Ormrod (2013: 148) defined content analysis as "a detailed and systematic examination of the contents of a particular body of material for the purpose of identifying patterns, themes, or biases". The process, according to Cohen et al. (2007: 476) involves coding, categorizing, looking for recurring patterns, similarities, inconsistencies or contradictions.

Each data segment or unit was considered against the overarching question of how participants expected to be supported and how they experienced support. Codes were then assigned to the specific units or segments of related meaning identified in the transcripts. The codes identified included, workshop or school visit frequency, types and sources of support, participant views and concerns about support. The codes were categorised to establish the emergent nature of themes, trends and patterns that were cross-referenced with the research questions to ensure that the researcher did not lose focus (McMillan & Schumacher, 1993: 480).

The analysis process was further informed by probing questions aimed at identifying thematic relationships between the various categories. The qualitative analysis process was concluded with a description of the thematic relationships and patterns which had emerged. The categories, patterns and emerging themes

were then linked to the research questions and discussed in relation to the relevant literature.

1.10 ENHANCING THE QUALITY AND CREDIBILITY OF THE STUDY

The study followed strict ethical conduct, based on permitted access and consent to participation, as well as ensured protection of participants and secured data. Careful attention was paid to satisfy the criteria associated with rigour in a qualitative study. Through the use of data, the researcher attempted to present a realistic picture of educator support in one South African school district.

Triangulation was used to enhance the trustworthiness of this study. Shenton (2004: 65) defined triangulation as the "use of different methods, especially observation, focus groups and individual interviews, which form the major data collection strategies for much qualitative research". Triangulation in this study was achieved by the use of interviews, document retrieval and non-participant observation. A "wide range of informants", namely, the principals, HODs and post level 1 educators were used to achieve triangulation in this study (Shenton, 2004: 65).

Member checking was employed to increase the trustworthiness of this study. Creswell (2002: 252) defined member checking as a "process where the researcher asks one or more participants in the study to check the accuracy of the account". The transcripts of the interviews were taken back to the participants to comment and determine the accuracy of the data and the final report.

Peer review was used to enhance the trustworthiness of this study. Lincoln and Guba (1985) highlighted that a peer review takes place when a "researcher employs the services of someone familiar with the research or phenomena to play devil's advocate, challenges the researcher's assumptions, asks in-depth questions about methods and interpretations". In this study, an auditor outside

the study was employed to review the different aspects of the research (Creswell, 2002: 253).

1.11 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The ethical clearance to conduct this study was obtained from the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Education at the University of Pretoria. Further permission to conduct the study was obtained from the Mpumalanga Department of Education, circuit manager, principals, head of departments and post level 1 educators selected for the study. During the initial meeting, the participants were made aware of the following:

1.11.1 Voluntary participation

All the participants were informed that their participation in the study was voluntary. They all agreed to participate in the study after the researcher had explained the purpose of the research study which is to explore how primary school educators expect to be supported and how they experience support from internal and external sources in a South African school district.

1.11.2 Informed consent

Informed consent implies that the "participants must give their consent to participate in the study" (Creswell, 2003: 64). All the participants gave consent to participate in the study by signing the consent letters. The researcher informed the participants that they were "free to withdraw from the study at any time without prejudice" (Creswell, 2003: 64).

1.11.3 Confidentiality and anonymity

Codes were assigned to protect the identity of the participants and schools in the report. The researcher anticipated that school principals may perceive it a risk to allow a stranger to gain access to sensitive school documents such as the SIPs, WSE reports and ANA results. To that effect, the researcher assured the school

principals that the information from the documents would be kept private and confidential. All the documents of the schools were verified in the principals' offices without removing them.

1.12 STRUCTURE OF THE STUDY

To assure a well-structured research report in which the content flows in a logical order, the chapters were outlined as follows:

Chapter 1: Background and context of the study
This chapter provides the orientation and background to and the context of the study, research problem, purpose of the study and conceptual framework underpinning the study.

Chapter 2: The legislative and policy context of educator support in South Africa
This chapter discusses support for educators in South Africa in the context of the legislative framework.

Chapter 3: Literature review
In this chapter, the focus is on reviewing the existing literature related to support for educators in both the international and South African contexts.

Chapter 4: Research design and methodology
This chapter outlines the research design and methodology used in the study. In addition, the chapter discusses the relevance of qualitative research, research paradigm, research design, data collection methods, strategies for ensuring trustworthiness of the study and ethical considerations that needed to be adhered to.

Chapter 5: Data analysis and discussion
This chapter presents data analysis procedures, findings and the discussion.

Chapter 6: Main findings, conclusions and recommendations of the study
This chapter summarises the main research findings that emerged from the data analysis in relation to the literature discussed in chapter 3. In addition, the chapter presents the conclusions, contributions and recommendations for further research.

1.13 SUMMARY

This first chapter established the background to the study and discussed the significance of the study. The problem statement was formulated by drawing from existing literature. The conceptual framework underpinning the study was discussed in detail. The next chapter discusses support for educators within the legislative context in South Africa.

CHAPTER 2

THE LEGISLATIVE CONTEXT OF EDUCATOR SUPPORT IN SOUTH AFRICA

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter reviews the intended support for educators within the legislative context in South Africa. The chapter discusses the level of support provided to educators, policies guiding support for educators, whole-school evaluation and initiatives undertaken to improve the quality education and learner achievement in schools.

2.2 LEVELS OF SUPPORT FOR EDUCATORS IN SOUTH AFRICA

The South African education support system is decentralised across four levels from national to province, to districts and to local schools.

2.2.1 Support from the National Department of Education

The South African education is governed by a system of cooperative governance, with power shared by the national and provincial governments (Moloi & Chetty: 2011: 1). The fourth schedule of the South African Constitution (RSA, 1996) states that 'education at all levels, excluding tertiary education,' is an area over which national and provincial governments have concurrent powers. At national level, the function of both primary and secondary education (Grade R to Grade 12), is administered by the Department of Basic Education (DBE). The main role of the officials in the national office is to provide the "national policy and a broad management framework for support" and monitor the implementation of administrative and policy development processes (DoE, 2005d: 7).

The focal areas of support at national level include "leadership, communication, financial planning and management, strategic planning and transformation, policy, research and development, curriculum delivery, and staff development"

(ELRC, 2008: 63). The Policy on the Organisation, Roles and Responsibilities of Education Districts (DBE, 2013a: 7) states that the "delegated authority, roles, relationships and lines of accountability of provincial head offices, district offices and education institutions have not been clearly formulated and are also not clearly understood and exercised". The main question is that if the roles and responsibilities are not clearly defined at provincial and district levels, what kind of support is provided to educators in schools.

2.2.2 Support from the provincial education departments

South Africa is divided into nine provinces, namely, Gauteng, Mpumalanga, Free State, Eastern Cape, Western Cape, Northern Cape, Limpopo, North West and KwaZulu-Natal. Each of the nine provinces has its own education department (DBE, 2013a: 11). Thus, each provincial education department is required to "coordinate the implementation of the national framework of support in relation to provincial needs" (DoE, 2005: 7). Support for educators in schools in each provincial education department is the responsibility of the provincial supervisory units which are further divided into school districts (RSA, 2001: 8).

2.2.3 Support from the school districts

There are 81 school districts in all the provincial education departments in South Africa (DBE, 2013a: 11). In the Mpumalanga province, where this study has been conducted, there are four school districts, namely, Bohlabela district, Ehlanzeni district, Gert Sibande district, and Nkangala district. A school district is defined as a "geographic area within a province which has been demarcated by the Member of the Executive Council (MEC) for Education of the province for purposes of effective education management and service delivery" (DBE, 2012a: 14).

Moloi and Chetty (2010:10) purported that school districts are "ideally positioned at the point where education links directly with schools". At this nexus, a school district "represents and exercises the authority of the PED in all day-to-day

administrative and professional dealings with schools" (DBE, 2012a: 13). Thus, the overarching purpose of a district office is to "help all education institutions to deliver education of high quality, advise and support educational institutions that are performing poorly and in need of services" (DBE, 2013a: 23).

Most of the district offices consists of five district support teams classified as "District Curriculum Support Team, District Management and Governance Support Team, District Learner Support Team, District Examination and Assessment Team, and District Operations Team" (DBE, 2013a: 21). Each support team has a specific task for supporting educators in schools. For example, the core function of the District Curriculum Support Teams is to "manage curriculum support in consultation with and advise teachers, facilitate inclusive education and report on school visits" (DBE, 2013a: 21). Similarly, the District Curriculum Support Team is required to "promote, organise and provide professional development of educators in co-operation with the South African Council for Educators (SACE)" (DBE, 2013a: 21). The role of the District Examination and Assessment Team is to "administer the ANAs, the National Senior Certificate (NSC) and Continuous Assessment (CASS)" (DBE, 2013a: 21).

Moloi and Chetty (2010: 10) asserted that the role of education districts is to provide "management and professional support", while Louis et al. (2010: 32) viewed the role of education district officials as formulating "strategies and support practices that enable principals, teachers and students to thrive". According to the DBE (2013a: 11), school district offices, with the vital support of the circuit offices, are responsible for assisting education institutions to "identify and address barriers to learning, promote effective teaching and learning, including classroom and organisational support, provide specialised learner and educator support, curricular and institutional development (including management and governance), and administrative support". The Eastern Cape Department of Education policy on on-site school support (2007: 10) emphasises

that district officials must conduct regular visits to schools and individual classrooms to "improve the quality of teaching and learning".

The DBE (2011a: 9) aspires to "improve the frequency and quality of the monitoring and support services provided by district offices to schools". This view supports the Foundations for Learning (FFL) Campaign (DoE, 2008: 22) which stated that "education district officials are obliged to visit all schools within the district at least once per term, with more frequent visits to schools requiring stronger support for monitoring, guidance, assist schools to improve their performance and work towards the agreed targets". Similarly, the Eastern Cape Department of Education Policy on on-site School Support (2007: 10) indicated that "regular visits of district officials to schools and individual classrooms improves curriculum implementation and the quality of teaching and learning in schools".

The National Development Plan 2030: Our Future – Make it Work, states that district officials have been advised to model certain dispositions, such as being "more capable, more professional and more responsive when performing the essential function of supporting schools to deliver the curriculum" (DBE,2012b: 315–399). Similarly, the National Policy on Whole-School Evaluation (RSA, 2001: 8) pointed out that the key role of the district support services is to coordinate "staff development programmes in response to individual professional needs, the findings of whole-school evaluation, and the requirements of provincial and national policies and initiatives". The NEEDU report (DBE, 2013b: 70) indicated that there are too many schools and educators seeking help from the districts. Thus, officials do not have sufficient time to provide additional support to educators.

2.2.4 Support from the circuit offices

The school districts in the nine provincial education departments in South Africa are subdivided into school circuits. The provincial education departments (PEDs), in consultation with district directors are required to provide adequate district staff in order to achieve the "optimum number of site visits by circuit and district staff to education institutions within the circuit" (DBE, 2013a: 26). Van der Voort and Wood (2016: 1) pointed out that both the school districts and circuit offices have a mandate from the DBE to support schools under their jurisdiction.

According to the (DBE, 2012a: 15), circuit offices carry the "front-line responsibility for service provision". The circuit offices are the nearest "point of contact between education institutions and the Provincial Department of Education" (DBE, 2013a: 25). Thus, the core functions of the circuit offices are to "provide a channel of communication between the district office and education institutions; provide management support to education institutions; provide administrative services to education institutions; facilitate training for principals, SMTs and SGBs; monitor the functionality of education institutions; provide curriculum support to Grade R practitioners and primary grade teachers; facilitate visits of specialist district teams to secondary schools; and report to the district office" (DBE, 2013a: 27).

Circuit offices are managed by Circuit Managers. The main function of the circuit manager is to "support school principals, SMTs and school governing bodies in the management, administration and governance of schools" (ELRC, 2008: 58). The findings from the ANA report (DBE, 2012b) indicated that circuit managers were "providing good support to schools through personal visits, written communications and telephonic support" in most provinces of South Africa (DBE, 2012b: 10).

2.2.5 Institutional-level support

Institutional-level support is also referred to as school-based support. The policy states that school management teams (SMTs) and Development Support Groups (DSGs) constitute the institutional-level support teams. The role of these institutional-level support teams is to "identify and address barriers to learning in the local context – thereby promoting effective teaching and learning in schools" (DoE, 2005d: 7). The Personnel Administrative Measures (PAM) document (DoE, 1999) outlines that the SMTs consist of the principal, deputy principal and heads of department. School principals are required to "regularly visit teachers in their classrooms to provide support, monitor their progress in providing quality teaching and learning and inform the school's professional development priorities" (ELRC, 2008: 53). Similarly, HODs are required to "control the work of educators and learners in the department, and to monitor and evaluate the performance of educators" (ELRC, 2008: 46).

The DSGs came into existence following the signing of an agreement (Education Labour Relations Council, Resolution 8 of 2003) between the teacher unions and Department of Education. Each DSG is composed of the immediate senior, peer and the educator undergoing the appraisal (ELRC, 2003: 4). The main role of the DSG is to provide mentoring and support for educators during the implementation of the IQMS (DoE, 2005d: 5).

2.3 WHOLE SCHOOL EVALUATION

The National Policy on Whole-School Evaluation (RSA, 2001) provides a framework of the way in which support for educators should be provided and strengthened by various stakeholders in education. Whole school evaluation (WSE) is conducted by external supervisory teams from the school district offices comprised of "accredited supervisors capable of evaluating the nine areas for evaluation, have the expertise to evaluate at least one subject/learning area and

an awareness of the key elements of good provision for Learners with Special Education Needs (LSEN)" (RSA, 2001: 8).

The WSE cycle involves "pre-evaluation visits, school self-evaluation, detailed on-site evaluation, post-evaluation reporting and post-evaluation support" (RSA, 2001: 8). This LSEN Policy (RSA, 2001: 3) highlights that the process of whole school evaluation does not rely on external evaluation only but "effective quality assurance is achieved when schools have well-developed internal self-evaluation processes, credible external evaluation and well-structured support services". This study explores how the internal self-evaluation and external evaluation processes described in the context of the well-structured support services complement each other in schools.

The supervisory teams spend between three and four days of the week evaluating a school. The evaluation process focuses on nine areas, namely, the "basic functionality of the school; leadership, management and communication; governance and relationships; quality teaching and learning, and educator development; curriculum provision and resources; learner achievement; school safety, security and discipline; school infrastructure; and community" (RSA, 2001: 5). The evaluation result of a school is published as a "written report and contains recommendations designed to help the school to continue to improve" (RSA, 2001: 8).

After the evaluation by the supervisory team, the district support teams are required to "formulate and implement an improvement plan based on the recommendations in the report and provide the school with support as it seeks to implement the plan" (RSA, 2001: 8). In addition, the district support teams are expected to "guide schools in the implementation of the recommendations in whole-school evaluation reports and find ways of setting up clusters of schools so that approaches to improving the performance of schools can be integrated

more efficiently and effectively" (RSA, 2001: 11). Much emphasis is placed on "raising standards and the quality of educational provision, co-ordinate staff development programmes in response to individual professional needs of educators, findings of whole-school evaluation, and the requirements of provincial and national policies and initiative" (RSA, 2001: 11).

A recommendation in a study by Mathaba (2014: 195) was that the WSE advisors should visit schools every term in order to assist the SMTs on the implementation of recommendations and support in general. In addition, the WSE team leaders should "adopt" the schools they visit in order to offer them with a meaningful monitoring and support (Mathaba, 2014: 195). The most vital point made by Mathaba (2014: 195) in this regard is that underperforming schools should be monitored and supported over a period of three years to ensure that they do not revert to underperformance.

2.4 POLICY ON SCHOOL SUPPORT

A search on educator support policies yielded only one policy implemented by the Eastern Cape Department of Education (ECDE). The ECDE policy on on-site school support (2007) specifies the intervention strategies for curriculum support in schools. The first recommended strategy contained in the ECDE policy is a lesson demonstration – whereby the official visiting the school delivers a lesson for other educators in the school and conducts a "mini-workshop or directed discussion about the lesson" (ECDE, 2007: 4). The official lead by example by giving guidance to educators in a school on lesson preparation and presentation.

The second strategy is called co-operative planning – where a "particular lesson or activity is co-planned with the curriculum official" (ECDE, 2007: 4). The process of planning together is considered important because it "builds confidence as the risk for implementing a new innovation is shared with the curriculum official"

(ECDE, 2007: 4). However, the emphasis here is that "co-planning is particularly effective if it is followed by a team teaching demonstration lesson" (ECDE, 2007: 4).

The third strategy is team teaching, which "works best when the same lesson is taught to more than one class" (ECDE, 2007: 4). This in turn, makes it "possible to teach, reflect, revise and then teach again" (ECDE, 2007: 4). This strategy is applicable to schools with a high learner enrolment, like most public schools in South Africa. The fourth strategy is mediating reflection (post lesson focus group discussions). This strategy is often "used for a group of teachers in a school faced with a particular issue or challenge with classroom practice, for example, managing a large class" (ECDE, 2007: 4). During this period, "reflections are recorded and shared in a focus group discussion" and "effective strategies to deal with the issue are identified and implemented" (ECDE, 2007: 4). This strategy provides educators with an opportunity to explore ways and means to improve practice.

The last recommended strategy is lesson observation. At this stage, a "curriculum official observes a few lessons in the school", completes the observation instrument and makes suggestions about what will be discussed afterwards (ECDE, 2007: 4). Most subject advisors in South Africa implement this strategy when they visit educators in schools. However, the challenge for this strategy is that it does not provide for follow-up support.

The four strategies for on-site support of the Eastern Cape Province have a potential to succeed where an adequate number of subject advisors are employed in a school district. These strategies demand that subject advisors spend time with educators to plan, participate in team teaching, conduct post lesson focus group discussions, and observe lessons. This is a point worthy for the exploration to determine whether the curriculum officials in the other provinces

of South Africa have the capacity to implement the same strategies to support educators in schools.

2.5 TARGETED SUPPORT

The McKinney report (2009: 83) reveals that the Western Cape Provincial Department of Education invited district leaders to a meeting on how to "develop a literacy strategy". At that meeting, the district leaders identified three areas of improvement, namely, "teacher development and support, the provision of resources and learning, as well as research and advocacy" (McKinney, 2009: 83). The important finding from the McKinney (2009) report was that the districts were better positioned to provide the targeted support than the provinces (McKinney, 2009: 83). In the same token, Van der Berg, Taylor, Gustafsson, Spaull and Armstrong (2011: 3) reiterated that targeted support helps to "improve practices within schools, facilitate communication and information sharing between authorities and schools, and facilitate sharing of best practices between schools".

In addition, the McKinney report (2009: 86), signify that, "as the level of support increased significantly, the relationship changed from one of occasional visits from the province or district to one in which a team was housed on the doorstep of the schools". This suggests that provincial and district officials must spend more time in schools in order to provide effective support to educators. Furthermore, the McKinney (2009: 86) report revealed that the increased number of visits of the officials from the province and districts to schools created a situation where the "tone of the interaction changed from one where schools felt 'inspected' to one of partnership and support".

The important highlight of the McKinney (2009) report is that the provincial and district officials established a good rapport with educators in the schools during this period. The circuit teams met every week to "discuss the school visits, to

problem solve the challenges they face, and to draw support from the district as needed, as well as from the province or third-party partners such as NGOs and community organisations active in the area" (McKinney, 2009: 86). This suggests that effective support is established when external officials from the DBE spend more time supporting educators in their own schools.

2.6 THE FUNCTIONS OF SUBJECT ADVISORS

Literature indicates that subject advisors are required to provide school-based support. A subject advisor is defined as an "expert in his subject field who provides an environment that creates and fosters commitment, confidence and collegiality among colleagues and teachers by sharing samples of good practice between teachers" (DBE (2012a: 50). In addition, subject advisors conduct "classroom observation, consultation, cluster meetings, and provision of feedback reports to school principals and educators on how to improve the quality of teaching and learning in schools" (DBE, 2013a: 12). Similarly, Narsee (2006: 180) reported that the role of subject advisors is to assist educators in terms of "planning and preparation, methods of assessment, recording and reporting".

According to the Policy on the Organisation, Roles and Responsibilities of Education Districts (DBE, 2013a: 12), the role of subject advisors includes "classroom observation, consultation, cluster meetings, and provides feedback reports to school principals and educators on how to improve the quality of teaching and learning in schools". However, the intended objective for improving the quality of teaching and learning becomes possible if subject advisors "maintain a visible presence at schools to support teachers to implement curriculum and pay regular visits to schools" (DBE, 2012a: 10).

The DBE (2012a: 26) specifies that the "minimum standard for a subject advisor could be two visits per school per term, and one cluster meeting per term". Similarly, annexure 3 of the Policy on the Organisation, Roles and Responsibilities of Education Districts (DBE, 2012a: 48), stipulates that subject advisors must make a personal visit to each school to discuss the previous year's performance, provide every teacher with a work schedule and lesson plan as well as with the necessary resources. Furthermore, subject advisors are required to conduct orientation meetings/workshops with HODs, principals and/or new teachers. These meetings/workshops focus on setting the targets, "clarifying the assessment and content requirements, discussing strategies to improve performance, and agreeing on a monitoring, evaluation and support strategy for the circuit/district" (DBE, 2012a: 49).

The role of the subject advisors during the second and third quarters of the academic year, is to "conduct school visits and focused on schools that have shown an uncharacteristic decline in end year grade results in Grade 12 or ANA or serial underperformers to improve learning outcomes" (DBE, 2012a: 49). In addition, subject advisors are expected to engage post level 1 educators and HODs in their academic improvement plans and to "check that teachers have all the necessary support material such as content framework, textbooks, exam guidelines, exemplar papers and memoranda, past exams and memoranda training materials on content" (DBE, 2012a: 50). Furthermore, subject advisors are also expected to "moderate formal assessment tasks, undertake face moderation in subjects that have a practical component or orals, and advise schools on procuring resources like equipment, chemicals, cooking items for hospitality studies" (DBE, 2012a: 50).

During the classroom visits, subject advisors should draw "samples of learners' written work to establish pace, depth and sequencing of curriculum coverage; compare written work to teacher planning and availability of resources; check

frequency and management of home and classwork as well as usefulness of feedback to improve learner understanding" (DBE, 2012a: 50). In addition, subject advisors must "evaluate the quality of classroom interaction, assess strategies to provide remedial lessons or additional support to learners that need it, conduct capacity building training for teachers in areas in which they need professional development support, and support the formation of cluster of schools with similar or common challenges to encourage working cooperation and sharing of best practices" (DBE, 2012a: 50).

During the fourth quarter of the academic year, the role of subject advisors is to "moderate oral and practical examinations and also CASS/School Based Assessment Tasks (SBAT); and work with Circuit Managers to coordinate, manage and monitor internal and external examinations" (DBE, 2012a: 50). Over and above, subject advisors are required to "network and research articles to provide teachers with additional support to promote teaching and learning in the classroom" (DBE, 2012a: 51). Each subject advisor concludes his/her school visit by writing a report to reflect his/her findings and make recommendations about the kind of support required for an individual educator and follow-up activities (DBE, 2012a: 51). This suggests that subject advisors provide technical and, to a certain extent, affective support.

2.7 INITIATIVES AIMED TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY EDUCATION AND LEARNER ACHIEVEMENT IN SCHOOLS

The DBE has undertaken a wide range of initiatives aimed at improving the quality of education and learner achievement in schools in South Africa. This included road shows conducted by officials from the provinces to inform school management teams about the "findings of national, regional and international tests pointing difficulties with the quality of literacy and numeracy in schools" (DBE, 2013a: 8; DBE, 2012a: 6). Formal assessment tasks exemplars were

introduced to improve the level of questioning in the classroom and provide educators with lesson plans (DBE, 2013a: 9).

The KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education Curriculum Management Strategy (2014: 10) highlighted that such intervention strategies were influenced by the underperformance of learners in the ANA tests, which provided evidence that some educators were not capable of "dealing with the content areas". In short, the intervention strategies employed by the DBE include the implementation of the ANAs, monitoring of curriculum coverage, national reading interventions and the provision of exemplars, support material and workbooks.

The other strategy for improving learner performance in South Africa was setting the national target of 60% for learner achievement in Grades 3, 6 and 9 in both literacy (language) and numeracy (mathematics) (DBE, 2011c, 2012). The Minister of Basic Education, Angie Motshekga, reported that the national target had been exceeded in 2014 in "both languages and mathematics at the Grade 3 level and in Home Languages for Grade 6" except in the Senior Phase (DBE, 2014). On the contrary, Frempong et al. (2013) highlighted that Grade 9 learners were underperforming during the ANA testing. Such underperformance reflected the "magnitude of the problem facing the education sector in its quest to improve the quality of education in South Africa" (Frempong et al., 2013).

The DBE (2015) reported that an intensive intervention and support programme for the Senior Phase were in the process of being developed to fast track the support for underperforming schools (DBE, 2015: 22). The DBE provides schools with Assessment Guidelines outlining the "curriculum scope of work and skills covered by the ANA tests in Grades 1 to 6 and 9 in preparation for the ANA tests" (DBE, 2013c: 13). The workbooks were developed in synchronisation with the CAPS and are considered an "important intervention strategy for improving the

performance of learners in national and international assessments of literacy and numeracy" (DBE, 2013c: 12; DBE, 2012c: 10).

To date, there is little evidence suggesting that the use of the workbooks help to improve learner performance. However, Frempong et al. (2013) warned that the use of a large-scale assessment, such as ANA, to improve teaching and learning have not been "well scrutinised and are based on measures and analysis with limited credibility". Furthermore, Frempong et al. (2013) argued that the ANA testing narrows curriculum coverage and encourages 'teaching to the test'. The ANA testing takes "valuable time away from non-tested subjects, particularly when high stakes are attached to results" (Frempong et al., 2013).

The Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS), introduced in 2012, is another strategy employed by the DBE to improve support for educators. Mather & Land (2014), DBE (2013c: 8), DBE (2012: 6) pointed out that the CAPS provides educators with the curriculum and assessment statements that are "clear, succinct and unambiguous and enable them to improve learners' numeracy and literacy skills effectively". The DBE continued to intensify its monitoring and support for educators through the subject advisors to enhance the implementation of CAPS in 2015 (DBE, 2014: 18). In this regard, the DBE has introduced the national instrument to monitor curriculum coverage in schools where learners are given more written work for the optimal use of teaching and learning time and thus, monitoring the achievement of the set of goals per subject (DBE, 2012c: 8; DBE, 2013c: 8).

The National Education Evaluation and Development Unit (NEEDU) was established in 2009 to assesses the state of the schooling systems in operation and makes recommendations designed to improve efficiency in literacy and numeracy (DBE, 2013a: 9). The main function of the NEEDU unit is to monitor and evaluate the implementation of the IQMS in schools, the quality of internal and

external assessment results and schools' intervention strategies emanating from the ANA results (DBE, 2012c: 10; DBE, 2013c: 9).

The year, 2014 was identified to be the year which would "be curriculum-focused and will be linked to detailed support of learning and teaching quality and improved performance monitoring, management and development systems which enable accountability to be strengthened at national, provincial, district and school levels". To date, there is little information about the accountability role of these stakeholders on matters of support for educators.

The National Reading Strategy was developed by the DBE in 2008. This reading strategy consists of the "100 storybook project (the provision of storybooks to historically disadvantaged primary schools); drop all and read campaign; teaching reading in the early grades, a teacher's handbook; and the foundations for learning (FFL) campaign" (DBE, 2013c: 10). At the level of the classroom, the reading strategy included the "planning and preparation of effective reading and literacy lessons, timetabling and weighting of reading and literacy lessons, utilisation of reading resources and DBE workbooks as a reading resource, implementation of reading and writing assessments (formative, summative, diagnostic and baseline), and observation of reading events (Readathon, Library Week, Spelling Bee, etc.)" (DBE, 2013c: 10).

2.8 CONCLUSION

The legislation, policies and regulations in South Africa discussed in this chapter provide a framework of support for educators in schools. The support for educators appears to be the collective responsibility of officials in the national, provincial, district, and circuit offices and school-based personnel such as the principal and HODs.

In addition, the contextualizing of issues presented in terms of the legislative context, the regulations associated with professional behaviours, the relationship among various players in the educational schemata (both locally and nationally) helped to clarify responsibilities and provided insight into actions taken. The next chapter contains a review of existing literature on support for educators from both an international and a South African perspective.

CHAPTER 3

LITERATURE REVIEW ON SUPPORT FOR EDUCATORS IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN AND INTERNATIONAL CONTEXTS

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter reviews existing literature on support for educators. International and national sources including journal articles, research reports, official documents, dissertations and theses, books, online and print media and conference papers were consulted. The following themes emerged from the review of the literature: induction and mentoring support for beginning teachers, coaching for educators in low-performing schools and professional development.

3.2 PURPOSE OF SUPPORT FOR TEACHERS

Support is broadly defined as helping or assisting. Thus, supporting educators means somebody is helping or assisting them. One can then rightly ask why educators need help or assistance. The DoE (1997) asserted that educators need support to improve teaching and learning. Mashau et al. (2008: 416) indicate that educator support helps to "optimise the work of the educator … and help him solve problems that could impede his effectiveness, such as subject advisory and professional services, educator research services and communication services".

Hopkins and MacGilchrist (1998) highlighted that the support for educators "impact directly or indirectly on the school variables or conditions to improve teaching and learning and student achievement". Similarly, Slavin (1998) and Datnow (2000) emphasised that the best support for educators comes through professional on-site support from expert educators during a "clustering school system which allows them to share information and knowledge, reflect and build, continuously, on their good practices and systems".

Wei, Darling-Hammond, Andree, Richardson and Orphanos (2009: ii) asserted that "improving support and providing professional learning for educators is a crucial step in transforming schools and improving academic achievement". The Department of Education (DoE, 2001) indicated that "successful learning is contingent upon strengthening education support services at various levels (national, provincial, district and institutional levels) through involving a host of role players and creation of streamlined and systemic implementation at all levels".

According to Reyneke, Meyer and Nel (2010), support for educators is important since it helps educators to improve on curricular, assessment and infusion of technology into teaching practices. Similarly, Bujowoye, Moletsane, Stofile, Moolla and Sylvester (2014: 1) affirmed that support for educators in schools create a conducive learning environment for effective teaching and which ultimately, enhance learners' academic performance.

Proponents of support for educators, including Bohm (2005: 398 in Mashau et al. 2008: 420), asserted that "most teachers require specific training and a constant supply of information about the primary functions of their occupation, such as teaching itself (creating a positive classroom climate, the value and means of positive disciplining, education in the broader sense of the word, planning assessment, and remedial work)". This suggests that continuous professional development is required for educators to stay abreast with the developments in the teaching profession. De Clercq and Shalem (2014: 138) affirmed that "educators need specialised knowledge and diverse methods of imparting knowledge to learners with different cognitive levels".

3.3 SUPPORT FOR TEACHERS FROM AN INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

Wei et al. (2009: 9) indicated that external experts often provide formal professional development support for educators. The researcher of this study explores educator support in countries whose students performed well in international assessments. Wieczorerek (2008: 102) reported that, Finland, Japan and Korea were among the top performers in the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)'s Program for International Assessment (PISA) testing.

3.3.1 SUPPORT FOR TEACHERS IN FINLAND

Sahlberg (2010: 1) and Darling-Hammond (2009: 15) reported that Finland has emerged as the "leading Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) country in educational achievement over the last decade". The main reason Finland was considered a leader in the "international pack in literacy, science, and mathematics" was because they valued and invested in teachers and the teaching profession as a whole (Sahlberg, 2010: 1). According to Wei et al., the recipe of success for Finland lies with a series of reforms of the Finnish educational system which led to a "decentralisation of authority and granted local municipalities, schools and teachers a high level of autonomy" (Wei et al., 2009: 9).

3.3.1.1 Becoming a teacher

Teaching is an attractive career choice in Finland. The entry requirement for teaching in Finland is a master's degree (Sahlberg, 2010: 2). Finland follows very stringent processes and procedures to identify the most suitable candidates to pursue teaching as a profession. Prospective candidates are selected based on best matriculation examination results, relevant records of school

accomplishments and only the top candidates proceed to the final stage of the interviews (Sahlberg, 2010: 2).

The successful candidates undergo a "high-quality, graduate-level preparation completely at state expense" in both content and pedagogy (Darling-Hammond, 2009: 17). The strength of the teaching training in Finland lies with the integration of both the "theoretical and methodological studies" conducted over a period of five years (Sahlberg, 2010: 4). During the five years' teacher training, student teachers "observe lessons from experienced teachers, practise teaching under the supervision of supervisory teachers, and deliver independent lessons to different groups of pupils while being evaluated by supervising teachers and Department of Teacher Education professors and lecturers" (Sahlberg, 2010: 4). The Finnish teacher training focuses on "continual reflection, evaluation, and problem solving at the level of the classroom, school, municipality and nation" (Darling-Hammond, 2009: 22).

3.3.1.2 Professional learning and development

There are no formal national teacher development programmes in Finland. Teachers attend annual mandatory training for some days (Wei et al., 2009: 27). The "government determines the focus of the training provided by service providers on a competitive basis based on the national educational development needs" (Sahlberg, 2010: 6). Some Finnish municipalities organise "in-service programs for all teachers while, in others, it is up to individual teachers or school principals to decide how much and what type of professional development is needed" (Sahlberg, 2010: 6). The purpose of conducting in-service programmes is to increase "teacher professionalism and to improve the abilities to solve problems within their school contexts by applying evidence-based solutions, and evaluating the impact of their procedures" (Sahlberg, 2010: 6).

Teachers within schools work together to develop the curriculum and to plan the instructional strategies for teaching the curriculum to the specific students in their schools. Time is allocated for joint planning of the "teachers' work week, with one afternoon each week designated for this work" (Barber and Mourshed, 2007). This suggests that a team approach is followed when teachers plan lessons and solve problems together. To this effect, Darling-Hammond (2009: 23) and Wei et al. (2009: 20) indicated that teachers in Finnish schools meet once a week in the afternoon to develop lesson plans in line with the national curriculum.

According to the Education in Finland (2012: 26) and Darling-Hammond (2009: 24), much emphasis is placed on continuing education for educators. Teachers pursuing their doctoral studies in education, are required to "complete advanced studies in the educational sciences" (Sahlberg, 2010: 5). This suggests that these teachers must shift their focus from the initial academic concentration or subject specialisation to something else in order to broaden their knowledge base and to teach the content in an advanced way (Sahlberg, 2010: 5).

3.3.1.3 Curriculum and assessment

As stated above, curriculum planning is the responsibility of schools and municipalities in Finland. The Education in Finland (2012: 13) reported that the activities of education providers are guided by objectives stated in legislation, the national curricula and qualification requirements. The national curriculum is flexible, decentralised, and less detailed. The intention is to provide teachers with a "high level of pedagogical and curricular autonomy" (Sahlberg, 2010: 6).

Finnish teachers select the textbooks and make significant "input into the development of course content, student assessment policies, the course offerings and budget allocation within a school" (Wei et al., 2009: 27). The "school-level curriculum, approved by local education authorities, teachers and school principals, provides teachers with well-developed curriculum knowledge and

planning skills" (Sahlberg, 2010: 6). It is obvious that the education system in Finland relies on the proficiency of educators; hence, there is a strong focus on both self-evaluations of schools and education providers and national evaluations of learning outcomes (Education in Finland, 2012: 13).

There is no standardised testing to determine student success in basic education or benchmarking of schools in Finland (Education in Finland, 2012: 16; Sahlberg, 2010: 6; Darling-Hammond, 2009: 20). Finns believe that standardised testing "narrows the curriculum, encourages teaching to the test, and promotes unhealthy competition among schools" (Sahlberg, 2010: 7). Teachers in Finland "design and conduct appropriate curriculum-based assessments to keep student progress, classroom assessment and school-based evaluation" (Sahlberg, 2010: 7). In addition, "Finland improves the schools and teacher education programs through continuous evaluation and review" (Sahlberg, 2010: 7).

Teachers provide feedback to students in a narrative form, with much emphasis on descriptions of learning progress and areas for growth (Sahlberg, 2010: 6; Darling-Hammond, 2009: 20). Providing narrative feedback to learners in South Africa might be desirable, but may be more difficult to achieve considering that the learner-educator ratio is 40 learners for one teacher in a classroom in primary schools (DBE, 2010). Progress for each student in schools in Finland is "judged more against individual progress and abilities than statistical indicators" (Sahlberg, 2010: 7). The student assessment in Finnish schools is "embedded in the teaching and learning process and used to improve both teachers' and students' work throughout the academic year" (Sahlberg, 2010: 7).

3.4 SUPPORT FOR TEACHERS IN AUSTRALIA

Australia is one of the high performing countries in international benchmark tests (Wei, Andree, and Darling-Hammond (2009). The Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL, 2012: 2) attributed the Australian success to the

"efforts and achievements of highly skilled and motivated teachers and school leaders".

3.4.1 Induction of newly appointed teachers

The federal government plays a crucial role towards the implementation of induction for newly appointed educators (Li & Fang, 2015: 35). Newly appointed teachers are provided with tutors and offered open courses (Li & Fang, 2015: 35). The development of the Internet has led to the Australian government strongly advocating online induction which promotes the active development and use of educational resources on the Internet (Li and Fang, 2015: 36).

3.4.2 School centres

School centres have been established to provide support for teachers in Australian schools. According to the Australian Government (2008), "School Centres for Teacher Education Excellence have been established …. as part of the National Partnership on Improving Quality Teaching in schools". Each of these centres "provides opportunities for the development of whole-school approaches, quality clinical experiences for pre-service teachers and collaboration and partnership with individual universities in building the capacity of schools in terms of professional learning for both prospective and existing teachers" (Australian Government, 2008). Thus, these school centres provide the opportunity for collaboration and partnership between the prospective and existing educators. This means that new teachers learn good practice from the experienced teachers.

3.4.3 Professional development of teachers

The Minister of Education in South Australia has developed a strategy to support mathematics and science teachers in primary schools to improve the quality teaching (Weatherwill, 2011: 6). This initiative provides for primary school

teachers to be trained on new ways to teach maths and science through teaching guidelines (Weatherwill, 2011: 6). Coaches for literacy and numeracy have been provided to assist teachers in schools to improve on their "teaching practices and achieve better results for their students" (Weatherwill, 2011: 6).

In addition, a Teacher Education Taskforce has been instituted to improve the "quality of teacher training and practical placements as well as balancing teaching supply and demand" (Weatherwill, 2011: 6). The findings of the Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) reveals that there was a higher participation rates in "professional development activities in terms of the courses and workshops, education conferences, in-service training in outside organisations, network of teachers and individual or collaborative research" (OECD, 2013b: 1). This means that the Australian teachers receive most of their professional development during the workshops, conferences, in-service training and during their own networking.

The AITSL (2012: 2) states that the "Australian Teacher Performance and Development Framework promotes the creation of a performance and development culture in all Australian schools characterised by a clear focus on improving teaching as a powerful means of improving student outcomes". This framework provides a detailed description of "what is required for teachers to know what is expected of them to receive frequent and useful feedback on their teaching and to access high quality support in order to improve their practice" (AITSL, 2012: 2). The advantage of this framework is that it promotes "genuine professional conversations to improve teaching and minimise the risk of administrative and bureaucratic requirements" (AITSL, 2012: 2).

All teachers are required to indicate documented goals to be reviewed regularly in relation to performance and development. Progress in this regard is measured by the "principal or delegate against the agreed upon goals" (AITSL, 2012: 5). This approach is similar to the South African Integrated Quality Management System

(IQMS) where the Development Support Groups (DSGs) consists of the immediate supervisor and a colleague, evaluate the performance of the educator and develop the professional growth plans (PGPs).

The strength of the Australian framework lies with its provision for "student feedback, peer/supervisor feedback, parent feedback, teacher self-assessment, as well as participation in professional learning and teacher reflection" (AITSL, 2012: 6). Observation of classroom teaching is perceived as a useful tool for teacher development, commonly used across the OECD countries, because useful feedback is given on time and focuses on improvement (AITSL, 2012: 6).

3.4.4 Support from the specialist teachers

Wei et al. (2009) reported that teachers in selected primary schools in Western Australia receive support from the "Specialist Teacher" as part of the Getting It Right (GiR) Strategy. The main objective of the GiR strategy is to "improve literacy and numeracy outcomes of high needs students, with a focus on Aboriginal students and other students at risk of not making satisfactory progress to achieve a greater parity of outcomes for all groups of students" (Wei et al. 2009: 25). The specialist teachers are selected from each school based on the "interest and expertise in numeracy or literacy" and receive training through a "series of seven three day intensive workshops over the course of their initial two-year appointment" (Wei et al. 2009: 25).

The 'Specialist Teacher' works closely with the "teachers in their schools for half a day each week for each teacher" (Wei et al, 2009: 25). However, this may prove to be difficult to achieve in South Africa since subject advisors are responsible for many educators. The 'Specialist Teachers' "monitor and record student learning, help teachers analyse student performance data and set performance goals for underperforming students, model teaching strategies, plan learning activities to

meet the identified needs of students, assist with the implementation of these activities, and provide access to a range of resources" (Wei et al, 2009: 25).

In addition, the "Specialist Teachers work collaboratively with teachers on continuous professional development and bring useful knowledge to the core teaching tasks of planning and teaching in a way that breaks through teacher isolation and encourages teachers to be reflective about their own teaching practice" (Wei et al, 2009: 25).

3.5 SUPPORT FOR TEACHERS IN SELECTED STATES IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA (USA)

The provision of education in the USA is largely the responsibility of the states and, to a certain extent, that of local government. Jensen (1997) described education as "perhaps the most important function of state and local government" (p. 1), while King-McKenzie et al. (2013) noted that "the majority of the control of American public schools lies in the hands of each local school district" (p. 250). This suggests that the "federal government does not operate public schools but each of the fifty states has its own Department of Education that sets guidelines for the schools of that state" (King-McKenzie et al., 2013: 250). Unlike South Africa, "there is no national curriculum in the United States of America; instead, individual state boards of education provide for state wide curricula" (Wieczorek, 2008: 105).

In recent years, the National Governors Association (NGA) and Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) worked together to develop the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) in the USA. Teachers and experts from across the country provided input and by June 2010, a final version of the standards was released. By June 2014, more than 40 states, including the "Department of Defense Education Activity, Washington D.C., Guam, the Northern Mariana Islands and the U.S. Virgin

Islands had adopted the CCSS in ELA/literacy and math" (from: The Common Core State Standards Initiative website at www.corestandards.org). It can thus be argued that the CCSS was the US's most recent attempt at developing and promoting a centralised curriculum.

3.5.1 Induction

Teacher support in the USA differs from state to state and is provided for various reasons. In some states, beginning teachers are assigned mentors, as part of an induction programme (Moore, 2016), while in other states, instructional coaches or teacher specialists are assigned to schools with low student achievement on state assessment measures (Monrad, May, & Amsterdam, 2002; Dominguez et al., 2006) or to narrow the achievement gap (Wilder, 2014). Coaches or specialists work in teams or on an individual basis.

Moore (2016: 61) reported that in Missouri, one of the midwestern states in the USA, the STEP UP (Supporting Teachers, Examining Practices, Uncovering Potential) induction program was launched in one district in 2004. The purpose of the STEP UP was to address the alarming rate at which the state was losing new teachers. Every new teacher in the profession is assigned a coach for a period of two to three years of teaching. STEP UP ensures that teachers in the Missouri begin their career with a solid foundation on which to build the rest of their career (Moore, 2016: 63). New teachers receive two days of training before the start of the school year to meet their "in-the-moment needs" (Moore, 2016: 63).

The advantage of this training is that it exposes new teachers to "educational theory and models of best practice they may not have encountered during their teacher preparation" (Moore, 2016: 63). Coaches provide follow-up sessions, including meeting with teachers "before school, during planning periods, and after school and visit their classrooms as they teach" (Moore, 2016: 63). The importance of the STEP UP program is that it reduced the attrition rate of teachers

drastically. Moore (2016: 62) reported that over the past three years, an average of 9 percent of teachers left the district at the end of first year, compared with the 31 percent who left in the years prior to the launch of the program.

3.5.2 Professional development of educators

A study by Louis et al. (2010: 32) conducted in 43 school districts and 180 schools in nine states in the United States of America (USA) revealed that the main issue facing the districts was how to use their positions of authority to develop and support practices that improve student learning at schools. The nine states included in the sample were New Jersey, New York (East), Missouri, North Carolina, Texas (South), Indiana, Nebraska (Midwest), New Mexico and Oregon (West). The common characteristics of these nine states is that they had low minority populations, non-white minority populations in a single race/ethnicity category and had large but more diverse non-white minority populations (Louis et al. 2010: 313).

The main finding was that the district support enhances the sense of efficacy among principals, who are the formal leaders closest to the classroom and they become most effective when they see themselves as working collaboratively towards clear, common goals with district personnel, other principals, and teachers (Louis et al. 2010: 282). In addition, the finding of the study was that, where teachers feel attached to a professional community, they are more likely to use instructional practices that are linked to improved student learning (Louis et al. 2010: 282).

Coaching is a common strategy for improving both professional development and quality of instruction in educational settings which helps to improve the implementation quality of evidence-based programs in schools (Ransford, et al., 2009: 511). A study by Sumner (2011: 7) conducted in 115 North Carolina public school districts revealed that of 115 school districts, 39 employed high school

instructional coaches at some point between 2005 and 2010. Although the activities of coaches differed, most coaches were expected to support teachers in lesson planning and delivery.

However, the main finding of the study by Sumner (2011: 7) was that "no relationship was found between student achievement and the number of schools a coach served, coaches' support of Professional Learning Communities, coach professional development, relationship confidentiality, or typical coaching activities". The only district that demonstrated the most significant growth in student achievement was the one where there was daily interaction between the coach and principal. The reason for a significant growth in the student achievement was that the coach in this particular district performed both traditional instructional coaching duties and taught students a minimum of 40 minutes every day (Sumner, 2011: 7).

Prior to the use of instructional coaches in North Carolina, the state made use of teams of distinguished educators comprising five members, each with expertise in a different core academic discipline led by the principal (or someone who has previously served as a principal). These teams were employed to conduct multiple and thorough evaluations of all teachers, assistant principals, and principals (Mandel, 2000: 11). During this period, teachers in North Carolina who performed below standard were given a general knowledge competency test. If they achieved an unsatisfactory score, they were assigned a mentor who provided a high level of support during the course of the entire school year.

The support provided to underperforming educators included "participation in workshops and visiting the classrooms of accomplished teachers in their field at other schools" (Mandel, 2000: 13). If, at the close of a school year, the teacher still performed below the expected standard, a recommendation was made to the "state board of education regarding the dismissal of which the dismissal

proceedings were aggravated by the failure of a teacher to pass the general knowledge test on two occasions (Mandel, 2000: 13).

Similarly, in South Carolina, external review teams (ERTs), comprising small groups of skilled and experienced individuals, were "assigned to all schools that receive an 'unsatisfactory' academic performance rating to design the school's plan for developing teachers, implementation strategies, and professional development training to improve student performance and to increase the rate of student progress" (Dominguez et al., 2006: 2).

Dominguez et al. (2006: 3) reported that the ERT members provided professional development and on-site assistance by spending "a minimum of four consecutive days visiting the school". During the visits to schools, the ERT members "observe every teacher teaching in class; review documents on student performance, attendance rates and other pertinent data; and conduct interviews with parents, teachers, students and principals" (Dominguez, et al., 2006: 3). Evidence-based recommendations were compiled by the ERTs to help the "Department of Education delineate the activities, support, services and technical assistance to schools" (Dominguez, et al., 2006: 3). ERTs provided continued assistance for at least "three years, or for a period deemed necessary by the review committee sustain improvement" (Dominguez et al., 2006: 3).

The states and school districts in the USA are continually looking for ways in which to improve what they do. For instance, in 2016, the South Carolina legislature established the Office of Transformation within the South Carolina Department of Education, in order to facilitate support to South Carolina schools and districts (2015-2016 Bill 4779: Office of Transformation - South Carolina Legislature Online - www.scstatehouse.gov). Schools identified as State Priority Schools (at risk schools), due to a low performance rating on the state report card, receive

"technical assistance," as required by the Education Accountability Act of 1998 (www.ed.sc.gov).

According to the amended legislation, leadership and curriculum coaches, employed by the Office of Transformation, will provide coaching and support (2015-2016 Bill 4779: Office of Transformation - South Carolina Legislature Online - www.scstatehouse.gov). "Transformation Coaches" help schools develop plans and ERTs continued to provide assistance, as the "CTA Plans evolve" (State Priority Schools Leadership Meeting - April 27, 2015 PowerPoint Presentation, Slide 10 of 12).

3.5.3 The changing roles and conditions for American teachers

The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act (2001) had placed additional pressures and accountability on teachers and schools to "ensure that all students make adequate progress on core academic areas" (Ransford, et al., 2009: 511). Under NCLB, districts that fail to make adequate yearly progress for multiple consecutive years become subject to increasingly serious consequences and interventions (Ransford, et al., 2009: 511). This approach is common from the countries that implement the national testing to benchmark the performance of learners in schools.

Vandenberghe and Huberman (1999) indicated that teachers are "pressed to do more work with fewer resources, and many face persistent and chronic overload". However, a study by Ransford, et al. (2009: 525) conducted in one school district serving primarily disadvantaged students in a midsized, urban setting in Pennsylvania, revealed that educators who perceived high levels of support from the leaders in their school "feel more conscientious about how they implement a curriculum" which, in turn, lead to higher quality of curriculum implementation.

Over 1 000 elementary schools in the United States use the Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies (PATHS) model where teachers receive ongoing, proactive coaching support from coaches who were former teachers and had experience with PATHS (Ransford, et al., 2009: 517). Teachers receive weekly coaching support during the first year of curriculum delivery, biweekly support between 1 and 3 years of training, and monthly support if they had been using the program for more than 3 years (Ransford, et al., 2009: 517). Apart from providing support to teachers, the PATHS model also provides students with instruction in the areas of "emotional awareness and understanding, self-control, social skills with peers, and social problem-solving skills in order to promote their social and emotional competence" (Ransford, et al., 2009: 517).

3.6 SUPPORT FOR TEACHERS IN JAPAN

Education in Japan is a "national, prefectural (provincial), and municipal responsibility ..... where every prefectural government has its own board of education that offers guidance, advice, and funding for the prefecture's public and private schools" (Wieczorek, 2008: 101). Japan has consistently been "ranked first in mathematics literacy, second in science literacy and above average in reading literacy in successive international tests among thirty-one developed nations" (Wieczorek, 2008: 102).

The reason for the success of Japan is because "teaching remains an honoured profession, and teachers' high social status emanates from the Japanese culture and public recognition of their important social responsibilities" (Wieczorek, 2008: 107). Literature suggests that teachers are paid well in Japan and "are eligible for many types of special allowances and bonuses and periodic improvements are made in salaries and compensation" (Wieczorek, 2008: 102).

3.6.1 Induction

Japan is one of the many countries where induction programmes for new educators are mandatory. According to Wei et al, 2009: 25), the induction is highly structured with clear roles outlined regarding those responsible for the development of new educators and a focus on professional growth and structured learning. The induction process in Japan involves the "observation, demonstration, discussion, and friendly critique as ways of ensuring that teachers share the language, tools, and practices" (Wei et al, 2009: 25).

3.6.2 Research lessons

Japan implements what is termed the "research lesson" (or "lesson study") approach to professional inquiry (Wei et al, 2009: 21). A research lesson involves groups of teachers observing "one another's classrooms and work together to refine individual lessons, expediting the spread of best practices throughout the school" (Barber & Mourshed, 2007). The research lessons form part of the learning culture, since "every teacher is required to prepare a best possible lesson that demonstrates strategies to achieve a specific goal such as where students become active problem-solvers and learn more from each other" (Wei et al., 2009: 21).

A group of educators observes while the lesson is taught and usually "records the lesson by means of videotapes and audiotapes" (Wei et al., 2009: 21). In addition, narrative and checklist observations are used to observe the "lesson of the instructing teacher" (Wei et al., 2009: 21). After each lesson observation, the educators discuss the "lesson's strengths and weakness, ask questions, and make suggestions to improve the lesson" (Wei et al., 2009: 21). The advantage of the Japanese 'research lessons' is that they provide teachers with the opportunity to "refine individual lessons, consult with other teachers and receive feedback based on colleagues' observations of their classroom practice, reflect on their own

practice, learn new content and approaches, and build a culture that emphasises continuous improvement and collaboration" (Fernandez, 2002).

More emphasis is placed on team planning of the teaching lessons in Japan. Wei et al. (2009: 21) reported that teachers "break up into subgroups of 4 to 6 teachers to plan their own lessons, share and comment on lessons". Teachers spend at least 10 - 15 hours over 3 - 4 weeks in preparation of a typical lesson study and work until 17h00. This suggests that the Japanese teachers spend more time after hours preparing for their lessons, something that is very rare in public schools in South Africa. Wei et al. (2009: 21) indicated that the planning together of the lessons after school hours provides educators with additional time for collegial work and planning. Wieczorek (2008: 102) pointed out that, many teachers teach on weekends and "during summer vacation, usually in the month of August".

Fernandez (2002) reported that, apart from teachers planning and observing one another's lessons in classrooms, "some teachers provide public research lessons to spread best practices across schools". The advantage of the public research lessons is that they allow "principals, district personnel and policymakers to see how teachers are grappling with new subject matter and goals and give recognition to excellent teachers" (Fernandez, 2002).

3.6.3 Professional development

There is limited information about professional development of educators in Japan. Wieczorek (2008: 104) reported that educators in Japan "complete their training at four-year post-secondary institutions and attend prescribed professional development throughout their careers". This suggests that professional development is a lifetime commitment for educators in Japan.

A number of initiatives had been undertaken to enhance the professional development of teachers in Japan. For instance, in 1989, the "Japan's teacher

union (Nihon Kyoshokuin Kumiai – Nikkyoso), adopted a system of teacher training which required new teachers to work under the direct supervision of master teachers and increased the number of both in-school and out-of-school training days and the time for new teachers' probationary status" (Wieczorek, 2008: 104).

Another important initiative that has taken place in Japan is that teachers are required to renew their teaching licences every ten years. Wieczorek (2008: 104) reported that, "in May 2006, the NHK (Nippon Hoso Kyokai – Japanese Broadcasting Corporation) reported that new teachers would have to renew their licences every ten years." Accordingly, "this was a notable departure from previous licencing policies, which allowed licensed teachers to teach throughout their careers without licence renewal" (Wieczorek, 2008: 104). The implication of this initiative is that the renewal of the teaching licence is contingent on the continuous involvement of the teachers in professional development in order to remain productive and effective throughout the teaching career.

3.7 SUPPORT FOR TEACHERS IN THE UNITED KINGDOM (UK)

Literature revealed that teacher support in the United Kingdom (UK) takes place mainly during induction, training programmes and during cluster groups. The UK is comprised of four countries, namely England, Scotland Wales and Northern Ireland – all well-developed countries.

3.7.1 Induction

The first years of teaching are regarded as the most demanding and decisive stage of teachers' development in the UK. Caene (2011: 2) reported that an organized plan of support measures for new teachers in the first years of their career exists in only a small group of European Union (EU) countries, among which the UK, Luxembourg and Lithuania seem to have a wide range of support

activities. The EU is a group of 28 countries that operates as cohesive economic block.

However, induction programmes are reported as mandatory in only ten states of the OECD study, with Canada (Quebec), Switzerland and some US states offering the lowest support (Caene, 2011: 3). The induction programmes focus on "fostering educational performance and effectiveness by outlining key variables for effectiveness in teachers" (Caene 2011: 3). The secondary focus is on "teaching effectiveness in the classroom, teachers' cooperation in the school context, national policies and organisational features" (Caene, 2011: 4).

3.7.2 Training programs

England introduced the national training programme which provided an improvement in the students' performance. Wei et al. (2009: 22) reported that England instituted a "national training program in best-practice training techniques, which coincided with a subsequent rise in the percentage of students meeting the target literacy standards". The training programme "is part of the National Literacy Strategy (NLS) and National Numeracy Strategy (NNS) which provide high quality teaching materials, resource documents, and videos depicting good practice" (Wei et al, 2009: 22).

Prior to that, Fullan (2007) and Earl, Watson and Torrance (2002) reported that there were "National Literacy and National Numeracy Centres [which] provide leadership and training for teacher training institutions and consultants who train school heads and coordinators, and lead math teachers and expert literacy teachers who, in turn, support and train other teachers". Earl et al. (2002) reported that "as more teachers become familiar with the strategies, expertise is increasingly located at the local level with consultants and leading mathematics teachers and literacy teachers providing support to teachers". A few years later, Fullan (2007) made the finding that "England began a new component of the

strategies designed to allow schools and local education agencies to learn best practices from each other by funding and supporting 1 500 groups of six schools each".

A study by Abbott et al. (2014: 430), conducted in the Midlands region in England, reported that local authorities (LA), when "faced with a lack of staff and resource to provide support to schools, decided to establish School Improvement Groups (SIGs)". The SIGs consist of the head teachers who have been identified "as having a significant impact on their own school improvement" (Abbott et al., 2014: 451). The overarching aim of the SIGs was to "use the expertise of effective head teachers to address issues of school improvement in schools deemed to be facing difficulty" (Abbott et al., 2014: 430). In addition, Abbott et al. (2014: 430) reported that the "LA had developed a model for school improvement that enabled head teachers of highly effective schools to provide support to senior staff in schools facing difficulty".

3.7.3 Clusters

Abbott et al. (2014: 442) reported that clusters comprising of head teachers and high-performing schools are used to "work collaboratively with more vulnerable peers". Townsend (2011: 101) revealed that there was "a need for leaders to share what they know and what they can do, not only with teachers within their own schools, but also outside of their schools with other leaders from different schools". There is evidence in literature that teachers from the vulnerable schools experienced the support from the SIGs in a more positive way. According to Abbott et al. (2014: 451), the "support given by head teachers of effective schools to vulnerable peers has been welcomed by head teachers of the supported schools".

Hill and Mathews (2010: 25) reported that the clusters and networks of the National Leaders of Education (NLE) in Nottingham led to the development of a

National Support School (NSS) responsible for providing support to other schools. The clusters and networks of the NLEs were reported to be effective, particularly in supporting primary schools 'where significant improvement is needed' (Hill & Mathews, 2010: 25). Similarly, Wei et al. (2009: 9) observed that the "organisation of professional learning communities is becoming increasingly structured with both externally and internally organised learning opportunities becoming useful, while school-based coaching is linked to periodic workshops and conferences".

In addition, Hill and Mathews (2008; 2010) reported that "significant improvements [were] made by NLEs in improving teaching and learning and building capacity". Hargreaves (2010) highlighted that factors to be considered when supporting educators from vulnerable schools include the ability to "accommodate the needs of pupils and staff in vulnerable schools, the capacity of more than one school by working together in sharing knowledge and good practice, efficient use of resources and 'protect' those vulnerable to crisis and failure".

These improvements were also noted by Abbott et al. (2014: 447) who stated that "it is striking to find so many of these schools identifying support for each other as a crucial ingredient in a strategy for school improvement". The important aspect here is that the support provided to vulnerable schools is based on the needs of an individual school. This creates an impression that a 'one-size fits all' support like the one provided in the South African public schools is unlikely to provide adequate support since the needs of educators vary from one school to another.

Wei et al. (2009: 9) emphasised that clusters provide "ongoing opportunities for collegial work where teachers have an opportunity to learn, and reflect upon new practices in their specific context by sharing their individual knowledge and

expertise". In addition, Wei et al. (2009: 9) further pointed out that, "in concrete terms, joint work is found in shared planning activities and collaboration on curriculum, when teachers observe and critique each other's instruction based on a shared understanding of effective teaching and goals for student learning". These assertions suggest that clusters benefit teachers because they get an opportunity to share best practice from each other.

3.8 SUPPORT FOR EDUCATORS IN SOUTH AFRICA

The importance of support for South African educators has been emphasised as far back as 1998, when Jansen outlined the reasons he thought outcomes-based education (OBE) would fail in South Africa. Jansen (1998: 6) lamented that the "official support is uneven, fragmented and, for many teachers, simply non-existent". A similar critique was expressed by Brady (1996: 7) that OBE will not be implemented successfully if "adequate support such as 'release time, aide support, [and] smaller class sizes'" is not provided. Brady (1996) argued that such an initiative would require more time to manage implementation of the new curriculum, continuous monitoring of implementation and opportunities for teachers to share and learn from one another and retraining of principals and education managers.

Researchers such as Narsee (2006), Ramolefe (2004), De Clercq (2002) and Sivhabu (2002) have reported that educators do not receive thorough, appropriate and/or sufficient support. Similarly, most of the participants in the study by Mashau et al. (2008: 428) perceived the "support services to be non-existent or unavailable". About three years ago, the DBE's Annual Performance Plan 2014 – 2015 reported that school visits from district officials do not focus on the areas of support (DBE, 2014: 22). A recent finding by Van der Berg et al. (2016: 26) reveals that "teacher support is far from adequate in most public education systems". The common feature among these research findings is that the

provision of educator support remains a challenge facing the South African education system.

A growing concern from the DBE (2014: 8) is that "there is a dire need to assess the "teachers' content knowledge in the subjects they teach, a need to replenish the current stock of teachers and the need to change the process of appointing principals in order to appoint competent individuals". To this effect, the DBE (2014: 8) is of the view that a more effective teacher development has to be implemented to improve the teacher competence. This assertion creates an impression that the DBE is worried that most of the educators are not competent in the education system. Thus, "expanding and strengthening the Funza Lushaka bursary scheme is in line with the national development plan to produce more and better qualified teachers" (DBE, 2014: 8). To date, there is little research conducted in this regard to shed some light whether the Funza Lushaka bursary scheme is able to produce competent educators as envisaged in the national development plan.

3.8.1 Induction

Unlike other countries, there is no uniform induction process or procedures to introduce newly-appointed educators into the education system in South Africa. As a result, induction of newly appointed educators is left solely at the discretion of an individual school to set up its own induction programme. This suggests that newly appointed educators begin their teaching career with no formal support in place. This view is confirmed by the Ministerial Committee on Teacher Education which reported that "newly qualified teachers are not supported through critical induction into the world of schooling, and become disillusioned, and/or develop practices of replicating poor quality teaching and learning" (DBE, 2005: 26).

The Ministerial Committee report further indicated that some disillusioned newly qualified educators opt to leave the education system. Such an "early attrition

from the teaching career is a loss of State investment in teachers' initial teacher education and such attrition can be partly explained in terms of lack of formal support for novice teachers" (DBE, 2005: 26). However, the Sunday Times newspaper (Monama, 5 October 2015) reported that the South African Council of Educators (SACE) is working with the Department of Education and teacher unions to ensure that new graduates do not go straight into teaching but, go through an induction year after studying before they can be registered as full-time teachers. At the time of this study, the idea of newly appointed educators undergoing a year of induction was still not yet implemented nor was there a national induction programme in place.

3.8.2 Professional development

Ono and Ferreira (2010: 60) noted that, "the professional development of teachers is often called 'in-service training' or 'staff development' and is conducted for different purposes and in different forms". Both Bolam (1993) and Le Roux (2002: 112) defined professional development as the "systematic and ongoing efforts to enable employees to acquire knowledge, skills and attitudes and attain organisational objectives in a more effective and efficient way". Similarly, Ling and McKenzie (2001: 91) defined professional development as a "means of empowering teachers by providing them with the ability to update and upgrade their knowledge and qualifications". There is agreement among researchers or authors in this field, that professional development follows a systematic approach where educators acquire or upgrade new knowledge and skills.

Like all other professionals, it is essential that educators stay informed about new knowledge and technologies. During professional development, targets are set, plans are devised to achieve these targets, and the type of support required is identified. Dichaba and Mokhele (2012: 249) pointed out that "professional development is, therefore, a resource intensive part of what governments,

professions, companies and individuals must do to efficiently respond to contingencies and build platforms for sustainable growth in reaction to continuous change". In light of the myriad of curricular changes in South Africa, there is an absolute need for educators to participate in professional development in order to stay abreast of the latest developments.

Greenland (cited in Villegas-Reimers, 2003) indicated that in-service education is conducted to serve four purposes, namely, the "certification of unqualified teachers, to upgrade teachers, to prepare teachers for new roles, and curriculum related dissemination or refresher courses". The training workshops conducted by the DBE when a new curriculum is introduced are intended to prepare educators for their new roles in the implementation of the new curriculum. In terms of section 63 of the Employment Educators Act 76 of 1998, "all educators may be required to attend programmes for ongoing professional development up to a maximum of 80 hours per annum" (RSA, 1998: 63).

A number of studies by Ball & Cohen (1999); Collinson & Ono (2001); Feiman-Nemser (2001); Fullan & Hargreaves (1996); Schwille & Dembélé (2007); Villegas-Reimers (2003) and Vonk (1995) revealed that most of the "traditional, in-service, education/teacher professional development programmes are provided in the form of workshops, seminars, conferences or courses". However, it has been suggested that the workshops and conferences do not meet the expectations of educators. Fullan (1991: 315) contended that, "nothing has promised so much and has been so frustratingly wasteful as the thousands of workshops and conferences that led to no significant change in practice when the teachers returned to their classrooms". Similarly, the National Education Development Unit (2013), cited in Mather and Land (2014: 203), reported that "what is of concern, though, is the continued adherence to styles of workshops that have been found by all involved to be ineffective". Anecdotal evidence suggests that the training workshops lack follow-ups and follow through.

According to Peacock (1993), the disadvantage of the training workshops is that only a cohort of educators are given short training courses and then required to pass on their knowledge and skills to further cohorts of educators. On the contrary, Ono and Ferreira (2010: 61) supported the model of training a cohort of educators by stating that this training model "allows for training in stages so that progress can be monitored and information can be disseminated quickly and to a large number of teachers as more and more of them receive training".

The cascade-training model is cost-effective since those who have been trained can then train others, thus limiting expenses (Ono & Ferreira, 2010: 61). However, the drawbacks of the cascade model are that those who receive the initial training may misunderstand or misinterpret the content/training or the trainers/facilitators may lack competence. This view is supported by De Clercq and Shalem (2014: 133) who reported that most of the trainers were not adequately informed about the meaning of the outcomes-based education (OBE)-type curriculum or how to translate learning outcomes into lesson plans.

The DBE (2015: 36) acknowledges that in "recent years, much external training has focused on orienting teachers to new curriculum documents". The DBE indicates that future training will however focus more on subject knowledge and teaching methodology. The DBE intends to repeat the "2008 professional development survey and publish a report aimed at guiding future developments through an analysis of teachers' own opinions of the various types of training they experience" (DBE, 2015: 36). At the time of writing of this study, there was no survey conducted by the DBE to explore how educators experience the CAPS training.

Another concern of the DBE is that "many practising and experienced teachers do not focus on further professional growth during their careers" (DBE, 2005: 27). As a result, the concept of lifelong learning is compromised and the "need for

teachers to be responsive to the changing expectations of educational policies and technological innovations impacting teaching and learning" (DBE, 2005a: 27). It is envisaged that "all professional teachers should be able to engage critically with innovation, changing policy environments and changing technological contexts" (DBE, 2005a: 27).

The Annual Performance Plan 2014–2015 (DBE, 2014: 20) specifies that it is vital that "all activities in the sector work towards supporting teaching practices in the classroom". This, in turn, suggests that educators and school authorities must be critical about schoolwork to improve learner performance. The focus should be on "effective targeted support on curriculum, assessment, management and planning, school improvement, and improved learner performance" (DBE, 2014: 20).

3.8.3 Integrated Quality Management System (IQMS)

The Integrated Quality Management System (IQMS) serves as a framework for professional development of educators in South Africa. The Development Support Group (DSG) is one of the internal sources tasked with the responsibility of providing support to educators in schools. The IQMS manual (DoE, 2005: 1) states that the purpose of the IQMS is to "identify the specific needs of educators, schools and district offices in terms of support and development; to provide support for continued growth for educators; to promote accountability; to monitor the overall effectiveness of an institution; and to evaluate the performance of educators".

The IQMS comprises three programmes; namely, the Developmental Appraisal Systems (DAS), Performance Measurement (PM) and WSE (DoE, 2005: 1). Although each programme has its own specific purpose, but they all serve the purpose of providing support to educators and schools in South Africa. For example, the purpose of DAS is to "appraise individual educators in a transparent

manner with a view of determining areas of strength and weaknesses, and drawing up programmes for individual development" (ELRC, 2003: 4). Thus, educator support could be tailored to the strengths and weaknesses of educators.

The purpose of the second IQMS programme, namely, the PM, is to "evaluate individual teachers for salary progression and grade progression, and affirmation of appointments, rewards and incentives" (ELRC, 2003: 4). Rewards and incentives are dimensions of organisational theory, used to guide this study. In an organisational theory framework, employees feel supported when the organisation shows appreciation for "increased efforts made on its behalf" through rewards (Eisenberger, Hutington, Huttchison & Sowa, 1986; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002; Eisenberger, Cummings, Armeli & Lynch, 1997; Shore & Shore, 1995).

The purpose of the third IQMS programme, namely, the WSE, is to "evaluate the overall effectiveness of a school, school management, infrastructure of the school and learning resources as well as quality of teaching and learning" (ELRC, 2003: 4). The implication of the WSE is that if the whole school is supported, effective teaching and learning as well as learner performance will improve.

The three programmes are interlinked to each other. For instance, the DAS component of IQMS requires educators to construct a 'personal growth plan' to identify the performance targets to be met, areas for development and the support required to develop each educator. However, "the growth plans of all teachers in a school should be integrated into the 'school improvement plan' as part of Whole School Evaluation component of IQMS" (DBE, 2005a: 17). All the three programmes emphasise that a more targeted support is required for schools and educators in order to improve teaching and learning as well as learner performance.

3.8.4 Support from training workshops

Literature suggests that support for educators in South Africa mainly takes place during the training workshops. Subject advisors are comprised of specialised office-based educators from the district and circuit offices who are primary conductors of these training workshops. However, a number of South African studies revealed that the training workshops do not live up to the expectation of the educators and that the presenters or facilitators were not adequately informed about curriculum matters.

De Clercq and Shalem (2014: 133) reported that most of the trainers were unable to translate learning outcomes into lesson plans during the curriculum training of the outcomes-based education (OBE). Similarly, the participants in the study by Sivhabu (2002: 178) felt that the support they received through workshops was not enough to provide them with sufficient knowledge to teach the new curriculum. In the same vein, Narsee (2006) reported that the majority of district officials lacked first-hand experience in the post-1994 schools to support educators to deal with the challenges of transformation.

Narsee (2006) further revealed that the training workshops were poorly contextualised, of short duration and without any demonstration, modelling or follow-up at the school level. Similarly, De Clercq (2007: 109) reported that the officials from the Department of Education were criticized for spending too much time on explaining the "content, purpose and ways of implementing the various new policies, such as the curriculum, assessment protocol, and/or the IQMS". In addition, De Clercq (2007: 109) further pointed out that the training courses and workshops were often criticised "for not being thorough, appropriate or sufficient".

The duration of the training workshops was perceived as a challenge for supporting educators in South Africa. De Clercq and Shalem (2014: 133) reported

that each workshop was limited to two or three days. The teacher participants in the Mpumalanga province expressed frustration with the circuits which rarely organised content workshops (one per year) while most of the teachers had little resources or social capital to seek alternative sources of meaningful support (De Clercq & Phiri, 2013: 82). Van der Berg et al. (2016: 26) highlighted that the ad hoc workshops or study sessions are inadequate for the development of real content knowledge, particularly in the applied disciplines such as reading and mathematics.

Another challenge indicated in literature is that the training workshops for educators in South Africa are based on a weak structure of a 'one-size-fits-all', which does not address individual support. Narsee (2006: 223) reported that the pedagogical support provided by district officials focuses on training large groups of educators about the new curriculum than providing "subject-based support to individual or small groups of teachers". Similarly, Jansen (2016) noted that "centre-based training and generic development courses have little effect".

Research, however, revealed that educators gain invaluable information during the curriculum support workshops. For example, De Clercq and Shalem (2014: 133) reported that the training workshops provide a "broad orientation about the meaning of the curriculum, its new terms and directives, subject-specific workshops subject matter knowledge, and preferred ways of teaching it (such as integration of school and everyday knowledge) as well as curriculum sequencing and pacing". To date, there is limited information about the "1+4 teacher development" training workshops introduced in 2015 conducted on Mondays to teach Grade 9 educators about the content to teach in Mathematics from Tuesday to Friday. Van der Berg et al. (2016: 46) have questioned the usefulness of this programme by stating that such light-touch interventions are unlikely to improve the content knowledge of teachers significantly.

The myriad of curricular changes that have taken place in South Africa within the space of 15 years – between 1997 and 2012 prompted the DBE to conduct more training workshops for educators. The first curriculum, "Curriculum 2005 (C2005), driven by an outcomes-based education (OBE) approach was introduced in 1997" (DoE, 2000). A review of C2005 resulted in the launch of the Revised National Curriculum Statements (RNCS), which came into effect in 2002 following a "realisation that most teachers did not have the knowledge resources to design specific curricula in the way envisaged in C2005" (DBE, 2013b).

The third curriculum change took place in 2011 when the RNCS was repackaged as the "National Curriculum Statements (NCS) which set out to specify the knowledge components of the curriculum in more explicit detail" than had previously been the case (DBE, 2013b: 26). The current Curriculum Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS) were introduced in 2012 to "provide educators with clear, succinct and unambiguous curriculum and assessment statement that enable them to improve learners' numeracy and literacy skills effectively" (DBE, 2013a: 8; DBE, 2012a: 6).

3.8.5 South African studies on school-based support for educators

According to the DBE (2014: 22), school-based support for educators need to be "reconfigured in terms of monitoring and supporting the learning processes so that they improve accountability in relation to specific areas of district support to schools". The expectation is that the districts should strengthen the "support and monitoring of curriculum coverage, teacher preparation, management, development and deployment, preparation for assessments and management of educator and labour relations issues" (DBE, 2014: 22).

Research suggests that the visits of district officials were characterised mainly by enforcing compliance with policy than provision of support to educators. De Clercq (2002) contended that "districts tend to focus on school monitoring partly

because of the pressure exercised by the departments on the districts themselves". Similarly, Narsee (2006: 224) affirmed that the primary obligation of district officials is to comply with the higher levels of authority than committing to the ideal of school support. Thus, the "misalignment between roles and expectations leads to false hopes on the part of schools about what districts can offer them, and undoubtedly creates tensions regarding the roles of districts" (Narsee, 2006: 224).

Van der Berg et al. (2011: 12) supported the view that the districts fulfil an almost exclusively monitoring role and, as a result, they are often ineffective in providing support to the schools. Similarly, Mavuso (2013: 158) reported that the school visits from the district officials were often "skewed to monitoring administrative issues rather than providing support". To that effect, there was little evidence of "systematic support in the form of advice, coaching and mentoring for teachers at classroom level" (Mavuso, 2013: 158). In other words, control was being exercised at the expense of support, thereby giving rise to tension between control and support.

A study by Smith (2011) revealed that the district officials described themselves as stressed, frustrated and demoralised because of the lack of planning and coordination at all levels of the system, and the lack of effective system-wide communication. On the other hand, the participants in the study by Sivhabu (2002: 178) expressed the view that they wanted to be taken seriously and their opinions reflected in subsequent encounters with those who provided them with support.

A number of studies have revealed that there is little evidence of follow up support for educators in schools. Smith (2011) reported that there was ambiguity surrounding the district officials' professional identity resulting in the absence of any clear sense of their role as well as a lack of both follow up and follow through.

Similarly, Mavuso (2013: 158) reported that the work done by subject advisors in training teachers in subject content, knowledge and pedagogy at workshops was not followed up at classroom level to ascertain whether the knowledge acquired by the teachers was being implemented.

In the same vein, De Clercq and Shalem (2014: 133) emphasised that follow-up district work is often ineffectual because the focus is on monitoring for compliance. As a result, the majority of educators emerge from training workshops on the "RNCS and the National Curriculum Statement (NCS) feeling 'unsupported, overburdened with paperwork and frustrated by the 'one-size-fits-all' curriculum training approach with hardly any guidance on curriculum content, lesson planning, and assessment" (De Clercq & Shalem, 2014: 133).

The study by Sivhabu (2002: 178) revealed that educators in the Limpopo province expected curriculum advisors, circuit managers and district managers to come to their schools and give them professional support as they grappled with the new curriculum that was impacting on their day to day work in the classroom. Jansen (2016) in The Times newspaper, dated, 08 January 2016, highlighted that "the best way to correct this is through intensive coaching as an alternative to inspections, work with individuals and groups of teachers in their classrooms to ensure they can teach at the level required".

3.8.6 Support from clusters

Aipinge (2007: ii) reported that many African countries introduced the school cluster, whereby educators from neighbouring schools are brought together "to improve the quality of education by sharing resources, experience and expertise among clusters and facilitating school administration by pooling resources from several schools to be shared equally". The advantage of clusters is that they enable educators to pool their individual expertise and resources and experience

the benefits of both collegiality and the principle that 'we are stronger as a team' (De Clercq & Phiri, 2013: 84).

De Clercq and Phiri (2013: 84) further indicated that "cluster support promotes direct experiential learning which is a powerful incentive to improving teachers' reflections and advance their subject and pedagogical content knowledge as well as classroom practices". In addition, cluster support "assists teachers to deal with real rather than hypothesised problems; points out areas of development and teachers witnessed immediate results from different teaching practises on their learners" (De Clercq & Phiri, 2013: 84). As a result, "cluster teaching changes teachers' practices, beliefs and attitudes, and acts as an effective teacher-initiated teacher development and accountability" (De Clercq & Phiri, 2013: 84). This, in turn, all compensates for a lack of district support and poor resources (De Clercq & Phiri, 2013: 84).

De Clercq and Phiri (2013: 79) revealed that "teacher clusters have pedagogical and/or administrative objectives". Clusters encourage educators to assist one another in understanding their practices and to break down the isolation by enabling a form of collaborative learning (Jita and Ndlalane, 2009; Giordano, 2008). In addition, teacher clusters provide a context in which educators may observe each other teaching and encourage them to try out new ways of teaching (De Clercq & Phiri, 2013: 79). Thus, teacher clusters constitute a special learning community that is committed to discussing and planning curriculum development innovations and improving the understanding of these innovations (Giordiano, 2008).

In addition, De Clercq and Phiri (2013: 79) reported that, in South Africa, cluster meetings are used mainly by the districts that are faced with a human resource shortage in order to familiarise educators with assessment moderation. This means that district officials delegate the function of support to educators to

cluster leaders. According to Giordano (2008), cluster leaders are better placed to provide support for educators because they know schools better than the district officials and are more effective in making certain decisions and planning.

Jita and Ndlalane (2009: 59) contended that the mere presence of cluster structures does not necessarily lead to effective teacher development as effective teacher development requires certain preconditions. De Clercq and Phiri (2013: 79) indicated that effective clusters focus on improving the performance of educators in the interests of better achievements and, as such, they require quality teacher-led interactions, based on professional knowledge and skills, and a collegial reflective culture.

The advantage of cluster teaching is that educators move at a similar pace in terms of the curriculum coverage with learners' writing the assessment tasks at the same time. This, in turn, encourages educators to work hard to catch up with their colleagues and to master those aspects of their subjects they find to be difficult (Phiri, 2011). Cluster teaching breaks fears and barriers to sharing since educators receive useful "feedback on the strengths and weaknesses of their teaching techniques from other teachers" (De Clercq & Phiri, 2013: 83).

Educators experience the process of cluster teaching as a valuable learning experience and they are encouraged to adopt new practices and reflect on what the learners did not understand and why this was the case (De Clercq & Phiri, 2013: 83). Apart from subject content and pedagogical knowledge, cluster teaching provides educators with additional skills and competencies such as the opportunity to work together to improve their planning and preparation of lessons, solve professional problems, and share skills and resources with others (De Clercq & Phiri, 2013: 83).

The disadvantages of clusters include, among others, lack of financial resources to attract quality facilitators; many of the clusters are unable to sustain themselves over a long period; an absence of reliable mechanisms to identify the priority needs of educators; and some district officials struggle to prioritise the areas of support for educators (De Clercq & Shalem, 2014: 134). In addition, some district officials who are not committed may abuse this system by delegating entirely their role of visiting the schools and educators to cluster leaders (De Clercq & Phiri, 2013: 79).

3.8.7 Support from non-governmental organisations (NGOs)

A number of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) have been involved in a number of projects with educators in various provinces of South Africa. For example, the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) launched the Mpumalanga Secondary School Initiative (MSSI) in 1999. The MSSI is a "province-wide initiative aimed at improving the quality of the mathematics and science education offered in the province by enhancing the teaching skills of in-service teachers" (Ono & Ferreira, 2010: 65).

The initial approach of the MSSI project was to train subject advisors who attended a five-week group study in Japan who conducted workshops for the mathematics and science HODs in the secondary schools in the districts (Mokhele, 2011: 17). The trained HODs then trained their colleagues in the schools. Educators in the Mpumalanga Province gained experiences and practice through the study missions in Japan and interaction with Japanese experts during the cluster training workshops (Mokhele, 2011: 17). Cluster leaders (CLs) were identified to provide both cluster-based and school-based professional development activities (Mokhele, 2011: 18). As a result, the Mpumalanga Department of Education (MDE) has since officially recognised cluster support. The role of cluster leaders is to conduct cluster meetings in the school circuits,

while subject advisors oversee the implementation of mathematics and science in the various regions in the province (Mokhele, 2011: 18).

In the Limpopo Province, about 400 schools participated in the donor-funded Khanyisa Programme in 2004. A baseline survey conducted with Grade 6 educators which participated in the Khanyisa Programme revealed that most educators perform below the expected levels in both languages and mathematics (Taylor, 2008: 11). This is a call for concern regarding the capacity of educators to provide quality teaching and learning, particularly in these subjects in primary schools which may have a negative impact on learner performance.

A donor-funded teacher development programme, namely, the Integrated Education Project (IEP) was provided in 1 000 schools in four provinces, including, "KwaZulu-Natal, Eastern Cape, Limpopo and Northern Cape" (Taylor, 2008: 11). The project consists 5 days of residential training for primary school educators per year. However, after four years of intensive training, no educator managed to "achieve 100% on any test, while the minimum scores for all four tests [were] well below what the primary school curriculum expects from the average learner" (Taylor, 2008: 11). The failure of educators to achieve maximum scores in this project poses a challenge to learner achievement in schools.

Taylor (2008: 71) suggested that the following interventions must be undertaken to improve the performance of educators in South Africa: (1) curriculum training that involves circuit managers, principals, subject advisors and staff at regional offices; (2) time be reserved for school-based professional development during regular working hours; (3) identifying and empowering teachers with a deeper understanding of Mathematics and Science as lesson study coordinators to share their expertise with other schools; (4) encouraging subject advisors to use more time to visit schools and clusters to facilitate lesson study; (5) and creating opportunities for teachers to share best practices regionally and provincially.

3.8.8 Support from teacher unions

There are contrasting views in literature about the role of the teacher unions when it comes to educator support in South Africa. The NEEDU report (2013b: 69) indicated that over the previous years the two teacher unions, SADTU and NAPTOSA, became involved in the provision of professional development for educators. This showed a commitment towards ensuring the "professional conduct of teachers and provide government with a useful starting point to engage teachers in a more constructive relationship in the future" (NEEDU, 2013b: 69).

On the contrary, Van der Berg et al. (2016) revealed that most of the time, the teacher unions in South Africa work against the DBE. For example, they have blocked accountability reforms such as the standardised ANA testing and prevented teacher testing aimed at identifying teacher capability constraints intended to inform pre-service and in-service training (Van der Berg et al., 2016: 40). In addition, the teacher unions stopped the implementation of "weak" pay-for-performance schemes such as the original Occupational Specific Dispensation proposal deemed necessary to reward effort and attract a stronger pool of teacher candidates into the system than is currently the case (Van der Berg et al., 2016: 40). Furthermore, the "teacher unions have also rejected the performance contracts for school principals to establish clear requirements against which their performance can be assessed and underperformance effectively dealt with" (Van der Berg et al., 2016: 40).

The resistance from the teacher unions to the state initiatives compromises the "autonomy and independence of the national department" (Van der Berg et al., 2016: 41). An element of distrust between the DBE and the teacher unions creeps in when "abrupt policy changes are made on SADTU demand" (Van der Berg et al., 2016: 41). A pertinent example was the "late retraction of the ANA testing instruction in 2015 due to SADTU resistance, leaving district officials bewildered

and discouraged" (Van der Berg et al., 2016: 41). Ultimately, this kind of resistance "cultivates citizen distrust of new policies and their effective implementation" (Van der Berg et al., 2016: 41).

3.8.9 Support within schools (internal support)

School-based support or internal support is an aspect of accountability systems whereby educators receive support within schools. The NEEDU report (DBE, 2013b) indicated that the best form of support for educators lies within the school itself. Outside parties can provide no more than "occasional support to teachers, whereas their peers within the school are constantly available, at break, between lessons or in the afternoons" (DBE, 2013b: 70).

Intra-institutional assistance is likely to be far more effective, since it is "offered within a direct understanding of the contextual conditions that pertain in the school, and can be offered continuously throughout the year" (DBE, 2013b: 70). Jansen (2016) highlighted that the collegial model, where a highly experienced educator with a record of achievement works alongside the resident teacher has proved to deliver effective teaching and learning in South African schools. The School Management Teams (SMTs) and Development Support Groups (DSGs) constitute the internal sources for supporting educators in schools.

3.8.9.1 Support from School Management Teams

The School Management Teams (SMTs) are established according to the Personnel Administrative Measures (PAM) determined by the Minister in terms of the Employment of Educators Act, 1998 (No. 76 of 1998). The SMT consists of the principal, deputy principals, and heads of departments (HODs) develops and empowers educators in a school (ELRC, 2008: 55).

A theme that emerged from the literature was that educators perceived the support from the SMT members to be unsatisfactory, particularly on curriculum

matters. The KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education Curriculum Management Strategy (2014: 8) reported that most of the SMTs in South Africa did not have a strategy to "monitor the implementation of curriculum policy at classroom level and to translate the importance of effective teaching and learning into classroom excellence".

A study by Ramolefe (2004: 74) conducted in the Limpopo Province reported that principals did not provide adequate support to educators because they were unfamiliar with the OBE policy and they did not have problem-solving, networking and communication skills. According to the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education Curriculum Management Strategy (2014: 8), the "weakness is serious when one considers that most of the SMTs do not frequently walk through classes for observation, conduct curriculum management and delivery meetings and periodically review curriculum related documents such as exercise books, teachers' portfolios etc.".

A study by Sivhabu (2002: 178) reported that educators felt that the heads of department and principals did not provide satisfactory support on the new implementation of the new curriculum. A study by Mashau et al. (2008: 424) revealed that "teachers receive inadequate support with respect to the discharge of pedagogical duties". To that end, the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education Curriculum Management Strategy (2014: 8) reported that the majority of the principals and HODs were ineffective to provide adequate support on specific subjects since they were also grappling to understand the new curriculum changes.

Research suggests that educators do not receive adequate support to deal with those learners who needs additional support in schools. A study by Mahlo (2011: 206) reported that educators do not receive support with reference to the implementation of inclusive education in the classrooms. Similarly, Masango

(2013: 66) revealed that both the principals and school-based support teams (SBSTs) lacked the knowledge required to implement inclusive education in South African schools. The DBE's Action Plan to 2019 states that "it has become increasingly clear that there is not enough good guidance offered to teachers on how to deal with a multitude of abilities within the same class" (DBE, 2015: 38).

Some studies revealed a challenge experienced by the HODs in the Foundation Phase. Bipath, Nkabinde and Grobler (2013: 2), revealed that the Foundation Phase HODs have a dual role, namely, to perform administrative function and teaching responsibilities. Thus, the Foundation Phase HODs are faced with a dilemma of competing demands of managing a department and for being a class teacher at the same time (Blandford, 2009:13).

The main function of HODs is to manage the teaching and learning process and coordinate all educational activities between the senior "management of the school and the educators within the school" (Bipath et al., 2013: 2). The NEEDU report (DBE, 2013b: 11) reported that "the most compelling reason to focus on the Foundation Phase is the fact that it is here that the base for all future learning is established. If the rudiments of reading, writing and calculating are not firmly entrenched by the end of Grade 3, then both learning opportunities and the larger life chances of young citizens will be curtailed" (DBE, 2013b: 11).

3.8.9.2 Support from Development Support Groups (DSGs)

The Development Support Groups (DSGs) came into existence following an agreement (Education Labour Relations Council, Resolution 8 of 2003) between the Department of Education and teacher unions. A DSG consists of the immediate senior, a peer and the educator undergoing the appraisal. The main function of the DSGs is to support and develop educators in schools (DoE, 2005: 5; ELRC, 2003: 4).

A number of studies revealed that the DSGs do not provide the envisaged support to educators in schools. A study by Nkambule (2010: 62) reported that the DSGs lacked the skills and knowledge required to provide support and continued growth to educators. Similarly, a study by Mosoage and Pilane (2014: 6) revealed that the "DSGs have no positional power to enforce rules". Heystek (2015: 2) revealed that the DSGs fails to take any disciplinary or developmental action even in cases where the performance of educators does not improve. The main challenge lies with the composition of the DSGs which excludes principals and deputy principals on the basis that they are not immediate supervisors for post level 1 educators. To this end, Mosoage and Pilane (2014: 6) argued that the role of the "principal in the IQMS process [has been reduced] into the role of adjusting the scores without the necessary scrutiny of the performance of the teacher".

Although the SMTs and DSGs perform a similar function on matters of support for educators in schools but their role are not synchronised. The management of teacher development by the SMTs and the IQMS processes by Staff Development Teams (SDTs) are viewed as separate processes, even though they are both aimed at developing and supporting the same educator (Mathaba, 2014: 196).

3.9 CONCLUSION/SYNTHESIS

This chapter reviewed existing literature on support provided to educators and the support they expect to receive, both internationally and in South Africa. The majority of the international literature reviewed highlighted that high performing countries such as Finland, Australia, Japan and United States made significant investments in teacher training, teacher induction, teacher development, and professional development with considerable emphasis on collaboration among schools in some countries.

In some instances, 'head teachers' or principals with a track record of improving student achievement supported their peers in schools where student achievement has been found lacking. School systems in the USA and Australia experimented with individual or teams of teacher specialists and coaches to provide support at the school level. There appears to be a marked departure from offsite to onsite support in these countries.

Review of the South African literature showed a reliance on offsite workshops. The main challenge is that those charged with the responsibility for supporting educators in schools tend to focus on monitoring compliance with the administrative tasks than focusing on areas of support. Findings from the South African studies suggested that educators do not receive thorough, appropriate or sufficient support from the district officials, subject advisors, circuit managers, principals and/or HODs. The next chapter discusses the research methodology used in the study.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses on the philosophical assumptions underpinning the study, the research paradigm, research design, the data analysis, the role of the researcher, the trustworthiness of the findings, ethical considerations and the delimitations of the study. The research process followed by the researcher is depicted in the diagram below:

TITLE Primary school educators' experiences of support from internal and external sources in a South African school district
PHILOSOPHICAL ASSUMPTIONS: Epistemological stance Primary school educators' truthful knowledge of support from internal and external sources. Ontological stance Reality about the experience of support by primary school educators is formed by the participants' consciousness and thinking.
RESEARCH PARADIGM Interpretative approach
RESEARCH APPROACH Qualitative research approach

RESEARCH DESIGN:

Case study

1. Case study to investigate how primary school educators experience support from internal and external sources in a South African school district
2. Three principals, eight heads of department and nine post-level 1 educators participated in the case study.

DATA COLLECTION METHOD

1. Interviews (individual and focus group interviews)
2. Document analysis
3. Observation (phase meetings and circuit meeting)

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

1. Informed consent
2. Privacy, confidentiality and anonymity.

TRUSTWORTHINESS

1. Triangulation
2. Member checking
3. Peer review.

DATA ANALYSIS:

Content analysis

Figure 4.1: A schematic presentation of the research plan.

4.2 PHILOSOPHICAL ASSUMPTIONS

The philosophical assumptions of this study were conceptualised within epistemological and ontological stances. Terre Blanche et al. (2006: 275) defined epistemology as a means of making sense of "people's experiences by interacting with them and listening carefully to what they tell us". Huff (2009: 108) explained that epistemology focuses on "what human beings know about what exists", while Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) contend that the view the researcher holds of the social world is informed by her/his assumptions about reality, knowledge and human nature. In addition, Huff (2009: 113) further highlights that, "all knowledge, including the most-taken-for granted common-sense knowledge of everyday reality is derived from and maintained by social interactions".

The epistemological stance taken in this study was that knowledge is subjective and that it is created, processed and communicated differently by different participants. Nieuwenhuis (2010: 55) noted that the "stories, experiences and voices of the respondents are mediums through which we explore and understand (know) reality". The search for knowledge in this study was based on the multiple meanings and interpretations of the concept of support from the perspectives of the participants, namely, the principals, HODs and post-level 1 educators. Data for this study were obtained through various data collection methods, including interviews, document retrieval and non-participant observations.

Drawing from the work of Burrell and Morgan (1979), Cohen, et al. (2007) noted that the researcher working in the interpretive paradigm holds the ontological assumption that reality resides inside human beings and the epistemological assumption that knowledge is subjective and can be produced. Thus, ontology means "taking people's subjective experiences seriously as the essence of what is real for them" (Terre Blanche, et al., 2006: 275). Similarly, Huff (2009: 113) pointed

out that ontology means that people are involved in the creation of the reality that they perceive.

The ontological stance taken for this study was that human beings experience different realities and that one single reality does not exist. Reality is "the product of individual consciousness" and, thus, a product of the mind (Cohen et al., 2000: 5, 6). The interpretivist researcher holds the assumption that the relationship between human beings and their environment is one of 'voluntarism'. The individual exercises free will "producing their own environments" instead of "responding mechanically and deterministically to their environment" (Cohen et al., 2000: 8).

4.3 RESEARCH PARADIGM

This study was conceptualised within an interpretive paradigm. A paradigm is "a perspective or world view based upon sets of values and philosophical assumptions, from which distinctive conceptualisations and explanations of phenomena are proposed" (Gray, 2009: 579). According to Peshkin (1993 in Leedy & Ormrod, 2013: 140), interpretation "enables a researcher to gain new insights about a particular phenomenon, and discover problems that exist within the phenomenon". In interpretative research, the investigator "builds an extensive collection of thick description (detailed records concerning text, people, actions, and the perceptions of the participants) as the basis for the inductive generation of an understanding of what is going on or how things work" (Locke, Siverman & Spirduso, 2010: 184).

The purpose of this study was to obtain an in-depth understanding about the ways in which primary school educators expect to be supported and experience support from internal and external sources in a South African education district. The researcher was of the view that the manner in which primary educators

construct their realities about support may be better understood within an interpretive paradigm. According to Peshkin (1993 in Leedy & Ormrod, 2013: 140), interpretation enables a "researcher to gain new insights about a particular phenomenon, develop new concepts or theoretical perspective about the phenomenon, and discover problems that exist within the phenomenon".

4.4 RESEARCH APPROACH

This study adopted a qualitative approach, which entails "interpretive studies resulting in detailed descriptive accounts of people's subjective experiences" (Stringer, 2004: 16). A qualitative approach was chosen for the purpose of this study to enable the researcher to explore how primary school educators expect to be supported and experience support from internal and external sources in a South African school district.

Qualitative research was deemed appropriate for the study because it is often "inductive and also allows the researcher to describe and understand the situations, experiences and meanings of people and groups before developing and/or testing additional general theories and explanations" (Fraenkel & Devers, 2000: 253). Merriam (1998: 11) observed that generic qualitative research seeks simply to "discover and understand … the perspectives … of the people involved".

Hays and Singh (2011: 5) highlighted that qualitative research is guided by characteristics such as "inductive and abductive ("lead way") analysis; naturalistic and experimental settings; the importance of context; the humanness of research; purposive sampling; thick description; and interactive, flexible research design". These characteristics of qualitative research suited the purpose of this study as the researcher was interested in understanding the phenomenon of support from the perspective of the participants in their natural settings. Hence, purposive sampling was used to select the participants for this study.

4.5 RESEARCH DESIGN

A research design is a "blueprint or detailed plan of how a research study is to be conducted" (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001: 166). Churchill, Brown and Suter (2010: 78) defined a research design as "the framework of plan for a study as a guide in collecting and analysing data … it is a blueprint that is followed in completing the study". Similarly, Creswell and Plano Clark (2011: 53) defined research designs as "procedures for collecting, analysing, interpreting, and reporting data in research studies".

The importance of the research design is that it "holds the project together as it shows how all the major parts of the research project, the sample, the data collected and the analysis work together to address the central research question" (Cohen et al., 2000: 75). In this study, the researcher was guided by the research design chosen in the selection of participants and data collection techniques that enabled him to answer the research questions.

4.5.1 Case study design

This study adopted a case study design. Nisbet and Watt (1984 in Cohen, Manion and Morisson, 2007: 253) defined a case study as a "specific instance that is frequently designed to illustrate a more general principle". According to Welman and Kruger (2000: 190), a case study refers to "a limited number of units of analysis such as individual, a group or an institution (which) are studied intensively". These two definitions highlight that a case study focuses on one case or specific phenomenon investigated within a number of individuals or institutions.

This study adopted a case study design since it provides for the use of multiple sources and techniques during the data gathering process. McMillan and Schumacher (2006: 316) indicated that a case study design focuses on one phenomenon in order to understand that phenomenon in depth, regardless of

the number of persons or sites. Similarly, Merriam (1998: 3) indicated that, in a case study, "meaning is socially constructed by individuals in interaction with their world". Furthermore, Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007: 254) highlighted that a case study portrays "what it is like to be in a particular situation, to catch the close up reality and thick description of participants' lived experiences of thoughts about and feelings for a situation". In this study, the participants provided accounts of their 'lived experiences' of support from internal and external sources.

The researcher's choice of the case study method was guided by the fact that the "case study design provides multiple data and multiple perspectives desirable within the qualitative paradigm" (Simons, 2009). In addition, the researcher's choice of the case study design was influenced by the ability of "a case study to collect extensive data from the individual(s), program(s) or events on which the investigation is focused. These data often include observations, interviews, documents, past records and audio visual materials" (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005: 135). The data collection strategies used in this study were the interviews, document retrieval and non-participant observation.

4.5.2 Sampling

Purposive sampling was used "to gain insight about the research questions based on their typicality or possession of the particular characteristics being sought" (Cohen et al., 2007: 115). Leedy and Ormrod (2005:199) highlighted that purposive sampling "specify in advance that each segment of the population will be represented in the sample". This study was conducted in three primary schools in one circuit office in the Nkangala school district in the Mpumalanga Province. There are four school districts in the Mpumalanga Province, namely, Bohlabela district, Ehlanzeni district, Gert Sibande district, and Nkangala district. These districts differ in terms of their geographical locations and represented various population groups of South Africa.

The three schools in the sample were purposively sampled based on their offering for the Foundation Phase (Grades 1–3), Intermediate Phase (Grades 4–6), and Senior Phase (Grades 7–9). School A is a semi-urban school consists of learners of African descent; school B is a suburban school consists mostly the White population; and school C is a township school consisting learners of African descent. Thus, the three schools in the sample represent a cross section of the population from various socio-economic backgrounds drawn from different geographical locations. The rationale for selecting schools from different backgrounds was to obtain "maximum variation" which would encompass complexity, subtlety and even contradictions (Denscombe, 2003: 168). In short, the schools chosen for the investigation represent a cross section of the population drawn from various geographical locations (urban, semi-urban and township).

4.5.3 Research participants

The participants in the study were three principals, eight heads of department and nine post-level 1 educators (the South African term used to define teachers at the entry level of their teaching career). Leedy and Ormrod (2013: 152) pointed out that, "qualitative researchers select participants or objects that will provide the most information about what is being investigated". The three principals were selected based on their role as managers of schools, while the heads of departments and post level 1 educators were purposively sampled by the principals as information-rich participants.

The rationale for enabling principals to select the HODs and post level 1 educators was to avoid selecting "quiet, uncooperative or inarticulate individuals" (Shenton, 2004: 65). To guard against biases and preferences, the researcher requested the principals to select HODs and post level 1 educators with knowledge and experience on matters of support. As a result, all the participants selected were knowledgeable about the subject being studied and provided

elaborate responses on matters affecting the Foundation Phase, Intermediate Phase and Senior Phase.

All the participants completed a biographical questionnaire (Annexure I) designed to provide information such as gender, age, race, qualifications and teaching/management experience. The biographical information of the principals is presented in the table below.

School	A	B	C
Type	Semi-urban	Urban	Township
Learner enrolment	345	754	926
Participant	P 1	P 2	P3
Gender	Female (F)	Female (F)	Male (M)
Age	45	60	60
Race	African (A)	White (W)	African (A)
Qualifications	BEd Hon; ACE; JPTD	FDE, HED	BA Ed Hon; BA; SED & SEC.
Total number of years as a principal	4 years	1 year	38 years

Table 4.1 The biographical information of the principals:

As shown in the table above, P 1 stands for principal number one, P 2 for principal number 2, and P 3 for principal number 3. The three principals comprised of two females and one male with the racial make-up of two Africans and one White. The highest and lowest age of the principals was 60 and 45. The three principals had

appropriate professional teaching qualifications. The highest qualifications for the two principals were bachelor honours degrees in education, while the other principal was in possession of a higher education diploma. P 3 had an experience of 38 years as the principal; while P 1 and P 2 were less experienced in their positions with 4 years and one-year experience respectively.

The biographical information of the head of departments is presented in the table below:

School	A			B			C		
Type	Semi-urban			Urban			Township		
Learner enrolment	345			754			926		
Participant	HOD 1	HOD 2	HOD 3	HOD 4	HOD 5	HOD 6	HOD 7	HOD 8	HOD 9
Gender	F	M	N/A	F	F	M	F	F	F
Age	58	50	N/A	42	49	41	32	53	52
Race	A	A	N/A	A	A	A	A	A	A
Qualifications	SPTD	HDE	N/A	ACE, SPTD	ACE, JPTD	B.Ed.	B.Ed.	B.Ed. Hon & JPTD	SPTD
Total number of years as an HOD	Acting	10	N/A	1	6	5	2	29	Acting

Table 4.2 The biographical information of the heads of department

As shown in the table above, the heads of departments who participated in this study were represented with the acronyms from HOD 1 to HOD 8. The initial plan of the researcher was to include a sample of three HODs in each school. However, there were only two HODs available in school A. The school qualifies for two HODs since it had a smallest enrolment of 345 learners. To this effect, the number of HODs who participated in this study was reduced to eight. All the HODs sampled were predominantly African females with only two males. The highest and lowest age of the HODs was 58 and 32 respectively. All the HODs had professional teaching qualifications and were suitably qualified for their positions. One HOD had a bachelor honours degree in education, two HODs held bachelor degrees in education, one HOD was in possession of a higher diploma in education, and four HODs had national education diplomas. Most of the HODs in the sample had more than five years' experience in their positions.

The biographical information of post-level 1 educators is presented in the table below:

School	A			B			C		
Type	Semi-urban			Urban			Township		
Learner enrolment	345			754			926		
Participant	T1	T2	T3	T4	T5	T6	T7	T8	T9
Gender	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F
Age	49	44	46	51	44	43	58	40	55
Race	A	A	A	W	A	A	A	A	A

Qualifications	BEd Hon; ACE; SPTD	ACE, FDE, STD	ACE, JPTD	HED, SPTD	BEd Hon, FDE, JPTD	BEd Hon	ACE, JPTD	SPTD	BTech
Total number of years	13	22	6	29	20	20	25	11	29

Table 4.3 The biographical information of the post-level 1 educators

As shown in the table above, the post-level 1 educators were represented with symbols T 1 to T 8. All the post-level 1 educators in the sample were females with the racial make-up of eight Africans and one White. The highest and lowest age of the post-level 1 educators were 58 and 40 respectively. All the PL1 educators had suitable professional teaching qualifications. Three educators were in possession of bachelor honours degrees, two educators had diplomas in education, one educator held a bachelor's degree, and three educators had national education diplomas. The teaching experience of the PL1 educators ranged between 6 and 29 years. Thus, the sample of the post-level 1 educators included primarily experienced educators.

4.6 DATA COLLECTION

The three data collection techniques used to collect the requisite data were the interviews, document retrieval and non-participation observation.

4.6.1 Interviews

Interviews were arranged and conducted at the agreed times with the participants in their own schools. Marshall and Rossman (1999: 109) described an interview as "a conversation with a purpose; it is a useful way of getting large amounts of data quickly". According to Cohen, Manion and Morisson (2002: 267),

interviews enable the "participants to discuss their interpretations of the world they live in and to express how they regard situations from their own point of view".

The purpose of conducting the interviews with the principals, HODs and post level 1 educators was to gain an in-depth understanding from the point of view of the primary school educators about how they experience support and expect to be supported by the internal and external sources. The individual interviews were conducted with principals in their own offices. The first focus group interviews were conducted with HODs in their offices. The second focus group interviews were conducted with post-level 1 educators in specialised centres, namely, the library in school A, laboratory in school B and media centre in school C.

Researchers, Creswell (2008) and De Vos and Fouché (1998), defined a "focus group interview as a process of collecting data through discussions with a group of participants on a specific topic or related topics". Similarly, Edward (2002: 16) described a focus group interview as "a technique involving the use of in-depth group interviews in which participants are selected because they are a purposive, although not necessarily representative, sampling of a specific population, this group being 'focused' on a given topic".

The rationale for conducting separate focus group interviews with the HODs and post-level 1 educators was to obtain varied perspectives on educator support. Arksey and Knight (1999: 76) pointed out that, "having more than one interviewee present provide two versions of events, a cross-check, and one can complement the other with additional points, leading to a more complete and reliable record". Furthermore, the advantage of focus group interviews is that they make it possible "to detect how the participants support, influence, complement, agree and disagree with each other, and the relationships between them" (Arksey & Knight, 1999: 76).

The three HOD participants who took part in the focus group interview in each school were drawn from the Foundation Phase, Intermediate Phase and Senior Phase. In school A, only two HODs participated in the focus group interview because the school is relatively small with an enrolment of 345 learners and thus qualifies for two HODs. Semi-structured interviews were used to collect data from the participants during the individual and focus group interviews. The strength of a semi-structured interview is that it provides the "researcher with an opportunity to ask questions and record answers from one participant at a time and decide on follow-up questions from the responses of the participants" (Creswell, 2002: 215).

All the participants were asked the same questions contained in annexures J, K and L. Each interview session lasted between 40-60 minutes. All the interviews were audio recorded with the participants' permission and later transcribed verbatim for analysis.

4.6.2 Document analysis (retrieval)

Creswell (2002: 219) described documents as "public and private records that qualitative researchers obtain from the sites or participants in a study which may include newspapers, minutes, personal journals, and letters". The second stage of data collection in this study was the sourcing of documents, namely, the School Improvement Plans (SIPs), Whole School Evaluation (WSE) reports, and Annual National Assessments (ANA). The purpose of retrieving the documents from the schools was to establish the documented support provided to primary school educators.

The first document perused by the researcher in each school was the School Improvement Plan (SIP). The SIP is an important document, which enables the school to measure its own progress through a process of ongoing self-evaluation (ELRC, 2003: 11). It is a consolidated report of the appraisal of all staff members,

outlining their strengths and weaknesses and containing recommendations. The purpose of analysing the SIPs was to explore the kind of support provided to educators in relation to their Professional Growth Plans (PGPs). The Developmental Appraisal component of IQMS requires educators to construct a 'personal growth plan', based on self and peer reflections on each teacher's practice, which are integrated into the School Improvement Plan as part of the 'Whole School Evaluation' (DBE, 2005: 17). The intention of analysing the SIPs was to determine the support provided for educators in terms of their areas of development.

The second document perused by the researcher in each school was the Whole School Evaluation (WSE) report. The WSE report is a national "system for monitoring and evaluation of the quality of education on a continuous and permanent basis" (DBE, 2001: 5). The purpose of analysing the WSE reports was to determine the frequency of visits of the WSE teams in terms of supporting educators in primary schools. The Policy of Whole-School Evaluation (RSA, 2001) prescribes that WSE teams must conduct "pre-evaluation surveys/visits, school self-evaluation, detailed on-site evaluation, post-evaluation reporting and post-evaluation support" (RSA, 2001: 8).

The third document perused by the researcher was the Annual National Assessment (ANA) results. The ANA is the national benchmarking tests conducted in Grades 1 to 9 in South Africa (DBE, 2001: 5). The purpose of analysing the ANA results was to determine learner performance in each school against the national target of 60% in languages and mathematics. The second reason for analysing the ANA results was to establish the kind of support provided to primary school educators in order to improve learner performance in the ANA tests.

4.6.3 Non-participant observation

The third phase of data collection was the non-participant observation. The researcher attended three phase meetings (one phase meeting in each school) and one cluster school circuit workshop to determine the frequency and the type of support provided to primary school educators during these encounters.

The three phase meetings were attended as follows: one phase meeting for the Foundation Phase in school A, one phase meeting for the Intermediate Phase in school B, and one phase meeting for the Senior Phase in school C. All the three phase meetings were held in the classrooms and lasted approximately for 60 minutes. In addition, the researcher attended a cluster workshop for educators teaching mathematics in Grade 9. The workshop is known as the '1+4 teacher development' because educators attend training on Monday to be taught the content to teach on Tuesday to Friday. These Monday workshops in this school district are held in those schools with adequate resources.

4.7 DATA ANALYSIS

The data that had been collected from the interviews, documents and observation were subjected to content analysis. Leedy and Ormrod (2013: 148) defined content analysis as "a detailed and systematic examination of the contents of a particular body of material for the purpose of identifying patterns, themes, or biases". According to Merriam (1998: 178), data analysis refers to "the process of making sense of data". The process, according to Cohen et al. (2007: 476) involves coding, categorizing, looking for recurring patterns, similarities, inconsistencies or contradictions. Content analysis "can be undertaken with any written material, from documents to interview transcriptions, from media products to personal interviews" (Cohen et al., 2007: 476).

4.7.1 Interview analysis

The purpose of analysing the semi-structured interview transcripts by means of the content analysis was to uncover themes informed by the conceptual framework underpinning the study. In this study, the data from the process of analysing the interview data started with transcribing the interviews. Thereafter, the researcher read through each interview a few times to get an overall feel for each one.

Bearing in mind the main research question and conceptual framework, codes were assigned to relevant segments of each transcript, using open coding. Brief notes or memos were written in the margins next to each relevant response. These notes contained concepts that appeared in the research questions and conceptual framework, as well as the researcher's hunches, insight, and speculation about the meaning of the responses.

Each data segment or unit was considered against the overarching question of how participants expected to be supported and how they experienced support. Codes were then assigned to the specific units or segments of related meaning identified in the transcripts. Codes or segments that were similar were grouped and placed in predefined categories or themes. Responses that did not fit the analysis framework, but were considered relevant to the study were assigned appropriate codes and later grouped and classified as emerging themes.

The codes identified included, workshop or school visit frequency, types and sources of support, participant views and concerns about support. The codes were categorised to establish the emergent nature of themes, trends and patterns that were cross-referenced with the research questions to ensure that the researcher did not lose focus (McMillan & Schumacher, 1993: 480). The analysis process was further informed by probing questions aimed at identifying thematic relationships between the various categories. The qualitative analysis process was

concluded with a description of the thematic relationships and patterns which had emerged. The categories, patterns and emerging themes were then linked to the research questions and discussed in relation to the relevant literature.

Next, a summary of each interview transcript was prepared. These summaries contained the broad themes that emerged across participant groups. These broad themes or categories were used to create a master list. In the final stage of the study, they were translated into study findings that were supported or illuminated by direct quotes from the data.

4.7.2 Document analysis

The researcher analysed the SIPs, WSE reports and ANA results. Codes were ascribed to each piece of datum considered to be relevant to the phenomenon under study. Notes were also written in the margins of the documents. The frequency with which codes occurred were considered, and, as was done during the interview analysis process, codes that appeared to be similar were grouped into categories. These categories or themes were placed on the master list and compared with those that emerged from interview and non-participant observation data.

4.7.3 Analysis of observations

The field notes that were created during the observations of phase meetings and the cluster workshop as well as observation sheets that were completed from addendum L were coded. Notes were written in the margins of the documents and codes considered to be similar across observations were grouped into categories or themes. These categories or themes were compared to those emerging from the interviews and document analyses and were all added to the master list.

4.8 THE ROLE OF THE RESEARCHER

Wood (2012) specified that, in qualitative research, "the researcher stands central to the data collected". The positionality perspective adopted in this study was that of an outsider in collaboration with insiders. The researcher approached the study from a perspective of "They know. We don't know" as opposed to "We know. They don't know" (Kerr & Anderson, 2005). The researcher's positionality was that of the researcher conducting research with insiders (educators in the schools).

The researcher of this study was a former principal of a school in the Mpumalanga Province in which the study was conducted. Therefore, in essence, the researcher possessed insider knowledge. To this end, it was therefore imperative for the researcher to practice reflexivity in order to combat reactivity on the part of the participants (Cohen et al., 2007). The practice of reflexivity means the continuous awareness of the researcher about his own past experiences, biases and potential reaction to data which may affect the research (Creswell, 2002; Cohen et al., 2007). The researcher had to bear in mind that participants could show reactivity by telling the researcher what he wanted to hear. To guard against both the participants' reactivity and potential researcher effect, this study was conducted in a different school district and circuit office in which the researcher was unfamiliar with the schools and participants in the sample.

The interview questions contained in appendices J, K and L were developed by the researcher in advance. The purpose of the interview questions was to elicit responses about the support participants expect to receive. The researcher gave the participants the assurance that their responses to interview questions will be kept confidential and that direct quotations used to illustrate points in the research report will not contain any information that would allow participants to be identified or traced.

4.9 TRUSTWORTHINESS

Trustworthiness, according to Merriam (1998: 199) means having "confidence in the conduct of the investigation and in the results of any particular study". In this study, trustworthiness was achieved by means of triangulation of data sources, member checks and peer review. The trustworthiness of the findings was verified by examining results for converging evidence, member checking and peer review.

4.9.1 Triangulation

According to Cohen et al. (2000: 112), triangulation means "the use of two or more methods of data collection to study a particular phenomenon". Terre Blanche et al. (2006: 380) described triangulation as the "use of multiple methods to study a single problem, looking for convergent evidence from different sources, such as interviewing, participant observation, surveying and a review of documentary sources". Similarly, Shenton (2004: 65) clarified that triangulation involves the "use of different methods, especially observation, focus groups and individual interviews, which form the major data collection strategies for much qualitative research". Trustworthiness in this study was enhanced by the use of data from different sources, namely, the interviews, documents and non-participation observation.

4.9.2 Member checking

Member checking refers to "a process where the researcher asks one or more participants in the study to check the accuracy of the account" (Creswell, 2002: 252). The researcher increased the trustworthiness of the study by taking the transcripts of the interviews back to the participants for them to comment on and to determine the accuracy of both the data and the final report. The participants were able to confirm whether there had been any omission or distortion of information and "whether the description is complete and realistic, if themes are

accurate, if the interpretation is fair and representative, and to correct misconceptions and misrepresentation" (Creswell, 2002: 252).

Some of the participants made corrections to ensure their opinions were reflected more accurately while others were satisfied with the way in which the researcher had captured their opinions and beliefs. In addition, minimal "editing of grammatical errors in participant interviews was undertaken, but without compromising the participants' original statements" (Creswell, 2002: 252).

4.9.3 Peer review

A peer review refers to the "review of data and research process by someone who is familiar with the research or the phenomena explored" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). A peer reviewer "provides support, plays devil's advocate, challenges the researcher's assumptions, pushes the researcher to the next step, and asks in-depth questions about methods and interpretations" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

The researcher increased the trustworthiness of this study by involving an "auditor outside the study to review different aspects of the research" (Creswell, 2002: 253). The auditor was given the interview transcripts, interview questions guide, list of interviewees and notes from documents that were used by the researcher to analyse the data. The auditor established that the findings of the researcher were, indeed, supported by data.

4.10 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The limitation of a study refers to "what constraints were imposed on the study, and to understand the context in which the research claims are set" (Vithal & Jansen, 2004: 35). The study was conducted in three primary schools in a school district in South Africa involving twenty participants, including three principals, eight HODs and nine post-level 1 educators. This was obviously a limited target

population, which did not represent all the schools in the circuit, the province or the country. Based on the small sample size used in the study, the inferences drawn from the study makes it difficult to generalise the findings beyond the three schools in which the study was conducted.

Although this research study was limited to three schools, but the findings and recommendations are valuable and could be applied to similar settings or present an opportunity to be researched in other settings. However, the researcher does not make any claims of generalisability of the findings of this research. Only the views of the primary school educators are expressed in this study; the study did not cover the views of the external sources such as subject advisors, circuit managers and district officials.

4.11 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The study followed strict ethical conduct based on permitted access and consent to participation, as well as ensured protection of participants and secured data. McMillan and Schumacher (2006: 333) maintained that it is essential for qualitative researchers to become "sensitive to ethical principles such as informed consent, confidentiality, anonymity, privacy and caring". The basic ethical principles adhered to in this study included the permission to conduct the research study, informed consent, confidentiality and anonymity.

4.11.1 Permission to conduct the research study

In order to comply with the ethical requirements, the researcher obtained ethical clearance from the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Education at the University of Pretoria to conduct the study. In addition, approval to conduct the study in the sampled schools was obtained from the provincial department of education, circuit manager, principals of the schools visited and all the participants selected for the study.

4.11.2 Informed consent

Farnham and Pilmlott (1995: 47) defined informed consent as "the knowing consent of individuals to participate as an exercise of choice, free from any element of fraud, deceit or similar unfair inducement or manipulation". Creswell (2003: 64) revealed that informed consent involves informing the potential respondents of the "goal of the investigation, the procedures to be used, the possible advantages of participating and the dangers (if any) of participating".

The researcher met with the participants in each school before commencing with the study to clarify the purpose and significance of the study, namely, to explore how primary school educators expect to be supported and how they experience support from internal and external sources in a South African school district. Participants were informed that they would participate voluntarily without any "pressure, manipulation or coercion in the research" (Trochim, 2001: 24).

The researcher informed the participants that they were "free to withdraw from the study at any time without prejudice" (Creswell, 2003: 64). The participants gave their consent to participate in the interview sessions by completing annexures F, G and H. The interview sessions lasted between 40-60 minutes and were recorded on a digital voice recorder with the permission of the participants to ensure accurate transcription of the verbal interaction which were later transcribed verbatim.

4.11.3 Confidentiality and anonymity

Trochim (2001) highlighted that "confidentiality and anonymity are two standards that help to protect the privacy of the research participants". The researcher maintained the anonymity of the participants and the confidentiality of the data by removing any identifying characteristics before the information was disseminated. The researcher subscribed to the notion that "all personal data captured during the research ought to be secured and made public only behind

a shield of anonymity" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000: 139). Accordingly, codes were used to protect the identity of the participants and schools.

4.12 CONCLUSION

The study was conducted in the interpretative paradigm and a qualitative approach was adopted. Interviews, document retrieval and non-participant observation were used as data collection strategies. The researcher used a case study design to explore how primary school educators expect to be supported and how they experience support from internal and external sources. Twenty educators from the three schools were selected through purposive sampling as participants in the study.

By employing purposive sampling the researcher created a synergy between the sample chosen and the epistemological and ontological emphases. Individual interviews were conducted with the principals while separate focus group interviews were conducted with the HODs and post-level 1 educators. The content analysis method was used to analyse the data collected from the interviews, documents and non-participant observations. The findings are presented in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 5

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the researcher present, explain and interpret analyses of interview, document and observational data. The chapter presents a comprehensive description and systematic analysis of the interview transcripts, the documents obtained and the observation notes.

5.2 DATA ANALYSIS FRAMEWORK

The analysis was guided by the following questions:

a) How do primary school educators expect to be supported by external sources in a South African school district?
b) How do primary school educators experience support from external sources in a South African school district?
c) How do primary school educators expect to be supported by internal sources in a South African school district?
d) How do primary school educators experience support from internal sources in a South African school district?

The hybrid conceptual framework, introduced and described in Chapter 1 complemented the research questions as a framework for analysis.

5.2.1 Literature review analysis

Before presenting the themes that emerged from the data, a summary of the findings from the literature review is presented. The questions posed in the semi-structured interviews, the observations and the document analysis were informed by the findings and arguments presented in the relevant literature.

The literature has shown that the challenges involved in teacher support arise not only in South Africa but affect the international community as well. This was evident from a study by Louis et al. (2010: 32) which reported that the districts in the United States of America were faced with the challenge of how to develop and support practices that improved student learning in schools. Similarly, in North Carolina, South Carolina and Canada, review teams of distinguished educators/external advisory councils were used to provide professional development to teachers, assistant principals and principals to improve student performance (Dominguez et al., 2006: 2; UNESCO, 2004: 51; Mandel, 2000: 11). Recently, a shift from support teams or specialists to instructional coaches has occurred.

The most conspicuous findings emerging from the South African literature (Mohlala, 2010; Narsee, 2006: 224; Mahlo, 2011) is that district officials are ill equipped to provide professional support to schools due to the absence of a clear sense of their role and the lack of follow up and follow through. Similarly, studies by Ramolefe (2004); Mashau et al. (2008); Masango (2013) and Sivhabu (2002) reported that educators in South Africa do not receive adequate support within schools because most principals and HODs are unfamiliar with the new curriculum and do not have the relevant skills required for problem-solving, networking and communication.

5.2.2 Findings emerging from interview data

Findings from the interview data included participant expectations and experiences of support and are presented as themes and sub-themes aligned with the research questions and elements of the conceptual framework that guided the study. The following table presents the themes and subthemes that emerged from the interview data:

THEMES	SUB-THEMES
Theme 1: Expectations of support from external sources	a) Notification about offsite workshops and school visits b) Timing, amount and frequency of external support c) Follow-up and support at school level
Theme 2: Participant experiences of support from external sources	a) Sources of external support b) Types of external support c) Amount and frequency of external support d) Views on external support.
Theme 3: Expectations of support from internal sources	a) A need to employ more HODs b) Additional opportunities for professional learning for educators teaching the core subjects c) A need for educators to take responsibility for their own learning or development
Theme 4: Participant experiences of support from internal sources	a) SMT and HODs are sources of internal support b) Types of internal support c) Views on internal support d) Lack of HOD manpower e) Human relations and lack of support from the DSGs

Table 5.1: Emerging themes and sub-themes

Theme 1: Expectations of support from external sources

Participants across the research sites indicated how they would like to be supported by external sources by raising concerns and offering ways in which those concerns could be addressed. Recurring concerns were the lack of advance notice of offsite workshops as well as school visits, the timing, amount and frequency of support by external sources and the lack of follow-up and support at the school level. Thus, broad themes that emerged from the interview data were: a) notification about offsite workshops and school visits; b) timing, amount and frequency of external support; and, c) follow-up and support at school level.

a) Notification about offsite workshops and school visits

The majority of participants lamented the fact that district officials schedule offsite workshops without considering the schools' schedules or they show up at schools at inopportune times. HOD 1 illustrated this concern when he noted that "many times the CIs come at the time when we least expect them, or they will call us to a workshop …without considering our plans." Participants expressed appreciation of the support they receive from both onsite and offsite but were concerned about the disruption of the school schedule and the toll the absence of educators take on learning.

b) Timing, amount and frequency of external support

Participants expressed a concern about the fact that valuable instructional time was lost when educators have to leave the school to attend offsite workshops. They also expressed the wish for an increased amount and frequency of support from the external sources. Participants from school C expressed the wish that subject advisors should conduct the curriculum support workshops during the school holidays (break) instead of taking educator participants offsite during the school day.

T 7 captures this concern very well with the following statement:

> Take, for instance, this year, we attended the MST (Maths, Science and Technology) workshop for 3 days. However, their timing was wrong because we left learners under the supervision of a few staff members – those who were not part of the workshop. It would have been better if such a workshop was conducted during the school holidays.

Appeals to conduct the curriculum workshops during school holidays have increased since the introduction of the DBE's '1+4 teacher development' programme designed to train educators teaching mathematics in Grade 9 on Monday on the content they teach on Tuesday to Friday. In this regard, HOD 8 surmised that:

> The 1 + 4 approach of the Department of Education to support Grade 9 teachers every Monday poses a threat to our schools because these teachers do not only teach Maths in our schools, they teach other subjects in other grades as well. As a result, the other subjects taught by these teachers suffer because there is no catch-up plan in place. It would be better if such training were conducted during school holidays.

Expressing the wish for increased frequency of support visits by school district officials, one participant suggested that the purpose of 'outreach visits' be changed from an assessment of the school's readiness for teaching and learning on the first day of school to a more sustained form of support. T 9 had the following to say about outreach visits.

> If officials from the province could increase the number of the outreach visits to schools and focus on supporting educators. I think the performance of schools would improve a lot.

One of the principal participants argued that subject advisors need to increase the amount of time they spend providing support to primary school educators in their respective schools. P 3 stated that:

> The officials from the Department of Education …. must frequently visit primary school educators to provide them with adequate curriculum support throughout the year.

Several participants indicated that the number of support workshops offered per year be increased to help educators adapt to curricular changes. The comment below from T 5 helped to explain why participants were in favour of the increased levels of support from external sources:

> The workshops are very informative and we gain a lot, it is just that they are normally conducted once a year per subject and this robs us of an opportunity to gain more information.

In addition, P1 said, "The teachers need more time and training; not the once-off thing or twice a year because we have just started the CAPS. If training can be conducted in every school term, educators can master the implementation of the new curriculum."

c) Follow-up and support at school level

Participants expressed a need for follow-up support for educators after the workshops or school visits from district officials. The response below from T 9 is similar to that of a number of participants:

> As much as the CIs visit us in schools … if support is not provided continuously, it does not serve any purpose.

Another participant, T1, noted that "when you come back to school, you are on your own until … they call you into another workshop." Participants frequently noted that officials do not come back to 'check' whether educators are

implementing the new curriculum the right way. All the Foundation Phase participants verbalised a sense of feeling 'unsupported' since they last received training during the introduction of the CAPS. T 5 lamented:

> They are no longer conducting workshops for the Foundation Phase educators. They do not even check whether we are implementing CAPS the right way.

Although the majority of participants decried the lack of follow-up or school-level support from external sources, the following response of T 1 offered a glimpse of what desirable support could look like:

> There is one CI who comes often to support the educator in our school. I can say that this CI really support the teacher most of the time. The rest of the other Cis visit educators without informing teachers as if they want to catch them off guard.

Theme 2: Participant experiences of support from external sources

Participants focused on the type, amount, frequency and adequacy of support they receive from external sources. In addition, the participants raised concerns about the support they receive from the external sources. Four (4) sub-themes were identified within this main theme, namely, the sources of external support, types of external support, amount and frequency of external support, and views on external support.

a) Sources of external support

Overall, the sources of external support for primary school educators were identified as provincial and district officials, circuit managers, subject advisors (curriculum implementers), cluster leaders and teacher unions. If the different participant groups are considered, the sources of external support differed by the position held by the participants. For example, principal participants identified

circuit managers, district officials and their peers as external sources of support, while HOD and post level 1 educator participants mainly referred to subject advisors (curriculum implementers) as their primary source of support.

b) Types of external support

As stated above, the majority of the participants in this study, particularly, the HODs and post level 1 educators, receive support primarily from the curriculum implementers. They noted that they receive support on content coverage, lesson preparation, assessment techniques and guidance on setting the examination question papers during the curriculum support workshops. P 3 puts it this way:

> The subject advisors conduct workshops and train teachers on setting standardised question papers. They supply teachers with intervention guides and the CAPS policy. They also provide one-on-one support to teachers at the school.

The teacher participants made frequent references to lesson planning and training on content delivery as areas of focus during the workshops offered by curriculum implementers. In this regard, T 2 said:

> From my CI, the support I receive is through the content itself. She usually organises people who are knowledgeable in a subject and provides us with the lesson plans.

Some of the participants across groups and schools indicated that they received cluster support. HOD 7 noted that:

> Cluster leaders conduct the workshops to help teachers share information on specific topics, lesson presentations and to overcome challenges they experience within their learning areas.

Participants also indicated that the teacher unions offered training to their members during the introduction of the Curriculum Assessment Policy

Statements (CAPS). Principal participants spoke positively about the support they received from the circuit manager and district officials. P 2 explained that:

> My basic support comes from the circuit manager during the principals' meetings that we hold twice per term. Such meetings provide us with the opportunity to make inputs and share good practice from our own schools.

Regarding the support received from district officials, principal participants noted that opportunities to learn from their peers are created and that they complement the support provided by the circuit manager. P 1 noted:

> Last year, I attended the review summit where the district officials presented strategies and recommendations from the Department of Education we are required to implement in schools. Some principals also shared some of the strategies that made them succeed in their schools.

Similarly, the HODs and post level 1 educators attested that they received training on the national intervention strategies from the curriculum implementers. In addition, the HODs and post level 1 educators indicated that curriculum implementers conduct school visits, not to support but to 'check' what they are doing.

c) Amount and frequency of external support

Principal participants indicated that circuit managers visit schools on a monthly basis and curriculum implementers on a quarterly basis. HOD and teacher participants indicated that they attend offsite workshops and receive school visits from curriculum implementers less frequently. Some participants noted that the frequency of workshops or school visits depends on the curriculum implementer. Some curriculum implementers visit schools to support educators once in every six months.

Participants noted that the shortage of curriculum implementers makes it impossible for them to provide a sufficient amount of support. HOD 7 explained that:

> The support from the CIs is very limited because they have many schools to support and they cannot be in all the schools all the time.

Similarly, T 9 supported this view by stating that:

> Some CIs try their level best to conduct workshops and visit schools, but they are very few to provide the required support to teachers in schools.

d) Views on external support

Although participants expressed positive views on the support from external sources, but they also raised some concerns. Principal participants indicated that they would prefer to see an increase of external support for educators in schools. P 2 noted that,

> The support is wonderful from some of the CIs and I really wish we could see every CI visiting our school every term. The CIs play an important role by checking the files, lesson preparations, learners' books and portfolios.

As indicated earlier, participants were concerned that the subject advisors do not communicate the dates of the curriculum workshops with educators in advance. This concern was expressed by HOD 1 who said:

> I am not satisfied with the manner in which CIs invite us into the workshops. Most of the time they call us to attend the workshops when it suits them without considering our plans. For example, before the school closed last year we finalised our strategic plan for 2015 and communicated this plan to all the teachers. To our surprise, we were invited into a five-day workshop on the first week of the school re-opening. I do not have a problem for being called into a workshop, but they should inform us in advance to avoid disrupting our plans in schools.

T 7 also had the following to say about the scheduling of workshops:

> The CIs must improve the manner in which they organise their workshops. It would have been better if the workshops that takes more than two days were conducted during the school holidays to avoid disrupting teaching and learning when teachers attend such workshops.

Participants expressed a concern about the level of competence of some curriculum implementers. Some participants received support from more than one CI and had varied experiences. An example is (T2) who had the following to say about one CI:

> The support I get from my CI does not meet my expectation. She is not knowledgeable enough on the subject. Every time we attend her workshop, we come out without knowing what to do. I think it is a disadvantage to have a CI who does not know his story.

However, T 2 had something different to say about support from another CI. She said:

> My CI is very much harsh but at the end of the day, we go out of the workshop, knowing exactly what to do at our schools.

While responding to interview questions, participants seemed to come to the realisation that what they may have considered to be support was in fact, surveillance or checking for compliance. In this regard, P 1 stated that,

> The Department of Education is just monitoring the implementation of the curriculum, not providing support, because, if you support somebody, you make sure that he is supported continuously and you check progress throughout.

T 3 shared a similar sentiment by stating that,

> When the CIs come to our schools, it is just monitoring and looking for mistakes, it is not for support. Most of the CIs, monitor compliance but do not provide support. To me, the CIs come to schools for their own records to prove to the Department of Education that they are visiting schools and not for the purpose of supporting the teachers in the schools.

Theme 3: Expectations of support from internal sources

Responses about how participants would like to be supported by internal sources were limited. Expectations of support from internal sources were indirectly expressed through raising concerns and suggesting ways in which those concerns could be addressed. The broad themes that emerged from the interview data were, a) a need to employ more HODs; b) additional opportunities for professional learning for educators teaching the core subjects; and, c) a need for educators to take responsibility for their own learning or development.

a) A need to employ more HODs

Participants expressed concern about the fact that, in general, HODs have a wide scope of responsibilities, which ultimately compromises the quality of support they provide to educators. To this end, the participants mentioned that it is virtually impossible for one HOD to be in possession of the necessary expertise to support educators in all the subjects because educators in South Africa specialises in two or three subjects during teacher training. Thus, the expectation was that HODs provide "out-of-field" support.

Participants expressed the desire to see more HODs employed in the Foundation Phase. T 5 illustrated a sentiment expressed by the Foundation Phase post level 1 participants across research sites by stating that:

> The Department of Education must appoint enough HODs because, currently, there is one HOD for the Foundation Phase in our school.

The expectation was that a sufficient number of HODs per school would translate into adequate support from a key internal source.

b) Additional opportunities for professional learning for educators teaching the core subjects

A majority of participants expected additional opportunities for professional learning for educators teaching what they termed, core subjects, referring to Mathematics, Life Sciences and Technology. HOD 9 suggested that:

> Teachers teaching subjects like Maths, Life Sciences and Technology should be supported by means of the skills development courses of the Department of Education and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) programmes.

Mathematics, Life Sciences and Technology are regarded in literature as the basis for shaping the future of the young citizens worldwide. In all the schools studied, none of the educators were participating in the skills development courses and the NGO programmes such as the MSSI project, Dinaledi project, Khanyisa programme and IEP, which are offered in certain sectors in some provinces in South Africa.

c) A need for educators to take responsibility for their own learning or development

The principal and HOD participants expected minimal support for qualified educators because they undergo subject specialisation during teacher training. Thus, they expect educators to be knowledgeable and competent on the subjects they teach. HOD 1 puts it this way:

> We cannot be apologetic for poor performance and place the blame on somebody else all the time. Competence and knowledge are cornerstones of teaching and, if such elements are in place, support from other people should not be an issue.

The expectation that educators should become a source of support to one another was verbalised. P 1 argued:

> I perceive support as a give-and-take process of helping each other, but most of the teachers do not cooperate on the aspects of support.

Another expectation that was raised was that educators must take initiative or responsibility for their own learning than to wait for external or internal support. HOD1 noted:

> Teachers need to dig more for information and to have that quest for performance. I would like to see educators reflecting more on their practices and acknowledge as well as on the areas in which they need to improve.

Theme 4: Participant experiences from internal sources

Participant experiences of internal support can be divided into practices and experiences indicated by principal and HOD participants and experiences indicated by post-level 1 educators. Five (5) sub-themes were identified within this main theme, namely: SMT and HODs are sources of internal support; types of internal support; views on internal support; lack of HOD manpower; human relations and lack of support from the DSGs.

a) SMT and HODs are sources of internal support

All the participants agreed that the internal support for primary school educators is the collective responsibility of the School Management Team (SMT) comprised of the principal, deputy principals and HODs. Of these internal sources, HODs emerged as a key source of internal support. The principals and post level 1 educators all agreed that HODs are the primary source of internal support for educators in schools. P 3 explained that:

> Although my role is to make sure that there is effective teaching and learning in the school; however, HODs focus on monitoring the implementation of the curriculum by post-level 1 educators.

An unexpected response was a reference to peer support at one of the research sites. HOD 2 shared the following:

> The teachers support one another. If you go to a teacher with a problem of introducing a lesson or a certain topic, she will come and help you.

b) Types of internal support

The participants mentioned that the internal support for primary school educators entails curriculum support, monitoring portfolios for educators and learners as well as classroom visits. P 1 pointed out that:

> As the SMT, we support educators collectively to manage the curriculum by checking the portfolios for teachers and learners' books, and conducting class visits.

Participants indicated that, apart from the HODs conducting phase and subject meetings, they also observe class teaching and check written work for learners. In addition, SMT members verify whether educators implement the national intervention strategies. P 1 explained that:

> As the SMT, we monitor that teachers use the previous ANA exemplars, workbooks and textbooks. We also monitor that teachers set standardised questions and we also encourage peer coaching.

Similarly, HOD 1 noted that:

> As HODs, we conduct internal workshops and monitor that teachers use the previous ANA question papers when conducting internal assessments.

Participant responses to the implementation of the national intervention strategies to improve learner performance in the ANA benchmarking tests

pointed to excessive use of such strategies. Participants from one research site indicated that they provide extra classes to improve the learner performance of Grade 9 learners. P 3 indicated that:

> We provide extra classes for Grades 9 learners and our Grade 9 teachers also attend extra maths classes every Monday.

Although the participants from this research site provided extra classes for grade 9 learners; however, such support was not provided to the grade 3 and grade 6 learners who were also performing poorly in the ANA tests. The overall impression of this study was that generally extra classes are not considered as an option to improve learner performance in the primary schools.

c) Views on internal support

Participants across the research sites experienced internal support more positive than the external support. They indicated that the internal support is more effective because the SMT members are familiar with the environment, the challenges and the behaviour of the learners and can provide immediate support. The views of the participants in this regard were clearly expressed in the statements made by T 4 and P2 below. P 2 lamented that:

> I personally do not think that somebody coming from outside the school can make much improvement in the school – effective support must come within the school from the principal and the staff.

Similarly, T 4 echoed a similar sentiment by stating that:

> I think the support that we get internally is the one which is effective because the HODs know the situation of the school – unlike people who are coming from outside who do not know what is happening in the school and how the learners are behaving. The person who is inside the school is able to see the difference and the loopholes and provides solutions, unlike an outsider who visit schools once per term.

d) Lack of HOD manpower

Although the participants indicated a preference of the internal support over external support; however, it emerged that the main challenge facing all the schools in the sample is the lack of HOD manpower. T 3 expressed the view that:

> The SMT members are trying their best to support us but we do not have enough HODs in our school. Just imagine, we have one HOD responsible for both the Intermediate and Senior Phases. I am the language teacher, he is the maths and science teacher, and his knowledge is limited to his area of subjects' specialisation.

A similar view was expressed by HOD 2 who stated that:

> Teacher support from the HODs differs from school to school. Take for instance, in our school, we have few HODs, and we do not have sufficient time to support educators because we have more work to do.

The participants blamed the learner-educator ratio system of the DBE for the shortage of HODs in schools. For instance, HOD 5 argued that:

> I personally think the government is failing us with the pupil-teacher ratio when it comes to the allocation of posts in schools. Imagine, I am the only HOD in the Intermediate Phase and, definitely, I am not able to provide support to all the six learning areas [subjects]. Nobody is a specialist in all the subjects. Even if I try to stretch myself to the limit, I still have a class to teach and I am expected to be effective in the classroom.

The disadvantage of the learner-educator ratio system of the DBE is that schools with fewer learners qualify for few HODs, even though the number of subjects provided in the primary schools remain the same irrespective of the size of the school. To this end, it is virtually impossible for one HOD to provide effective support for educators in all the subjects they teach in a school since educators in South Africa specialise in two or three subjects during teacher training.

The overall impression gained from the HOD participant responses were that they do not have sufficient time to support educators. This situation is further exacerbated by the fact that most primary school educators spend most of their time after school hours supporting learners with extra-mural activities. HOD 4 explained that:

> We do not have enough time to support educators in our schools because of their involvement in athletics during the first term, music competitions in the second term and sports activities during the third term.

The challenge experienced by the Foundation Phase participants was the dual role of the HODs, that of being full time teachers and performing administrative duties. HOD 4 admitted that:

> In the Foundation Phase, I do not have sufficient time to support teachers because I am also a fulltime class teacher. However, if there is a challenge, we tackle it together; otherwise it is teamwork that keeps us going.

Similarly, T 1 affirmed that:

> Our HOD tries her level best to support us but the challenge is that she is also a full-time teacher with her own class to teach, like all of us. As a result, her supportive role becomes compromised in the sense that, if she has to provide support to a particular educator, it means she must leave her own class unattended.

e) Human relations and lack of support from the DSGs

The participants from two research sites cited poor human relations as a challenge for internal support in their schools. HOD 1 expressed the view that:

> The challenge facing our school is poor human relations. It is an area that needs to be developed since it breeds resistance towards support, derails progress and demoralises enthusiastic educators.

Some of the participants indicated that in a bigger school, people have different views which makes it difficult for them to agree on a particular view. HOD 4 expressed the opinion that:

> In a bigger school like ours, senior management adopt a general approach instead of a specific approach when addressing problems. As a result, the views of the minority are not recognised which creates some tensions and strain the relationship between management and teachers.

None of the participants in this study indicated that they received support from the Development Support Group (DSG). The DSG is one of the internal sources tasked with the responsibility for supporting and developing educators in schools (DoE, 2005: 5; ELRC, 2003: 4). P 1 clarified that:

> The role of the DSGs is not equivalent to support for teachers because their role is confined to the matters of the IQMS which has nothing to do with curriculum support for educators.

A similar concern was expressed by HOD 1 that:

> The DSGs are not proactive in the area of support for educators. They only conduct class visits to individual teachers for the purpose of summative scores in the IQMS.

Thus, like activities performed by district and circuit officials, considered to be external support, this aspect of internal support is perceived to be an exercise in compliance.

5.3 DOCUMENT ANALYSIS

The data that had been collected from the School Improvement Plans (SIPs), Whole School Evaluation (WSE) reports, and Annual National Assessment (ANA) results were subjected to content analysis.

5.3.1. School Improvement Plans

The school improvement plan for 2015 of school A consisted of nine objectives, namely, a) the basic functionality; leadership, management, and communication; b) governance and relationships; c) quality of teaching and teachers' development; d) curriculum provision and resources; e) learner achievement; f) school safety, security and discipline; g) school infrastructure; h) parents and community.

The main challenges indicated in the SIP for school A were understaffing, staff disintegration due to poor interpersonal relations, teacher incompetence in the subjects they teach, and the location of the school at a distance far from the community it serves. Other challenges indicated in the SIP are the failure of educators to complete the planned activities on time, resistance to change or transformation by some of the educators, poor parental involvement, lack of training for educators in subjects they teach, and poor resources for the subjects like Technology and Natural Sciences. Although the challenges were identified in the SIP, it was not indicated how they would be addressed. This suggest that the SIP had just been developed for the sake of compliance than addressing the challenges of the school.

The school improvement plan for 2015 of school B covered aspects such as: a) the strategic planning (time table planning, subject meetings, planning of teaching); b) policy review; c) human relations (improved communication between the SMT and staff); d) lesson planning, preparation and presentation (weekly forecasts, e) term plans, work schedules, subject frameworks); f) learner assessment (rubrics, CASS, various assessment techniques, portfolios, foundations for learning, completion of marks); g) analysis of examination data (quarterly); h) and extracurricular participation (athletics, soccer, netball, cricket, excursions, choir, tennis, arts festival, cultural concert).

An attempt was made to indicate the type of assistance required from the DBE. This includes professional development of educators, human relations (improved communication between the Department of Education and the school), knowledge of curriculum and learning areas (NCS training from the Department of Education, revised curriculum, phase and cluster meetings). However, the type of assistance required from the DBE on professional development and human relations was not specified.

The school improvement plan of 2015 for school C indicated that the SMT is responsible for monitoring the activities of educators. The activities included a) monitoring that educators revise the ANA previous question papers; b) implement CASS; c) train educators on content gap; d) ensure educators adhere to pace setters/syllabus; e) network with the best performing schools; f) manage assessment through the School Assessment Team; g) monitor the improvement of learner performance; and h) monitor that educators implement different strategies. However, the SIP of school C does not make provision for the external support or assistance required outside the school.

The main finding of the analysis from the SIPs of the three schools revealed that the objectives of the schools were too generic and without time lines. There was no evidence that the SIPs were developed collectively by the SMTs, DSGs and School Development Teams (SDTs). The principals admitted that the SIPs were developed by the SMTs without involving the other stakeholders. The exclusion of the DSGs and SDTs when the SIPs were developed was against the IQMS policy which states that the "DSGs are required to identify the specific needs of educators in terms of support and development, provide support for continued growth for educators, and evaluate the performance of educators" (DoE, 2005: 1).

There was no evidence of implementation of the objectives as indicated in the SIPs of the three schools. This means that there was no alignment between the

objectives contained in the SIPs with the support provided to educators in schools.

5.3.2. Whole School Evaluation reports

The unexpected finding of this study was that none of the schools in the sample were in possession of whole school evaluation (WSE) reports. The three schools in the sample were never visited by the district WSE teams for the purpose of whole school evaluation. As a result, there were no inferences drawn by the researcher on support provided by the WSE teams in primary schools in this school district. In this regard, the Policy on the Organisation, Roles and Responsibilities of Education Districts (DBE, 2012a: 10) noted that education districts are responsible for evaluating too many education institutions; thus, they are unable to render effective services to all of them.

5.3.3. Annual National Assessments (ANA) results

The Annual National Assessments (ANA) results for the three schools in Grades 3, 6 and 9 were analysed. The rationale for the duration authorities analysing the ANA results in the three schools was to determine the kind of support provided to educators in order to improve learner performance in the ANA benchmark tests. The ANA results of the three schools for the three-year period, from 2012 to 2014, are presented in Annexure N.

The ANA results for school A revealed that the grade 3 learners achieved above 60% in the Home Language during the period from 2012 to 2014. In Mathematics, the grade 3 learners achieved below 60% in 2012 and 2013, but obtained 61% in 2014. The grade 6 learners scored below 60% in both the Home Language and Mathematics. The grade 9 learners obtained 66% in the Home Language in 2012, but achieved below 60% in 2013 and 2014. The overall analysis of performance for the learners in school A revealed that the learners in this school performed

below the national target of 60% in both the Home Language and Mathematics in all the three grades.

In school B, the grade 3 learners achieved 65% in the Home Language in 2012 but obtained below 60% in 2013 and 2014. In Mathematics, the grade 3 learners scored above 60% in 2012 and 2014, but regressed to 56% in 2013. The grade 6 learners achieved 63% in the Home Language in 2014, but obtained below 60% in 2012 and 2013 respectively. The grade 9 learners achieved below 60% in both the Home Language and Mathematics during the period from 2012 to 2014. The overall analysis of the ANA results for school B indicated that learners in this school performed below the national target of 60% in both the Home Language and Mathematics.

In school C, the learners in grades 3, 6 and 9 achieved below 60% in both Mathematics and Home Languages during the period from 2012 to 2014. This was the worst performing school in the ANA benchmarking tests. It was surprising to note that such low learner performance in this school had not yet caught the attention of the district and circuit officials to intervene and provide some rescue plans.

5.4 NON-PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION

The researcher attended three phase meetings as follows: one Foundation Phase meeting in school A, one Intermediate Phase meeting in school B, and one Senior Phase meeting in school C. Each of these phase meetings in all the three schools were chaired by the HODs. The common topics discussed during these phase meetings were the annual and termly plans, lesson preparations, assessment teaching plans, and classroom visits/observations dates of the HODs. Much emphasis was placed on educators meeting the time lines and to keep up with the pacesetters. None of these phase meetings was able to focus on individual support for educators.

In addition, the researcher attended the '1+4 teacher development' cluster workshop for educators teaching mathematics in grade 9. These educators attend the workshop every Monday to receive training on the content they teach learners on Tuesday to Friday. The subject advisor assigns educators lessons to present to their colleagues in the next workshop. During the lesson presentation, the other educators critique the lesson presentations and agree on the best approaches they believe will be easily understood by the learners. The main advantage of these workshops is that various lesson presentation methods are explored. The disadvantage is that these workshops are conducted during school hours yet there are no catch-up plans in place to recover the time lost when educators attend the Monday workshops.

5.5 DISCUSSION

The participants identified officials from the province and districts offices, circuit managers, subject advisors and cluster leaders as the external sources of support for primary school educators. Participants indicated that external support were provided during offsite and onsite workshops, as well as during school visits. HODs emerged as the key source of internal support, while principals reportedly provided support to a lesser extent.

It became clear from the participants' responses, that their perception of educator support is not necessarily aligned with the ways in which it is described in the literature. Participants made frequent references to practices by those who, according to legislation and policy, should provide support, which could best be described as surveillance during the introduction of curricular changes. When the participants discussed what they perceived to be support, they noted that the perceived support from external sources was not always adequate. These findings are consistent with those from studies by De Clercq and Shalem (2014: 133); Mavuso (2013: 158) and Van der Berg et al. (2011: 12), who reported that the visits

of subject advisors and district officials tend to fulfil an almost exclusively monitoring role and are, therefore, often ineffective in terms of providing a systematic support in the form of advice, coaching and mentoring to teachers at the classroom level.

Participants indicated that, in some instances, the support was inadequate or confusing due to perceived incompetence on the part of the sources of support or a shortage of sources of support. The perceived incompetence of sources of support aligns with findings from studies by Mohlala (2010) and Narsee (2006: 224) which revealed that most officials from the district offices were ill-equipped to provide professional support to educators in schools. Despite concerns raised by participants, some indicated that they found value in the support provided by external sources. This finding is consistent with a study by De Clercq and Shalem (2014: 133) who reported that the "workshops provide a broad orientation about the meaning of the curriculum, its new terms and directives, subject matter knowledge and preferred ways of teaching it (such as integration of school and everyday knowledge) as well as curriculum sequencing and pacing".

A key concern among participants was the timing of offsite workshops. Across research sites, participants voiced concern about workshops that were scheduled to take place during the school day; sometimes more than one day; thereby, taking away instructional time and disadvantaging learners. The literature did not really reveal a concern about the timing of offsite workshops. It showed that educators expressed a preference to receive support at school while they attempt implementation of curricular changes or reform efforts.

Another concern that was raised, was the amount and frequency of support that educators received from both external and internal sources. In addition, the lack of follow-up during educator attempts to implement curricular change was highlighted. Thus, although information was provided and lesson planning and

delivery addressed in offsite workshops, sustained support through follow-up appeared to be limited or absent. This finding is consistent with findings from Narsee's 2006 study and De Clercq and Shalem's 2014 study.

Cluster support emerged as a form of external support that was positively viewed and experienced across participant groups and research sites. Participants noted that the strength of cluster groups lies in the fact that educators share information on specific topics, lesson presentations and apparatus, and strategies to overcome the challenges in their various subjects. This finding is consistent with that reported by previous studies (Aipinge, 2007; De Clercq and Phiri, 2013; Wei et al., 2009: 9) which indicated that clusters provide ongoing opportunities for collegial work for sharing knowledge, expertise and collaboration on curriculum.

The role played by teacher unions played in supporting their members when the Curriculum Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS) was introduced was highlighted. The involvement of the teacher unions in the CAPS implementation is praiseworthy considering that previously, they have opposed the changes from the DBE. This suggests a change of heart and the willingness of the teacher unions to contribute in a more constructive way on educational matters. This finding confirms the NEEDU report (DBE, 2013b: 69) which reported that lately SADTU and NAPTOSA have become involved in professional development of educators in South Africa. However, this study found no evidence of support from the teacher unions beyond the CAPS rollout.

Participants across the research sites expressed more positive views of the support provided by internal sources. They noted that support from "in-house" personnel is readily available; they know what the issues are and understand the context within which these issues occur. This finding is consistent with the sentiment expressed in the NEEDU report that internal sources of support "are constantly available, at break, between lessons or in the afternoons" and "intra-

institutional assistance is likely to be far more effective, since it is offered within a direct understanding of the contextual conditions that pertain in the school, and can be offered continuously throughout the year" (DBE, 2013b: 70).

Although the participants indicated positive views and that they prefer support from the internal sources; it emerged from this study that internal support has its own challenges. A recurring theme across the participant groups and research sites was the limited number of HODs and CIs available to provide support to primary school educators. It emerged from the data that HODs are stretched thin due to the fact that they have to provide support or guidance to educators, in addition to meeting their responsibilities as a classroom teacher. The fact that HODs may have expert knowledge in one phase or two subject areas means that they have to support or guide teachers in areas in which they are not well-versed.

The participants from the Foundation Phase experienced the dual role of the HODs as problematic. This finding is similar to that from studies by Bipath, Nkabinde and Grobler (2013: 2), and Blandford (1997: 13) which reported that HODs in the Foundation Phase are faced with a dilemma of coping with the competing demands of their administrative duties and teaching responsibilities. In this regard, Ransford, et al. (2009: 510) warned that those teachers who perceive low levels of support are the most vulnerable when it comes to the implementation of the new curricula.

None of the participants in this study indicated that they received support from the DSGs. The apparent lack of support from the DSGs is against the assertion in the Conceptual and operational guidelines for the implementation of inclusive education: District-based Support Teams (DoE, 2005d: 5) that the DSGs have a mandate to provide mentoring and support to educators during the implementation of the IQMS. In addition, the lack of support from the DSGs is divergent to the purpose of the IQMS which is "to identify the specific needs of

educators, schools and district offices in terms of support and development; to provide support for continued growth for educators; to promote accountability; to monitor the overall effectiveness of an institution; and to evaluate the performance of educators" (DoE, 2005: 1). The finding of this study is consistent with the studies by Nkambule (2010: 62); Mosoage and Pilane (2014: 6) which reported that the DSGs lack the skills and knowledge required to provide support and continued growth to educators because they have no positional power to enforce rules.

Due to the lack of the availability of WSE reports in all the research sites, the researcher is unable to report findings about educator support as it relates to whole school evaluation. The Policy of Whole-School Evaluation (RSA, 2001) specify that, the "..... district support services co-ordinate staff development programmes in response to educators' individual professional needs, the findings of whole-school evaluation, and the requirements of provincial and national policies and initiatives". In addition, the objectives of the Foundations for Learning (FFL) campaign (DoE, 2008: 22) stating that, "education district officials are obliged to visit all schools within the district at least once per term, with more frequent visits to schools requiring stronger support for monitoring and guidance, assist schools to improve their performance and work towards the agreed targets" were not met.

The document analysis in all the three schools revealed that the primary school learners achieved below the national target in all the exit grades, namely, grade 3, 6 and 9. This finding is contrary to the pronouncement made by the Minister of Basic Education, Angie Motshekga, that only the Senior Phase was "not delivering the expected progress against the targets set in 2010 at national level" (DBE, 2015: 22). The DBE (2013a: 48) specifies that subject advisors are required to conduct school visits to serial underperforming schools and those showing a decline in Grade 12 or ANA results. However, this study revealed that there was no

additional support provided to primary school educators from the underperforming schools during the ANA benchmarking tests. The lack of support for educators takes place despite an assurance from the Minister of Education that the DBE is planning to "fast-track support for schools and districts where large numbers of learners are underperforming" (DBE, 2015: 22).

As much as there are initiatives from the DBE intended to provide support for educators, the challenge is that such initiatives are not thoroughly planned and carried through. Poor learner performance thus continues to prevail in primary schools even though various policies are in place. McKinney (2009: 86) advised that when learners perform below the level of achievement in a school, the level of support changes from occasional visits to that of a team from the districts is housed "on the doorstep of the schools".

5.6 CONCLUSION

This chapter presented the analysis of the interview data, document review and observation. The data from the interviews were analysed and the major themes were compared with predetermined themes from the literature review. Documents such as the SIPs and ANA results were also analysed. In addition, the data from the non-participant observation was also used to validate the data from the interviews and documents. Chapter 6 focuses on the conclusions and recommendations based on the findings of the study.

CHAPTER 6

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides an overview of the study with reference to the literature review, research questions and study findings. The purpose of this study was to explore how primary school educators experience support and how they expect to be supported by internal and external sources in a South African school district. This chapter discusses the summary of findings, recommendations, contribution to the conceptual framework, contribution to new knowledge, limitations of the study, suggestions for future research, and conclusion.

6.2 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

This section highlights the main findings of this study as reported in chapter 5. The major findings of this study are presented with the existing literature, research questions and conceptual framework as backdrop. The findings are enriched with the data from document analysis and observations.

6.2.1 How do primary school educators expect to be supported by external sources in a South African school district?

The participants in this study made more reference to their experiences with support from external sources, than they did with expectations. Expectations were indirectly voiced by raising concerns about the provision of support by external sources and suggesting ways in which to address these concerns.

Concerns were raised about the timing of offsite workshops, the amount and frequency of support workshops and visits and availability of sources of external support. Furthermore, the expectation that the provincial department of education appoint cluster leaders on a full-time basis and reimburse the costs

they incur when supporting educators in the neighbouring schools, were expressed.

6.2.2 How do primary school educators experience support from the external sources in a South African school district?

The principal participants indicated that they experienced adequate support from the circuit manager on leadership and management, curriculum management and the functionality of school governing bodies (SGBs). They also received support from district officials who created opportunities for peer learning among principals. HODs and post-level 1 educators indicated that they mainly received support from curriculum implementers through offsite workshops and school visits.

One-on-one support sessions for post-level 1 educators were also provided by Curriculum Implementers (CIs). Participants across groups and research sites indicated that an additional external source of support was the cluster leader. Cluster meetings provided opportunities for collaborative planning and learning. In general, information about curricular changes was shared during offsite workshops and emphasis was placed on lesson planning, setting standardised examinations and pace-setting.

The lack of human resources was consistently raised as a concern about the provision of support by both external and internal sources. The participants indicated that the shortage of subject advisors existed in this school district. As a result, the frequency with which CIs are supposed to conduct offsite workshops or school visits is compromised.

Analyses of the documents that were sourced, showed challenges or areas that needed improvement but no clear plan or strategies to address them. The

support required from the district or province was included in one of the documents but no details were provided.

6.2.3 How do primary school educators expect to be supported by internal sources in a South African school district?

Overall, participants did not really voice the expectations they hold regarding support from internal sources. Similar to responses regarding support from external sources, participants voiced concerns and suggested ways in which such concerns could be addressed. Participants were concerned about the impact on the effectiveness of support based on the workload of the HODs.

Previous research noted the dual roles of Foundation Phase HODs — that of teaching classes and performing administrative tasks. So, the added layer of support provision adds to a workload that is already heavy. The overall impression gained through this study was that the primary school HODs have a wide scope of duties, which ultimately compromises the quality of support they provide to educators. The recommendation that more HODs be hired in each primary school became a refrain.

6.2.4: How do primary school educators experience support from internal sources in a South African school district?

Participants in this study expressed a preference for internal support over external support. They indicated that the internal sources of support are familiar with the environment, the challenges and the behaviour of the learners. Thus, they are capable of monitoring the progress and improvements of both the educators and learners on daily basis unlike the outside parties who provide occasional support. The preference of internal support over external support from the participants in this study is consistent with the NEEDU report (DBE, 2013: 70) which reported that

educators within the school provide support with a direct understanding of the contextual conditions of the school.

The participants indicated that the SMT members monitor the implementation of the national intervention strategies to improve learner performance. This includes monitoring the use of workbooks and ANA exemplars provided by the DBE. However, analysis of the trends in the ANA results revealed that the primary school learners in the three schools studied were performing below the national target in all the three basic phases. Intervention plans should be developed and implemented to address underperformance in the ANA testing. The analysis of the documents sourced for this study revealed that there were no concrete plans in place to address low performance on the ANA.

In this study, HODs emerged as a key source of internal support. Participants indicated that the HODs experience a heavy workload for supporting educators across a number of subjects such as the languages, sciences and commercial subjects. As a result, the quality of support is compromised since HODs have limited expertise as far as the different subjects are concerned.

Participants were surprisingly quiet about the induction of beginning teachers or educators in promotion posts, as a desired form of support. The international literature is replete with examples of induction programmes and the benefits thereof.

6.3 LOCATING THE FINDINGS WITHIN THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The conceptual framework within which this study was completed, is best described as a hybrid framework, consisting of elements in organisational support theory and the UNESCO 'Policy Framework for Improving the Quality of Teaching and Learning.' Organisation support theory posits that employees consider how well their organisation or company meets their socio-emotional

needs as indicative of how supportive the company is towards their development. When the perception that these needs are met exists among employees, the result could be reduced stress levels, an increase in commitment and satisfaction, positive moods and higher levels of productivity.

Research in the international context suggests that employees with negative perceptions of curriculum support are more likely to be stressed, suffer from burnout and less likely to make attempts to implement reform efforts (Ransford, et al., 2009; Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). Research in South Africa revealed that teachers felt unsupported and overwhelmed by the demands associated with curriculum reform after attending offsite workshops (De Clercq & Shalem, 2014).

The second part of the conceptual framework that guided this study, the 'Policy Framework for Improving the Quality of Teaching and Learning' is related to goal number 6 of 'Education for All' (EFA), focusing on improving the quality of education. Two key elements of this framework are advisory work and in-service training. In the international context, instructional coaches and teacher specialists do advisory work by providing onsite technical support and in-service training (professional development) which appears to be coherent, coordinated and grounded in legislation and policy.

Considering the hybrid framework, a limited amount of technical support, aimed at improving the quality of education is provided, while affective aspects, i.e., meeting the socio-emotional needs of educators, whilst providing support appears to be neglected. A broad theme that emerged in this study was that information provided during the offsite workshops is helpful but follow-up support is lacking. Findings as it relates to organisational support theory included participants feeling like they are under surveillance; perceived district officials to be on fault-finding missions when they conduct school visits and classroom

observations; and felt like they are on their own once they return to schools after attending the offsite workshops.

A recurring theme was the desire of the participants to receive follow-up and sustained support. Another theme that emerged was that participants expected to be included in scheduling of the offsite workshops and planning of school and classroom visits. Participants also expressed the wish to be guided by knowledgeable and competent officials. They reported feeling confused after attending offsite workshops and they were not confident that they were implementing the curriculum effectively due to limited onsite support.

6.4 RECOMMENDATIONS OF THIS STUDY

The recommendations of this study are in line with the findings and the research questions that underpin this research. Key findings of this study included misperceptions about the meaning of support; concerns about the timing of offsite workshops; availability of curriculum instructors and heads of departments to provide support; the amount and quality of support; lack of follow-up and the perception of support as surveillance.

It is recommended that the district officials shift the focus from the offsite to onsite support. The international literature highlighted that high performing countries such as Finland, Australia, Japan and United States have made considerable departure from offsite to onsite support where individual or teams of teacher specialists and coaches provide support to teachers at the school level.

A recommendation that emerged from the data was that subject advisors increase the frequency of their visits to schools. An example of efficient support in the literature is the 'shoulder to shoulder' support model implemented by the 'subject specialists' in Australia. The strength of this model is that it provides 'subject specialists' (subject advisors in the case of South Africa) the opportunity

to work "with teachers in their schools for some hours each week, monitor and analyse learner performance, and assist with the implementation of the activities" (Wei et al., 2009: 25). This model is described as learner-centred and focuses on improving learner performance.

It is recommended that school visits be planned with a particular purpose in mind. The purpose of school visits of the district officials should be to offer support to educators to implement what they have learnt during offsite curricular workshops. A refrain that emerged from the data was that district officials use the school visits to monitor compliance with policies or to find fault than focusing on areas of support. It is therefore recommended for the DBE to make a clear distinction between support and monitoring for educators in schools. In addition, the DBE should review the role of the DSGs considering that previous studies (Nkambule, 2010; Mosoage & Pilane, 2014), including this study, reported that the DSGs do not provide educator support in schools.

Another recommendation is that the DBE should consider conducting the offsite curriculum support workshops during school holidays, as suggested by the participants, to circumvent the loss of contact time for teaching and learning when educators attend the support workshops during school hours. In addition, conducting the workshops during school holidays could minimise a disruption of the school schedules.

In order to address the shortage of subject or curriculum advisors, formalising cluster support is recommended. The participants expressed the belief that the appointment of cluster leaders will help to lessen the workload of the subject advisors. The strength of cluster groups lies in sharing of the information, knowledge, skills and resources. Hence, Jansen (2016) and AITSL (2012: 2) noted that better appraisal, coaching and feedback is achieved when individuals and groups of educators work together to improve teacher performance.

Since HODs emerged as a key internal source of educator support, a fair distribution of workload for HODs is recommended. In addition to an emphasis on school needs, HOD appointments should be aligned with educator support needs.

Previous research, as well as this study, reported that educator support is inadequate or non-existent due to incompetence on the part of the CIs or subject advisors. It is therefore recommended that the officials in this school district undergo preparation or training for their roles as workshop facilitators to be able to provide educators with appropriate feedback during curriculum workshops and classroom visits.

A final recommendation of this study is that school districts should consult international literature on the role instructional coaches and teacher specialists could potentially play in providing educator support. The majority of the international literature reviewed highlighted that countries with a good performance record such as Finland, Australia and Japan have made significant investments in teacher training, teacher induction, teacher development, and professional development with considerable emphasis on collaboration among schools. In some instances, 'head teachers' or principals with a track record of improving student achievement supported their peers in schools where student achievement has been found lacking. Policy makers and practitioners could assess induction or support models for their appropriateness or suitability in the South African context.

6.5 CONTRIBUTION OF NEW KNOWLEDGE

This study contributed to the body of existing knowledge by uncovering a limited amount of technical support, aimed at improving the quality of education; while affective aspects, i.e., meeting the socio-emotional needs of educators appear to be neglected. Given this context, deeper understanding of what kind of support

educators expect in contrast to what they actually receive has the potential to improve local practice and practice in international communities in a similar situation.

A key contribution of this study was establishing a framework for educator support in chapter 1 on page 9 of this study. The importance of this framework is that it marries the provision of technical support with the affective goals of support. Thus, instead of conducting site visits to ensure compliance with prescripts, the support should focus on professional development of educators through appropriate advisement, provided in a manner that make educators feel that their efforts and contributions are valued.

This study contributes to the body of existing knowledge by highlighting that school principals, heads of departments and post-level 1 teachers, who participated in the study, felt like they are under surveillance; perceived district officials to be on fault-finding missions when conducting school visits and classroom observations; and they felt unsupported when implementing curricular changes once they return to schools after attending the offsite workshops.

This study contributes to new knowledge by revealing that support for educators in South Africa is provided in the context of off-site support than onsite support. To date, there is little evidence of onsite support for educators, hence, participants expressed a preference to receive support at school while they attempt implementation of curricular changes or reform efforts. The international literature highlighted that high performing countries such as Finland, Australia, Japan and United States have made considerable departure from offsite to onsite support where individual or teams of teacher specialists and coaches provide support to teachers at the school level.

Another contribution of this study to the body of knowledge was to voice the challenge experienced by the participants about the timing of the offsite workshops. Across research sites, participants voiced concern about workshops that were scheduled to take place during the school day; sometimes more than one day; thereby, taking away instructional time and disadvantaging learners.

In addition, this study contributes to the body of knowledge by revealing that primary school educators in South Africa receive inadequate support due to perceived incompetence on the part of the sources of support or a shortage of sources of support. The finding of this study revealed that there is limited number of HODs and CIs available to provide support to primary school educators. In addition, the limited HODs are stretched thin since they do not have the expert knowledge to support or guide post level 1 educators in subject areas in which they are not well-versed.

Another contribution of this study to the body of knowledge is the finding that primary school learners achieved below the national target in all the exit grades, namely, grade 3, 6 and 9. This underperformance continues to prevail even though the DBE (2013a: 48) specifies that subject advisors are required to conduct school visits to serial underperforming schools and those showing a decline in Grade 12 or ANA results. The finding of this study revealed that no additional support was provided to primary school educators to improve learner performance in the ANA benchmarking tests. The lack of support for educators is contrary to the assurance made by the Minister of Education that the DBE is planning to "fast-track support for schools and districts where large numbers of learners are underperforming" (DBE, 2015: 22).

This study also contributes to the existing body of knowledge by highlighting that educators in schools do not receive any form of support from the Development Support Groups (DSGs). The DSGs are established "to identify the specific needs

of educators, schools and district offices in terms of support and development; to provide support for continued growth for educators; to promote accountability; to monitor the overall effectiveness of an institution; and to evaluate the performance of educators" (DoE, 2005: 1). Previous studies by Nkambule (2010: 62); Mosoage and Pilane (2014: 6) reported that the DSGs lack the skills and knowledge required to provide support and continued growth to educators and do not have positional power to enforce rules.

6.6 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study was conducted in three primary schools in a South African education district with a sample of 20 participants, namely, three principals, eight HODs and nine post-level 1 teachers. This was obviously a limited target population which did not represent all the schools in the circuit, the province or the country.

Based on the small sample size, the inferences drawn from the study makes it difficult to generalise the findings beyond the three schools in which the study was conducted. It is left to the reader to decide the relevance of the findings of this study to their particular setting. In addition, the study focused on the views of primary school educators and did not include the views of external sources of support such as subject advisors, circuit managers and district officials. Nevertheless, the researcher did everything possible to ensure that the study findings were trustworthy.

6.7 SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The researcher suggests the following areas to be explored for future studies:
Further investigation of this research topic is required on a larger sample to provide greater insight into the topic.

A similar study needs to be conducted to solicit the views of the district officials, circuit managers and subject advisors (curriculum implementers) who provide external support to educators in schools. The views of these stakeholders will add value in the quest to find solutions of supporting primary school educators in light of the curriculum reviews and national testing.

A research study is required to investigate the efficiency of subject advisors to provide support to educators in schools since the element of subject advisor/curriculum implementer incompetence has resurfaced in a number of studies, including this study.

Empirical studies are required to investigate the capacity of the "1 + 4 teacher development" programme to develop educators teaching mathematics in grade 9. There is a need to investigate whether this programme is achieving the intended objective of supporting educators to improve learner performance.

A comprehensive study is required to explore how newly appointed/promoted educators experience support in the absence of a national induction programme and a clearly defined support structure for educators in public schools in South Africa.

6.8 CONCLUSION

Literature suggests that educator support is a challenge throughout the education system in South Africa. The challenge of educator support emanates from the lack of intensive teacher training. The universities in South Africa tend to focus more on theory than practical teaching. As a result, student educators begin their teaching career with a deficit of practical teaching knowledge and thus require intensive support to adapt to the field of teaching.

The problem of educator support in South Africa is exacerbated by the lack of critical induction programmes to introduce new educators into the world of teaching. As a result, new educators begin their teaching career with no solid support base as they are required to navigate their own way into the teaching system and subsequently spend their entire teaching career with no clearly defined support. The situation is further complicated by the lack of a systematic support in the form of advice, coaching and mentoring of educators in schools.

An effective accountability system for both internal and external sources to provide quality support for educators in schools is also lacking. Support for educators in South Africa appears to be construed as 'monitoring'. There is a need to separate 'monitoring' and 'support' so that more onsite support can be provided to educators in schools. Unless school-based support is strengthened, there is little hope that primary school educators will succeed in their endeavour to provide quality teaching capable of improving learner performance.

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8. ANNEXURES

Annexure A: Ethical clearance certificate

UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA
Faculty of Education

RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE	CLEARANCE NUMBER: EM 14/06/03
DEGREE AND PROJECT	PhD Primary school educators' experiences of support from internal and external sources in a South African school district
INVESTIGATORS	Samson Gugulethu Nkambule
DEPARTMENT	Education Management and Policy Studies
APPROVAL TO COMMENCE STUDY	18 August 2014
DATE OF CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE	24 August 2016

Please note:

For Master's application, Ethics Clearance is valid for 2 years
For PhD application, Ethics Clearance is valid for 3 years

CHAIRPERSON OF ETHICS COMMITTEE: Prof Liesel Ebersöhn

CC Bronwynne Swarts
Christina Amsterdam
Johan Beckmann

This Ethics Clearance Certificate if issued subject to the following conditions:

1. A signed personal declaration of responsibility
2. If the research question changes significantly so as to alter the nature of the study, a new application of ethical clearance must be submitted
3. It remains the student's responsibility to ensure that all the necessary forms for informed consent are kept for future queries

Please quote the clearance number in all enquiries

Annexure B: Application letter to conduct a research study in primary schools in the Mpumalanga Province (Mpumalanga Department of Education)

Enq:	SG.Nkambule	P.O. Box 6312
Contacts:	079 834 7270	Tasbetpark
Email:	gugulethu.nkambule@yahoo.com	1040
Student no:	04315405	1 August 2014

Research Unit
The Head of Department (HoD)
Mpumalanga Department of Education
Private Bag X11341
NELSPRUIT
1200

RE: APPLICATION FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT A RESEARCH IN NKANGALA DISTRICT SCHOOLS

I am a doctoral student at the University of Pretoria. The title of my research study is "Primary school educators' experiences of support from internal and external sources in a South African school district".

I humbly request your permission to conduct a research study in Nkangala district schools. I intend to collect data from 3 public primary schools. The purpose of this study is to complete my PhD and also contribute to the literature in the field of education, particularly on support for primary schools.

I will conduct the individual interviews with the principals and focus group interviews with head of departments and post level 1 educators, peruse documents of the schools and attend phase meetings. The names of the schools and participants will be kept confidential, anonymous and shall not be disclosed in the research report.

Yours truly,

S.G Nkambule (Mr)	Prof C.E.N Amsterdam
Student number: 04315405	Supervisor

Annexure C: Permission letter from Mpumalanga Department of Education

APPLICATION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH STUDY: MR. SAMSON GUGULETHU NKAMBULE
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

education
DEPARTMENT: EDUCATION
MPUMALANGA PROVINCE

Private Bag X 11341
Nelspruit 1200
Government Boulevard
Riverside Park
Building 5
Mpumalanga Province
Republic of South Africa

Litiko leTemfundvo Umnyango weFundo Departement van Onderwys Umnyango wezeMfundo
Enquiries: H.A. Baloyi (013) 766 5476

MR. SAMSON GUGULETHU NKAMBULE
P.O. BOX 6312
TASBET PARK
1040

RE: APPLICATION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH: MR. SAMSON GUGULETHU NKAMBULE

Your application to conduct research was received and therefore acknowledged. The title of your study reads: "Exploring support for primary school educators in a South African Education District." The request to conduct this scientific study is approved based on its relevance and the impact it will cause in the education system in general. In most schools support from parents is very minimal; hence performance by some learners is not satisfactory. Parental involvement and support will remain a pivotal part and school system, therefore any research that seeks to address this aspect will always be supported.

You are requested to fully observe the provisions of the departmental research manual which is attached. You are also requested to adhere to your University's research ethics as spelt out in your research ethics document.

In terms of the attached manual (2.2. bullet number 4 & 6) data or any research activity can only be conducted after school hours as per appointment. You are also requested to share your findings with the relevant sections of the department so that we may consider implementing your findings if that will be in the best interest of the department.

Sisonke Sifundzisa Sive

MPUMALANGA
A Pioneering Spirit

APPLICATION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH STUDY: MR. SAMSON GUGULETHU NAKAMBULE
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

For more information kindly liaise with the department's research unit @ 013 766 5476 or a.baloyi@education.mpu.gov.za.

The department wishes you well in this important project and pledges to give you the necessary support you may need.

APPROVED/~~NOTAPPROVED~~:

MRS MOC MHLABANE
HEAD OF DEPARTMENT
10, 9, 14
DATE

Annexure D: Application letter to the circuit manager for permission to conduct research in schools

Enquiries: SG.Nkambule
079 834 7270
gugulethu.nkambule@yahoo.com

P.O. Box 6312
Tasbetpark
1040

1 September 2014

CIRCUIT MANAGER

Dear Sir/Madam

RE: REQUEST TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

I am a doctoral student at the University of Pretoria. The title of my research study is "Primary school educators' experiences of support from internal and external sources in a South African school district".

I humbly request your permission to conduct a research study in schools in your circuit. I have been granted permission by the Mpumalanga Department of Education to conduct this research project in this school district (see the letter of approval attached). The purpose of this study is to complete my PhD and also contribute to the literature in the field of education, particularly on support for primary schools. Support for educators in the context of this study refers to classroom and organisational support, learner and educator support, as well as curricular and institutional development provided by district officials, subject

advisors, circuit managers and school management teams in order to identify and address barriers to learning and promote effective teaching and learning (Policy on the Organisation, Roles and Responsibilities of Education Districts, 2013: 11; Perry, 2013: 16; Dominguez, Nicholls, Storandt & Associates, 2006: 3 UNESCO, 2004: 163).

The study will be conducted to schools offering the Foundation Phase, Intermediate Phase and Senior Phase. The names of the schools and participants will be kept confidential, anonymous and shall not be disclosed in the research report. I will conduct individual interviews with the principals and focus group interviews with a number of heads of departments and post level 1 educators in each school. I will peruse the school improvement plans (SIPs), whole-school evaluation (WSE) reports and Annual National Assessments (ANA) results. I will also attend one phase meeting per school and one Monday workshop for grade 9 teachers teaching mathematics.

I do trust my request will receive your favourable consideration.

Yours truly,

_____	_____
Samson Gugulethu Nkambule (Mr)	Prof C.EN. Amsterdam
Student number: 04315405	Supervisor

Annexure E: Application letter to the principals for permission to conduct research in schools

UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Enq:	SG.Nkambule	P.O. Box 6312
Contacts:	079 834 7270	Tasbetpark
Email:	gugulethu.nkambule@yahoo.com	1040
Student no:	04315405	01 October 2014

Dear Principal

RE: REQUEST TO CONDUCT A RESEARCH IN YOUR SCHOOL

I am a doctoral student at the University of Pretoria. The title of my research study is "Primary school educators' experiences of support from internal and external sources in a South African school district".

I humbly request your permission to conduct a research study in your school. I have been granted permission by the Mpumalanga Department of Education and the circuit manager to conduct this research project in schools (see the letters of approval attached). The purpose of this study is to complete my PhD and also contribute to the literature in the field of education, particularly on support for primary schools. The name of the school and participants will be kept confidential, anonymous and shall not be disclosed in the research report.

The collection of data will take place in three phases (days). The first phase will focus on the individual interview with the principal and focus group interviews

with three heads of departments and three post level 1 educators. During the second phase (day), I will analyse the School Improvement Plan (SIP), Whole School Evaluation (WSE) reports and Annual National Assessments (ANA) results. The third phase will be about observing one phase meeting at the school.

Yours truly,

_____	_____
S.G. Nkambule (Mr)	Prof C.E.N Amsterdam
Student number: 04315405	Supervisor

Annexure F: Information letter and informed consent form for Principals

UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Dear Principal

INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN A STUDY AND INFORMED CONSENT

You are cordially invited to participate in a research project aimed at collecting information about how primary school educators experience support from internal and external sources in a South African school district. Support for educators in the context of this study refers to classroom and organisational support; learner and educator support, as well as curricular and institutional development provided by district officials, subject advisors, circuit managers and school management teams to identify and address barriers to learning and promote effective teaching and learning (Policy on the Organisation, Roles and Responsibilities of Education Districts, 2013: 11; Perry, 2013: 16; Dominguez, Nicholls, Storandt & Associates, 2006: 3 UNESCO, 2004: 163).

Your participation is voluntary and you will not be subjected to any risk or harm of any kind. You are not going to be required to respond to acts of deception or betrayal in the research process or its published outcomes. You will be free to withdraw from the study at any time without prejudice. Your identity and the name of your school will remain anonymous and will not be mentioned in the research report. The information is only required to assist the researcher to complete his study.

Title of the research project: "Primary school educators' experiences of support from internal and external sources in a South African school district".

Purpose of the research: The purpose of this study is to explore how primary school educators experience support from internal and external sources in a South African school district.

What is expected of the principal in this study? The principal will be required to participate in an individual interview of approximately 30 minutes to be recorded on a digital voice recorder for accurate inscription of the verbal interaction. The principal will be requested to provide the researcher with the School Improvement Plan (SIP), Whole School Evaluation (WSE) reports and Annual National Assessment (ANA) results to enable the researcher to gather evidence of support for the school, teachers and learner performance. The principal will also be expected to arrange that the researcher attend at least one phase meeting at the school.

Benefits: The principals will reflect on the role for supporting educators and the type of support required in primary schools. Participation in this study provides principals an opportunity to contribute about the support required for primary school educators. The study will contribute to the body of knowledge in the field of education on measures required to provide primary school educators with adequate support.

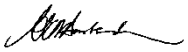
I, Mr/Ms/Dr/. _____ hereby confirm that I have read and understand the content of this letter and hereby give my consent to participate in the study, "Primary school educators' experiences of support from internal and external sources in a South African school district".

Signature of the participant: _____ Date: _____

Name of student: Mr Gugulethu Nkambule

Signature of student: _____ Date: 01 October 2014

Name of the supervisor: Dr C.E.N. Amsterdam



Signature of the supervisor: _____ Date: 01 October 2014

Annexure G: Information letter and informed consent form for head of departments (HODs)

Dear Head of Department

INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN A STUDY AND INFORMED CONSENT

You are cordially invited to participate in a research project aimed at collecting information about how primary school educators experience support from internal and external sources in a South African school district. Support for educators in the context of this study refers to classroom and organisational support; learner and educator support, as well as curricular and institutional development provided by district officials, subject advisors, circuit managers and school management teams to identify and address barriers to learning and promote effective teaching and learning (Policy on the Organisation, Roles and Responsibilities of Education Districts, 2013: 11; Perry, 2013: 16; Dominguez, Nicholls, Storandt & Associates, 2006: 3 UNESCO, 2004: 163).

Your participation is voluntary and you will not be subjected to any risk or harm of any kind. You are not going to be required to respond to acts of deception or betrayal in the research process or its published outcomes. You will be free to withdraw from the study at any time without prejudice. Your identity and the name of your school will remain anonymous and will not be mentioned in the research report. The information is only required to assist the researcher to complete his study.

Title of the research project: "Primary school educators' experiences of support from internal and external sources in a South African school district".

Purpose of the research: The purpose of this study is to explore how primary school educators experience support from internal and external sources in a South African school district.

What is expected of the HOD in this study? The HOD will be required to participate in a group interview of approximately 30 minutes to be recorded on a digital voice recorder for accurate inscription of verbal interaction.

Benefits: The HODs will reflect on their role when supporting educators and also the type of support required to fulfil their roles and responsibilities in schools. Participation in this study provides HODs with an opportunity to contribute about support required for primary school educators. The study will contribute to the body of knowledge in the field of education on measures required to provide primary school educators with adequate support.

I, Mr/Ms/Dr/. _____ hereby confirm that I have read and understand the content of this letter and hereby give my consent to participate in the study, "Primary school educators' experiences of support from internal and external sources in a South African school district".

Signature of the participant: _____ Date: _____

Name of student: Mr Gugulethu Nkambule

Signature of student: _____ Date: 01 October 2014

Name of the supervisor: Dr C.E.N. Amsterdam

Signature of the supervisor: _____ Date: 01 October 2014

Annexure H: Information letter and informed consent form for post level 1 educators

Dear Teacher

INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN A STUDY AND INFORMED CONSENT

You are cordially invited to participate in a research project aimed at collecting information about how primary school educators experience support from internal and external sources in a South African school district. Support for educators in the context of this study refers to classroom and organisational support; learner and educator support, as well as curricular and institutional development provided by district officials, subject advisors, circuit managers and school management teams to identify and address barriers to learning and promote effective teaching and learning (Policy on the Organisation, Roles and Responsibilities of Education Districts, 2013: 11; Perry, 2013: 16; Dominguez, Nicholls, Storandt & Associates, 2006: 3 UNESCO, 2004: 163).

Your participation is voluntary and you will not be subjected to any risk or harm of any kind. You are not going to be required to respond to acts of deception or betrayal in the research process or its published outcomes. You will be free to withdraw from the study at any time without prejudice. Your identity and the name of your school will remain anonymous and will not be mentioned in the research report. The information is only required to assist the researcher to complete his study.

Title of the research project: "Primary school educators' experiences of support from internal and external sources in a South African school district".

Purpose of the research: The purpose of this study is to explore how primary school educators experience support from internal and external sources in a South African school district.

What is expected of the post level 1 educators in this study? The post level 1 educators will be required to participate in a group interview of approximately 30 minutes to be recorded on a digital voice recorder for accurate inscription of verbal interaction.

Benefits: Teachers will get an opportunity to reflect on the support they receive from internal and external sources in schools. Participation in this study provides post level 1 educators with an opportunity to contribute about support required for primary school, educators. The study will contribute to the body of knowledge in the field of education on measures required to provide primary school educators with adequate support.

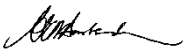
I, Mr/Ms/Dr/. _____ hereby confirm that I have read and understand the content of this letter and hereby give my consent to participate in the study, "Primary school educators' experiences of support from internal and external sources in a South African school district".

Signature of the participant: _____ Date: _____

Name of student: Mr Gugulethu Nkambule

Signature of student: _____ Date: 01 October 2014

Name of the supervisor: Dr C.E.N. Amsterdam



Signature of the supervisor: _____ Date: 01 October 2014

Annexure I: Biographical questionnaire for participants

Please answer the following questions by using (X) to indicate your answer in the relevant block or by writing down your answer in the space provided.

1. Indicate your gender.

Male		Female	

2. What is your age in years?

3. Indicate your race.

African	
White	
Coloured	
Indian/Asian	

4. Indicate your qualifications.

5. How long have you been teaching/HOD/Principal?

6. Specify your teaching subjects and grades.

Annexure J: Interview Schedule for principals

1. Who provides support to you and teachers from outside the school?
2. What kind of support do you receive from these people/officials from outside the school?
3. How do these people from outside the school support you to improve learner performance?
4. How do you feel about the support you receive from people/officials outside the school?
5. How often do you receive support from people/officials from outside the school and does it meet your expectations? If yes, how? If no, why not?
6. Who provides support for you within the school?
7. What kind of support is provided by people/officials within the school?
8. How the people/officials within the school support you to improve learner performance?
9. Does support from within the school meet your expectations? If yes, how? If no, why not?
10. What are the challenges involved in supporting educators in schools?
11. What do you suggest should be done to improve the support for educators in schools?

Annexure K: Interview Schedule for head of departments

UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

1. Who provides support to you and teachers from outside the school?
2. What kind of support do you receive from these people/officials from outside the school?
3. How do these people from outside the school support you to improve learner performance?
4. How do you feel about the support you receive from people/officials outside the school?
5. How often do you receive support from people/officials from outside the school and does it meet your expectations? If yes, how? If no, why not?
6. Who provides support for you within the school?
7. What kind of support is provided by people/officials within the school?
8. How the people/officials within the school support you to improve learner performance?
9. Does support from within the school meet your expectations? If yes, how? If no, why not?
10. What are the challenges involved in supporting educators in schools?
11. What do you suggest should be done to improve the support for educators in schools?

Annexure L: Interview Schedule for post Level 1 educators

1. Who provides support to you and teachers from outside the school?
2. What kind of support do you receive from these people/officials from outside the school?
3. How do these people from outside the school support you to improve learner performance?
4. How do you feel about the support you receive from people/officials outside the school?
5. How often do you receive support from people/officials from outside the school and does it meet your expectations? If yes, how? If no, why not?
6. Who provides support for you within the school?
7. What kind of support is provided by people/officials within the school?
8. How the people/officials within the school support you to improve learner performance?
9. Does support from within the school meet your expectations? If yes, how? If no, why not?
10. What are the challenges involved in supporting educators in schools?
11. What do you suggest should be done to improve the support for educators in schools?

Annexure M: Observation sheet

UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

School: _____ Date: _____

Participants: _____ Duration: _____

DISCUSSIONS ABOUT:	1	2	3	4	5
Content knowledge					
Assessments					
Strategies to improve learner performance					
External support					
Internal support					
Support on Professional Growth Plans					
Support on School Improvement Plans					

Scale: 1 = Not at all, 2 = very little, 3 = a little, 4 a lot 5 a very great deal

Points of clarification made and/or that were required,

_____

_____

Possible lines of further inquiry.

_____

_____

Annexure N: ANA Results for the three schools during 2012–2014.

SCHOOL A		2012	2013	2014
Grade 3	Home Language (HL)	65%	68%	67%
	Mathematics	35%	49%	61%
Grade 6	Home Language (HL)	50%	58%	55%
	Mathematics	38%	42%	45%
Grade 9	Home Language (HL)	66%	53%	48%
	Mathematics	40%	42%	30%
SCHOOL B		2012	2013	2014
Grade 3	Home Language (HL)	65%	46%	58%
	Mathematics	64%	56%	60%
Grade 6	Home Language (HL)	51%	54%	63%
	Mathematics	56%	29%	36%
Grade 9	Home Language (HL)	39%	44%	48%
	Mathematics	18%	22%	20%
SCHOOL C		2012	2013	2014
Grade 3	Home Language (HL)	11%	38%	46%
	Mathematics	21%	36%	45%
Grade 6	Home Language (HL)	15%	48%	47%
	Mathematics	20%	25%	36%
Grade 9	Home Language (HL)	53%	44%	45%
	Mathematics	20%	11%	13%