Experiences of teachers as curriculum leaders in South African secondary schools

by

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Declaration

I, Rebecca Ofundem Bessong Nee Agbor, (Student Number: 18298959), declare that the thesis, which I hereby submit for the degree Philosophiae Doctor in Education Management and Policy Studies at the University of Pretoria, is my own work and has not previously been submitted by me for a degree at this or any other tertiary institution.

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Rebecca Ofundem Bessong

May 2021

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Ethics Statement

I, Rebecca Ofundem Bessong Nee Agbor, obtained ethical approval for the investigation into “Experiences of teachers as curriculum leaders in South African secondary schools”. I declare that I observed the ethical standards and policy guidelines for responsible research in the code of ethics for researchers prescribed by the University of Pretoria.

Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to my late elder brother, Emmanuel Enohatta Agbor, and my late elder sister, Beatrice Ako Agbor. May you continue to Rest in the Peace of Christ till we meet to part no more.

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Abstract

Research indicates that teachers are one of the most important stakeholders in quality of education in a country and are responsible for its improvement. However, how teachers understand and experience their role as curriculum leaders in contributing to education quality is yet to be known. The purpose of this study was to investigate teachers' understanding and experiences of their role as curriculum leaders in schools. The study assumed a qualitative approach within the interpretive paradigm underpinned by Grant's Model of Teacher Leadership. The sample consisted of 20 teachers and 4 principals from 4 secondary schools within the Vhembe District of the Limpopo Province of South Africa. The data on how teachers understand and experience their role as curriculum leaders in schools were obtained by means of semi-structured individual interviews, focus-group discussions with teachers at each school, as well as lesson, and curriculum-related meeting observations. The data were thematically analysed, and the results categorised according to themes and sub-themes.

From the findings of this study, it was established that teachers understand their role as curriculum leaders in the light of teacher inclusion in decision-making during the entire curriculum development process. Teachers perceived their role as multi-layered and complex. Teachers experienced their role as curriculum leaders in that they led instructional activities, school-based curriculum development activities, and curriculum activities beyond the school, involving the community. The findings also indicated that teachers experience exclusion when vital curriculum decisions are taken. Teachers experience making decisions as curriculum leaders mostly at the implementation stage of the curriculum.

The study contributes to the growing knowledge of information on teacher leadership in schools. It recommends a bottom-up approach to ideas and suggestions on matters of curriculum decisions at any level such decisions are made. The study also proposes a model to guide teacher inclusion in curriculum decision-making. The study was limited to the views and experiences of teachers and principals who participated in the study. A further study employing a quantitative approach, on teachers as curriculum leaders, could be carried out on a larger sample that would allow for generalization of the findings.

Key words: Teachers, curriculum leaders, decision-making, role, curriculum, experience, understanding.

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This is to certify that I, Lydia Weight, have proofread the document titled: Experiences of teachers as curriculum leaders in South African secondary schools, by Rebecca Bessong. I have made all the necessary corrections. The document is therefore ready for presentation to the destined authority. Yours faithfully

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List of Abbreviations

ACE	Advanced Certificate in Education leadership
CAPS	Curriculum Assessment Policy Statements
CBD	Central Business District
CESAC	Comparative Education Study and Adaptation Centre
C2005	Curriculum 2005
CLIL	Content and Language Integrated Learning
CPD	Continuous Professional Development
DoE	Department of Education (National)
FGDs	Focus Group Discussions
GCE	General Certificate of Education
HoD	Head of Department
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
ITE	Institute of Technical Education
Km	Kilometres
LTM	Learning and teaching materials
MOE	Ministry of Education
NERD	Nigerian Educational Research and Development
NES	New Education System
NSC	National Senior Certificate
OBE	Outcomes Based Education
OECD	Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development
OME	Ontario Ministry of Education
PIRLS	Progress in International Reading and Literacy Study
PISA	The Program for International Student Assessments
RNCS	Revised National Curriculum Statement
SASA	South African Schools Act
SACMEQ	Southern African Consortium for the Measurement of Education Quality
SBCD	School-based curriculum development
SGB	School Governing Body
SMT	Senior Management Team
SWOT	Strengths Weaknesses Opportunities and Threats

TIMSS	Trends in Mathematics and Science Study
TVE	Technical and Vocational Education
TVET	Technical Vocational Education and Training
US	United States
UK	United Kingdom
VET	Vocational Education Training

CHAPTER ONE

OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

Effective curriculum leadership is a prerequisite for any successful educational institution (Kiat, Heng & Ratanam-Lim, 2017). This study focused on establishing an understanding of teachers' experiences as curriculum leaders in secondary schools in South Africa. The underlying assumption was that how teachers experience and understand their role as curriculum leaders impacts on how they execute this role for efficient teaching and learning. This chapter gives an overview of the study. I provide the background to the study, articulate the statement of the problem, the rationale of the study, a brief literature review, the purpose of the study and the research questions. I also indicate the methodology used and the significance of the study. Furthermore, I clarified technical concepts and provide an outline of the thesis.

1.2 Background

Curriculum leadership in school is centred on defining the school programme, collaborating for success, providing the path to follow, and coordinating teaching and learning activities for the attainment of desired goals (Wiles, 2009). These aspects of leading the curriculum guide curriculum leaders in defining the purpose of schooling, clarifying objectives, defining the roles of workers, and selecting the best strategies and tactics to use at classroom level. In defining the programme, curriculum leaders engage in a process of helping all stakeholders in the school community to discover what they wish to have as the school curriculum programme. Curriculum leadership also involves envisioning, as curriculum leaders must strike a balance between maintaining and upgrading the school programmes to keep abreast with the ever-changing world (Wiles, 2009; Glatthorn, Boschee, Whitehead & Boschee, 2015). According to Kiat et al. (2017), a curriculum leader plays a role in the leadership network which comprises other curriculum specialists. This assertion affirms the notion of collaboration by different leaders at different levels of the organisation in developing and implementing the curriculum. In a nutshell, curriculum leadership is any

initiative taken by experts on curriculum issues to influence, direct, and motivate fellow experts in curriculum matters; and to become engaged in decision-making at different stages of the curriculum development process. These decisions should add value to teaching, learning, and learning outcomes (Carl, 2012).

Teachers have always been involved in performing various roles associated with their profession both in and out of school. In defining some of these roles, Obi (2018) concurring with Fairman and Mackenzie (2012), states that teachers model to learners (teachers are disciplined, regular at classes, prepared for lessons) and the school community (teachers model good behaviour).Teachers play multiple roles such as *in loco parentis* while learners are at school, or as examiners, knowledge givers, curriculum developers, or classroom managers. Despite their multiple roles, in recent years, teachers have taken on much more responsibility for the development of the curriculum at the school level (Wiles, 2009). Teachers, as curriculum leaders, organise the content of the curriculum such that lessons planned and delivered meet learners' needs (Wiles, 2009). In agreement with this statement, Xiong and Lim (2015), Algers and Silva-Fletcher (2015) aver that teachers create a significant impact, in determining their course content and pedagogy. Teachers are the primary source of assistance in the school in defining the direction to lead the curriculum for change and school improvement. Teachers are the key to all curriculum work; teachers must be fully and openly involved in developing school programmes. Teachers determine whether a curriculum innovation takes root or withers on the vine (Kiat et al., 2017; Nevenglosky, 2018). Goodwin (2017) opines that curriculum leadership is situated in the lives of teachers; and actual teaching and learning occurs in the real lives of teachers. As such, curriculum leadership as a practice, means leading any change in both curriculum and teaching. Such requires the professional judgement and decision-making of teachers and other school leaders to develop professional knowledge, and to change mindsets, beliefs, values, and commitment (Brundrett & Duncan, 2011).

Literature presents many views of teachers' understanding of their role as curriculum leaders. Aliakbari and Sadeghi (2014) indicate that Iranian teachers perceive their role as curriculum leaders as a way of making changes to the curriculum and creating the vision for the school and its future. Gunkel (2010) explains that, according to some teachers from his study in South Africa, the teachers' role as curriculum leader is to step up and offer academic service wherever it is needed, be it to other teachers, learners, or parents. In professional learning communities, Ainscow (2010) explains that teachers, as curriculum leaders,

perceive their role as that of engaging in processes that sustain and share collective learning. The underlying notion in pushing for collective learning is that collaboration in performing curriculum activities improves teacher learning, teaching practice, and learner learning and holistic development (Hadebe, 2013). In my opinion, the varying perceptions teachers have of their role as curriculum leaders may be attributed to the type of recognition given to teachers as stakeholders of school leadership whenever crucial curriculum decisions are being taken.

Increased accountability has intensified pressure on school managers and caused a paradigm shift that has acknowledged the contribution of other stakeholders in school leadership and decision-making in general (Woods, 2016). The teacher is recognised as one important leader and stakeholder in the school. Such recognition is a characteristic of the concept of distributed leadership (Moonsamy, 2010). A distributive leadership approach is a shared process which involves working with all stakeholders in a collegial and creative manner. In this way, the untapped leadership potential of people may be sought out and developed in a supportive environment for the betterment of the school (Grant, 2008). This creates the opportunity for teacher leadership to emerge.

To Sinha and Hanuscin (2017), teacher leadership is the ability of teachers to recognise both formal and informal leadership, to take up and act upon any opportunity to lead, and to believe in themselves as leaders. One of the areas in which teachers apply their leadership is to the curriculum, curriculum delivery being their core business. Apart from curriculum delivery, teachers who initiate and sustain school development projects are also regarded as teacher leaders (Frost, 2012). Such teachers enhance their own and colleagues' professional learning. Teachers also maintain intense enthusiasm and a strong sense of moral purpose in social relationships within the classroom, to improve the quality of learning. Teacher leadership is enacted in a variety of forms, including leadership in curriculum activities.

In recognition of the importance of teacher leadership which encompasses the role of teachers as curriculum leaders, the governments of many countries have legislated a teacher leadership role. In the Republic of Macedonia, the horizontal and decentralised governance system created the formal structural conditions for full teacher participation in managing and running schools (Petrovska & Sivevska, 2014). In the United States of America, the Education Department created the position of instructional coaches, in which

experienced teachers are used within schools to serve as mentors to other teachers (Smith, Hayes, & Lyons, 2017). In Hong Kong, curriculum development teams are formed within schools and run by fellow teachers who assist colleagues in instructional development (Law, Galton, & Wan, 2010). In the Republic of South Africa, the national Task Team on education management development (DoE, 1996a) implicitly supported the notion of teacher leadership for the new educational system established after 1994. In the Task Team's report, the team argues for self-management of schools, which is accompanied by internal devolution of power (Moloi, 2007; Grant, 2006). Policies such as the Norms and Standards for Educators (DoE, 2000) also challenge teachers to take up leadership roles in school. For example, role number 3 requires teachers to be leaders, administrators, and managers. As leaders, they are required to participate in schools' decision-making processes.

There has been a paradigm shift from recognising the principal as the sole leader in school, to recognising everyone in school with leadership potential in education leadership. This offers the possibility of and opens the space for teacher participation in leadership, and particularly leadership in curriculum matters. One of the important areas that research (Handler, 2010; Law et al., 2010; Carl, 2012; Alsubaie, 2016; Smith et al., 2017) suggests that teachers should be involved in, is in leading the curriculum. Teachers are most knowledgeable about the practice of teaching (Alsubaie, 2016). Thus, recognising (acknowledging their conceptions and beliefs) teachers as curriculum leaders can empower and motivate them (Taole, 2013) to become more committed, to take ownership of curriculum matters, and to allow the school to tap into their expertise for the improvement of quality of education (Obi, 2018). To fully tap into the expertise of teachers in curriculum delivery, school managers have to create opportunities for teachers to lead. Teachers' contribution in curriculum matters means that they would not struggle to understand issues of the curriculum before implementing them (Alsubaie, 2016). The more exposed teachers are to curriculum matters, the more innovative they may become as they improvise and become more creative in overcoming the emerging challenges (Xiong & Lim, 2015). As a result of being involved in curriculum leadership, teachers may understand better what is expected of them. The more teachers understand their role as curriculum leaders, the more they may want to undertake associated responsibilities. Such understanding is likely to result in effective teaching and learning (McNeill, Katsh-Singer, Gonzalez-Howard & Loper, 2016) and better educational quality. Conversely, Phillips, Ingrole, Burris and Tabulda (2017) warn that, when school managers and other education stakeholders fail to recognise and encourage teachers' contributions, and when teachers do not understand their role as

curriculum leaders, curriculum alignment is negatively affected, as is the quality of education.

Despite the existence of democracy in South Africa since 1994, education policies on devolution of power to schools and advocacies for tapping into leadership potentials at any level where these exist (South African Schools Acts 1996; The Task Team Report 1996 and Norms and Standards for Educators 2000), top-down practices of leadership still dominate the education sphere (Fani, 2015; Molapo & Pillay, 2018). The questioning abilities of National Senior Certificate (NSC) holders (Schoer, Ntuli, Rankin, Sebastiao, & Hunt, 2010; Modisaotsile, 2012) and South Africa's poor performances in international competitions (Spaull, 2013), point fingers to a missing piece in the puzzle of the quality of education in the country. That is, teachers' contribution in leading curriculum matters.

The teachers' role as curriculum leaders is yet to be exploited as a possible contributing factor for the enhancement of education quality. Hence, in this study, I set out to explore teachers' understanding and experiences of their role as curriculum leaders in South African secondary schools. I will also investigate how school managers create opportunities for teachers to enact their role as curriculum leaders.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

The quality of education in South Africa is supposedly of the best, or at least comparable with those of other countries in the Southern African region and sub-Saharan Africa (Kiregyera, 2010). Unfortunately, this is not the case, causing Bloch (2009) to declare schooling in South Africa a national disaster. Mouton, Louw and Strydom (2013) report that the South African school system is riddled with adversities such as poorly performing teachers, poor work ethics, lack of community and parental support, poor control of educational authorities, poor support for teachers, and very low levels of accountability. These adversities culminate in low learner morale, displayed through indiscipline, brutal violence, low moral values, absenteeism, late-coming, truancy, a high dropout rate, and poor performance in essential subjects (Mouton et al., 2013).

Researchers have also expressed concerns about the abilities of National Senior Certificate (NSC) holders (Schoer, Ntuli, Rankin, Sebastiao, & Hunt, 2010 & 2011; Modisaotsile, 2012). Amidst the growing concerns and the many challenges impacting negatively on the quality of education in South Africa, in 2013, the DBE (2013) rated its NSC examination passes at

40% and 30% in some subjects. On the other hand, Wedekind's (2013) discussion paper reveals that pass marks between 30% and 40%, as with South Africa's NSC pass marks, are not unusual. However, Wedekind (2013), cautions that contextual and systemic issues need to be understood in relation to the structure of a curriculum, the number of subjects taken, the rules of subject combinations, and many other factors. This notwithstanding, The Ministerial Task Team Report of 2014 recommended a raise in the overall minimum pass requirements for each level of pass above the basic NSC (DBE, 2014).

Gumede and Biyase (2016) stated that, since the onset of democracy in South Africa in 1994, the country's fragmented post-apartheid education system has received attention on aspects ranging from school access, teacher deployment, financial resources, governance, curriculum reforms, to implementation of new ways of delivering the curriculum. Nonetheless, the country continues to face challenges in its education quality, recording poor results in international assessments. This is evident in its students' performances in such assessments as Trends in Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) in 1995, 1999, 2002 and 2011; Progress in International Reading and Literacy Study (PIRLS) Grade 8, in 2011 (Spaull, 2013); and the Southern African Consortium for the Measurement of Education Quality − SACMEQ (Moloi & Chetty, 2012).

The Department of Education (DoE) continues its efforts to improve the quality of education in the country. These, among many others, include (i) curriculum changes (Chisholm, Volmink, Ndhlovu,Potenza, Mahomed, Muller & Mphahlele, 2005; Bantwini, 2010), (ii) improvement in school leadership, by the implementation of the advanced certificate in education leadership (ACE) to improve principals' leadership skills (Bush, Kiggundu & Moorosi, 2011); and the introduction of the school feeding scheme in 1994. This feeding scheme has been rolled out in most rural areas to improve learner concentration and learning outcomes (Muvhango, 2016). However, the concept of teachers as curriculum leaders in schools, specifically teachers' experiences and understanding of their role as curriculum leaders, has not been exploited as a possible contributing factor to improving the quality of education in the country. This is the gap in literature that this study sets out to fill. In order to fill this gap, I asked the following questions: 1) What are teachers' understanding of their role as curriculum leaders?; 2) What do teachers perceive to be their role as curriculum leaders?; 3) How do teachers enact their role as curriculum leaders?; and 4) How do school managers create opportunities for teachers to perform their role in leading the curriculum implementation in schools?

Teachers' understanding of their role as curriculum leaders is, for several reasons, of paramount importance. My assumption in this study is that it is only through a deep understanding of their role, that teachers can assume full ownership, responsibility, and commitment to leading the curriculum and improving educational quality. Al-Mahdy et al. (2018) emphasise that proper understanding of their role as curriculum leaders contributes to enactive mastery of their art. Enactive mastery provides an individual with evidence of success, and heightens efficacy belief and commitment (Phillips et al., 2017). In addition, with good understanding, comes inquisitiveness and innovation of better strategies for achieving set goals. According to Good, Barocas, Chavez-Moreno, Feldman and Canela (2017), proper understanding creates a connection between goals and designs, and the actual lived challenges of implementation.

The present study is a recognition of teachers' contribution as curriculum leaders towards the improvement of educational quality in South Africa. Recognition of this important contribution will motivate teachers to become more aware of their role. Teachers will seek to learn what they do not know, to improve on what they already know, and to strive to perform this role better, for the improvement of educational quality (Phillips et al., 2017). Put differently, the study will enable teachers to reflect on how well they understand and practise their role; and school managers to reflect on how well they create opportunities for teachers to perform their role.

Teacher exclusion from curriculum decision-making, particularly at the national level, is a non-recognition of teachers' role as curriculum leaders. DoE excludes teachers in curriculum decision-making by allowing only Teachers' Union representatives instead of all teachers at curriculum decision-making tables (De Clercq, 2013; Mafisa, 2017). It is only through knowing how teachers experience and understand their role as curriculum leaders, that their contribution (through meaningful involvement in decision-making) to augmenting the quality of education can be maximised.

1.4 Rationale of the study

I have always contemplated curriculum-related matters, such as its conception, design, development, implementation, management, and leadership. I have also been intrigued by the multiple curriculum-related tasks teachers perform in the multifaceted contexts of schools, to contribute to learner outcomes and whole-school improvement. These tasks

leave me wondering how teachers experience and understand their contribution as curriculum leaders, in ensuring quality education.

From my experience as an actor in the classroom theatre from 1997 to 2016, and as a head of department (HoD) for the last three years, I have observed that teachers perform informal tasks such as self- and peer evaluation; they induct novice teachers, mentor student teachers, and support colleagues within and across schools (Hlatywayo, 2010; Moonsamy, 2010). Other formal tasks include lesson planning and teaching, leading in professional-development training sessions, setting examination papers, moderating examinations, playing the role of external marker at circuit, district, and national levels, preparing students for extra-curricular and co-curricular activities − professional responsibilities, or those representing the school at different levels of decision-making (Obi, 2018).

Teachers have been mandated, legislations put in place, and teachers challenged to take up a leadership role in schools, yet teachers are mostly only regarded as curriculum implementers. It is therefore of interest and concern to know how teachers experience leading in the core aspect of schooling – the curriculum. Furthermore, over the last five years of my experience as a teacher, I have realised that teachers frequently question DoE policies, asking why teachers' opinions are not sought before certain education policies are formulated. Teachers' constant grumblings awoke my interest in discovering how teachers experience and understand their role as curriculum leaders. In addition, my interest in teachers' experiences as curriculum leaders in school arises from Grant's (2017) statement, that literature on teacher leadership in the South African context is sparse.

According to Nevenglosky (2018), knowledge on teachers' understanding of their role as curriculum leaders may provide insights into whether curriculum implementation will meet with success or failure. Research by Algers and Silva-Fletcher (2015), and McNeill et al. (2016) indicates significant influence of teachers' beliefs on their decisions for instruction. Such pivotal indicators of teachers' beliefs warrant an investigation into teachers' concerns, expectations, values, and perceptions of their role as curriculum leaders. Teachers' esoteric knowledge can inform the planning of professional development activities for teacher efficacy. I also deemed it necessary to explore teachers' experiences and understanding as curriculum leaders, because such involvement should be driven by insight into the ultimate purpose of these activities (student learning). Knowledge of teachers' experiences as curriculum leaders is also important because it indicates whether teacher engagement is self-initiated (because they understand it is their responsibility, and that it contributes to

improving educational quality) or whether their engagement is in accomplishing delegated tasks from the school authority. When teachers have a good understanding of their expected roles as curriculum leaders, this will enable them to improve their engagement in activities expected of them. Better engagement may result in effective teaching and learning, and better educational quality. Conversely, when teachers do not understand and correctly experience their role as curriculum leaders, they cannot enact this role as expected of them.

On the academic level, Handler, Carl, and Alsubaie (2010, 2012 & 2016, respectively), propose that teachers need to shift from the traditional role of curriculum users, to a new role of curriculum leaders. To make such a huge move from their supposed comfort zone, it is important for teachers to understand their expected leadership role in curriculum matters. A study by Grant, Gardner, Kajee, Moodley and Somaroo (2010) reveals that the teachers in Kwazulu-Natal who participated in the study had, in general, only limited understanding of what teacher leadership means. This finding reflects a need to further investigate teachers' understanding of their curriculum leadership role.

1.5 Brief literature review

I conducted an extensive literature search and gained good understanding of relevant concepts of the study such as the curriculum, curriculum development, implementation, implementation challenges and curriculum reforms. I also interrogated literature on teacher leadership, which provided the appropriate theoretical framework for the present study. Furthermore, I perused literature on teachers' understanding of their role as curriculum leaders, how teachers exercise their role as curriculum leaders, how school managers create opportunities for teachers to lead curriculum matters in school, school leadership and leadership theories relevant to this study. I conclude this brief literature review section with a summary of Grant's (2012) Model of Teacher leadership, the theoretical framework for this study.

My study was hinged on Grant's (2012) model of teacher leadership (hereafter Grant's [2012] Model). Grant (2012) formulated four zones in which teachers, as leaders, operate, by adapting Devaney's (1987) six roles. Grant used this new model as a tool for analysing data for her study on teacher leadership in South Africa (Grant, 2006). This model describes teacher leadership as practised in the form of various roles in different zones or places. By 2012, Grant had improved upon her model by adding indicators of each role. I investigated

the role of teachers as curriculum leaders (the focus of the present study) in all four zones of the model.

The following paragraphs summarise Grant's (2012) model. In Zone One, within the boundaries of the classroom, teachers lead as they continue to teach and improve on their teaching. Zone Two is found outside the classroom but within the school, when teachers interact with students and fellow teachers in curricular and co-curricular activities. Zone Three is whole-school development: teachers, as curriculum leaders, take part in evaluating school practices for possible improvement of emphasis on grey areas. Teachers also take part in school decision-making processes, including the SBCD. In Zone Four, the teachers' role as curriculum leader occurs between schools, within the cluster, circuit, district, provincial, and even at national levels on curriculum development aspects, as well as in the community, in building partnerships of learning communities. My study looks at teacher curriculum-leading activities in all four zones.

As a prerequisite for teachers to engage in these roles, school contexts must be transformative to bring about change. Distributed leadership, collaboration, and values associated with collaborative work must exist. School managers must practise distributed leadership by creating participatory structures in schools (Ho, 2010) to allow teachers to step forward and unleash their potential as curriculum leaders. A collaborative culture must reign where there is interdependency (Spillane, 2006 & Bush, 2013). Teachers tap into the expertise of one another when they engage in curriculum-leading activities, such as peer coaching, peer observation, and professional-learning community discussions for the common goal of improving education quality through better teaching and learning practices. Teachers will collaborate when the associated values of trust, respect, and support exist (Emira, 2010; Hadebe, 2013; Angelle & Teague, 2014). In the present study, these values for collaboration impact on teachers' curriculum-leading activities such as lesson planning, identification of learner and teacher strengths and weaknesses, in order jointly to adopt strategies for improvement.

I deemed Grant's (2012) model a suitable analytical tool for my study aimed at exploring secondary school teachers' experiences and understanding of their role as curriculum leaders for the improvement of the quality of education. This was based on my argument, that any teacher leadership activity with a bearing on the curriculum (decision-making, planning, developing, implementing, or assessing) within any of the zones, that enhances

teacher content knowledge, pedagogic knowledge or teaching practices, and student learning, is leading the curriculum. Teacher enactment of their role as curriculum leaders therefore should occur when teachers engage in any curriculum-related activities within any zone of the model. Put differently, in my data generation and analysis I studied the ways in which teachers play their role as curriculum leaders within and outside the classroom of the school; and how they play such a role beyond the school. Further, in looking at the opportunities created by management, in the study, I intended to understand at which zones these opportunities are created for teachers to lead the curriculum.

1.6 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore teachers' experiences and understanding of their role as curriculum leaders in South African secondary schools. This study specifically aimed at:

- Exploring teachers' understanding of their role as curriculum leaders
- Determining teachers' perceptions of their role as curriculum leaders
- Establishing ways in which teachers execute their role as curriculum leaders
- Examining ways in which school managers create opportunities for teachers to lead in curriculum matters
- Proposing a model of teacher inclusion in curriculum decision-making.

To attain the main purpose, the study focused on what teachers perceive to be their role as curriculum leaders; how they enact such a role, and how school managers create leadership opportunities for teachers to lead in the curriculum.

1.7 Main Research Question

What are teachers' experiences and understanding of their role as curriculum leaders in South African secondary schools?

1. 7.1 Subsidiary questions

- What are teachers' understanding of their role as curriculum leaders in schools?
- What do teachers perceive to be their role as curriculum leaders in secondary schools?
- How do teachers execute their role as curriculum leaders in secondary schools?

- How do school managers create opportunities for teacher leadership in curriculum matters?

1.8 Research Methodology

In this study, I used the interpretivist paradigm. An interpretivist paradigm is anti-positivist; researchers believe that reality is multi-faceted and subjective, being viewed differently by different individuals (Cohen, Manion & Marrison, 2013). Through the qualitative approach, I carried out this multiple-site case-study design research.

Deploying the non-probability sampling method, I purposefully selected twenty-four "information-rich" participants (McMillan, 2012) from four secondary schools of the Soutpansberg East circuit, within the Vhembe West district of the Limpopo Province of South Africa.

I used various data-collection instruments to obtain the qualitative data for this study. A face-to-face semi-structured individual interview schedule employed pre-determined questions; a focus-group discussion schedule with leading questions allowed further probing; and observation guides directed data-collection focus during lessons and curriculum meetings I observed. I thematically analysed the data, based on Grant's (2012) model of teacher leadership .

I present a detailed discussion of the methodology used in this research in Chapter 4 of the study.

1.9 Significance of the Study

This study has generated knowledge of how teachers experience and understand their role as curriculum leaders, adding to literature on teacher leadership. The study has also highlighted the support that school managers (principals) give to teachers in terms of curriculum-leading opportunities. The involvement of teachers in this study will create an opportunity for teachers to reflect on their role as curriculum leaders. The study generated information from which I made recommendations to policy and practical improvement on the role that teachers play as curriculum leaders. The study theorised the role of teachers as curriculum leaders. Furthermore, the study proposes a model that describes effective ways in which teachers can play the role of curriculum leaders.

1.10 Clarification of concepts

In this study, I used the terms leadership, curriculum, teacher leadership, and curriculum leaders, according to the definitions below.

1.10.1 Leadership

To Grint, Jones and Holt (2017) leadership is innovation − constructing a novel strategy in an existing situation, based on who the leader is, what they want to achieve, where they operate (position), why they lead, and how they achieve their aims − this makes them leaders. Such a process requires various people to fill different roles.

Kruse (2013) considers leadership a process of social influence that makes full use of others' efforts to attain set goals. Leadership, in this study, is a process of teachers initiating a move or action, setting goals in leading curriculum activities, influencing, motivating, and interacting with others to achieve these goals for positive change.

1.10.2 Curriculum

Hoadley and Jansen (2012) consider a curriculum as all that is planned, taught, and learnt. It comprises teaching practice, sociocultural and political aspects of educational content decisions (Ylimaki, 2012).

In this study, the word curriculum implies every planned, documented, or unplanned learning activity both in and out of the classroom of the school, and beyond the school. The curriculum embraces any activity that contributes to impacting and acquiring knowledge, skills, and attitude. It will therefore take into consideration decision-making and actions on the four (4) core elements of the curriculum. These elements are teaching, learning, assessment, and resources used for teaching and learning.

1.10.3 Teacher leadership

Grant (2010) defines teacher leadership as the awareness of all classroom-based teachers in taking up informal leadership roles within and beyond the classroom, working in collaboration, mutual respect, and trust with other stakeholders towards the common goal of the school. Teacher leadership embodies individual teacher development, collaboration, and organisational development as the main focal areas of practising teachers (Taylor, Goeke, Klein, Onore & Geist, 2011).

In this study, teacher leadership implies teachers taking initiatives to improve upon themselves, their learners, and colleagues, within and across schools, school communities, and beyond.

1.10.4 Curriculum leaders

Curriculum leaders, according to Jorgensen (2015), are those who assume responsibility for the whole curriculum or for a curriculum area like Mathematics. Niesche and Jorgensen (2013) explain that curriculum leaders are those who take into consideration the social context of the school in their approach to interpreting and enacting the curriculum. These leaders have vision, a set direction, and use site data to inform action on curriculum matters. For Ylimaki (2012), and Shields (2017), curriculum leaders are those who bring in knowledge of educational leadership, curriculum studies, and a desired image of the society for which students are being prepared.

In this study, curriculum leaders are those teachers who collaborate with other education stakeholders within and beyond the school, tapping into one another's expertise in using site data to improve their practice and learners' knowledge gain.

1.11 Outline of thesis

This thesis consists of seven chapters. The present chapter focuses on the background and orientation of the study, as well as an overview of subsequent chapters. In Chapter Two, the focus is on the literature of the current discourse in the field of teachers as curriculum leaders. Chapter Three dwells on the theoretical framework used to frame the study. The framework also enabled me to position the research findings within the existing body of knowledge related to teachers as curriculum leaders. Chapter Four focuses on the research design and methodology I used in this study. In Chapter Five, I present the empirical findings of the study. In Chapter Six, I discuss the research findings and the new knowledge emerging from the study. In Chapter Seven, I present a summary of findings, drawing a conclusion, and making recommendations for policy, practice, and further research on teachers as curriculum leaders.

1.12 Summary

In this chapter I provide the background and locate the study within the available literature on teachers as curriculum leaders. I also present the research problem, identifying the gap in literature related to the search for quality education (teachers' experiences and understanding of their role as curriculum leaders). In addition, I discuss the study purpose,

the theoretical framework and the methodology adopted for the study. Finally, I present the study outline and a summary of the chapter. In the next chapter I discuss local and global issues associated with teachers as curriculum leaders, including understanding or conceptualisation of curriculum, leadership, teacher leadership, roles of teachers, and opportunities for teachers in leading the curriculum.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF LITERATURE ON TEACHERS AS CURRICULUM LEADERS

2.1 Introduction

In Chapter One, I presented the background to the study, the problem, rationale, objectives, and research questions guiding the study, the methodology and the study outline. In this chapter, I discuss existing literature as it relates to the concept of teachers as curriculum leaders. This review is also informed by the fact that my study is situated within the broader concept of teacher leadership. In this chapter I also discuss what research has documented of related aspects on teachers as curriculum leaders. Such includes curriculum, curriculum leaders, teachers' roles, leadership, teacher leadership, and opportunities for teachers as curriculum leaders. I now begin by conceptualising the curriculum.

2.2 Conceptualising the term curriculum

In this section of the study, I defined curriculum, and discussed the various types of curriculum, curriculum development, implementation, and implementation challenges. Clarifying the term curriculum and its related components in this study rests on its pivotal position in the working lives of teachers. Whatever teachers engage in, whether formal or informal, within or beyond the school, is leading the curriculum. The word curriculum originates from the Latin word 'currere' meaning 'to run'; it symbolises a path or track to follow to reach a goal (Patanker & Jadhav, 2013). Today's conflicting definition of the term curriculum depends on the user's philosophy and the relationship they have with school and society (Du Preez & Simmonds, 2014). In explaining the concept of curriculum, Amanchukwu, Stanley and Ololube, (2015); Glatthorn et al., (2015), concur with (Du Preez & Simmonds, 2014) that defining the concept of curriculum is difficult and challenging, as the term has been used with differing meanings for decades. Glatthorn et al. (2015) consider the curriculum as a documented set of plans on several levels, put into practise in school to guide student learning and experience which are observed and recorded. Jacobs, Vakalisa and Gawe (2011) emphasise that experiences are an inseparable part of the curriculum. This notion of curriculum as experiences is shared by Ahmadi and Lukman (2015), expressed as the curriculum being all about experiences required of a child for all-round development. To Booyse and Du Plesis (2014), a curriculum is planned and guided learning with specific outcomes to achieve. Salim (2011) and Sweeney (2012) describe the

curriculum as what is taught, and how it is taught. However, Salim (2011) also criticises this view, seeing the curriculum in this light as a political stance. Apart from considering academic subjects in the definition of curriculum, Taneja (2012) and Ahmadi and Lukman (2015) postulate that the whole life at school forms the curriculum. The experiences learners encounter from the array of formal and informal activities, and interactions between learners and teachers within the school that contribute to moulding a balanced personality, is the curriculum (Taneja, 2012). In addition, Patanker and Jadhav (2013) refer to the planned experiences as the interaction of learners with course content resources and processes for evaluating how educational objectives are achieved. Simmonds (2017) takes a step away from the definitions above. In her quest for gender equity, curriculum, to her, is a site of racial, theological, gender, and political dispute, to educate for social change.

Despite the variety of perspectives, the concepts of organised, documented, planned, and unplanned learning and experiences with both specific and non-specific goals are dominant in the above definitions. I contend that an understanding of what curriculum is impacts on leading its activities. In this study, curriculum means all knowledge that learners acquire at school, whether formal or informal, planned, or unplanned, in the classroom and beyond, from their peers or teachers.

2.2.1 Types of curriculum

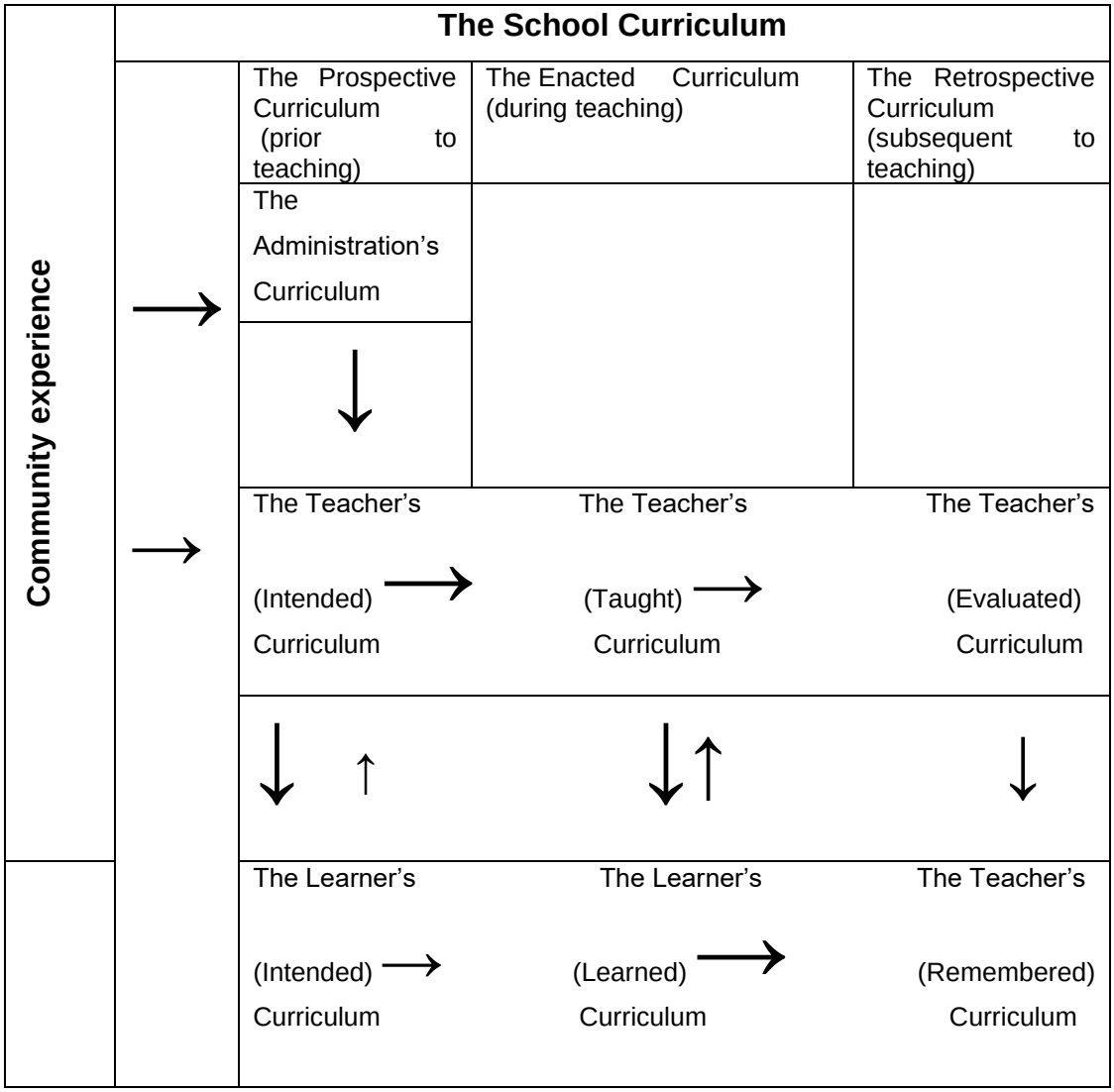
There is a panoply of curriculum types. Each type depicts its purpose. Young (2014) explains that curricula are designed for different purposes and vary in the extent to which they pre-suppose that learners vary in their capabilities. Curriculum types include formal curriculum, hidden curriculum, informal curriculum, latent curriculum (inexplicit/repressed), societal or social curriculum, electronic curriculum, null curriculum (things not taught directly), received curriculum, rhetorical curriculum, and internal curriculum. For the purpose of this study, I discussed further the curriculum types in which teacher curriculum-leading activities are performed. These are: formal curriculum, hidden curriculum, and informal curriculum. For the purpose of this study, is it important to discuss some types of curriculum, teachers being indispensable to the realisation of each type of curriculum. These types of curriculum discussed below are interconnected. This information speaks to the present study in that it depicts what teachers experience in their daily working lives.

2.2.1.1 Formal curriculum

The formal curriculum, with other appellations such as overt /written /intentional /explicit /in use (Jacobs et al., 2011), is the stated curriculum. It is the curriculum with specified expected content to be learned in a course or grade. Such a conception of curriculum portrays it as a policy artefact for classroom implementation (Du Preez & Simmonds, 2014). Resources such as official documents, physical facilities, textbooks, films, and other teaching and learning materials, are part of a formal curriculum. When put into use, these resources improve the teaching and learning processes for the attainment of set curriculum goals (Davis, 2014; Alvior, 2014). Teachers as curriculum leaders are the architects in sourcing these support materials based on curriculum goals. Barton, Garvis, and Ryan (2014) explain that 'a one size fits all' choice of resources cannot be effective in obtaining the various segments that make up desired goals. This opens opportunities in which teachers are accorded a voice, based on their expertise as curriculum leaders, to contribute to the choice of material. In school settings, the formal curriculum is supposed to be the supported, taught, learned, and assessed curriculum, although this is less often the case.

The formal curriculum is further divided into parts (Morris & Adamson, 2010; Alvior, 2014). Alvior (2014) refers to these parts as the school curriculum types. These include recommended curriculum (usually as from the Department of Education), intended (prospective) curriculum, as represented in a teacher's lesson plan, taught (enacted), supported curriculum (all instructional materials such as textbooks, playgrounds, audio and visual materials that help teachers during implementation of planned lesson), learned curriculum (what learners have actually learned), assessed curriculum (quizzes, tests, examinations set to evaluate learning outcomes), and hidden curriculum (unplanned learning and experiences). Tripp (1994) gives a diagrammatic representation of some classroom implications, as shown in Figure 2.1

Figure 2.1: The school curriculum



Key

→ Major transformations

→
→ Degrees of influence
→

Source: (Tripp, 1994)

In summary, it is almost impossible for the stated curriculum to be realised exactly as it is meant to be at the point of learners' outcomes. There are bound to be changes, because

teachers will plan lessons according to learners' capabilities and school context. During lesson delivery, teachers, as curriculum leaders, apply their expertise, and may alter a planned lesson if learners do not interact or respond as the teacher has anticipated. This may result in some differences between the teacher's intended and enacted lesson. There may also be differences between objectives of a given lesson, and what learners have learnt. When assessed, learners will respond based on what they can remember from what they have previously learnt. In the light of this study, these dynamics between formal curriculum and learning outcomes reflect teachers' daily experiences in Zone One (the classroom) of the various zones in which teachers perform their role as curriculum leaders.

2.2.1.2 Informal curriculum

This curriculum type, also referred to as unscripted curriculum, is not written down, yet influences what is taught. Khan (2013) defines informal curriculum as the interpersonal interactions between teachers and learners that have a significant influence on learners. The informal curriculum is an unscripted form of teaching and learning among and between learners and teachers through highly interpersonal interactions. Kahn's notion of informal curriculum aligns with the aspect of informal experiences and interpersonal interactions between learners and teachers, and among learners, expressed in Taneja's (2012) curriculum definition in 2.2 above. These informal experiences and interactions, Taneja (2012) emphasised, are indispensable to the holistic formation of an individual. A discussion of the informal curriculum is relevant to this study because it mirrors actual happenings in the school environment.

2.2.1.3 Hidden curriculum

MacLeod (2014) explains that in the early 1960s education scholars drew attention to usually undermined practices that occur in institutions of learning; and in 1994 Hafferty and Franks introduced the concept to the medical field. This type of curriculum has been referred to as covert, unplanned, implicit, and in some cases, the unintended curriculum. Hyndman, Telford, Finch and Benson (2012) allude to a hidden curriculum as the unwritten, unofficial, unintended values, lessons, and perspectives that students learn. A hidden curriculum, according to Gaufberg, Batalden, Sands, and Bell (2010), refers to learning by means of informal interactions among students, teachers, and others; learning that occurs as a result of the organisational, cultural, and structural influences of an institution. The hidden curriculum speaks to this study of teachers as role models to learners. Teachers as

curriculum leaders uphold and enforce the beliefs, values, norms, and ideologies that make up the culture of a given school. For example, teachers' adherence to values of academic excellence, punctuality to lessons, being collaborative, and forging a spirit of interdependence influences learners and others around them to emulate such.

2.3 Curriculum development

A discussion of curriculum development in this study is vital. The role of teachers as curriculum leaders falls within the realms of the curriculum-development process (Nunalall, 2012). As curriculum leaders, when teachers participate at the various stages of developing the curriculum, teachers feel valued; they are intrinsically motivated; they claim ownership, and their commitment increases towards achieving set goals (Alsubaie, 2016). My assumption is that the teachers' role as curriculum leaders should be performed during the various stages of the curriculum-development process, at every level of the formal curriculum (national, provincial, district, school and classroom), and at each developmental stage on each level. Curriculum development presupposes change, as there are various approaches employed in developing a curriculum (Du Preez & Simmonds, 2014). Jacobs et al. (2011) describe curriculum development as involving a consultation on government's curriculum statements, definition of objectives, seeking information about topics in the curriculum, and decisions on appropriate teaching and assessment strategies. Curriculum development is also considered the process of creating a planned syllabus, and teaching, training, and exhibition modes (Patanker & Jadhav, 2013). As an approach, Du Preez and Simmonds (2014) indicate that curriculum development poses questions on the elements and steps of curriculum planning. Curriculum development, according to Stenhouse (2012), is a social process in which teachers consider contextual factors when developing a curriculum. In line with this school of thought, Patanker and Jadhav (2013) aver that the process changes according to the needs of society and the stakeholders in the education system. Put differently, the process is time- and place-sensitive.

The curriculum-development process is cyclical, and includes design, implementation, assessment, and evaluation (Patanker & Jadhav, 2013; Booyse & Du Plesis, 2014). The design stage involves the creation of a new curriculum, and the re-planning of an existing one after evaluation Carl (2012). An innovation process may also be embarked upon after evaluation. Tytler, Symington, and Smith (2010) explain innovation as a type of thinking and transformation of ideas into value-creating outcomes, thereby responding more effectively to demands of changing circumstances. At the implementation phase teachers, learners,

parents, and other stakeholders are first oriented and prepared (dissemination) for its enactment (Carl, 2012). During evaluation, the outcomes (success and effectiveness, and learner effectiveness) are checked against the intended aims and objectives in the design stage (Carl, 2012).

Because curriculum development is a dynamic process that changes according to the needs of society, and the stakeholders of the education system (Kandiko & Blackmore, 2012; Patanker & Jadhav, 2013), it follows that curriculum developers, according to Ahmadi and Lukman (2015), are a group of individuals representing the state, school authorities, parents, teachers, and learners who engage in the curriculum development processes of planning, designing, developing, implementing, evaluating, and revising at different levels. The strong involvement in decision-making during curriculum development of these grass-root sources, as Mulenga and Luangala (2015) refer to them, is essential. Such involvement enables curriculum developers to identify the knowledge, skills, and values relevant to learners of the curriculum. Lau (2001) sees this group of individuals as a strong network of heterogeneous components that represent the power distribution in society. Curriculum developers can be considered experts with field-specific knowledge in aspects such as concept formation, task construction, and activity sequencing (Ahl, Koljonen & Helenius, 2017).

In the context of this study, existing policies such as SASA (DoE, 1996b), and Norms and Standards for Educators (DoE, 2000) have legislated teacher involvement in decision-making and leading in matters of education. However, the mismatch between policy and praxis (Mokua, 2010; Zanele, 2016) consigns teacher involvement in curriculum development mostly to the classroom, and to some limited degree, the school. The importance of teacher involvement as curriculum developers cannot be overemphasised (Ahmadi & Lukman, 2015; Alsubaie, 2016). Teachers must be an integral part of the curriculum-development process for such a process to be effective; and for schools to be successful in meeting societal needs (Nunalall, 2012; Alsubaie, 2016). Teachers would not struggle to know and understand the curriculum were their ideas and opinions infused into the curriculum for development. In addition, teachers being at the most crucial (implementation) stage of the process, introduce the curriculum in the classroom, and are most knowledgeable about the practice of teaching (Alsubaie, 2016). Without teachers, no educational reform will be effective.

As professionals, teachers adapt to their learners, work with their colleagues, reflect on their practice, and further their competence over time (Ahl et al., 2017). In order to understand these activities as examples of the teacher role in curriculum leading, teachers must begin by contributing to curriculum-development activities. Lack of teacher understanding of these responsibilities as part of their curriculum-leading role, reduces teachers to mere users of tools of the trade, followers of laws and regulations, and adapters to guidelines (Ahl et al., 2017). The power of teachers' in-house expertise (knowledge, experience and competencies), rooted in their personal and professional connections to the school community, grounds them as excellent curriculum developers (Katz, 2015). A good understanding of their role as curriculum leaders boosts teachers' confidence, and encourages their engagement in curricular decision-making (Katz, 2015).

2.3.1 Curriculum implementation

The present study on teachers' role as curriculum leaders, and teacher leadership in curriculum matters shows the role as most evident during curriculum implementation. This necessitates a discussion in this study of the concept of curriculum implementation. Curriculum implementation, as a stage in the curriculum development process, refers to how teachers communicate or deliver a curriculum to learners. It involves the use of a variety of teaching and learning resources provided in a curriculum. Teachers explore differing strategies in the use of lesson plans, activities, and assessments proposed in the design during instructions and evaluation of what learners are supposed to achieve (Wiles & Bondi, 2014). Curriculum implementation, to Ahmadi and Lukman (2015), is the way in which teachers translate the planned or officially designed course of study into a syllabus, schemes of work, and lessons to be delivered to learners. In tandem with Ahmadi and Lukman's (2015) above definition, Asaaju (2015) considers curriculum implementation as the process of translating theory into practice. To Nevenglosky (2018), curriculum implementation involves the delivery of knowledge by use of appropriate resources and instructional practices. Causarano (2015) explains that effective curriculum implementation gels instructional practices to lesson objectives, to espouse learners' needs.

I deduce from the explanations of the scholars above that, if curriculum implementation involves knowledge transmitting, use of teaching and learning resources, and assessment, by implication, interactions among teachers, learners, and other education stakeholders geared towards achieving set curriculum objectives, are imperative. Such interactions will result in narrowing the existing gap between planned and learned curriculum (the product of

theory and practice). My contention is that ways must be sought to ensure that teacher beliefs, perceptions, values, and expectations (teacher understanding), and enactment of their role as curriculum leaders, are in consonance with scholarly expectations, (including teacher involvement in all stages of the curriculum development process). This is because research (Algers & Silva-Fletcher, 2015; McNeill et al., 2016) shows that their experiences and understanding impact on their instructional practices, with consequences to the quality of education (outcome of learner achievement as its evidence).

2.3.2 Overview of curriculum implementation challenges in the global context

A global overview of curriculum implementation challenges is relevant in this study because no country exists in isolation, nor can curricula of one country have nothing in common with those of other countries. Since countries borrow or emulate best practices from other countries during curriculum reforms, such a review may also inform strategies for overcoming curriculum implementation challenges in South Africa.

Teachers' attempts at implementing the curriculum in order to achieve set curriculum objectives never go free of challenges (Tan & Pedretti, 2010; Tuul et al., 2011; Olibie, 2013). An exploration of global curriculum implementation challenges, as gleaned from some selected countries, sheds light on certain challenges teachers experience in performing their role as curriculum leaders in secondary schools.

A curriculum is worth its salt if it addresses current and anticipated needs, problems, and aspirations of the learner and society (Godfrey-Kalio, Duruamaku-Dim & Kalio, 2015). Yet a curriculum remains a package if it is not effectively implemented, and intended objectives obtained (Mulenga, 2016). Globally, scholars have reported unsuccessful curriculum implementation for a myriad of reasons (Bekoe & Eshun, 2013; Salahuddin, Khan, & Rahman, 2013; Asaaju, 2015 & Nevenglosky, Cale, & Aguilar, 2019). These reasons hamper the role of teachers as curriculum leaders in the effective implementation of the curriculum. I attempted a representation of the various continents in my choice of countries, to allow a possibly broader glimpse of curriculum implementation challenges. The most recent (2015) results of The Program for International Student Assessments (PISA) guided my selection of developed countries. PISA is a worldwide study of 15-year- old students' scholastic performance in mathematics, science, and reading by the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in 70 countries. The top tier positions (one to ten) are dominated by countries from three continents. I took the best country of

each of these three continents (Singapore from Asia, Estonia from Europe, and Canada from North America) (“PISA 2015 Results Vol III,” n.d.). From the African continent, I decided to peruse literature from the east, west, and south of the continent (Kenya, Nigeria, and South Africa).

Canada

Emphasis on environmental education in Canada is compelling. However, implementation of environmental education in Canadian schools is in dissonance with policy expectations. Tan and Pedretti (2010) found that teachers in Ontario complain of an overcrowded curriculum, lack of resources, low priority of environmental education in schools, and a mismatch between environmental educators’ beliefs and practices. All these findings are replicated in a study by Spence, Wright and Castleden (2013), in Nova Scotia. Tan and Pedretti (2010) also report on complexities to access outdoor opportunities, and socio-political actions. Spence et al. (2013) aver that integrating environmental education into a classroom depends on teacher values. As with environmental education, the use of information and communication technology (ICT) by integrating educational robots in schools, met with a solid wall. Khanlari (2016) reveals an insufficient number of educational robots in schools, teachers’ inability to access adequate and relevant software, lack of time, and too much course material. Teachers feel incompetent in their technology skills to use robotics in their classes, complaining of inadequate technical and instructional support. These inadequacies erode any opportunities for teachers effectively to enact their role as curriculum leaders at the implementation stage of the curriculum.

Estonia

Although Estonia has a very good education system and topped the rest of the OECD countries in PISA 2015, curriculum implementation suffers challenges in some respects. Up to 1999, Estonian teachers were subjected to a rigid form of curriculum implementation (in which teachers lacked any freedom of thought and choice) prescribed by its national education system (Tuul, Ugaste & Mikser, 2011). Teachers, as curriculum leaders, need to be creative and innovative. However, these intuitions are also stifled by teachers within such inflexible education systems. From 1999, curriculum reforms gave teachers freedom and autonomy to make informed choices on their teaching strategies (Erss, 2018), although this came with a form of new insecurity − teachers complaining of uncertainty of curriculum demands. Tuul et al. (2011) report that teachers describe the new curriculum as rich in

shortness (highly summarised) and generality, with no definite guidelines to enable them to organise their work.

Furthermore, content and language-integrated learning (CLIL) was introduced to promote students' English-language proficiency (Dvorjaninova & Alas, 2018). Nevertheless, implementation of the CLIL teaching methodology had its impediments. Challenges ranged from English teachers' lack of subject-specific content knowledge, subject teachers' low English-language proficiency, lack of appropriate teaching materials, and reluctance among teachers to incorporate the CLIL into their own classroom.

In 2013, three institutions administered by the Estonian Ministry of Education and Research rolled out a six-year (2014-2020) ICT project to ensure that: (i) graduates at every level of education were provided with modern digital competences (ii) smart use was made of ICT in teaching, as learning and organisation of teaching enhances quality of education. Implementation of this curriculum endeavour was marred for many reasons, including a chaotic and inconsistent development of the Education Information System, an insufficient number of trained ICT specialists for the labour market, too many fragmented disorderly activities, the sustainability of the ICT project depending on the European Union for finances, irregular monitoring and development of the project, development of ICT competences in other subjects for teaching and learning being marginal on all levels of education. These challenges only bred negative experiences such as frustration, disappointment, and demotivation in teachers' endeavours to perform their role as curriculum leaders (Pedaste, Kori, Tõnisson, Palts, Altin, & Rantsus, 2017).

Similarly, vocational education training (VET) in the country has its own hurdles to overcome. Sirk, Liivik and Loogma (2016), in a qualitative study to analyse changes to the work of VET teachers and their professionalism, found that some of these changes negatively impact on curriculum implementation. Sirk et al. (2016) found weakened family support for learners (non-parental involvement), and a poor learner attitude, which negatively impacts on teacher motivation. Absence of teacher involvement at design and planning stages, and poor curriculum dissemination resulted in difficulties in understanding the implementation phase. Rekkor, Umarik and Loogma (2013) agree on finding limited teacher involvement during curriculum development processes. The researchers' study revealed five categories of teachers, from those who are described as enthusiastic innovators, to those who are bitterly disappointed. Teachers complain of curriculum content

overload, and limited time for dissemination. Such challenges encountered by Estonian teachers reduce teachers' role as curriculum leaders in schools to the barest minimum.

Singapore

Singapore's educational system places great emphasis on excellence in high-stake examinations (Silver, 2011; Lim & Pyvis, 2012). Lim and Pyvis (2012) explain that the value placed on excellence in high-stake examinations places the new educational framework of 'Teach Less, Learn More' and Innovation and Enterprise' in jeopardy. A study on the teaching of Singaporean history by Boon (2017) reveals curriculum implementation challenges caused by an assessment-driven curriculum. Boon (2017) also reports challenges of overloaded content, with limited time allocation (Lim & Pyvis, 2012), heavy teacher workload from frequent content, pedagogic, and assessment changes, teacher lack of content knowledge, and unfamiliarity with the newly introduced inquiry-based approach to teaching and learning, as well as the absence of regular professional development opportunities. Furthermore, the history curriculum implementation is hampered by student low priority of and lack of interest in the subject, and poor command of the English language.

I now turn to sub-Saharan Africa (SSA). Countries of this region, like most countries of the world, are striving to provide a human-capital base for their citizens to compete for jobs in an increasing globalised world. However, providing education of acceptable quality is of greater challenge than providing enough school places (Majgaard & Mingat, 2012). The complexities, urgency, and challenges in SSA are unique (Baghdady & Zaki, 2019). Many countries in SSA disregard factors that are catalysts for successful curriculum reforms (Bunmi & Taiwo, 2017). I decided to interrogate curriculum implementation challenges in Nigeria (a leading state in West Africa), Kenya (with the best education system in East Africa) and South Africa (the country under study).

Nigeria

In 2012, Bandele and Faremi undertook a quantitative study of 120 teachers and instructors of Technical and Vocational Education (TVE) in Ondo and Ekiti states of South West Nigeria. This study investigated the challenges hindering effective implementation of the TVE in that part of the country. Bandele and Faremi (2012) reveal that, although the bulk of teachers and instructors were professionals, there were no standard workshops for practical work, nor in-service training for teachers. Okarafor (2016) attests to the acute scarcity of infrastructure and facilities at all levels. Bandele and Faremi (2012) also report poor

conditions of service, outdated equipment, unstable government policy, and lack of related modern instructional materials which jeopardise the teachers' and instructors' efforts, leaving them with negative experiences as curriculum leaders.

Olibie (2013), Igbokwe, Mezieobi and Eke (2014) affirm that effective curriculum implementation in Nigerian schools is hindered by inadequate allocation of resources and funds for curricular and co-curricular activities, inadequate training on curriculum innovations, and incompetence. In addition to the poor funding indicated above, Nwangwa and Omotere (2013) also report insufficient training on new curriculum roles of school-management teams as curriculum-implementation challenges. This situation also renders SMTs impotent in assisting teachers. By implication, teacher support from school-based continuous professional development is hampered, with consequences on their role as curriculum leaders at the instructional stage. Nwakpa (2017) reveals non-involvement of teachers during other curriculum-development stages, unfavourable school environment, heavy academic load, and non-parental involvement as hurdles to effective curriculum implementation in Nigerian secondary schools.

Similarly, e-learning implementation in Nigerian secondary schools is egregious. Nwana (2016) reports acute shortage of e-learning materials such as computers, the Internet, email facilities, multimedia television, multimedia computers, and digital libraries. Most schools have only a few ordinary computers, scanners, printers, unutilised ready-made courseware, and unqualified teachers with no knowledge and skills in computer application. The concept of teachers as curriculum leaders is non-existent, given such a situation.

Kenya

Since the launch of Free Primary Education and Free Day Secondary Education in Kenya in 2003, the challenges to effectively implement the curriculum have been on the rise in most parts of the country (Orodho, Waweru, Ndichu & Nthinguri (2013). Studies by Orodho et al. (2013 & 2014) on strategies to cope with school-based challenges inhibiting effective curriculum implementation, reveals that these challenges stem from insufficient physical facilities and instructional resources (Ziganyu, 2010). Furthermore, Ziganyu (2010) reports under-staffing, and heavy teacher workload resulting from very large classes (high learner-teacher ratio) which confound teachers' efforts to effectively engage in instructional practices, their most influential level of the curriculum development process leading the implementation stage. Ziganyu (2010) also reveals problems of drug and substance abuse

preventing teaching and learning. Concerning the information and communication technology (ICT) curriculum, Mingaine (2013) remarks that the limited supply of qualified teachers is responsible for its ineffective implementation. In agreement, Amoku, Miheso and Ndeuthi (2015), attest that teachers are unable to develop their own technological skills and knowledge, and self-training in the use of ICT in their teaching. Tonui, Kerich and Koross (2016) emphasise that competencies in ICT must be developed among teachers, content developers, technical support specialists, and educational administrators. Tonui et al. (2016) also indicate unavailability of computers (19.5% available), and the lack of institutional commitment, together with lack of procedures for monitoring and evaluating teachers' use of ICT in curriculum implementation.

The technical vocational education and training (TVET) curriculum implementation in Kenya, as with other arms of the education sector, has its own shortfalls. Both the government and private (like the Catholic Community Colleges) arms of TVET centres have suffered similar challenges. Research findings report inadequate finance, and teacher inappropriate professional skills (Waihura, Kagema & Kimiti, 2016; Agufana, 2018), inadequate staff (Sang, Muthaa & Mbugua, 2012; Kigwilu, Akala & Wambua, 2016), inadequate facilities, resources, and materials (Sang et al., 2012 & Agufana, 2018), obsolete tools and materials (Sang et al., 2012), theory-dominant lessons (Waihura et al., 2016), negative societal perceptions of TVETs, negative learner attitude and lack of interest (Kigwilu et al., 2016 & Agufana, 2018), poor management, and poor government support (Kigwilu et al., 2016).

South Africa

An expected match between policy and praxis in curriculum reforms depends largely on the availability of resources (Lunenburg, 2011; Maharajh, Nkosi & Mkhize, 2016). In support of the importance of available resources to curriculum implementation, Taole (2015) comments that resources and support are pivotal to successful curriculum implementation. Locally, in South Africa, unsuccessful curriculum implementation is being attributed mainly to challenges with educational resources (human, material, and financial) (Van der Nest, 2012).

With regard to human resources, inadequate teacher training incapacitates teachers on effective curriculum implementation (Mokua, 2010; Monyane, & Selesho, 2012; Taole, 2015; Mahangi, Krog, Oluyemi & Nel, 2016), and leaves teachers lacking skills, such as being innovative in producing context-specific resources (Van der Nest, 2012; Badugela, 2012);

and in communicating the knowledge they possess to learners. In Blease and Condy's (2014) study on the teaching of writing in rural multi-grade classes in the Western Cape, the researchers noted that some teachers were unqualified (without required minimum qualification). Teachers lamented that their inability to effectively teach the learners writing skills rests on the fact that they have no knowledge of how to teach multi-grade classes. No such training existed in their pre-service education programme. Mahangi et al. (2016) also found that Grade R teachers in their study were not sufficiently knowledgeable in their practice. Limited teacher pedagogic content knowledge is an issue which Maharajh et al. (2016) and Mahangi et al. (2016) consider the greatest of human-resource challenges. As the saying goes, "you cannot give what you don't have" (Nwakpa, 2017). Teacher leadership in curriculum matters is almost impossible without sound training. Unqualified and poorly trained teachers will be void of agency. Such teachers will lack the courage to take plausible risks, or have the ability to improvise, be innovative, visionary, influential and proactive. Teachers' role as curriculum leaders will be limited to reading and explaining from textbooks. The problem of teacher shortage (Badugela, 2012) results in overcrowded classes (Taole, 2015), increased teacher workload (Mokua, 2010), which is worsened by having to teach subjects they are not trained in (Mandukwini, 2016). South Africa would do well to emulate the Pakistani strategy of public-private partnership. A quantitative study by Khalid, Javed, Nasir, and Afreen (2016) on 140 teachers from 14 schools in the Bhakkar district of Punjab-Pakistan reveals the role of public-private partnership in education. Most schools have a rich supply of human and material resources (well-qualified teachers, libraries, classrooms, playgrounds, laboratories, safety, and security).

Insufficient support for continuous professional development (CPD) is confirmed in several studies (Taole, 2013; Mahangi et al., 2016; Mandukwini, 2016). Teachers in Mosala's (2011) study on implementation challenges of NRCS mathematics in the Free State frowned on workshop facilitators from the DoE who have limited knowledge of the curriculum, and seemed confused with policy requirements. Similarly, senior phase teachers of the North West (Taole, 2015) complained of very few workshops or training sessions, with no follow-ups on the implementation of the NRCS. Support from school leadership equally leaves much to be desired. Taole's (2015) study reveals limited support from school leadership in terms of improving teachers' skills through CPD activities. External and internal support through CPD, whether formal or informal, assists teachers to better understand their role as curriculum leaders. Teachers' beliefs and perceptions of their role as curriculum leaders stem from shared knowledge, experiences, and collaboration with peers. Teachers tap into

this shared knowledge as they engage in reflective strategies to improve upon the teaching and learning process (Harris & Jones 2010; Pollara, 2012; Banegas, 2019).

Research shows that the absence of parental support negatively impacts on curriculum implementation (Badugela, 2012; Blease & Condy, 2014). Badugela (2012) reports minimal parental involvement in children's education, as a result of being ill-informed on curriculum. According to Blease and Condy (2014); Maharajh et al. (2016); and Mahangi et al. (2016), non-parental involvement in the South African context is aggravated by poverty and illiteracy.

Moreover, minimal teacher consultations make teachers view curriculum implementation policy as something imposed on them (Taole, 2013; Mandukwini, 2016). This top-down approach to curriculum innovation, with little or no teacher consultation (Mokua, 2010; Nunalall, 2012), inter alia, accounts for unsuccessful curriculum implementation. It is difficult to lead and influence others to come on board a concept or ideology one did not participate in formulating.

In terms of material resources, insufficient resources such as teaching and learning materials, and infrastructure are equally of concern for successful curriculum implementation (Monyane & Selesho, 2012). Badugela (2012) and Mahangi et al. (2016) report that insufficient classrooms (few or dilapidated infrastructure) cause overcrowding, with negative impact on teacher-tailored resources. Maharajh et al. (2016) report textbook shortages and age-inappropriate literacy textbooks for Grade R in rural KwaZulu-Natal Province.

Cultural diversity negatively impacts on curriculum implementation in some cases (Blease & Condy (2014). Maharajh et al. (2016) and Mahangi et al. (2016) report use of more than two different languages, even sign language in Grade R in rural KwaZulu-Natal Province, because learners and teachers use different mother tongues.

A global interrogation of curriculum implementation challenges reveals common aspects such as top-down decision-making, curriculum-content overload, shortages of resources, teacher incompetence, limited support from education officials, and frequent curriculum changes. What stands out uniquely in the South African context, from the literature I reviewed, is the challenge to teachers teaching subjects in which they had no training, while the challenge of drug abuse is preeminent in the Kenyan and South African contexts. One

of the common challenges − top-down decision-making − has a particular bearing on this present study. It speaks to teacher exclusion from curriculum decision-making processes, which I believe contributes to the problem of poor-quality education in South Africa (Mokua, 2010; Taole, 2013; Zanele, 2016). I assume that recognising teachers as curriculum leaders by including them in curriculum decision-making processes may possibly impact on teacher ownership of the curriculum through increased motivation, commitment, and creativity (Katz, 2015; Alsubaie, 2016). A possible positive effect on effective teaching and learning, and eventual improvement in the quality of education may then result. A likely reason for top-down decision-making in curriculum matters persisting, may be a lack of confidence in teachers' ability to make appropriate curriculum decisions (Handler, 2010).

Ogar and Awhen (2015) contend that the quality of curriculum implementation of any society is the bedrock of its political, economic, scientific, and technological well-being. Challenges faced in the implementation of curricula in some countries may result in curriculum reforms. I now delve into curriculum reforms of those countries whose curriculum implementation challenges I have already discussed.

2.4 A Global Overview of Curriculum Reforms

Great changes are occurring worldwide, and educational systems must respond to these changes or become obsolete and irrelevant (Mbachu & Hamilton-Ekeke, 2013). A review of reforms in other countries is important, because of possible similarities in trends that can inform improvement in another context. This study resides in the domain of leading the curriculum. Curriculum reform (an arm of leading the curriculum) being under the umbrella of education reform, I begin this section by conceptualising education reform and curriculum reform. Next, I discuss a global overview of curriculum reforms, and how reforming the curriculum relates to teachers' experiences, as curriculum leaders.

Educational reform and curriculum change has been a global phenomenon for decades (Gou-Brennan, 2016). Curriculum is at the core of education. Curriculum cannot therefore be static if education must meet the aspirations of the people it serves. Naturally, curriculum must change to reflect shifting trends in education, training, and the labour market (European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training-CEDEFOD 2012).

Deng (2010) in International Encyclopaedia of Education defines educational reform as a transformational plan or movement for systemic change in educational theory and practice

at basic or higher levels of education in each community or society. To Marciniak (2015), educational reform implies making changes to a public-schooling system. Vasquez-Martinez, Giron, De-La-Luz-Arellano, and Ayon-Banuelos (2013), see educational reform in the light of social-production questions and state regulations. To these researchers, decisions and education policies put in place by the state to reform education, should be geared towards answering societal questions; the goal of education being development for social progress that will result in change and transformation of citizens. Sturges (2015), for his part, considers educational reform as a pragmatic activity of planned school change, rooted in political economic interest.

The commonality in these views of educational reform is the idea of change for improvement. (Vasquez-Martinez, et al. (2013) explain that the purpose of educational reform is to fulfil world-wide commitments on education. According to Provenzo (2008), the goal of educational reform is to realise deep, systemic, and sustained restructuring of public schooling, which Vasquez-Martinez et al. (2013) suggest could be achieved through changes in educational philosophy, student policy, pedagogy, organisation, and financing.
The numerous educational reforms occurring throughout the world impact on teachers' roles and functions, especially on their role as curriculum leaders.

Curriculum reform is described by Tan (2012), and Tan and Reyes (2016), as change in subjects and subject content to be learnt. Such reform embodies pedagogical changes, and changes in how these subjects are assessed. Curriculum reforms, according to Alabi and Okemakinde (2010), are a re-examination of the results, goals, and objectives of education. In a commentary on an Israeli study on why, what, and how a medical school should reform its curriculum, Reis (2018) advises that curricular reforms, such as educational reforms, should follow a clear vision, mission, and selected paradigm; and pay attention to stakeholders, context, culture, and politics. This is because any curriculum change that fails to heed such cautions will fail to serve the people it is meant to serve. For instance, teachers, as curriculum leaders, and one of the important stakeholders, must be able to adapt and implement the said change to learners in their immediate context.
Gleanings of local and international literature on curriculum reforms show that these changes have been on the agendas of many countries for decades (Jansen, 1999a; DoE, 2009, South Africa; Paulo & Tilya, 2014, Tanzania; Hongbiao, 2013, China; Pietarinen, Pyhältö, & Soini, 2017, Finland; Brookhart, 2013, USA; Savage, 2016, Australia).

In this section, I interrogate the curriculum reforms of countries already discussed in the preceding section, in order to obtain a more comprehensive picture of teachers' experiences as curriculum leaders within the educational systems of these countries.

2.4.1 Curriculum reforms in Ontario, Canada

A review of curriculum reforms in Canada is of relevance in this study because Canada is one of the countries that had implemented the OBE system of education which South Africa adopted in 1997 (Bantwini, 2010; Maodzwa-Taruvinga & Cross, 2012). In addition, being one of the countries with a successful education system in the world ("PISA 2015 Results Vol III," n.d.), South Africa may emulate its best practices on involving teachers in leading curriculum matters.

The curriculum-development process in Canada has undergone some changes. There is neither a national curriculum nor national standards for education in Canada (OECD, 2010). Canada's decentralised system gives provinces autonomy in their educational decisions (Anderson, 2016; Burns, 2017). Education ministers of all provinces belong to The Council of Minister of Education Canada (CMEC). CMEC is a collaborative body which advises ministers based on their province's problems. In 2008, CMEC initiated the Learn Canada 2020 that addressed the needs and aspirations of Canadians under four pillars of lifelong learning: "early childhood learning and development, elementary to secondary school systems, post-secondary education and adult learning and skills development." All nine provinces and two territories are collaborating on the development of a common framework of goals for science education from K-12, and on setting standards for science in a School Achievement Indicators program. All provinces and territories in Canada (except Saskatchewan) have established a core curriculum of about 80% provincially defined courses, and 20% locally developed curriculum (Anderson, 2016). Curriculum reforms in the largest province (Ontario) are discussed in greater detail.

Ontario is the nation's largest and one of the most successful provinces (OECD, 2010; Anderson, 2016). In the 1960s and 1970s the Ontario Ministry of Education (OME) changed its provincial curriculum policies to promote local curriculum development, thus reflecting the realities and needs of the local context. This initiative takes cognisance of the importance of context to any curriculum change, the curriculum being there to serve the learners and society. In like manner, teachers, as curriculum leaders in any given context, must ensure

that the delivered curriculum speaks to the recipients (learners) at ground level. This change is in line with the notion that curriculum reforms remain as policies on paper if teachers, as curriculum leaders, do not adapt them for implementation to suit the context of learners.
In 1984, under a policy document named Ontario Schools: Intermediate and Secondary Divisions (OSIS), the government mandated a revision of the secondary-school graduation requirements and curriculum. Two policy documents – Transition Years Grades 7, 8, and 9 (1992), and "Program Policy for Elementary and Secondary Education" (Policy No. 115, 1994), laid the foundation for decoupling the Grade 9 curriculum programme (under OSIS, students were streamed upon entry to Grade 9) from academic, general, and basic levels of difficulty before Grade 10. Since 1990, changes in Ontario's curriculum have reflected a general trend in Western education focusing on outcomes (Anderson, 2016).

In 1993, OME adopted a new curriculum − The Common Curriculum Grades 1-9 (under this policy, all Grade 9 students followed the same programme, as opposed to streaming, and were granted a secondary-school diploma upon successful completion). This was to replace the primary curriculum (Grades 1-6) outlined in The Formative Years (1975). Implementation of this new curriculum started in 1995 and was accompanied by Provincial Standards Language, and Mathematics Grades 1-9, as well as subject by subject curriculum guides. The Common Curriculum brought the concepts of outcomes-based learning and curriculum integration into Ontario curriculum policy. Students were expected to attain a common set of pre-specified learning outcomes by Grades 3 and 6 linked to the provincially defined standards (Anderson & Jaafar, 2003). In 1997, The Ontario Curriculum replaced The Common Curriculum at the elementary school level to align with the more rigorous high school programme. The Ontario Curriculum defined subject specific outcomes and standards by grade level. In January 1998, decisions to re-stream and re-credit Grade 9 were announced; they were implemented in 1999.

The curriculum was restructured from three streams (basic, general, and advanced) to two (applied and academic) and a Grade 9 literacy test shifted to Grade 10 as a requirement for graduation. This ushered in what Martin (2012) refers to as millenarian education, an education that speaks to the needs of the period. The policy document − Choices into Action: Guidance and Career Education Program Policy for Ontario Elementary and Secondary Schools − was launched in 1999, aimed at shaping students' lives from kindergarten to graduation. Other policies such as "Program and Diploma Requirements 1999" were launched in the same year, designed to equip students with knowledge and skills by

preparing them for further education and work. Another policy, “The Ontario Curriculum Grades 9-12: Program Planning and Assessment 2000” enshrines workplace skills for market-based productivity across all disciplines, for satisfying and productive lives (Martin, 2012). In addition, a compulsory course − “Career Studies” was offered in the second year of secondary school to students aged 15 years. All courses are mandated to include “Education for Exceptional Students, English as a Second Language, English Literacy Development, The Role of Technology in the Curriculum, Career Education, and Cooperative Education and other Workplace Experiences” (Martin, 2012).

In 2003, its education system moved away from heavy standardised testing and teacher accountability to one of high academic standards, but with teacher involvement in its development. This initiative acknowledges teachers as rightful partners in the curriculum development process. Being part of selecting the curriculum content and deciding on how that content is to be passed across to learners indicates OME’s trust and confidence in teacher professional expertise. This is a stance that empowers, motivates, and encourages teachers to engage and enact their role as curriculum leaders. Teacher collaboration among schools of similar backgrounds surged, and Ontario increased its graduation rate from 68% in 2003 to 82% in 2013 (Anderson, 2016). From 2003 to 2010, the Ontario Ministry of Education (OME) introduced two curriculum-reform initiatives. The literacy and numeracy initiative recorded great success in increasing reading and mathematics outcomes in Grades 3 and 6. The second initiative − “Student Success” launched in 2005 − aimed to increase the high school graduation rate to 85%. Student Success caters for students who are at risk of not graduating. By this initiative, students who failed one or more courses in Grade 9 were identified as potential dropouts. “Student success officers” were_state-funded for such students; and the graduation rate increased from 68%-79% (OECD, 2010). By funding individuals to take on the responsibility of ensuring the success of the potential dropouts, OME is conscious of the need to prevent teacher heavy workload and attrition. Instead of being forever engaged with teaching learners, teachers can make use of their free time to improve themselves and their practice, either by engaging in individual research, or in professional discussions of any kind.

In 2008, after the Canadian Prime Minister’s apology to the aboriginal people for the school systems not being inclusive enough of them, OME took steps to release “First Nations, Metis, and Inuit Education Policy Framework”, an initiative which increased the number of aboriginal staff at schools, and integrated more aboriginal content into the curriculum

(Anderson, 2016). In asserting teachers' pivotal role as curriculum leaders in successful curriculum reforms, Anderson (2016) warns that, without extensive teacher support, it can be difficult to implement inclusive education in a school system. Ontario curriculum reforms also focus on teaching time, classroom size, and improving the quality of education for exceptional children. Focusing on teaching time or contact time is crucial because teacher and learner contact for curriculum implementation is at the core of teacher leadership on curriculum matters (Anderson, 2016). It is said that the quality of contact time determines whether a curriculum reform flourishes or withers (Kiat et al., 2017; Nevenglosky, 2018).

OME also took steps to improve guidance of students for course selection and their future career plans. Another important aspect of the reform is the vision of providing students with the latest knowledge and skills to make their full contribution to a highly competitive global economy, and to become responsible citizens in their respective communities (OECD, 2010; Martin, 2012).

The Career Studies course was revised in 2006 and in 2010. Program Planning and Assessment 2000 was replaced and extended beyond secondary school by "Growing Success: Assessment Evaluation and Reporting in Ontario Schools First Edition" (Grades 1-12). This programme tied learning skills to workplace habits in preparation for post-secondary education and the world of work. In 2011, Program and Diploma Requirements 1999 was also extended beyond secondary school and replaced by Ontario Schools, Kindergarten to Grade 12: Policy and Program Requirements 2011, maintaining emphasis on career education.

Aware of the negative effects of previous top-down curriculum reform initiatives on teachers' experiences and role as curriculum leaders, the OME sought support from teachers for the new reforms by bringing them on board through regular meetings with teacher representatives and a wide range of stakeholders. The efforts culminated in the signing of two four-year collective bargaining agreements (2005-2008 and 2009-2012). Among issues agreed upon were 200 minutes of weekly preparation time for all elementary school teachers, and the hiring of teachers for the student-success position in each school. (OECD, 2010). Preparation time creates opportunities for teachers to collaborate and work in teams rather than solo. This enables teachers of the same grade level subject to plan lessons together, and to share teaching strategies, and/or understanding of subject content.

Knowledge and skills gained help teachers perform their role better as curriculum leaders during the teaching and learning process for the attainment of intended curriculum goals.

2.4.2 Curriculum reforms in Estonia

After independence in 1991, the 1992 Estonian Education Act which was passed regulated a 9-year compulsory education system for children age 7 to 16, preceded by a pre-primary education for children 5-6 years (UNESCO, 2011; Lees, 2016). The Act stipulates an education system of knowledge, skills, proficiency, values, rules of behaviour for dignity, self-esteem, selection, and acquisition of a suitable profession. The education system was based on the principles of humanism, democracy, preservation and development of ethnic minorities, the Estonian nation and culture. It is a lifelong education that focuses on permanent change, sustainable development, and competitiveness in the global market. Estonian basic education has three stages each lasting three years (Grades 1-3, 4-6 & 7-9).The education system comprises 4 years of primary education (Grades 1-4), 5 years of basic education (Grades 5-9), with an exit examination organised by the school in three subjects (Estonian language and literature, or Estonia as second language, mathematics, and an elective subject); and the junior secondary education certificate was awarded on successful completion (UNESCO, 2011; Kiviorg, 2012). A 3-year senior secondary education followed (Grades 10-12) either in general or vocational secondary. Students (17 years and older) who fail to complete can enter vocational education with duration of courses ranging from six months to two-and-a-half years.

In close cooperation with education stakeholders, comprising teachers and researchers, in 1996, the State School Board coordinated the curriculum-design process. It sent out two drafts to other teachers, school managers, and researchers country-wide for input. Discussion panels in which individuals and institutions alike expressed their views took place before the first national curriculum framework was adopted in that year. Schools drew up their own curricula based on the national framework (UNESCO, 2011; Lees, 2016). The democratic move of including teachers in the inception of the national curriculum recognises teachers as curriculum leaders. Such recognition empowers and motivates teachers to claim ownership of the changed curriculum. Teachers in such circumstances are better able to understand their role as curriculum leaders, becoming innovative, emboldening risk takers, and being influential and proactive. Challenges within their powers will be courageously encountered. Furthermore, the devolution of authority to schools to draw up their own curricula is a mark of great confidence and trust in teacher professionalism. School

managers, for their part, will build the same trust and confidence in teachers, and will be encouraged to embark on a distributed leadership style, creating opportunities for teachers to lead in curriculum matters. School managers will see teacher leadership in curriculum matters as team service, rather than as a threat to their position of authority.

In 2000, the State School Board transferred the responsibility to coordinate and develop the national curriculum to a Centre of Curriculum Development at the University of Tartu. By 2002, Estonian teachers, as curriculum leaders, experienced confusion and dissatisfaction with the curriculum and other educational decisions, owing to lack of exposure to a pluralism of ideas. This resulted in the revision of the 1996 curriculum for general education (Keskula, Loogma, Kolka, & Sau-Ek, 2012). In 2007 the government approved a detailed plan to implement Estonian as the educational language. Government regulated that, by 2011, at least 60% of studies at upper secondary schools must be conducted in the Estonian language (UNESCO, 2011; (Lees, 2016).

In 2010, the government approved an updated compulsory national curriculum with more freedom of choice and more focus on competencies and learning outcomes (Khavenson, 2018). A council of experts, including officials of associations of parents, teachers, school heads, and student councils participated in prior discussions. Kiviorg (2012) affirms this inclusive participation by stating that a school's curriculum and amendments to it are submitted to the student council, the teacher council, and the board of trustees, prior to its enactment. Of great interest to me here is the inclusion even of student council representatives. In my opinion, there is a lesson for South Africa to draw from this genuine learner participation in decision-making on curriculum matters at the national level. In the South African context, SASA mandates learners as members of a School Governing Body (SGB) in charge of the governance of schools. Unfortunately, this is only on paper, as policy and practice do not match. Learners are always simply informed of decisions already arrived at by adult members of the SGB (Phaswana, 2010; Duma, 2011).

The curriculum is meant for learners. Being participants in the decisions on what is of interest to them eases the tasks of teachers during the implementation process. Learners will easily cooperate with teachers on what they themselves (learners) have decided to learn, creating a conducive atmosphere to teacher leadership in curriculum implementation. Such positive experiences are a form of support for teachers to perform better as curriculum leaders and facilitators during the learning and teaching process.

The 2010 approved curriculum is oriented towards learning rather than teaching. The upper secondary or gymnasiums consist of eighteen subjects with eleven options of electives (Laanemets, 2014). Five examinations are written at the end of the programme, of which three are compulsory centralised state examinations covering Estonian, one foreign language, and mathematics. Learners are awarded a full secondary general, vocational, or combined general and vocational education certificate upon completion (depending on the programme followed), which entitles them to higher education. Estonia's binary higher education system allows admission into universities or institutions for higher professional education (UNESCO, 2011). There are upper secondary school-leaving certificates based on an examination by the school for students who fail the state examination. Groups involved in the preparation of the curricula introduced changes which brought the study of subjects closer to students' interests and daily life (for example, emphasising research-based learning in the case of natural sciences). Implementation of the 2010 curriculum commenced in the 2011/12 academic year in Grades 1, 4, and 7, and the remaining grades joined in the 2013/14 academic year (Ministry of Education and Research-MER, 2018). In 2011, the national curriculum was separated into two frameworks − lower secondary, and upper secondary − mainly for (i) clarity of rights and responsibilities of stakeholders, and (ii) to set a basis for funding, management, and supervision.

2.4.3 Curriculum reforms in Singapore

A review of Singapore's curriculum reforms is of essence to this study because, like South Africa, Singapore's curriculum content was overloaded and examination oriented (Boon, 2017). A subsequent curriculum reform driven by education discussions by teachers, parents and the communities (Deng, 2010; Low et al., 2017) resulted in high teacher morale. A possible contributing factor to Singapore having one of the best performing learners in the world. It is a practice South African education authority can learn from.

Singaporean education has seen a plethora of initiatives in response to perceived challenges in globalisation (Deng, Gopinathan, & Lee, 2013). A major source of Singapore's competitive advantage rests in the ability of the state to successfully manage education and skill demand and supply. The economic demands of Singapore dictate the educational reforms for Singaporeans, through milestones of a survival-driven education from 1965 to 1978, an efficiency-driven education system prevailing from 1978 to1997, and an ability-driven education system from 1997(Boon & Gopinathan, 2006).

After independence in 1965 (six years after being self-governed in 1959), the survival-driven education system was in operation, focusing on increasing low-skilled labour-intensive industries. The building of schools became the responsibility of the Ministry of Education (MOE). Education was given in all four languages of English, Tamil, Chinese and Malay, equally prioritised, with Malay as the national language. Free primary education was made available to all (Boon & Gopinathan, 2006).

By 1963, learning a second language was compulsory in primary schools, and by 1966 in the secondary schools. A single national bilingual education system was created teaching learners English and a mother tongue (Tamil, Chinese, and Malay). Secondary vocational schools were established for the first time in 1964, consisting of subjects such as woodwork, domestic science, art and crafts, and technical drawing (Boon & Gopinathan, 2006). In 1968, a Technical Education Department was set up within the MOE. By 1969 anticipated shortages in technical skills resulted in mandatory two-year training in technical subjects for lower secondary boys, while girls could choose between technical subjects and home economics (Boon & Gopinathan, 2006).

The education system encountered serious challenges in the early 1970s. There was a high turnover of education ministers, with as many as three ministers within 15 months at one time. Communication broke down between ministry and schools; there were frequent policy changes without consulting parents and teachers; and policies being interpreted differently at different levels. Teachers suffered dejection, low status and morale, leading to frequent resignation of teachers and principals (Jensen, Downing & Clark, 2017). South Africa can relate to this situation as it suffered a similar fate with its introduction of the OBE system following the dawn of democracy in the country.

During such times, the activities of teachers, as curriculum leaders, would be at their barest minimum. Factors that create opportunities for teacher leadership in curriculum matters such as support, collaboration, and participative decision-making were absent. Faced with dejection, malaise and demoralisation, teachers cannot be visionary, innovative, nor can they venture any risks to better perform their role as curriculum leaders.
The government introduced a review committee for the education system led by Dr Goh Keng Swee (the then Deputy Prime Minister). The “Goh Report” indicated wastage (performance below expected standards and dropouts), and low literacy levels of learners.

A ministerial report of 1968 stressed the need for more learners in the technical education stream (Boon & Gopinathan, 2006).

From the late 1970s, Singapore started losing its upper hand in low-skilled, labour-intensive industries, as Southeast Asian countries ventured into this area. An efficiency-driven education system was launched from 1978, concentrating on sustainable development. This system focused on providing basic education, skills, and attitudes required for industrialisation and production. In January 1979, a New Education System (NES) was introduced with three streams for both primary and secondary schools. NES allowed learners to progress at a pace suitable to their ability, and as far as they could possibly advance for training and employment (Low, Goodwin, & Synder, 2017). NES allowed eight years for slower learners to complete primary school, five years at secondary school to acquire a General Certificate of Education (GCE) Ordinary Level; and a further three years for GCE Advanced Level (against the normal 6, 4, and 2 years, respectively). South Africa adopted a similar stance later by allowing learners to repeat once per phase. NES also introduced a new lower secondary school-leaving certificate, a GCE “Normal”. A Junior College education (a two-year pre-university education) was introduced to prepare learners for the university. Learners write the GCE Advanced Level Examination (Lim & Pyvis, 2012).

Unfortunately, there were no changes to the government’s top-down approach to planning, disseminating, and enforcing of decision-making of educational changes (Low et al., 2017). Even learners and teachers suffered the rigidity of the system such as inconveniences of a double-session structure. The NES brought with it no changes to principals’ and teachers’ lack of commitment to effectively implement the required changes. It is not surprising that teachers do not commit themselves as curriculum leaders to curriculum changes which they neither understand nor own (Low et al., 2017).

The education system was purged with the appointment of Dr Tony Tan Keng Yam as Minister of Education in the 1980s. He gave greater autonomy to schools, and increased flexibility within the school system (Tan, 2010 & Jensen, Downing & Clark, 2017). A gifted education programme was introduced in 1985 (to reduce the number of years gifted children spend in secondary schools), pastoral care in 1987, and by 1989, a single session was initiated for all secondary schools (Boon & Gopinathan, 2006).

By the early 1990s the minister upgraded vocational and technical education. Yam replaced a vocational and industrial Training Board created in 1979 with the 1992 Institute of Technical Education (ITE), to provide quality technical and vocational education (Boon & Gopinathan, 2006 & OECD, 2016). Several ITE campuses with modern educational and sporting infrastructures were built; and scholarships were granted to top ITE graduates to pursue diploma courses in polytechnics. This move would reverse the negative societal opinion of vocational and technical training. By 1995, positive outcomes of the efficiency-driven education were evident in Singaporean performance in international competitive examinations.

Rapid global technological advances in the late 1990s provoked another educational reform in Singapore (Low et al., 2017). The need to transit to a knowledge-based economy warranted an ability-driven system of education with emphasis on innovation and creativity (Low et al., 2017). This system provides 10 years of general education to all youths (including six years of compulsory primary education with a variety of programmes according to learners' ability). Major national examinations are taken at the end of primary (Grade 6), secondary (Grade 10/11-O-Levels, Grade 10-N-Levels, for Normal Academic and Normal Technical students only) and Junior College years/Grade 12-A-Levels (Low et al., 2017). Learners have the option not to sit for an intermediate examination between junior and senior secondary school. In 1997, the MOE initiated the Thinking Schools, Learning Nation (TSLN) concept. This calls on both teachers and learners to engage in active learning and experimenting with innovative ways of promoting critical thinking skills (Tan, 2010). This is an education model to prepare learners for the future, and a shift towards attaining 21 Century Competencies − 21CC (Tan, Koh, Chan, Costes-Onishi, & Hung, 2017). Deng et al. (2013) refer to this policy initiative as vision-instigated curriculum-making, as it symbolises a paradigm shift to the holistic development of lifelong learning people. The information and communication technology (ICT) Masterplans was also initiated in 1997, (to be rolled out in four phases −1997, 2003, 2009 & 2015), aimed at equipping all schools with the necessary infrastructure and modern technologies for attaining the 21CC. Continuous implementation of the TSLN and other policies was also the goal (Tan et al., 2017).

To tackle the problem of teacher shortages, and to attract high-quality people to join the teaching profession, thereby effectively implementing the new curriculum, a revamping of teacher-training programmes took place. Teachers' salaries were competitive with those of lawyers, engineers, and medical practitioners in government services. Provisions were

made for each teacher to be entitled to 100 hours fully subsidised professional training per year (Low et al., 2017), with monetary rewards to teachers with a certain number of years' service, and sabbatical leave to learn new knowledge and skills even outside the field of education. Teachers, parents, and communities became engaged in educational discussions. These structures and initiatives put in place for a knowledge-based economy provide conditions necessary for teachers to perform their role effectively as curriculum leaders (Low et al., 2017). Singaporean teachers enjoy great respect from society owing to the cultural context and policies that highlight the importance of education, promoting the status of teaching as a career (Low et al., 2017). Such system recognition and value placed on teacher professional expertise, acknowledges the importance of in-service professional development, participative decision-making, support, collaboration, and motivation. These factors stimulate commitment, a feeling of ownership, creativity, and innovativeness, thus creating opportunities for teacher leadership in curriculum matters. There are certainly lessons for South Africa to learn from these positive curriculum policies that culminate in positive experiences for teachers in leading curriculum matters for improved teaching and learning, and education quality.

In 2005, the MOE reduced (10 to 30%) curriculum content for each subject (Deng, 2010), for the enactment of the Teach Less Learn More (TLLM) programme. The programme called on teachers to teach less for learners to learn more, implying that teachers should engage in quality learner-centred teaching, with emphasis on problem-based learning and project work in class (Tee Ng, 2008; Low et al., 2017). According to Hairon et al. (2018), TLLM gives teachers the autonomy to develop their schools' curriculum and space, for teachers and learners to engage in actual teaching and learning rather than preparing for tests. However, Tan (2010) is sceptical of this teacher autonomy working unless Singaporeans become more independent and comfortable with questioning assumptions. According to Tan (2010), a 2009 revised education policy with desired student outcomes of "flexibility and diversity" is only on paper, Singapore's curriculum still being highly standardised (Lim & Pyvis, 2012), and teachers teaching towards standardised testing. Thus, without a move away from the prevalent and institutionalised culture of standardisation, more freedom of expression, creativity and innovation remain elusive (Tan, 2010). The same stance is held by Deng et al. (2013), who aver that the divergence between policies and reality in schools persists, as emphasis on Singapore's culture and practice of student testing prevents the adoption of innovative practices at ground level.

Within the framework of 21CC and Desired Student Outcomes, in 2009, the MOE launched a revised set of desired student outcomes. This envisages learners becoming confident, engaging in self-directed learning, becoming active contributors to society, and concerned citizens (Deng et al., 2013; Tan et al., 2017). In 2010, the "Total Curriculum Framework" was also launched within 21CC, expanding its focus on thinking skills to include values, emotions and interpersonal skills to be infused into the total curriculum (academic and non-academic areas) of each school (Tan et al., 2017). Teachers, as curriculum leaders, need to adapt their pedagogical strategies, incorporating aspects to enable learners to develop these competencies.

In 2011, the education minister (Heng Swee Keat) launched Character and Citizenship Education Framework (CCE) to instil a sense of responsibility in learners. In 2012, Values in Action (VIA) was launched to emphasise the provision of authentic learning experiences for learner involvement in the community (Tan et al., 2017). The year 2013 saw the launching of an Applied Learning Programme (ALP) that had to take effect in all schools by 2017. The ALP is an interdisciplinary knowledge programme to develop learners' interpersonal skills, character and values (Tan et al., 2017). These are plausible initiatives that will afford teachers exciting experiences as curriculum leaders if their encounter with learners focuses on authentic teaching and learning for holistic development of learners.

Curriculum 2015 (C2015) was launched to prepare learners for life and work in the 21st century. Its broad outcomes include generic skills (critical thinking, communication, collaboration and management) and capacities in media, technology, and multicultural literacy (Deng, 2010), for the formation of a confident person, a self-directed learner, a concerned citizen, and a contributor to the economy (Deng et al., 2013).
Although many countries (Canada, United States) seem to admire Singapore's education system, Tan (2010) and Deng (2010) are very critical of Singapore's top-down approach to policy decision-making and highly standardised curriculum on teaching to test. This impacts on teacher experiences in performing their role as curriculum leaders in schools.

2.4.4 Curriculum reforms in Nigeria

The essence of Nigeria's curriculum reforms information in this thesis is that it provides information on curriculum reforms from the western part of Sub-Saharan Africa. Nigeria gained independence from Britain in 1960 yet continued with the colonial education system. Although a federation of 36 states, with successive democratic and military governments,

Nigeria operates a unitary system of education (Yusuf & Yusuf, 2009). The Lagos curriculum conference held in 1969 recommended tailoring the curriculum to meet local needs. The Federal Government announced the Universal Primary Education Programme in 1976. In 1977, the national policy on education was created, and has seen three revisions in 1981, 1998, and 2004 (Yusuf & Yusuf, 2009). In 1982, Nigeria adopted America's education system, even though it continued with British examinations such as the Ordinary Level and Advanced Level (Obomanu, 2011). Educational groups such as Comparative Education Study and Adaptation Centre (CESAC), Nigeria Educational Research and Development (NERD), National Teachers' Institute (NTI), National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) have been closely involved in curriculum reforms in Nigeria (Megbo & Saka, 2015).

In the 1980s, Nigeria adopted the 6-3-3-4 education system − six years primary, three years junior secondary, three years senior secondary, and four years tertiary (Obanya, 2010; Igbokwe, Mezieobi & Eke, 2014). This system necessitated a syllabus heavy with science, technology and vocational subjects in the junior secondary phase to enable learners to gain self-sufficiency skills. Students could then choose to exit school after completing junior secondary, and not proceed to the senior phase (Igbokwe et al., 2014; Adeyemi, 2015). Unfortunately, the government failed to seriously consider essential elements for successful implementation, and the curriculum objectives could not be attained (Obanya, 2010; Igbokwe et al., 2014; Adeyemi, 2015). The Nigerian Federal Government adopted the Universal Basic Education Programme in 1999, and introduced Curriculum 2007, which commenced in 2008 (Igbokwe, 2015). This is a 9-year continuous schooling with the 9-year Basic Education Curriculum philosophy consisting of 3 levels − lower level Grades 1-3, middle level 4-6, and upper level junior secondary school (JSS) Forms 1-3. Igbokwe (2015) cites the Federal Ministry of Education (2008), explaining that subject offerings ranged between ten to sixteen from Primary 1 to JSS 3.

Curriculum 2007 ushered in a new beginning for the mathematics curriculum in Nigeria (Awofala, Ola-Owula & Fatade, 2012; Igbokwe, 2015). A descriptive survey study by Awofala et al. (2012) on two hundred primary and secondary teachers combined in Calabar Cross River State, reveals high positive teacher perceptions of the new mathematics curriculum. However, their findings contrast with earlier studies by Obiunu, (2011). Reports were that poor teacher quality, lack of teacher development, and lack of teacher support materials hampered the implementation of the Curriculum 2007 (Igbokwe, 2015). It is a common saying that no education system can rise above its teachers. These barriers to

successful implementation would likely cause teacher frustration, absenteeism, and demotivation to engage optimally in their role as curriculum leaders. Owing to some contemporary and national concerns to make the curriculum more practical, relevant, and in line with global best practices, the 9-year curriculum was revised in 2012; and implementation of the revised version commenced in September 2014, continuing to the present (Igbokwe, 2015).

2.4.5 Curriculum reforms in Kenya

At independence, Kenya needed education for manpower and development. Thus, since its independence in 1963, Kenya has committed to provide equal education opportunities to all its citizens (Agufana, 2018). However, its education system has experienced several fundamental reforms in structure and curricular content, influenced by increasing demands for free and compulsory education, and education for industrialisation, in alignment with the vision 2030 and Constitution 2010 (Cheserek & Mugalavai, 2012). The government has formed commissions at different times to investigate the entire education system (Gikungu, Karanja & Thinguri, 2014; WaMberia, 2016). The Ominde Commission of 1964 proposed nine objectives focusing on expansion of manpower capacities to fight poverty, and to deal with cultural, social, religious, and other needs (Korir, 2016). In 1976, the Gachathi commission looked at restructuring education in the light of the Ominde Commission, heeding the call by the International Labour Organization to increase technical and vocational aspects of the curriculum. The Mackay report of 1981 marked the departure from the colonial British model (7-6-3) of primary, lower secondary, upper secondary, and higher education. The 8-4-4 system of education (eight years primary, four years secondary, and four years university education) was introduced in 1985, with a strong emphasis on practical subjects rather than traditional academic subjects (Kaviti, 2018). However, negative attitudes towards vocational training, lack of training resources and infrastructure, shortage of qualified teachers, among other factors, hampered advancement. These negativities triggered negative experiences for teachers as curriculum leaders, with pedagogy and curriculum delivery affected. Shortage of qualified teachers caused a heavy workload for those few available.

The Kamunge Report of 1988 raised issues of 8-4-4 being heavily loaded with content, and purely examination oriented, recommending its review (Gikungu et al., 2014; Kaviti, 2018). By 1999, the Koech report identified other weaknesses of the policy, such as students' inability to cope at university (Gikungu et al., 2014). In January 2011, the education ministry

set up a Task Force chaired by professor Odhiambo, to realign the education sector to the new constitution. In 2012, a report by the Task Force recommended a 2-6-3-3 education system (2 years pre-primary, 6 years primary, 3 years junior secondary, 3 years senior secondary, and at least 3 years higher education) aimed at ensuring that learners acquire competencies and skills to meet human resource aspirations of Kenya's Vision 2030 blueprint for development (Korir, 2016). The Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD) supported the 2-6-3-3 system which was piloted in April 2017, and went into effect by January 2018 (Kaviti, 2018).

Earlier studies by some Kenyan scholars (Njengere, 2013; Muricho & Changach, 2013) warn the government about its approach to education reforms. Njengere (2013) expresses concerns about the ever-widening gap among the intended, implemented, and learnt curriculum. Muricho and Changach (2013) caution that, unless the government brings key role players (parents, students, education administrators and teachers in particular) on board in decision-making during education planning and reforms, ceasing the top-bottom approach by political elites, Kenyans' call for a relevant education system will persist. Molapo and Pillay's (2018) South African study reveals similar concerns with top-bottom decision-making in the South African context.

Thus, Kenya's education change for political expedience is not a unique case. Molapo and Pillay (2018) state that the highly politicised education context in South Africa has relegated curriculum implementation to the back seat. This echoes earlier assertions by Jansen (1999b) in (Chisholm, 2005), that syllabus alterations had much more to do with the politics of transition than school curriculum, and that C2005 emerged as a political rather than an educational project Muller (2004), in (Ngibe, 2016).

2.4.6 Curriculum reforms in South Africa

In some countries, evaluation outcomes of Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) results trigger curriculum reforms. In the South African context, pursuance of equity in education is the driver of the numerous curriculum reforms (Bantwini, 2010).
The advent of democracy in South Africa in 1994 brought with it changes in most sectors of the economy, including education (Molapo & Pillay, 2018). The South African education system has seen three waves of curriculum reforms since the dawn of democracy in 1994. The first wave purged the apartheid syllabi of racist language and controversial and outdated content, and paved the way for a single national curriculum whose content had to be arrived

at in a participatory manner (Bantwini, 2010). Curriculum 2005 (C2005), being the second wave, was launched in 1997, and was based on the principles of the Outcomes Based Education (OBE) used in the United States of America, Canada, Australia and New Zealand (Bantwini, 2010; Maodzwa-Taruvinga & Cross, 2012; Schmidt, 2017). The OBE is underpinned by values such as non-sexism, non-racialism, peace, prosperity and democracy, enshrined in the South African constitution (Bantwini, 2010; Maodzwa-Taruvinga, & Cross, 2012). Implementation of C2005, a learner-centred curriculum with the educator as a facilitator, met with a myriad of challenges, such as obscure terminology, lack of materials and content specifications, poor understanding of OBE by teachers, to name a few (Jansen, 1998). One may not be wrong to attribute teachers' poor understanding of OBE to the absence of teachers' voices or input during the initial stages of planning and designing. The obscure terminology must have heightened teachers' frustrations in their attempt to perform their role as curriculum leaders at the implementation stage. According to Jansen, (1998 & 1999), OBE was adopted for political expedience, with little or nothing to do with classroom realities. In the year 2000, the then education minister, Professor Kader Asmal set up a review committee led by Professor Chisholm. The C2005 was revised, as recommended by the committee, thus launching the third wave of curriculum reforms with the Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS) introduced in 2002, referred to as the National Curriculum Statement (NCS) and scheduled for implementation from 2004 (Chisholm, 2005). These changes notwithstanding, commitment to OBE is maintained as reflected in the principles and purposes of C2005 (achievement-oriented, activity-based, and learner-centred). Jansen and Taylor (2003), in their World Bank Report, refer to C2005 as the "heart" of school reforms after 1994. Ramatlapana and Makonye (2012) cite Taylor, Muller and Vinjevold (2003), who opine that, with the NCS, curricular subjects were integrated into one another and into everyday life, with unclear pacing and sequencing. Teaching was based on programme organisers, on which concepts from different subjects were to be extracted for learners. Learners would have to understand how to integrate everyday life with school knowledge, and school knowledge with everyday life. Yet learners still performed poorly in national assessments and international achievement tests. Since all versions of the curriculum after 1994 are streamlined from OBE, with which teachers, as curriculum leaders, are not very comfortable to date, it is therefore not surprising that learner performance is equally poor. Teachers cannot give to learners what they as curriculum leaders do not have.

A curriculum should provide learners with what they need for life after school. Concerns that NCS was failing learners led the Minister of Education, Angela Motshekga, to call for its review in 2009. The NCS was then replaced by the Curriculum Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS) from 2010 (DoE, 2009). All these changes within the education system are meant to redress past racial inequalities and skills shortages in maths, science, and technology (Bantwini, 2010). According to Du Plessis (2013), for all these changes, teachers merely change what they teach (curriculum) but not how they teach it (pedagogy). This observation is similar to that made by Tan (2010) and (Deng et al., 2013) in the Singaporean context. Teachers are probably still to come to terms with CAPS, because they were not part of the curriculum review committee, even though they are curriculum leaders. Deng (2010) maintains that change of a whole system, not just a discipline or subject, is a significant curricular change that demands a different perspective on both the idea of change, and on the processes for planning and implementation. A change must involve all stakeholders, the most important of whom are teachers (Alsubaie, 2016). Such involvement enables understanding of roles and creates the feeling of ownership and commitment to attain set goals. As curriculum leaders, a good understanding of their role enables teachers to deploy reflective strategies in their teaching styles in the advent of any curriculum change or reform (McNeill, Katsh-Singer, Gonzalez-Howard & Loper, 2016). This fosters change both in what (curriculum) and how (pedagogy) they teach. How the curriculum is implemented determines whether the goals set at the initial stages of planning and designing will be attained (Kiat et al., 2017; Nevenglosky, 2018).

This review of global curriculum reforms reveals changes in structure (Kiviorg, 2012; Lees, 2016) and content (Martin (2012; Anderson, 2016). Another common phenomenon observed is “teaching to test” to attain higher examination scores at the expense of student transformation. There is so much South Africa can learn from other countries, such as the decentralised curriculum system in Ontario (Anderson, 2016). In Estonia (UNESCO, 2011; Lees, 2016) and Singapore, some state collaboration with teachers and other stakeholders existed prior to curriculum changes (Tan, 2010 & Jensen, Downing & Clark, 2017), although not as maximally as in the case of Ontario.

Apart from Ontario with its genuine decentralised curriculum system, the literature I reviewed reveals top-down centralised curriculum systems in the various countries whose curriculum reforms are discussed in this section. A common trend is a change of curriculum as soon as these countries become independent, which is a similar situation that South Africa

experienced in its post-apartheid education. However, the absence of teacher involvement during curriculum reforms (Nigeria, Kenya, and South Africa), and inconsistent involvement of teachers (Estonia & Singapore), although important stakeholders in curriculum change discussions, is most likely to result in chaotic situations such as those experienced by Singapore in the late 1970s and South Africa from the late 1990s to the early 2000s.
In this study, one of the objectives is to propose a model which can consistently involve teachers in decision-making on curriculum reforms.

2.5 Conceptualising teachers role

Conceptualising the teachers' role in this study is imperative because it helps to situate the readers' expectations of teachers, and teachers' activities within the present study. The concept of the teachers' role is amply discussed in literature (Loh & Nalliah, 2010; Lunenberg, Dengerink & Korthagen, 2014; Sultana, 2019); and there seems to be a common understanding of what the teachers' role means. In interrogating literature on the teachers' role, it appears that some scholars refer to the word 'role' differently, either as role, responsibility, or duty. A role, according to Sharma and Jain (2013), is a position defined by a set of expectations about behaviour of any job incumbent. Izadinia (2012) used the terms roles and responsibilities interchangeably in a qualitative study on Tehran teacher educators as role models to their student teachers. Likewise, Zombwe (2019), to respond to the question, "Who is a teacher?", states that the roles or responsibilities of a teacher explains who a teacher is. The aspect of behaviours is the common element in these definitions. In this study, I have used the term 'role' in conceptualising the set of behaviours, duties, or responsibilities the teaching profession and society expect of teachers. Teachers perform many different roles within schools and communities that may be subject to variations, depending on the educational level and the society.

In the sections below, I discussed seven roles (facilitators/learning mediators; role models; scholar or lifelong learners; learning area or subject specialists; assessors; leaders, administrators, managers; and pastoral caregivers), as outlined in the Norms and Standards for Educators in South Africa (DoE, 2000), that seem to encompass those not overtly mentioned in this section. All these roles either directly or indirectly focus on teachers as curriculum leaders in schools with regard to curriculum implementation and other curriculum-related activities.

2.5.1 Teachers as facilitators/learning mediators

Gone are the days when teachers were regarded as custodians of knowledge or gatekeepers of information during the teaching and learning process in the classroom Brad and Tammy (2010). The paradigm shift of learner-centred pedagogy enables teachers to creatively mould learners to take ownership of their learning. Teachers facilitate the teaching and learning process by guiding and engaging learners in various instructional activities to improve teaching and learning (Kotirde & Yunos, 2014), supporting and anticipating learners' different needs (Ketelaar, Den Brok, Beijaard, & Boshuizen, 2012). Jagtap (2016) explains that, in present-day teaching and learning, teachers mostly provide introductory or initial information, and then guide learners to search for more, and interrogate learners' methods or process of task handling. In a 2014 mixed-method study of 198 primary and secondary school, Finnish teachers, Ahonen, Pyhältö, Pietarinen, and Soini (2014), on teachers' professional beliefs about their roles and the pupils' roles in the school, report that teachers are facilitators of learning both to their learners and to their colleagues within the professional community encounters. By creating a good atmosphere and collaborating with colleagues, teachers learn from one another. Banegas (2019) also reports that learners' motivation improves when teachers use a context-responsive bottom-up curriculum in which learners participate in lesson design and implementation.

Unlike the findings of Ahonen et al. (2014) and Banegas (2019), studies by Qhobela and Moru (2014) from Lesotho reveal a teacher-centred pedagogy, with teachers possessing a narrow operational definition of the concept of learner-centredness; they also experience time constraints. Similarly, Otukile-Mongwaketse (2018) in Botswana indicates that teacher-centredness in the teaching and learning process still dominates some classroom practices, because the curriculum is examination-oriented and class sizes are too large.

2.5.2 Teachers as role models

The aspect of teacher behaviour is crucial to the core role of teacher role modelling and is centred on teachers' exemplary behaviour. Ahonen et al., (2014) opine that in addition to their core role of dispensing knowledge to learners, teachers are expected to be epitomes of appropriate traits to learners, to guide them in developing into good human beings. Okeke and Drake (2014) emphasise that the importance of the teacher role modelling warrants the inclusion of a legal and pedagogical framework in training institutions to support the teaching and learning of character education to student teachers. According to Berkowitz (2011), the

character strengths of role models attract others to emulate them. Similarly, Loh and Nalliah (2010) insist that teacher role modelling is considered to have a positive influence on learners' academic and personality growth. For Ahonen et al. (2014), teachers have a central role in promoting learners' behavioural outcomes. Zombwe (2019) stresses that teachers are role models to learners in both behaviour and skills (teachers should, for example, be hard working, diligent, and have good manners). Phillippo and Stone (2013) refer to the modelling role of teachers as social capital, in that teachers are an embodiment of social and emotional support to learners. Such support, these researchers reiterate, results in a positive learner-teacher relationship that promotes learner resiliency and boosts learner outcomes and academy achievement Phillippo and Stone (2013).

2.5.3 Teachers as life-long learners

According to Harris and Jones (2010), the quality of an educational system cannot outperform the quality of its teachers. This also implies that teachers must continuously be improving upon themselves in order to match the trend of change in education, remaining masters of their craft. In accordance with this, Zombwe (2019) remarks that teachers should have a reading culture. This enables them to be eager to learn new methodologies, and to become more flexible in accepting changes for improvement, knowledge not being static. Teachers engage as lifelong learners in different ways: as professional learning community (PLC) members, researchers, pursuers of higher qualifications, and professional development participants, to name a few. Harris and Jones (2010) used data from a group of schools in Wales that piloted a model of (PLCs). Harris and Jones (2010) conclude that PLCs offer a way of generating changed professional practice that contributes to system improvement. This implies that, as teachers participate in PLCs activities, they collaborate, share experiences, acting as mentors to one another, gaining knowledge, skills and values to improve upon their content and pedagogical knowledge, to better perform their role as curriculum leaders for desired quality education (Harris & Jones, 2010; Pollara, 2012). Owing to the invaluable benefits of PLCs, teachers also make use of information communication technology (ICT) to participate in LPC activities for their continuous professional development (CPD). Vuorikari, Berlanga, Cachia, Cao, Fetter, Gilleran, Klamma, Puni, Scimeca and Sloep (2011) report on a case study on e-twinning (e-twinning, also referred to as digital mediated networking, is the lifelong learning networking of more than 160,000 European teachers) of school collaboration and teachers' networks for opportunities for professional development. Song, Petrushyna, Cao, and Klamma (2011), from e-twinning workshops in Germany, evaluated teachers' ability to self-monitor their

learning progress, and identify their learning gaps and goals in learning, to gain insights into their competencies and CPD. Song et al. (2011) report that teachers' ability to self-monitor their learning progress is a crucial competence of their lifelong learning.

Furthermore, as lifelong learners, teachers engage in research to enable them to better understand existing problems that require their attention as curriculum leaders. Forrest, Kosick, Vogel & Wu (2012) (mathematics professors of Richard Stockton College of New Jersey) engaged mathematics teachers of all surrounding public high schools in a project in 2012. The project was aimed at transforming professional development initiatives into collaborative, reciprocal community engagement opportunities, to increase student achievement (Forrest et al., 2012). Using an interactive methodology, teachers engaged both as participants and investigators in sustained open dialogue of all participants that assessed teachers' content knowledge (Forrest et al., 2012). The findings revealed the gaps within teachers' knowledge base, a better understanding of their daily challenges that had a significant impact or benefit (providing a reflexive platform for positive changes) for their pedagogy (Forrest et al., 2012). In addition, Motlhabane and Dichaba (2013) explain from their findings of teachers enrolled in the advanced Certificate of Educators in the South African context that, in performing their role as lifelong learners through research and further studies, teachers fine-tune their skills before engaging with learners at the implementation stage of the curriculum development process. Turner and Simon (2013) report similar findings on the learning of teachers enrolled for a professional master's course in the United Kingdom. Teachers show increased confidence and a strong sense of professional identity emanating from theoretical knowledge gained, and confidence to experiment in the classroom.

2.5.4 Teachers as learning area or subject specialists

Teachers, as masters of their craft, are specialists in subject, discipline, learning area, or phase. Such a specialist possesses the knowledge, skills, values, procedures, methods, principles, and pedagogic content knowledge of the learning area or phase; and through research should contribute to the knowledge base of the discipline (DoE, 2000). Taking the same stance as (DoE, 2000), Campbell and Chittleborough (2014) explain that teachers, as subject specialists, engage in action research, and become mentors to their less experienced colleagues. Subject specialists encourage collaboration, online networking, and face-to-face group meetings where possible, to improve theirs and their colleagues' subject-content knowledge and pedagogic knowledge, as well as to consolidate their

teaching skills (De Vries, Grift, & Jansen, 2014). Peercy, Martin-Beltrán, Silverman, and Daniel (2015) assert that the multiple position of being experts and learners at the same time has important implications for fostering teacher subject learning throughout teachers' careers. Masuda (2010) concurs that teachers' multiple positioning promotes reflection on their own teaching practices, increasing pedagogical knowledge. Gleeson and Davison (2016) teach us that teachers, as subject specialists, should use subject-specific language, as this supports a disciplinary concept of learning. In agreement with this, Renandya (2012) believes that teachers should be ambassadors of the inner circle, by speaking the language of the discipline. One can see this as a role-modelling technique of teachers as curriculum leaders, in influencing and motivating learners on easy acquisition of content knowledge.

As subject experts, teachers also deploy their knowledge, skills, values, procedures, methods, principles, and pedagogical content knowledge of the learning area in determining criteria for textbook selection. A South African study by Makgato and Ramaligela (2012), on criteria for textbook selection by Grade 9 technology teachers, reports that, on implementing their subject expertise, teachers set as main criteria the nature of the text content as related to the discipline, and the mode or the way the content is presented.

2.5.5 Teachers as assessors

As assessors, teachers must understand the purpose, methods (diagnostic, formative, and summative) and effects of assessments (DoE, 2000-Norms & Standards for Educators). This is what Sultana (2019) refers to as teacher assessment literacy, that is, teachers' knowledge or competency as assessors. Koh, Burke, Gong, and Tan (2018) further reveal that teachers' assessment literacy is determined by the degree of teachers' understanding of the principles behind selecting and designing tasks, judging learners' work, and interpreting and using data to improve student learning. Teachers are expected to synchronise assessment with the level of learning and requirements of accredited bodies, integrating assessment into the learning and teaching process (DoE, 2000 − Norms & Standards for Educators). On this point, Beebe, Vonderwell, and Boboc (2010) explain that teaching and learning are improved upon when teachers appropriately integrate assessment processes. In support of (DoE, 2000) the above, Black and Wiliam (2014) reiterate that, as assessors, teachers design assessment with learning aims in mind, and present learners with advice in the form of assessment feedback on how to improve on their learning, a procedure which Beebe et al. (2010) term assessment for learning. In a nutshell, the higher the teacher assessment literacy level, the better teachers will enact their role as assessors

in leading the curriculum in schools. However, Brown's (2011) mixed-method study of 215 participants from 10 schools in Motheo District within the Free State province of South Africa reports that teachers mostly assessed learners in the cognitive and affective domains, leaving out the psychomotor domain. This may be because the teachers lacked knowledge of assessment strategies. Similarly, Maile's (2013) qualitative study on the quality of assessment in some Gauteng schools, suggests that teachers are unable to cope with policy demands and the realities of school contexts. Maile's (2013) findings show that most HoDs approve tasks focusing on content coverage rather than on the quality of the questions.

Contrary to the South African studies above, Grant (2012) used moderation of pupils' scripts in an attempt to form sustainable assessment cultures. Grant (2012) conducted a longitudinal study (4 years) involving 518 participants from one Scottish educational authority. Both primary and secondary school teachers participated in moderation events. Data from focus groups, and recordings analysed, revealed that teachers in each cluster perform cross-sectoral moderation for various subjects.

2.5.6 Teachers as interpreters and designers of learning programme materials

The teachers' role goes beyond the operational implementation of the curriculum to designing, re-designing, and co-designing of learning and teaching materials (LTM) according to their learners' needs (Izadinia, 2012; Cviko, McKenney, & Voogt, 2014). As curriculum leaders, teachers are visionary, exercising their agency not just by making use of all learning programme material as provided. The researchers (De Vries, Schouwenaars and Stokhof (2017) posit that teachers need to adapt to approaches and LTM as appropriate to context and learners' needs. For example, in the use of inquiry-based science education in the Netherlands, teachers adapt activity levels, evaluating instruments for practical (time constraints, classroom management) and pedagogic (group work, capacities of learners) reasons (De Vries et al., 2017). Similarly, language teachers in Iran modified the syllabus presentation from a linearly organised approach imposed by central agencies and commercial curriculum developers, to a cyclical approach which teachers perceived better for learners. (Ostovar-Namaghi & Gholami, 2018). Frossard, Barajas and Trifonova (2012) also hold that teachers design LTM based on the lesson objectives, available time and material, and learner profile. In the South African context, post-apartheid curriculum changes challenge teachers to embark on creative and innovative learning material development as well as to tailor existing material to the context of their learners (Makgato & Ramaligela, 2012).

Furthermore, the presence of ICT in everyday life calls on teachers to engage as designers of technology-enhanced learning (Kali, McKenney & Sagy, 2015). A qualitative case study by Cviko et al. (2014) on seven Netherlands teachers, reports teacher involvement in the co-design of technology-rich learning activities, with positive effects on learners' learning outcomes. As a way of interpreting the curriculum, teachers employ the use of ICT to engage in teaching for creativity (Davies, Jindal-Snape, Digby, Howe, Collier, C., & Hay, 2014), as evident in the game-based learning approach adopted by Spanish teachers to enhance learning (Frossard et al., 2012).

The goal of teachers' role as interpreters and designers of learning programme materials is to improve student learning. This is made possible by the presence of conditions such as a relaxed and collaborative learning atmosphere (Frossard et al., 2012) and teamwork among teachers (Cviko et al., 2014). Challenges are part of a learning curve. In performing their role as interpreters and designers of learning programme materials, teachers encounter certain challenges, such as limited experience in the use of ICT, time constraints, and diverse learner profiles (De Vries et al., 2017). Research calls on teacher education training institutions to address the issue of teacher incompetence in the use of ICT (Kuure, Molin-Juustila, Keisanen, Riekki, Iivari & Kinnula, 2016).

2.5.7 Teachers as leaders, administrators, and managers

The multi-faceted nature of school chores creates opportunities for teachers to perform various roles, including leading, managing, and administrating. In distinguishing among leaders, managers, and administrators, Shahrill (2014) indicates that leaders do the right things, managers do things right, while administrators do the right things in the right way. Robed in all three roles, teachers render these services as the need arises. Research shows that the potential to lead is not limited to those in positions of authority (Brad & Tammy, 2010; Leithwood et al., 2010; Gumus, Bellibas, Esen & Gumus, 2016). As leaders, teachers must participate in decision-making in schools (DoE, 2000). Zombwe (2019) stresses that involving teachers in decision-making is important to the development of the teaching profession.

Decision-making during the learning and teaching process is mostly the responsibility of the teacher. As leaders, teachers' roles expand to include mentor, coach, and facilitator for other teachers (Mulrine & Huckvale, 2014) and learners (Kotirde & Yunos, 2014; Jagtap, 2016). As classroom administrators, teachers keep learner attendance records (Beckmann &

Minnaar, 2010; Mampane, 2012), prepare reports on learner social and family backgrounds, maintain statistical records of learner achievement and progress, prepare learner portfolios and bulk photocopying (Mampane, 2012). Teachers' managerial role warrants that they are responsible for organising their lessons, controlling learners' classroom activities (Lebor, 2016), and creating a conducive atmosphere (even in anticipating potential problems) for effective learning and teaching to take place (Mampane, 2012) . However, studies (Beckmann & Minnaar, 2010; Mampane, 2012; Kim, 2019) show that teachers are battling to cope with the unending list of roles that eats into their core business as curriculum leaders (learning and teaching). Brad and Tammy (2010) blame the inability of teachers to conveniently sail with the tides in the limited time devoted to core operational skills (multi-managing, planning and organisation of classroom and learning environment) during teacher preparatory programmes.

2.5.8 Teachers as pastoral caregivers

Although the first teacher role that comes to people's minds is that of learning facilitator, teachers are also pastoral caregivers: they are teachers of the whole child as well as their own subject (Noddings, 2012). Teachers' role as curriculum leaders cannot be completely separated from their pastoral role (Noddings, 2012; Phillippo, & Stone, 2013). In the context of South African schools, this role has been legislated in the Norms and Standards for Educators (DoE, 2000), stipulating that teachers uphold the constitution and promote democratic values and practices in schools and society. As a result, teachers act *in loco parentis* for learners in school. Teachers provide material, social, and emotional support to learners (Ogina, 2010; Noddings, 2012; Phillippo & Stone, 2013 & Sekhu, 2019). In a mixed-method study with 531 learners and 45 teachers in California, Phillippo and Stone (2013) analysed the degree to which teachers define their role. Their findings indicate that teachers' role includes social and emotional support to learners. This positive learner-teacher relationship Phillippo and Stone (2013) aver, promotes learner resiliency, and boosts learner outcomes and academic achievement. Renandya (2012), Phillippo and Stone (2013), and Thielking, La Sala and Flatau (2017) refer to teachers in this role as social capital. Renandya (2012) postulates that, by taking on the social capital role (as friend, caretaker, counsellor, advisor, supporter) teachers hope to prepare and create autonomous or independent learners who will take ownership of their learning and future life. In agreement with Renandya (2012), Noddings (2012) expresses that it is the hope of caring teachers that their learners will take a caring attitude in both their professional and civic life. In the course of performing their pastoral role, teachers encounter numerous challenges, such as lack of

training and experience (Ogina, 2010; Phillippo and Stone, 2013; Thielking et al., 2017; Sekhu, 2019), overwhelming need for pastoral care, and teacher academic workload (Ogina, 2010; Sekhu, 2019), absence of support from school leadership and management, and shortages of material resources (Ogina, 2010 & 2019). In order for both teachers and learners to benefit, Wood and Goba (2011) recommend the involvement of specialised support services with whom teachers can partner to address issues of vulnerable learners at school. Mavole, Mutisya, and Wambulwa (2017) reiterate the need for school social workers, arguing that such partnership falls in line with the growing leaning towards inclusive education. Moreover, professional school social workers are likely to contribute to the holistic development of the learners' personality, talents, and mental and physical abilities (Reyneke, 2018).

In the light of this study, teacher understanding of their role as curriculum leaders must encompass taking charge and influencing the holistic development of learners. The roles discussed above are intertwined in teachers' role as curriculum leaders. Teachers must be concerned and take steps in whatever way necessary to address barriers to the holistic development of learners.

2.6 Conceptualising leadership

In this section of literature, I interrogate the concept of leadership and its related parameters. The study on experiences of teachers as curriculum leaders cannot be explored in isolation from school leadership, which falls under the umbrella of education leadership, and leadership in general. Discussions include international and local literature on conceptualisation of leadership, the conundrum of leadership and management, leaders and their roles, school leadership, different types of leadership, and teachers as curriculum leaders.

2.6.1 An overview of the term leadership

The concept of leadership has been explained in very many ways, globally. For Shahrill (2014), leadership is about doing the right things correctly. Algahtani (2014) declares that leadership skills focus on potential change by establishing direction, aligning people, and motivating and inspiring them. Shahrill (2014) cites Leithwood et al. (2004), who stress that the role of leaders is to set direction, to develop people, and to redesign the organisation, in order to effect change, as Algahtani (2014) points out. In Sampson's (2012) study in Queensland, on how effective contemporary leaders influence subordinates, the researcher

reveals eight micro-level leadership practices that support a leader's effectiveness to influence subordinates, as follows: (i) challenging assumptions, (ii) coaching, (iii) listening openly, (iv) sharing responsibility, (v) giving constructive feedback with support, (vi) modelling through behaviour, (vii) demonstrating inspirational vision, and (viii) facilitating for attainment of vision.

According to Forde (2010), leadership describes the state of activities, competencies, and/or functions of a leader. Leadership is concerned with the daily activities of ordinary people who are comfortable with themselves and make a difference to the lives of others. Such people, the researcher remarks, exist at all levels of organisations. Speaking of a deprived context in the preface to his book, Chikoko (2018), explains that leadership denotes change, development, and movement. Leadership, in terms of curriculum implementation, implies maximal participation in all curriculum decision-making processes at any level. This ignites creativity and motivation for change in the classroom to maximise student learning (Alsubaie, 2016).

In the following section, I present a discussion on the relationship between leadership and management. Although the purpose of this study is to explore leadership experiences of teachers, this discussion is important because leadership and management always co-exist within an organisation.

2.6.2 The conundrum of the relationship between leadership and management

For many decades, leadership and management have been linked to people in managerial positions. It is often assumed that anyone in a managerial position is a leader (Lunenburg, 2011). Connolly, James, and Fertig (2017), in distinguishing between management and leadership, perceive management in relation to organisational hierarchy, with those occupying higher positions having more power and authority than those lower in the hierarchy. Kaiser and Hogan (2010), and Connolly et al. (2017) also look at leadership in relation to those who have senior positions in an organisational hierarchy, but acting to influence others to achieve organisational goals. Therefore, leadership and management roles and functions are regarded as reserved for those in these positions of authority (Kaiser & Hogan, 2010; Connolly et al., 2017). However, research has shown a shift from this line of thought, as illustrated below in the distinction between leadership and management (Ali , 2013, & Lopez, 2014) and Leithwood, Patten and Jantzi (2010.

Leadership and management have been conceptualised differently by numerous scholars, both internationally and locally. Management, to Christie (2010) and Ratcliffe (2013),

describes organisational structures and processes of managerial activities linked to those in formally designated positions. Ali (2013) and Lopez (2014) perceive management as planning, organising, budgeting, and controlling of an organisation's activities. For Shead, management routinely plans, executes, and measures (Shead, n.d.).

On the other hand, leadership for Leithwood et al., (2010), is a set of shared practices among all staff. Ratcliffe (2013) and Lopez (2014) consider leadership to be all about direction and influence, aligning people with the vision through communication, motivation, and inspiration. According to Ali (2013), leadership is about initiating change; and Armstrong (2016) sees leadership as a process by which to develop and communicate a vision for the future.

The overlap between management and leadership is that both are linked to people in positions of power. However, routine planning, organising, and controlling of resources for efficiency are the dominant concepts in the discourse of management; while providing direction and exercising influence are the dominant concepts in the discourse of leadership (Myende, 2018).

Unlike managerial functions that are performed only by those in positions of authority (such as principals, deputy principals, and heads of department, in the context of a school), as implied in Myende (2018), leadership functions may be performed by various people across the organisation (including teachers, students, non-teaching staff, and parents). Since leadership functions may be performed by anyone with leadership potential within the school context, teachers are leaders, irrespective of not supposedly being in positions of authority. The focus of this study is on teachers as curriculum leaders, especially because previous scholarly works (Tallerico, 2011; Ngobeni, 2011; Jenkins & Pfeifer, 2012; Ylimaki, 2012 & DeMatthews, 2014) on leading curriculum activities have focused only on principals and senior-management team members, despite teachers' daily interaction with the curriculum in the process of teaching and learning.

Management and leadership are not synonymous; yet they are mostly used interchangeably. The overlap between school leadership and management is for the purpose of attaining positive learner outcomes. Adair (2005) in Forde (2010), explains that the word leadership denotes both the role played by an individual as the leader, as well as

the attributes society expects of that individual in that role. I now turn to discuss who leaders are, and what attributes they should possess.

2.6.3 Leaders and educational leadership

According to Lopez (2014), leaders are individuals who are visionary, influential, motivational, and transformative in bringing about change in others (Forde, 2010; Heystek, 2016) to attain organisational goals. Teachers, as curriculum leaders, have to perform their role within and beyond schools, transforming learners', colleagues', and other stakeholders' lives. As leaders, teachers are knowledgeable, skilled, passionate, and committed to their profession (Nene, 2010; Kumalo, 2015), comfortable with themselves (Forde, 2010), confident, and good communicators (Molefe, 2010). Just as one cannot discuss the concept of leadership without touching on management, it goes without saying that the concept of education leadership cannot be discussed while ignoring education management. I now briefly discuss these two concepts, and then draw the link between education leadership and teachers as curriculum leaders.

The terms education leadership and school leadership are used interchangeably in literature (Odhiambo & Hii, 2012; Newman, 2013; Heystek, 2016). In this study I adopt the term education leadership. To Grant (2010), education leadership involves having a sense of direction and vision for transformation and change in the non-static complex society. Newman (2013) explains that education leadership should be morally grounded, value driven, and context sensitive (strategies teachers adopt to implement the curriculum are informed by their context). Conversely, education management concerns itself with systems and structures in maintaining the organisational status quo (Grant, 2010). The complementary functions of both education leadership and education management guide decision-making to create good learning opportunities (Bush et al., 2011), through relational leadership (Odhiambo & Hii, 2012; Okoroji, Anyanwu, & Ukpere, 2014) and collaboration (Ngcobo & Tikly, 2010). Thus, the complementary functions of both leadership and management enable teachers to perform their role as curriculum leaders for effective teaching and learning.

In the past, research on education leadership had been premised on the "great man theory of leadership", with positional power vested in the person of the principal (Grant, 2010; Chikoko, 2018). The multiplicity of chores in education leadership now waters down the "great man theory of leadership" of a heroic leader, and calls for recognition of the potentials

of teachers, whom Chikoko (2018) refers to as those on the “shop floor” and Grant, Naicker and Pillay (2018) to expansive leadership.

2.7 Attributes of teachers as curriculum leaders

A discussion of attributes of teachers as curriculum leaders is important in this study because it provides information or indicators of the calibre and nature of professionals (teachers) who should engage in curriculum decisions with other curriculum experts (Miller, 2012; Lupascu, Pânisoară & Pânisoară, 2014; Sunan & Ketkanok, 2018).
. In the light of CPD, this provides information or indicators on area mentees and/or fellow teachers who may need assistance during activities, such as peer evaluation and mentoring. As curriculum leaders, there are many attributes teachers possess that enable them to execute their role well. These are a combination of attributes of teacher leaders, good or effective teachers.

As curriculum leaders, researchers argue that teachers are academically sound, creative, good assessors, and punctual for lessons (Miller, 2012; Pretorius, 2013), a source of empowerment, emotional intelligence, collaboration, and relationship building for fellow teachers (Lumpkin, Claxton & Wilson, 2014); positive, enthusiastic, and good communicators (Clinton, Aston & Koelle, 2018). These teachers have excellent organisational, time-management, and classroom-management skills. Miller (2012), Pretorius (2013), and Banu (2014) maintain that teachers should demonstrate interest in learners, together with ethical and moral values (Miller, 2012; Lupascu et al., 2014; Sunan & Ketkanok, 2018).

2.8 Teachers as curriculum leaders

There exists a great deal of literature globally on the concept of teacher leadership (Grant, 2010; De Villiers & Pretorius, 2011; Taylor, Goeke, Klein, Onore, & Geist, 2011; Fairman & Mackenzie, 2012; Margolis & Huggins, (2012); Duncan (2014), even though there is no consensus on its definition (Neumerski, 2013). These scholars designate what teacher leadership is, what teacher leaders do, and the spaces in which they enact their leadership roles. Grant (2010) defines teacher leadership as the awareness of all classroom-based teachers in taking up informal leadership roles within and beyond the classroom, working in collaboration, mutual respect, and trust with other stakeholders towards the common goal of the school. Teacher leadership, to De Villiers and Pretorius (2011), is the development of collaboration among teachers of a given school. Teacher leadership is teachers’

improvement of themselves and others, by collaborating in teacher-initiated, teacher-led reforms driven by teachers to improve teaching and student learning (Fairman & Mackenzie, 2012; Margolis & Huggins, 2012). On the other hand, to a former United States (US) Secretary of Education − Duncan (2014), teacher leadership means teachers having a voice in the policies and decisions that impact on their students, their daily work and profession. The focus of these definitions are teacher leaders as expert teachers, and self-initiated leadership on both informal and formal activities in a spirit of trust, collegiality, and collaboration with other teachers for their own, students', and school improvement.

Literature shows that teachers enact various leadership roles both individually and collectively within four major spheres (Fairman & Mackenzie, 2012), boundaries (Daniel Muijs, Chapman, & Armstrong, 2013), or zones (Grant, 2017). Within the classroom, (1) focusing on instructional practices (Daniel Muijs et al., 2013); outside their own classrooms, (2) teachers share ideas and learning, mentoring, coaching other teachers, collaborating, and reflecting together on collective work (Fairman & Mackenzie, 2012; Grant, 2017). Within the school in whole-school development or organisational boundaries, (3) teachers interact in groups, and through relationships, re-culture the school (Fairman & Mackenzie, 2012). Beyond the school and across schools, (4) teachers collaborate with the broader school community, and parents, and assist teachers of other schools as they share work in professional organisations (Fairman & Mackenzie, 2012).

Most of these teacher leadership roles are linked to curriculum matters, yet scholarly works on leading curriculum have not given teachers the recognition as curriculum leaders. Naidoo and Petersen (2015) studied the curriculum leadership of principals, focusing on how the curriculum has been implemented, and how leadership has been affected. Zhong and Ehrich (2010) explored two principals' leadership practices on teaching and learning, and sources of power in mainland China. The burning question was "Where is the teacher in the literature of leading curriculum matters?" Although there is no direct scholarship that views teachers as curriculum leaders, if one considers what is involved in teacher leadership, how and where it takes place, teachers are indeed curriculum leaders.

2.8.1 Teachers as curriculum leaders in school-based curriculum development

Teachers, as curriculum leaders in school-based curriculum development, illustrate one of the many curriculum activities teachers engage in as curriculum leaders in school. This

concept provides some information in literature that relates to answering the third subsidiary question in this study.

School-based curricula are the formal and informal content and processes (curricular and co-curricular activities) that aid students to acquire skills, knowledge, values, understanding and attitude while at school (Carl, 2012). School-based curriculum development (SBCD) is shared decision-making among teachers, students, and others on school projects, subject-related innovations, values, norms, roles, and procedures (Chen, Wang, & Neo, 2015). SBCD activities take into consideration the interests and needs of its students (Xu & Wong, 2011).

Teachers are central to and are a crucial feature in SBCD, which reveals the initiatives of innovative teachers in creating and expanding spaces for development works in schools (Law et al., 2010). In a report on teachers' activities in a Chinese curriculum-development team, Law et al. (2010) remark that teachers adopt the action-research-based pattern of planning, experimentation and reflection. In school subject-specific research, teachers are engaged in systematic inquiry and classroom experimentation. These teachers diagnose a problematic area, plan innovative pedagogic styles, experiment through implementation, and evaluate, through reflective activities. By this, teachers empower one another, and the result is improved quality of education.

Teachers are regarded as agents of change. They must articulate school objectives in their teaching practices. Most teachers live in and share the life circumstances of their students. Thus, they are better positioned to make SBCD decisions. Priestley, Minty and Eager (2014) accentuate that the nature and extent of teacher innovations on SBCD depends on their understanding of national curriculum policy, and on a clearer vision of what the policy means within each school.

2.8.2 Teachers as curriculum leaders in instructional activities

To Gulcan (2012), instructional leadership means providing optimal situations for effective teaching and learning. Instructional leadership is about influencing teachers to produce the best of teaching and learning in the classroom (Bipath & Mafuwane, 2015). For (Woods, 2016), instructional leadership is the power and behaviour employed by principals, teachers, and other school personnel, which influence individuals and situations at school. In a

nutshell, instructional leadership is coordinating, motivating teachers and students for the best teaching, and learning results.

Teachers' role as curriculum leaders in instructional activities is invaluable. Teachers engage in activities that improve their and others' teaching practices, to achieve the general goal of schooling − student learning (Al-Mahdy et al., 2018). Teachers, as curriculum leaders, offer in-service training to new teachers. Teachers mentor, coach, and encourage their colleagues to experiment with novel practices to improve instructional performance (Law et al., 2010; Driescher, 2016). Pollara (2012), after action research on peer coaching on 15 teachers in Endeavor, New Jersey, reports that peer coaching improves instructional practices in classroom management, thus improving the teaching and learning atmosphere. Creating a favourable atmosphere for teaching and learning is an indispensable aspect of teachers' instructional activities. Baeten, Kyndt, Struyven & Dochy, 2010 reviewed a student-centred learning environment as a teaching strategy. These researchers found that when learners have a positive perception of their learning environment, they become motivated, gain self-confidence, feel self-efficacious, and more easily adopt a deep-learning approach. Erb (2010) also reports that inclusive language use, such as "we" instead of "I, and you", gives learners a feeling of togetherness, equitability, and being valued. Similarly, Singh's (2014) qualitative study on two private schools in Delhi, India, indicates that making provision for space and time for learner-learner interactions and teacher-learner interactions during the teaching and learning process, results in the classroom environment being relaxed and conducive to learning. Zajda (2018) believes that both teachers' intrinsic and extrinsic motivation for learners creates an atmosphere that triggers independent learning.

The teachers' role as curriculum leader in instructional activities is also confirmed in the findings of Mayfield II, (2018). The study by Mayfield II (2018) reveals that teachers perform instructional leadership roles such as performance evaluation, professional development of colleagues, and monitoring of instructional practices.

In the classroom, the teacher, as the curriculum leader, directs or facilitates the transfer of the learning content through a planned lesson, assessing the effectiveness of student learning (Carl, 2012). Teachers adopt various pedagogical strategies, based on learners' interests and needs. In a mixed-method study in Istanbul, Turkey, Altintas and Özdemir (2015) evaluated teachers' use of a differentiated approach on both gifted and non-gifted learners, reporting that student achievement improved significantly. From their qualitative

study on Zimbabwean teachers, Mupa and Chinooneka (2015) suggest the use of profiling learners according to their abilities, making ample use of explanations, demonstrations, and a variety of techniques in setting questions as helpful pedagogic strategies for effective teaching and learning.

The school principal, as the recognised instructional leader, checks for a conducive teaching and learning environment, and provides materials. However, the transactional act of impacting that which is to transform the students, rests with the curriculum leader of the moment − the teacher.

2.8.3 Teachers as curriculum leaders beyond the school

In teachers' quest to continuously improve on their practice and influence others to do the same, they network with colleagues both within and outside the school boundaries. Networks, professional learning communities (PLCs), or clusters, are related terms (Jita & Mokhele, 2014). Networks provide teachers with a platform for collaboration, thus breaking the traditional solo way of operating. A PLC is a community which recognises that its members' learning is key to student learning. Literature also refers to a PLC as a group of collaborative, reflective, inclusive, and supportive individuals, focused on the advancement of their practice by acquiring knowledge to improve student learning (Stoll, 2011; DuFour, DuFour, Eaker & Many, 2013). Teachers in the PLCs create opportunities for teacher learning, in a bid to strengthen teacher professionalism (Cereseto, 2016). Teachers do so by engaging in continuous action research (DuFour et al., 2013), team dialogue (Steyn, 2014), and in collectively analysing strategies for building shared knowledge, thus improving and sustaining practices in teaching and learning (Ainscow, 2010).

The discussion above foregrounds these teacher networks on collaborative inquiry by all school professionals focused on improving teacher learning. This may be accomplished through social support to improve student learning. Teachers collect data on student learning through assessment results, analysing them collectively, and linking findings to teachers' knowledge and pedagogic strengths and weaknesses. Based on these data, the team develops strategies that improve both teachers' learning, classroom practices (curriculum implementation), and student learning (DuFour et al., 2013).

Furthermore, teachers set, pre-moderate, mark, and post-moderate quarterly grade benchmark assessment tests for the district (Driescher, 2016). Teachers perform cross-sectoral moderation for various subjects at cluster level (Grant, 2012), and end-of-course examinations at national levels (Driescher, 2016). Teachers also provide professional development sessions across districts, contributing to the development of the district curriculum (Smith et al., 2017).

In leading curriculum activities beyond the school, teachers also engage with parents through varying forms of communication – phone calls, emails, text messages, and face-to-face meetings (Kaptich, Kiplangat & Munyua, 2019). Thompson and Mazer (2012) suggest that teacher-parent communication in a southern district in the United States focuses on many aspects of a learner, but with particular attention on academic performance. Lemmer (2012) observes that, in the context of South African schools, such engagements are mostly conferences, ritualised events characterised by a client orientation to parents, instead of to home-school relations. These interactions are overwhelmingly geared at problem-solving, resulting in limited expectations from parents and teachers.

2.9 Teachers' experiences of their role as curriculum leaders

This concept provides some information in the literature in answering the first part of the main research question of this study: What are teachers' experiences of their role as curriculum leaders in selected South African secondary schools?

Obi (2018) reports in her study on Cameroonian teachers, that teachers share decision-making on curricular matters, especially decisions that influence student learning. Teachers advise the administration on certain subject allocations in examination classes (grades). Such collaborative practices, according to Hallinger and Heck (2010), promote extensive sharing in decision-making and responsibility for student learning. Teachers in Namibia share professional knowledge on teaching techniques, and classroom management strategies during subject and departmental meetings (Hamatwi, 2015). Teachers in Namibia (Hamatwi, 2015) and Illinois (DuFour et al., 2013) also engage in effective curriculum implementation through joint lesson planning, delivery, and assessment of student learning, during which they identify and assist struggling students. These teachers engage as curriculum developers for knowledge enhancement through reflective teaching. In SBCD, teachers enact their role as curriculum leaders when they engage in action research. Law et al. (2010), in Hong Kong, reveal teachers' engagement in their systematic inquiry and

classroom experimentation. These researchers adopt context-specific resolutions to improve student learning. Teachers in PLCs engage in similar action-research practices for their professional growth (DuFour et al., 2013).

Teachers also encounter negative experiences as they perform their role as curriculum leaders. In a survey involving 41,020 cases, Xie and Shen (2013) found that, among others issues, teachers in US public schools are not given the opportunity to evaluate their peers, or participate in decision-making on hiring new full-time teachers, nor in selecting textbooks. Hong and Youngs (2014) reveal that South Korean teachers refused the autonomy granted to them to decide on certain curriculum issues. Teachers stated that it was not an autonomy per se, because curriculum content is still dictated by the central agency. Schools are only allowed to choose the subjects to offer, and the number of hours per subject. Moreover, teachers perceived that the said autonomy has come with some job insecurity for teachers.

2.9.1 Teachers' understanding of their role as curriculum leaders

This concept also provides some information in the literature in answering the second part of the main research question in this study: What are teachers' understanding of their role as curriculum leaders in selected South African secondary schools?

Scholarly works on teachers' understanding of their role as curriculum leaders show varying views. In their study of some South African teachers, De Villiers and Pretorius (2011) report that teachers' understanding of their role as curriculum leaders means to facilitate teaching; such that all students, including the marginalised and disadvantaged attain effective learning; to mentor new teachers, thus improving on their teaching practices, and to encourage school-wide approaches to teaching, learning, and assessment. Angelle and Teague's (2014) study of three districts in the south-eastern state of Tennessee reveals teachers' understanding of their role as curriculum leaders as engagement to aid their peers. Teachers share new ideas for teaching through professional development, grade meetings, and other school-wide meetings.

In contrast with the near-common perceptions held by most teachers of their role as curriculum leaders, Turkish teachers (Gülbahar, 2017) exhibit a poor perception of teacher leadership, in general. Apart from the awareness of their role as curriculum leaders in the implementation of the curriculum in classrooms, these teachers show low levels of any commitment to institutional development (Gülbahar, 2017). Despite some differences in

teachers' perceptions of their role as curriculum leaders, there are some dominant aspects. These include professional assistance to colleagues through mentoring, coaching, and modelling (Harris & Jones, 2010), improved teaching strategies, and practices for effective student learning (Song et al., 2011), redesigning the school curriculum, and articulating school-wide vision and development (Xu & Wong, 2011).

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2.9.2 Creating opportunities for teachers as curriculum leaders

This literature assists in the discussion of the findings of the fourth subsidiary question on how school managers create opportunities for teacher leadership in curriculum matters.

By capacitating teachers through aspects such as mentoring, motivation, and engaging in the practice of distributed leadership, school managers open opportunities for teachers' role as curriculum leaders to emerge (Hadebe, 2013).

To answer the question "what is distributed leadership?" Parker (2015) expresses concern about a range of terms used in the literature to refer to distributed leadership. These include collective leadership (Taylor et al., 2011; Gronn, 2016), shared leadership (Harris & DeFlaminis, 2016; Driescher, 2016), and devolved leadership (Bush, 2018). As a result, any form of leadership with any such terms may be referred to as distributed leadership. Concurring with Parker (2015), after a desk review of hundreds of articles on distributed leadership from 2002 to 2013, Tian, Risku and Collin (2016) conclude that there is no clear definition of distributed leadership.

However, the dominant component of distributed leadership is spreading leadership across the organisation to every potential leader. School leadership is distributed both formally and informally among people and for a range of tasks. Formally, school managers assign teachers to lead various school committees. These teachers make decisions to achieve the objectives of the said committees, which may either indirectly or directly impact on student learning and school improvement. School managers support informal leadership activities of teachers, such as when teachers assume positions of subject heads, or grade or phase coordinators (Driescher, 2016).

As motivation, school managers should create participatory management structures in school (Ho, 2010; Pillay, 2015). Participating in formal decision-making processes, for

example, avails teachers a platform to work collaboratively with colleagues. When school managers align teachers' tasks with their expertise, this motivates teachers to engage in leading curriculum activities (Hadebe, 2013). School managers should build trust and confidence in teachers, for example, by inviting teachers to propose solutions to a given problem before managers make an input. Through power and vision sharing and incorporating teachers' ideas to inform decisions and practice, teachers' capacities as curriculum leaders are built (Emira, 2010; Angelle & Teague, 2014).

From a study of principals of three different schools in Shanghai, Qian and Walker (2013) report that these principals created opportunities for teachers. The principals allowed time for teachers to prepare lessons together, and to observe and analyse one another's teaching methods (Qian & Walker, 2013). The principals gave financial rewards to teachers who were recognised for outstanding performance (Qian & Walker, 2013). They selected and tailored development strategies to fit their contexts and formed partnership with consultants/external sources to harness teacher professional development.

In South Africa, Naicker and Mestry (2013) studied teachers' reflection on distributive leadership in primary schools in Soweto. Their study reveals that the leadership in these schools is rooted in classical leadership practices. Potential for distributive leadership is hindered by autocratic styles of leadership, hierarchical structures, and non-participative decision-making. Fani's (2015) qualitative case study of a township secondary school in the Eastern Cape suggests similar findings. Chua, Thien, Lim, Tan and Guan (2020) report a lack of support for PLC activities from Malaysian school authorities because the school authorities had inappropriate perceptions of the concept of PLCs.

When school managers create conducive conditions, such as a supportive vision, and scheduled time for PLCs to operate, these make space for teachers to enact their roles as curriculum leaders (Steyn, 2013 & 2014). Furthermore, when school managers engage teachers in action research to support an inquiry into their own practice, and develop action plans to test and evaluate the impact, this enhances teacher professional learning for the enactment of curriculum-related practices (Thomas, Turner, Brandon, & Friesen, 2018).

2.10 Summary

In this chapter, I explained some of what existing literature holds on related aspects of teachers as curriculum leaders. These included conceptualising the curriculum, curriculum

leaders, teachers' roles, teachers' understanding and experiences of their role as curriculum leaders, as well as examples of how school managers create opportunities for teachers to execute their role as curriculum leaders. In the proceeding chapter, I discuss the theoretical framework of the study and other related leadership theories.

CHAPTER THREE

FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I present a detailed discussion of the theoretical framework on which the data analysis is grounded, this is Grant's (2012) Teacher Leadership Model. Salient issues, as well as criticisms emerging from the model, are discussed. A proper understanding of this model is essential in situating the study, and in interpreting teachers' experiences as curriculum leaders. In this chapter, I also discuss some theories of leadership that impact on the practice of teacher leadership and by implication, teachers' leadership in curriculum matters.

3.2 Grant's Model – Teacher Leadership

Grant formulated four zones in which teachers as leaders operate, by adapting Devaney's (1987) six roles. Grant used this new model as a tool for analysing data for her study on teacher leadership in South Africa (Grant, 2006). In 2012, Grant improved upon her model by adding indicators of each role. The complete model consists of three levels of analysis. Level One harbours the four zones, Level Two the six roles performed in the different zones, and Level Three comprises indicators attached to each role (Grant, 2012). In this study, the concept of teachers as curriculum leaders falls under the umbrella of teacher leadership. In the following section I present the model in greater detail, linking its relevance to this study.

3.3 Zones, roles, and indicators of the model

Grant's (2012) model describes teacher leadership as practised in different zones. Fairman and Mackenzie (2012) refer to these zones as spheres, and contend that teachers enact various leadership roles both individually and collectively within these four major spheres. Muijs, Chapman, and Armstrong (2013) acknowledge these different zones, alluding to them as boundaries.

In Zone one, which is within the classroom, Grant (2012) declares that teachers perform Role One of the model. Grant presents this role as continuing to teach and improve on their teaching. This role, according to Muijs et al. (2013) includes focusing on instructional practices (Daniel Muijs et al., 2013). In the view of Fairman and Mackenzie (2012), an individual teacher in this zone engages in experiments, and reflects on learning about their

practice, improving on their teaching. The seven indicators of teacher leadership activities in this zone, as put forward by Grant (2012), are: (i) centrality of expert practice (including appropriate teaching and assessment strategies, and expert knowledge); by this, teachers implement and evaluate learners' acquisition of subject-content knowledge imparted to learners, (ii) keeping abreast of new developments (attendance at workshops and further studies) for own professional development, (iii) designing of learning activities, and improvisation or appropriate use of resources, (iv) processes of record-keeping and reflective practices, (v) engagement in classroom action research, (vi) maintaining of effective classroom discipline and meaningful relationship with learners, and (vii) taking initiative, and engaging in autonomous decision-making to make change happen in the classroom to the benefit of learners. Zone one appears to be the area in which the teachers' role as curriculum leader is most evident. This zone presents teachers as content-area specialists. Scribner and Bradley-Levine (2010) describe this role of teachers as the most important role within the cultural logic (among organisationally legitimised roles and gendered leadership roles) that shaped teacher leadership in their study. This zone is the centre of teacher curriculum-leading activities, or curriculum implementation (Grant, 2012). It is the zone in which teachers claim the most ownership of their profession. Anyone who speaks of teacher leadership visualises teachers in action in this zone. In this zone, I obtained the most authentic data for this study. During lesson observations, I observed teachers creating a conducive learning environment (Banegas, 2019), facilitating the teaching and learning process, demonstrating pedagogic prowess and content knowledge, and assessing learners, inter alia (Ahonen et al., 2014).

Zone Two of Grant's (2012) model is outside of the classroom. Here, teachers work with learners and teachers on both curricular and extra-curricular activities. In this zone, teachers enact three of the six roles of this model (Roles Two, Three, and Four). Role Two is the providing of curriculum development knowledge. Indicators of this role are: (i) joint curriculum development (core and extracurricular), (ii) team teaching, (iii) taking initiative in subject committee meetings, (iv) working to contextualise curriculum for own particular school, (v) attending Department of Education workshops, taking new learning with critique back to school staff, and (vi) extra-/co-curricular coordination (e.g., sports, and cultural activities). Role Three has as indicators the leading of in-service education, and assisting other teachers, (i) forging close relationships and building rapport with individual teachers through which mutual learning takes place, (ii) introducing staff-development initiatives, (iii) peer coaching, (iv) a mentoring role for teacher leaders (including induction), (v) building

skills and confidence in others, (vi) and working with integrity, trust, and transparency. Within Zone Two, Role Four entails participating in performance evaluation of teachers. The following indicators are indicative of this role: (i) engagement in integrated quality management system (IQMS) activities such as peer assessment, for example, and involvement in developing support groups, (ii) informal peer assessment activities, (iii) moderation of assessment tasks, and (iv) reflection on core and co-curricular/extracurricular activities. In performing these roles, teachers share ideas and learning; they mentor and coach other teachers, while collaborating and reflecting together on collective work (Fairman & Mackenzie, 2012; Muijs et al., 2013). In the view of Hoang (2008), teachers seek expertise from their colleagues. A report by The Center for the Future of Teaching and Learning (2017), is in accord with teacher curriculum-leading activities in this zone. The report states that teachers collaborate with peers to influence, improve, and transform curriculum implementation in the process of teaching and learning. The relevance of Zone Two to this study is that it provides the arena or space in which teachers continue to facilitate learning, as in extracurricular activities during physical education, which is relevant for the holistic development of learners. Within this zone, teachers reflect on their practice, exchanging ideas both formally and informally with their peers, to improve on their art of curriculum implementation.

Within the school, whole school development, or organisational boundaries are presented as Zone Three of Grant's (2012) model. Evident in this zone are Roles Five and Six. As Role Five, teachers participate in organising and leading peer reviews of school practice, by their involvement in (i) organisational diagnosis (Audit: SWOT− strengths weaknesses opportunities and threats) and dealing with the change process (School Development Planning), (ii) whole school evaluation processes, (iii) school-based action research, (iv) mediating role (informal mediation as well as union representation), (v) school practices, including fundraising, policy development, and professional development initiatives.

Teachers perform Role Six by participating in school-level decision-making: (i) awareness of and non-partisan attitude to micro-politics of school (work with integrity, trust and transparency), (ii) participative leadership, in which all teachers feel part of the change or development, and have a sense of ownership, (iii) problem identification and solution, (v) conflict resolution and communication skills, (vi) school-based planning and decision-making. Fairman and Mackenzie (2012) put this forward in other words, by expressing that teachers interact in groups and through relationships. Thus, teachers re-culture the school,

and question, advocate, and build support and organisational capacity while engaging in collective school-wide improvement. As curriculum leaders within this zone, my study gauges teachers' involvement in decision-making and activities on the development and evaluation of school-based curriculum (Algers & Silva-Fletcher, 2015; Alsubaie, 2016) professional development initiatives, informal performance evaluation of fellow teachers, staff placement, and teaching-resource selection for possible improvement (Obi, 2018), with emphasis on curriculum-related grey areas (Handler, 2010).

The fourth zone of Grant's (2012) model focuses on teacher-leadership activities beyond the school and across schools. This zone harbours Roles Two and Three as discussed earlier in Zone Two, above. The indicators of Role Two in both Zones Two and Four are the same as illustrated in Zone Two above. Role Three indicators for Zone Four are: (i) forge relationships with, and build rapport with individual teachers, through which mutual learning takes place, (ii) staff development initiatives, (iii) peer coaching, (iv) mentoring role of teacher leaders (including induction), (v) and building skills and confidence in others. Within this zone, teachers collaborate with the broader school community, and teachers share work in professional organisations (Fairman & Mackenzie, 2012). This implies that teachers provide curriculum-development knowledge, leading in-service education, and assisting teachers of other schools. Teachers provide curriculum-leading services within the cluster, circuit, district, provincial, and even at national levels on curriculum development aspects, as well as the community, in building partnerships of learning communities (Grant, 2012). In this study, these indicators serve as a guide to exploring teachers' understanding and experiences of their role as curriculum leaders.

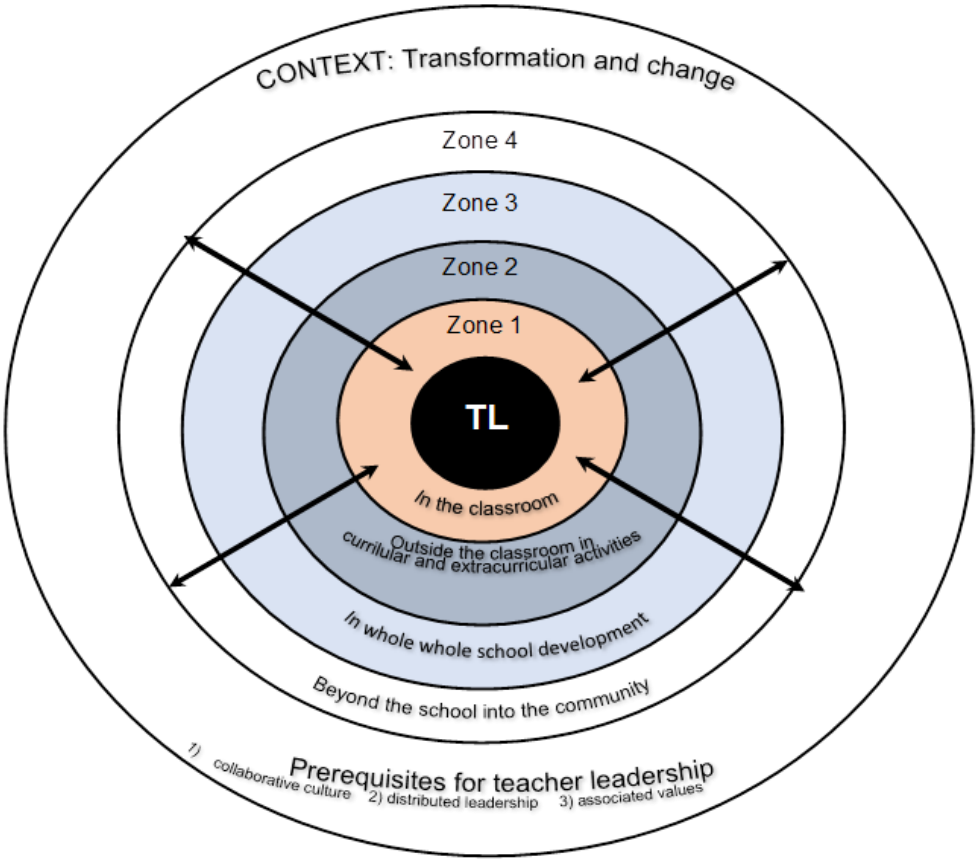
3.4 Organisational prerequisites of the model

As prerequisites for teachers to engage in these roles, school contexts must be transformative, to bring about change. Distributed leadership, collaboration, and values associated with collaborative work, must exist. School managers are expected to practise distributed leadership by creating participatory structures in schools (Ho, 2010; (Pillay, 2015), to allow teachers to step forward and unleash their potential as curriculum leaders. A collaborative culture must reign where there is interdependency (Spillane, 2006 & Bush, 2013). Teachers tap into the expertise of one another when they engage in curriculum-leading activities such as peer coaching, peer observation, professional learning, and community discussions, for the common goal of improving education quality through better teaching and learning practices. Teachers collaborate when the associated values of trust,

respect, and support exist (Emira, 2010; Hadebe, 2013; Angelle & Teague, 2014).This section of Grant's (2012) model for the present study, enables the exploration of ways in which school managers create opportunities for teachers to engage in curriculum-leading activities in the various zones (such as lesson planning, identification of learner and teacher strengths and weaknesses), in order to jointly adopt strategies for improvement. This answers the fourth subsidiary question of the study and contributes to the overall experiences of teachers as curriculum leaders.

Teachers' understanding of their role as curriculum leaders, therefore, should be reflected in their activities within the different zones of the model: opportunities to enact such a role arise, or are initiated by teachers themselves. Figure 3.1 is a diagrammatic representation of Grant's (2012) model.

Figure 3.1: Model of teacher leadership (Grant, 2012)



FIRST LEVEL OF ANALYSIS FOUR ZONES							
Zone 1 In the classroom	**Zone 2** Working with other teachers and learners outside the classroom in curricular and extracurricular activities			**Zone 3** Outside the classroom in whole school development		**Zone 4** Beyond the school into the community	
SECOND LEVEL OF ANALYSIS SIX ROLES							
One: Continuing to teach and improve one's own teaching	**Two:** Providing curriculum-development knowledge	**Three:** Leading in-service education and assisting other teachers	**Four:** Participating in performance-evaluation of teachers	**Five:** Organising and leading peer reviews of school practice	**Six:** Participating in school-level decision-making	**Two:** Providing curriculum-development knowledge	**Three:** Leading in-service education and assisting other teachers
THIRD LEVEL OF ANALYSIS INDICATORS							
1. Centrality of expert practice (including appropriate teaching & assessment strategies and expert knowledge. **2.** Keeping abreast of new developments (attendance at workshops and further study) for own professional development. **3.** Designing of learning activities and improvisation/appropriate use of resources. **4.** Processing of record-keeping and reflection practice. **5.** Engagement in classroom action research. **6.** Maintaining effective classroom discipline and meaningful relationships with learners (evidence of pastoral-care role). **7.** Take initiative and engage in autonomous decision-making to make change happen in classroom, to benefit of learners.	**1.** Joint curriculum development (core and extra-/co-curricular). **2.** Team teaching. **3.** Take initiative in subject-committee meetings. **4.** Work to contextualise curriculum for own particular school. **5.** Attend DOE curriculum workshop & and take new learning, with critique, back to school staff. **6.** Extra-/co-curricular coordination (e.g., sports, cultural activities, etc).	**1.** Forge close relationships and build rapport with individual teachers through which mutual learning takes place. **2.** Staff development initiatives. **3.** Peer coaching. **4.** Mentoring role of teacher leaders (including induction). **5.** Building skills and confidence in others. **6.** Work with integrity, trust and transparency.	**1.** Engage in IQMS activities such as peer assessment, e.g., involvement in development support groups. **2.** Informal peer-assessment activities. **3.** Moderation of assessment tasks. **4.** Reflection on core and co-/extra- curricular activities.	**1**. Organisational diagnosis (audit SWOT and dealing with the change processes (school development planning). **2**. Whole-school evaluation processes. **3**. School-based action research **4.** Mediating role (informal mediation as well as union representation). **5**. School practices, including fundraising, policy development, staff development, professional development initiatives, etc.	**1**. Awareness & non-partisanship in micro-politics of school (work with integrity, trust, and transparency). **2**. Participative leadership in which all teachers feel part of the change or development, and have a sense of ownership **3**. Problem identification and resolution. **4**. Conflict resolution and communication skills. **5**. School-based planning and decision-making.	**1.** Joint curriculum development (core and extra-/co-curricular). **2.** Liaise with and empower parents on curriculum issues (parent meetings, visits, communication – written or verbal). **3.** Liaise with and empower the SGB regarding curriculum issues (SGB meetings, workshops, training – influencing of agenda. **4.** Networking at circuit/district/regional/provincial level through committee or cluster meeting involvement.	**1.** Forge close relationships and build rapport with individual teachers through which mutual learning takes place. **2.** Staff development initiatives. **3.** Peer coaching. **4**. Mentoring role of teacher leaders (including inducting). **5.** Building skills and confidence in others. **6.** Work with integrity, trust, and transparency.

3.5 Contextual understanding of teachers as curriculum leaders in South Africa

It is widely acknowledged that context impacts on leadership practices (Bredeson, Klar & Johansson, 2011). For Makhasane, Simamane and Chikoko (2018), leadership, as with any other process, can be better understood within a given context. Grant (2006) explains that understanding the context in which teacher leadership, in general, occurs, is imperative. Before the onset of democracy in South Africa in 1994, teacher curriculum leadership, as with teacher leadership, in general, was limited to the confines of the classroom. School leadership was characterised by autocratic styles of leadership, hierarchical structures, and non-participative decision-making (Noleen, 2004).

With the dawn of democracy in 1994, the South African education system embarked on a democratisation process, in which school leadership should not be the task of only a few positional individuals. Through policies such as The National Task Team on Education Management (1996a), SASA (1996b), and Norms and Standards for Educators (2000), the apartheid education system, which was divided along racial lines, was dismantled, and a unified non-racial system ushered in (Bush & Glover, 2016). However, despite the numerous policies, as indicated above, twenty-five years down the line, this paradigmatic shift from autocracy to democracy in school processes is yet to take firm root in many schools. This is evident in studies by De Villiers and Pretorius (2011), Naicker and Mestry (2011 & 2013), and Driescher (2016). This paradigmatic shift must be actualised for teachers to better understand and take up their role as curriculum leaders, and for school managers to unreservedly create opportunities for teacher agency, thereby setting a context which enables transformation and change.

3.6 Strengths and weaknesses of the model

The teacher-leadership model by Grant (2012) provides a succinct conceptual clarity on teacher leadership, in general, in the context of South Africa. The model incorporates the roles, zones, or places of enactment of roles, role indicators, organisational prerequisites, and context, in order to provide this conceptual clarity.

My analysis of the indicators of the various roles of the model situates the model more as a 'model of teacher curriculum leadership'. The model has been used extensively in empirical studies in the South African and Namibian contexts (Xulu, 2010; Moonsamy, 2010; Fani, 2015; Hashikutuva, 2011; Hamatwi, 2015). Despite its extensive use, Grant's (2012) model of teacher leadership, as with most theories and conceptual underpinnings, is far from complete. Some scholars (Moonsamy, 2010; Kumalo, 2015 John, 2015 & Pillay, 2015) have pointed out a few shortfalls, that are discussed in the next section.

3.7 Limitations of the model

I conceptualise that, although Grant's model of teacher leadership does not encompass all issues of teacher leadership, it is apt for my study on the exploration of teachers' experiences and understanding of their role as curriculum leaders. Its aptness to my study is in criticism of Moonsamy (2010) and John (2015), who aver that the model fails to capture non-curriculum practices. Moonsamy (2010) strongly holds that Zone Four needs a third role that focuses on social and humanitarian issues; and Zone Three a third role on teacher-leader working with learners at whole-school level (as revealed by his study). This role includes interrelationships that teachers engage in, such as those connected to the complex challenges faced by mainstream learners. Kumalo (2015) also sees the absence of personal dispositions and attributes of a teacher leader in the model as a shortfall. On her part, Pillay (2015) criticises the model, based on the absence of 'collaborative structures' and 'agency' as prerequisites for the emergence of teacher leadership. These gaps the respective critics filled in their individual studies.

In this study, Grant's model of teacher leadership (2012) also served other purposes, apart from being used as the analytical tool for teachers as curriculum leaders. This model guided the literature reviewed on aspects of teacher curriculum leading. It assisted in the development of the data-collection instrument, as well as in pre-determining categories for eventual themes for analysis.

I now present a discussion on teacher leadership, and some educational leadership theories, with a bearing on this study of teachers' experiences as curriculum leaders.

3.8 Conceptualising teacher leadership

A conceptualisation of teacher leadership is essential to this study because it embodies the concept of teachers as curriculum leaders. While teachers, as curriculum leaders, focus mainly on teacher-leading curriculum activities (the core of this present study), teacher leadership covers curriculum matters and every other aspect or domain in which teachers lead. Research into teacher leadership portrays the concept as highly contested, with a myriad of definitions (Cosenza, 2015; Warren, 2015). Grant (2010) defines teacher leadership as the awareness of all classroom-based teachers in taking up informal leadership roles within and beyond the classroom, working in collaboration, mutual respect, and trust with other stakeholders towards the common goal of the school. (Taylor et al., 2011) maintain that teacher leadership embodies individual teacher development, collaboration, and organisational development, as the main foci areas of practising teachers. (Taylor et al., 2011) reiterate that teacher leadership unfolds as a specific type of relationship that naturally mobilises others in their interchange of expertise, to improve upon their practice.

The relational approach of teacher leadership definition, for me, is rooted in the collegial, collaborative, and interdependent ways of teachers in engaging in professional activities. This is opposed to the solo way in which teachers previously performed their art. For example, instead of teachers individually preparing and planning their lessons, as previously, now teachers of the same phase, grade, and/or subject endeavour jointly to perform such activities.

Cosenza (2015) qualitatively studied the perceptions of twenty-two teachers in southern California on the meaning of teacher leadership. The findings revealed five themes – collaboration, sharing best practices, acting (being drivers of their profession), role modelling, and formal roles.

3.8.1 Teachers as leaders

Traditionally, teacher leaders are experienced or expert teachers with good teaching skills, knowledge of their subject, curriculum, and classroom management (Warren,

2015). Although I work from the premise that every teacher is a leader, in every school there are teachers who are more visionary, who want to see more change and improvement in learners, fellow teachers, and the school (Angelle & DeHart, 2011; Grant, 2012). These teachers go beyond the responsibilities expected of all teachers. (Ankrum, 2016) echoes the same notion of change, by saying that teacher leaders are catalysts of change in schools. Teacher leaders are also regarded by Angelle and DeHart (2011) as decision-makers, visionary teachers, future-oriented, with abilities to listen, to solve problems, with school goals in mind. Such teachers, regardless of their designation or level in the hierarchy, continue to teach, and simultaneously take up their agential role to make change happen.

A qualitative analysis of the perceptions of school administrators, teachers, learners and parents in the Turkish culture, by Cemaloğlu and Duran (2018), reveals that teacher leaders are those who create awareness and difference in schools. Such teachers positively impact on school culture and climate; they are role models, tolerant, fair, and advocates of collaboration with colleagues. Teacher expertise provides the influence that allows them to take on their roles as leaders (De Villiers, 2010). Teachers influence their colleagues by modelling lessons within schools and beyond, as in professional-learning communities. One may add that an expert teacher cannot sit back and watch school activities being performed in any random manner. The know-how within the expert teacher forces its way out, enabling the expert teacher to take initiative; for example, to mentor novice teachers, thus ensuring effective teaching and learning. To Taylor, Yates, Meyer and Kinsella (2011), teacher leaders are curious, committed to student learning, and are positively oriented towards internal and external professional development. Certain conditions have to be in place for teacher leadership to be enacted. Teachers must take up their role and make a meaningful impact on effective teaching and learning, and whole-school improvement.

3.8.2 Conditions for functionality

Grant (2012), suggests three prerequisites or conditions necessary for teacher leadership, which encompass the activities of teachers as curriculum leaders. These are: distributed leadership, collaborative culture, and associated values (trust, respect, recognition, transparency, ownership, consultation).

Teachers are drawn into decision-making processes in which leadership is distributed. The more leadership distributed, the greater the opportunities for teacher leadership beyond the classroom (Grant, 2010), and subsequent transformation and change of the school context. According to (Slabbert, 2013), teacher leadership is a means of operationalising distributed leadership. In the same vein, Bush and Glover (2016) assert that it is improbable to embed distributed leadership in schools without teacher leaders: both teacher leadership and distributed leadership are underpinned by the notion of shared values. Teacher leadership is made possible when leadership is genuinely distributed. This type of distributed leadership is referred to as dispersed distributed leadership. In the light of this study, where dispersed distributed leadership is practised, teachers, as curriculum leaders, are autonomous. Such teachers initiate curriculum activities without the formal working of hierarchy. These teachers are supported by the hierarchy that puts structures in place (Pillay, 2015) to enable teachers to make use of the knowledge, skills, and attributes they possess (John, 2015). As curriculum leaders in a context of distributed leadership, teachers do not rigidly adhere to standard operating procedures. For example, teachers will re-design learning programme materials to suit the specific needs and context of their learners (Makgato & Ramaligela, 2012).

The presence of collaborative culture as an enabler of teacher leadership, and by extension teacher activities as curriculum leaders, cannot be overemphasised. Angelle and DeHart (2011) maintain that, for teacher leaders to be effective, teachers must not operate in a vacuum, but must share their ideas and decisions with the rest of the faculty. This includes making use of departmental and common planning time. As curriculum leaders, teachers no longer work independently because of the enormous benefits associated with collaborative school culture. Teachers interact with colleagues within and across schools, sharing knowledge of their practice, as they lead and learn in their community of practice (Bush, 2013; Taylor et al., 2011).

According to Hallinger and Walker (2016), to establish collective trust is of utmost importance for nourishing the workplace (school) collaboration and development of PLCs. Collaboration in leading curriculum activities is impossible in the absence of trust, respect, recognition, and transparency (Emira, 2010; Grant, 2012; Hadebe,

2013). De Villiers (2010) avers that trust, as a value, is essential. Trust motivates and encourages commitment and ownership of operations within an enabling school environment. Here trust is valued, developed, nurtured, supported, and rewarded. Rewards can come in the slightest form of recognition, acknowledgement, and appreciation. Lizotte (2013) indicates that, unsurprisingly, teachers want their efforts to be recognised even with monetary compensation. Recognition encourages teachers to become more innovative. When recognition is absent, the likely message is that the activities performed by the teacher leaders are irrelevant.

3.8.3 Benefits of teacher leadership

Increasingly, teacher leadership is seen as a key option for school reform and improvement (Aliakbari & Sadeghi, 2014). There are numerous benefits to learners, teachers, schools, parents, and the community when teachers lead, and especially in curriculum activities. Zondo (2013) maintains that teacher leadership improves the quality of schooling, providing principals with access to more minds, hearts, and hands. Thus the complex task is undertaken of improving learning for everyone (De Villiers, 2010) by unleashing the untapped potential of teachers as leaders, for school improvement (Frost, 2012).

Angelle and DeHart (2011) report that, when teacher leadership is promoted in school through inclusion in decision-making, teachers express more professional satisfaction, less stress, and more loyalty to the principal, and the improved educational climate of the school (Cheng & Szeto, 2016), increasing the scholastic aptitude of schools (Ankrum, 2016). A similar finding in the South African context is reported by Melikhaya (2015)**,** that teachers showed high levels of enthusiasm in initiating and leading activities, such as professional development training, from which their peers learn new pedagogical strategies. (De Villiers, 2010) ascribes such enthusiasm to teacher expertise and self-efficacy. Teachers, as leaders, are knowledgeable in curriculum content and pedagogy. As curriculum leaders, they are confident and willing to share this knowledge in their community of practice, within and beyond the school. This influences best practice among teachers, thereby improving the quality of education to learners. As (Driescher, 2016) remarks, true leadership implies making efforts to

share acquired knowledge and expertise, thus developing and supporting other colleagues.

3.8.4 Challenges to teacher leadership

There is hardly any profession or role performed which is void of obstacles. Teacher-leadership practice, as beneficial as it is to all stakeholders of schools, is riddled with challenges brought about by the same beneficiaries. Some hindrances to teacher leadership reported by researchers include an unfavourable school structure (Hadebe, 2013; Xie and Shen, 2013), egalitarianism (Gumede, 2011), absence of associated values (Kumalo, 2015), lack of time and resources, and heavy workload (Al-Taneiji & Ibrahim, 2017; Good, Barocas, Chávez-Moreno, Feldman & Canela, 2017).

School structure plays a major role in the practise of teacher leadership. Conversely, school structure can be crippling. School structure that is bureaucratic and centralised reflects absence of distributed leadership practices. Within such a structure, the principal and other management members of the school do not create opportunities for teachers to perform leadership roles. In a survey inquiring into the level of teacher leadership, examining US national representative data from 2003-04, Xie and Shen (2013) report substantially low levels of teacher leadership in school, especially in related areas such as evaluating teachers, hiring new full-time teachers, and deciding on how the school budget will be spent; also in curriculum-related areas such as establishing the curriculum, and selecting textbooks and other instructional materials. As curriculum leaders, in the light of this study, these teachers are disarmed if they cannot be involved in decision-making of such important curriculum activities**.** The exclusion practice is perpetuated through top-bottom school structures, which Xie and Shen (2013) blame on policy emphasis to maintain curriculum standards. Regarding this paradox, Priestley, Edwards, Mille and Priestley (2012) state that teachers are increasingly required to act as agents of change in the wake of new forms of curricular policy, yet their agency is under-theorised and often misconstrued. Similar findings of top-down structures are reported by Aliakbari and Sadeghi (2014) with Iranian teachers, and Melikhaya (2015) with South African teachers. Al-Taneiji and Ibrahim (2017) explain that some school administrators feel insecure when teachers show

leadership charisma, resolving to exclude teachers from decision-making for fear that they may influence school operations. Al-Taneiji and Ibrahim (2017) reveal unfair distribution of leadership roles in most of their case schools. Most principals prefer certain groups of teachers, supporting ideas these teachers initiate, and giving them more opportunities to assume leadership roles. This leads to departmentalisation, in which teachers see themselves as members of specific departments, rather than as staff of a single organisation. This makes collaboration and teamwork difficult, eroding the leadership drive in teachers, as the practice of favouritism leaves no room for trust, but breeds division.

Exclusion of teachers in decision-making in the South African context is contrary to policies such as SASA (1996b), and Norms and Standards for Educators (DoE, 2000). Teachers' roles of learning-area specialists, and interpreters and designers of learning materials, mandate inclusion in decision-making at any stage of the curriculum-development process. Brad and Tammy (2010) caution that such inclusion is part of professional development. As curriculum leaders, teachers' input should not come only at the implementation stage in the classroom, which is currently the case. This further explains why sometimes teachers struggle in the classroom to implement curriculum content, or to use instructional materials they did not participate in establishing or designing.

Furthermore, a heavy workload, time constraints, and lack of recognition or encouragement are noted in literature as hindering factors. Good, Barocas, Chávez-Moreno, Feldman and Canela (2017) maintain that time, workload (Al-Taneiji & Ibrahim (2017), and isolation deprive teachers of a seat at the table as policy agents. This implies that teachers are too busy to afford any profound thoughts, reflections or pondering on policy issues. Moreover, their solo working nature makes collaboration difficult; and collaboration is essential for advocating policy matters. In the South African context, (Gumede, 2011; Fani, 2015 & Kumalo, 2015) also indicate from their findings that teachers report lack of time and heavy workload as a barrier to teacher-leadership practices. Teachers complained they go the extra mile to be productive, despite the limited time and heavy workload (Kumalo, 2015). Nevertheless, their efforts are not recognised (John, 2015). Al-Taneiji and Ibrahim (2017) remark that some United Arab Emirates teachers reported holding back their leadership potential

to avoid being overworked, should they demonstrate their hardworking nature to school authorities. This reflects Grant's (2012) findings of teachers turning down leadership opportunities to avoid additional work.

Egalitarianism is another roadblock to teacher leadership. Teachers cling to the "us against them" mentality, preferring to be associated with those in the classroom rather than with the administration (Fairman & Mackenzie, 2015). Being considered by colleagues as part of the administration destroys cooperation with colleagues (Gumede, 2011). Such is risky, and teachers do not like to be thought of as experts for fear of harming relationship and trust with colleagues (Fairman & Mackenzie, 2015). According to Grant (2012), such teachers assume that they have no right to lead, neither is it their job to lead. The attitude of labelling colleagues as "know-alls", apart from discouraging the teacher leader, may negatively impact on the pessimistic teachers during PLC exchanges, in which they are supposed to learn from their peers in exchanging ideas and strategies of best practices. As curriculum leaders in instructional practices, Stephenson, Dada and Harold (2012) argue that teacher instructional leadership is developed by working with colleagues to improve content knowledge.

In addition, the lack of support and associated values pose hurdles to the practising of teacher leadership. Teacher leaders need to be supported by all stakeholders of the school, in whatever way possible. Teachers struggle to engage, or do not engage at all, when resources are not available, and collaboration not given. Kumalo (2015) indicates that teachers in her study complain of indiscipline in learners, and uncooperative parents. John (2015) reports poor infrastructure and lack of resources.

Since teachers' role as curriculum leaders is an aspect of teacher leadership, it is worthwhile to discuss some leadership theories in education (Harris, 2013;Crespo, 2016). These education leadership theories discussed in the sections that follow, contribute to teachers' experiences as curriculum leaders (Bush, Joubert, Kiggundu & Van Rooyen, 2010). School managers engage in these forms of leadership at one time or another in their effort to create opportunities for teachers to perform their role as curriculum leaders (Bengu & Myende, 2016).

3.9 Types of educational leadership theories

There are many educational leadership theories, such as the contingency, transactional, transformational, instructional, and distributed leadership theories; yet there is no single all-compassing leadership theory. As such, in most cases, leaders adopt a combination of theories based on several determining factors geared towards the overall goals to be achieved for the type and level of institution. (Liu & Hallinger (2018) assert that, for the past four decades, there has been significant research on the nature and effects of education or school leadership. This is seen in studies by Sebastian, Camburn and Spillane (2017) on instructional leadership, Muijs (2011) on transformational leadership, Harris (2013) on distributed leadership, and Grant (2012) on teacher leadership. For the purpose of this study, I discussed contingency, transformational, instructional, distributed, and teacher leadership theories. This discussion draws the link or relationship of these theories to this study on teachers as curriculum leaders.

3.9.1 Transformational leadership theory

Generally, to transform means to change, to make a lasting positive difference. Muijs (2011) describes transformational leadership as leadership that transforms both individuals in an organisation and the organisation itself, through upholding the organisation's values and goals. According to Ayman and Korabik (2010), a transformational leader inspires followers to high levels of effort and dedication. Bass (1985) in Muijs (2011), explains that proponents of transformational leadership are of the view that the leader conscientises followers on the organisation's goals such that their personal interest becomes second to that of the organisation. Consequently, followers' commitment increases, resulting in long-term genuine organisational change. In the school context, teachers become more committed as they note the 'bigger picture', or the benefits of a successful or functional school.

3.9.2 Contingency leadership theory

This leadership theory, sometimes referred to as situational or contextual or adaptive, has to do with school leaders' ability to switch or change leadership practices as the situation at hand demands. According to Warwas (2015), contingency models stress the contextual dependency of leaders' practices, as these must correlate with local opportunities and constraints. From a qualitative study in South Africa on how principals cope with and adapt to policy change in deprived contexts, Bengu and Myende state that this leadership model has no fixed pattern. The model is fluid and evolving, adapting practices, depending on the context (Bengu & Myende, 2016). Research indicates that contingency leadership has several variables, such as context Notman (2017), professional identity (Day & Gu, 2010), values (Day, Harris, Hadfield, Tolley & Beresford, 2000), structure of the task (Ayman & Korabik, 2010), or needs of the society (Bengu & Myende, 2016). Crow (2007) and Ryan (2007), had earlier argued that leaders can have multiple personal and multiple professional identities, depending on their audience and context. Furthermore, despite stating personal beliefs and values as possible variables in contingency leadership, Day et al. (2000) acknowledge that leadership practices are contingent on context.

Context stands out as a dominant variable in this leadership model. In the light of this study, teachers as curriculum leaders make much use of contingency model of leading. Teachers lead curriculum activities in different contexts (in the classroom, on the sports ground, in the community). Their leadership approaches must differ with the type of activities in these different contexts, to bring about positive change. Moreover, what works for one teacher in any context or situation, may not work for another teacher. This affirms Bengu and Myende's (2016) views that school leadership is not about compliance, but about the leader's ability to identify what works in a given context.

3.9.3 Instructional leadership

Research in instructional leadership theory originated in the late 1970s. Terms such as "learner centred leadership and "pedagogical leadership" have been used to denote

instructional leadership (Harris, 2004). As with many other concepts, researchers define instructional leadership with several perspectives in mind. According to Gunawan, (2017), instructional leadership is the model of leadership that concentrates on developing learning activities continuously and systematically. For Woods (2016), instructional leadership is the power and behaviour employed by principals, teachers, and other school personnel, to influence individuals and situations in schools. Gülcan, (2012) suggests both a narrow and broad definition. Narrowly, Gülcan defines instructional leadership as a function within management with actions relating directly to teaching and learning. Broadly, instructional leadership is defined as a process of performing all leadership activities that may affect learning at school. The common points in these definitions are creating favourable conditions at school to improve teaching and learning activities, as well as learner achievement.

The functions of instructional leaders, according to Hallinger and Murphy (1985) in Ismail, Don and Husin (2018), include defining the school mission, managing curriculum and instructions, and promoting a school learning climate. These are the three dimensions in the instructional-leadership theory framework, according to Hallinger and Murphy (1985) in Ismail et al. (2018). Each dimension involves principals' behaviour regarding diversity practices through specialised task functions. Similarly, Gunawan (2017) states that instructional leadership functions include: articulating the vision of the school, developing the curriculum according to the vision, mission, and objectives of the school, developing schools towards learning organisations, creating a school culture and climate conducive to learning and innovation, and managing learners to develop their capacity. Bush, Joubert, Kiggundu and Van Rooyen (2010) emphasise the importance of instructional leadership, by stating that classroom practice and leadership have the most influence on the quality of education.

A completely different view of instructional leadership is held by Horng and Loeb (2010). These researchers consider too narrow the traditional definition of instructional leadership which focuses on curriculum and classroom instruction. Horng and Loeb (2010) therefore propose an expansive instructional leadership definition, which also includes organisational management to achieve instructional improvement. The researchers argue that efficient organisational managers are effective in hiring high-

quality teachers, supporting staff, and allocating budgets and resources. Such managers maintain a positive working and learning environment for teachers to be successful in the classroom, thereby improving learner academic achievement. According to Horng and Loeb (2010), leader involvement in the classroom affects the quality of teaching only marginally, because the reality of large schools and tens of teachers makes impossible ideal forms of instructional leading of lesson observations, providing feedback, modelling lessons, directing and coaching teachers.

Similar to the criticism on the “great man” theory of leadership, with the positional heroic leader, critics of instructional leadership argue that the approach is all centred on the principal, when its activities can be performed by other leaders in school (MacBeath & Dempster, 2009). Secondly, the instructional leadership approach is criticised for its teaching-centred dimension, which ignores the learning aspect (MacBeath & Dempster, 2009). These critics have proposed a leadership for learning model comprising five principles. The first principle stresses shared leadership, and the second stresses learning. The principle on learning also appears one-sided, being learning-centred. In my opinion, teaching and learning are incorporated into each another. Teaching is led for learning to occur, and only limited learning can take place without teaching. However, policy texts in Nordic countries capture both domains by stating that instructional leadership is the school leaders’ responsibility for leading teaching and learning (Uljens, Möller, Ârlestig, & Frederiksen, 2013).

Historically, over the past several decades, instructional leadership has gradually gained increasing currency as a key role of school principals through much of the world (Hallinger, Adams, Harris & Jones, 2018). Recent studies are recognising instructional leadership as one of the most important activities not only of school principals, but of school principals and other school leaders (Lunenburg, 2010; Bush, 2013). For example, findings from a qualitative study on four heads of department (HODs) in an under-resourced school in South Africa, by Seobi and Wood (2016) explain how these HODs developed guidelines, for other HODs to improve their instructional leadership practices. These HODs are being proactive in creating an environment conducive to teaching and learning. Progress in research continues to challenge the linear hierarchical process of instructional leadership. Such should cease to be considered the duty of principals, becoming a multidirectional collaborative endeavour between

school administrators and teachers (Woods, 2016). Principals' engagement in distributed leadership practices enables teacher instructional leadership practice (Mayfield II, 2018); and consequently, creates opportunities for teachers to experience their role as curriculum leaders. This provides information in response to the fourth question of this study: How do school managers create opportunities for teachers to perform their role as curriculum leaders in school? I now proceed to peruse distributed leadership as a theory in education leadership.

3.10 Distributed leadership

Rather than invest leadership in a small number of formerly recognised individuals, recent organisational leadership models, such as distributed leadership, acknowledge that leadership must emanate from many individuals within an organisation (Taylor et al. 2011). According to Bush, Hamid, Ng and Kaparou (2018), the model of distributed leadership has become the most fashionable in the 21st century, because leadership is too complex to be handled purely through solo leadership. Grant (2017) defines the distributed leadership theory in its simplest form as leadership that incorporates the notion of multiple leaders who interact with followers in dynamic ways. To Bush (2018), distributed leadership is a form of leadership that spreads leadership across an organisation, empowering staff to develop their leadership capabilities. It thus uncouples leadership from positional authority and distributes it both formally and informally among people and tasks (Crespo, 2016). In the South African context, Grant (2017) expresses concern that the concept of distributed leadership has become a phrase to describe any form of devolved or shared leadership. Grant calls for a deep, realistic use of the concept, that takes into consideration 'who is involved in the distribution of leadership, what is distributed, how the distribution happens and why it happens in the way it does'. Therefore, policy provisions (SASA, 1996; Norms and Standards for Educators, 2000) that recognise teachers as leaders should be implemented. If teachers understand their role as curriculum leaders, they will practise their agency as informal leaders in various curriculum activities and processes. An improvement of education quality in the country will come about through improved teaching and learning. The dominant element in these definitions is the practise of leadership by various individuals, positional, and non-positional alike.

Conditions for functionality must be in place for distributed leadership to exist. For example, leaders must demonstrate their support of it to followers by creating opportunities for followers, engaging their leadership expertise. Bush and Glover (2012) report from their study of nine high-performing English schools in Canada that school heads play a central role in whether distributed leadership takes root in schools. Tian et al. (2016) affirm this from a meta-analysis of distributed leadership (2002-2013), stating that formal leaders should be regarded as important 'gate keepers' who can either encourage or discourage other leaders from employing their leadership potentials to attain positive changes in schools.

Moreover, when school leaders schedule collaborative time, this provides an environment to enhance school culture, as values and beliefs of informal leaders are shared around instructional issues (Crespo, 2016) in mutual trust and understanding, since they are colleagues.

In addition, Grenda and Hackmann (2014) explain that high-quality staff is important for principals in developing trust and confidence to distribute leadership. Since principals are still held accountable for the success of schools, high-quality staff build confidence in the principal to practise distributed leadership: the principal trusts the staff to deliver as desired or expected of them.

In a survey of 70811 North Carolina teachers and principals, Grant (2011) identifies four distributed leadership functions that leaders perform. These include: (i) setting direction (identify shared vision, effective group decisions, teachers centrally involved in decision-making, and giving teachers opportunities to contribute), (ii) developing people (offering intellectual stimulation, individual support, teachers determining content of in-service professional development programmes, deciding school budget and hiring personnel), (iii) managing instructional programmes (devising teaching techniques, assessment practices, selecting instructional materials, teacher professionalism and cooperation − sharing and exposing classroom practices) and (iv) redesigning the organisation (scheduling time for professional development and collaboration). Functions (iii) and (iv) above had earlier been reported in the study by Grenda and Hackmann (2014). As curriculum leaders, teachers in South African schools perform these functions to varying degrees, based on their understanding of

their role as curriculum leaders, and the opportunities school managers create for teachers.

There are many benefits that organisations enjoy when leadership is distributed. Bush and Glover (2012) purport that enactment of distributed leadership increases the potential for enhanced learning outcomes. Grenda and Hackmann (2014), support this view, saying that the practice of distributed leadership in schools creates schools with high levels of professionalism, engagement, and commitment to the central mission of teaching and learning. Furthermore, Crespo (2016) believes that enactment of distributed leadership has indirect, yet significant effects, on teachers. For example, findings from Crespo's (2016) mixed-method study of one urban middle school indicate that teachers look to informal teacher leaders within their peer group for encouragement, practical support, and resources, in areas that are more closely related to classroom instructions. Thus, the practice of distributed leadership creates a form of social capital among teachers, which translates into human capital (student learning).

Grenda and Hackmann (2014) also indicate that distributed leadership reduces workload stress on school managers. As teachers engage in distributed leadership activities, they continually collaborate on issues relating to their learners, the curriculum, and other school-wide decision-making processes, thus leading to optimum synergy. The principal’s role can more easily become that of a facilitator, mediator, coach, and supporter, thereby encouraging a more collegial school atmosphere (Naicker and Mestry 2011).

The benefits of distributed leadership notwithstanding, there are certain challenges that these leaders must deal with. Findings from Grenda and Hackmann (2014) indicate that a variety of leadership may make accurate communication difficult. Interdisciplinary team leaders, even with the best of intentions, may put forward only variants of an original message. The practice of distributed leadership requires a fundamental change in the way formal leaders understand their practice and view their role, because it means actively supporting and facilitating the leadership of others (Harris, 2013).

Unavoidably, issues of power, authority, and inequality hang over distributed leadership, as with other forms of leadership and practice (Harris, 2013). There needs to be a shift in power, authority, and control for the practice of distributed leadership to take place. Hamatwi (2015) terms this shift redistribution, from formal position holders, to anyone with leadership potential at any level of the organisation. Hierarchical leaders, especially the principal, are often placed in a tight corner here. Although the plate of functions is overflowing with responsibilities, the principal often hesitates to accept help even when readily available. This is because the principal alone is the final authority to render an account to external authorities on the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of the school.

Similarly, some formal leaders find it difficult to redistribute authority and power to certain individuals in the organisation with leadership potential. This is because they are being cautious not to be abused, or to have their authority undermined (Harris, 2013) by those they have empowered.

Another challenge Harris (2013) notes is the absence of trust. It is obvious that no leader will entrust authority, or responsibility to any quarter when unsure of an expected outcome. Where there is no trust, leaders will let go, and at the same time hold back. In such circumstances, there cannot be any genuine or authentic distributed leadership. When an organisation is heterogeneous, it poses a challenge if leadership fails to capitalise on the diversity by adequately adjusting practice in response to greater heterogeneity (Lumby, 2017). The disadvantage is that those not accommodated may become demoralised, resulting in possible factions within the organisation.

Despite the overwhelming acceptance of distributed leadership as a leadership practice most associated with increased school effectiveness, this practice is not devoid of criticism. The general view of its critics is its normative use in research (Harris, 2013). That is, it is something desirable, based on value judgement as opposed to facts.

Lumby (2013) avers that the spread and dominance of distributed leadership may not primarily be its publicly espoused efficacy in delivering benefits for learners. It may

well be a disguised means of maintaining the status quo of power for formal leaders, encouraging gullible teachers to do more work. It is quite understandable that only window dressing of distributed leadership practice will exist without the active support and participation of the principal, in the case of a school.

Lumby (2013) further criticises the distributed leadership theory for being silent on gender and race matters, on the basis that such presents work processes as gender- or race-free. Lumby (2013) argues that obscuring gender/race role within the social organisation of work, when such issues prevent inclusion in leadership, may be actively fuelling the prevalence of inequality. Female leaders, in some instances, have expressed their challenge in leading on the basis of their gender. Either their authority is undermined, or they are not included in the redistributed power Pillay (2015).

Another criticism of distributed leadership as an ideal form of leadership practice in education, is put forward by Gronn (2016), who argues that leadership practice in education should neither be exclusively individual nor collective. According to Gronn (2016), because the leadership of individualism has failed scholars, it is obvious that leadership of pluralism should replace this system. Degrees of individualism and collectivism should co-exist. Bolden (2011) endorsed Gronn's thoughts by stating that leadership does not have to be 'democratic' or 'shared' for it to be effective. Rather, it is important to balance the various contributions, recognising these differing forms of leadership in a more integrated system for reaching set goals.

Despite the changes in and criticism of distributed leadership, I work from the premise that leadership should be distributed. The distributed leadership theory is the educational leadership theory which sets the stage for teacher leadership. According to Grant et al. (2010), teacher leadership is a manifestation of distributed leadership. Teacher leadership is the umbrella theory which encompasses and recognises teachers as curriculum leaders for improvement of the quality of education in South Africa − the gap in literature that this study sets out to fill.

3.11 Summary

The discussions above focused on the explanation of the theoretical framework of this study. Other leadership theories with possible impact on the practice of teacher leadership in general, and curriculum leadership, are discussed. The next chapter is devoted to discussions of the methodology of this study.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH APPROACH, DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

This study sought to explore teachers' experiences and understanding of their role as curriculum leaders in schools. In the previous chapter I discussed the framework of analysis of the study − the Model of Teacher Leadership (Grant, 2012) . I discussed the strengths and weaknesses of the model; and explained why it is a suitable model for my study. In this chapter, I discussed (the how, who, and where of the study) the research methodology for this study on teachers' experiences and understanding of their role as curriculum leaders in schools.

4.2 Research paradigm

Kivunja and Kuyini (2017) explain that the word paradigm is a Greek word meaning pattern. Mack (2010) defines a research paradigm as a loose collection of logically related assumptions, concepts, or propositions that orient thinking and research. According to Khan (2014), a paradigm is a set of suppositions and ideas that provides a bird's eye view of the world, when its scientific aspect is related to its assumptions. Kivunja and Kuyini (2017) define a paradigm as the conceptual lens through which researchers examine the methodological aspects of their research project, in determining the research methods to be used and the ways in which the data will be analysed. A paradigm describes a researcher's worldview and reflects a researcher's belief about the world they want to live in (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). This study is located within the interpretivist paradigm which seeks to understand the subjective views of humans. Saunders and Tosey (2012), also explain that a researcher's view of the world apropos of human knowledge and nature of reality determines how a research question is understood and how it is answered. Since a research paradigm reflects a researcher's beliefs about the world they want to live in, that is the knowledge a researcher seeks to know and make sense of. There is certainly more than one type of research paradigm. Gemma (2018) states that there are three commonly held

philosophical research paradigms, namely: positivism, interpretivism, and critical theory. According to Gemma (2018), positivists uphold objectivity and proving or disproving hypotheses; interpretivists value subjectivity; and the proponents of critical theory consider the wider oppressive nature of politics or social influences, which often includes feminist research.

Judging from the purpose of this research inquiry which is to explore teachers' experiences and understanding of their role as curriculum leaders in schools, I deemed interpretivism the appropriate research paradigm for the study. In the next section, I discuss interpretivism in greater detail, stating its components, strengths, and weaknesses. According to Scotland (2012), a paradigm consists of its ontology (its view of the nature of reality, or assumptions about how that reality can be made known), its epistemology (its view of how one acquires knowledge), its methodology, and methods. Kivunja and Kuyini (2017) also mention the axiology of a paradigm, which comprises the values and ethics associated with a paradigm.

4.2.1 Interpretivist/constructivist paradigm

The interpretivist paradigm is the paradigm within which the present study is located because the study aim is to make sense of how teachers experience and perceive their role as curriculum leaders in the school world. To Cohen et al., (2011) the interpretivist paradigm deals with making meaning and seeking to understand the subjective world of human experiences. According to Flick (2014), interpretivists argue that truth and knowledge are subjective, culturally, and historically situated, based on people's experiences and understanding of the truth and knowledge. (Cohen, Manion and Marrison (2013) reiterate that truth is viewed differently by different individuals. Interpretivists consider individuals as research participants from whom differing views on the same phenomenon emerge (Creswell, 2013). Constructivism, according to Creswell (2014), relates to the development of subjective meanings and understanding of participants' experiences concerning specific topics, based on their social and historical backgrounds. Constructivism produces multidimensional realities built between the researcher and the participants (Bunniss & Kelly, 2010). Interpretivism and constructivism are related concepts that address the understanding of the world as others experience it (Kawulich & Chilisa, 2012). I employed the

interpretive/constructive paradigm, and gained insight into the world of teachers' experiences, and understanding of their role as curriculum leaders in secondary schools. DeVos, Strydom, Fouche and Delport (2014) are of the view that the greatest good of the interpretive paradigm is that much attention is paid to the world views of the research participants (in this study, the teachers). The interpretive/constructivist paradigm presents reality subjectively, meaning being constructed (Cohen et al., 2011). The constructivist paradigm enabled me to establish a mutual relationship with the participants, and, guided by the tenets of interpretivists, I developed and maintained a trusting relationship with the teachers. As the teachers shared their perceptions and beliefs with me, I interpreted and constructed meanings from individual teachers' lived experiences or utterances (Cohen et al., 2011) on leading curriculum activities in schools. I constructed multiple realities from the different experiences of the teachers. (DeVos et al. 2014) criticise the interpretive paradigm for its subjectivity, and the possible bias by the researcher on reliability and validity of findings, together with the limited sample size that may rule out generalisation.

Scotland (2012) asserts that "every paradigm is based upon its own ontological and epistemological assumptions"; and this can be seen in the methodology and methods that underpin a research. In view of this, Scotland (2012) states that any methodology a researcher decides to use is determined by the reason for the data, where the data will come from, and how the data are collected and analysed.

The ontological position of the interpretive/constructive paradigm is relativism. This is because anti-positivists or interpretivists believe that reality is multi-faceted and subjective (Bunniss, & Kelly, 2010), being viewed differently by different individuals (Scotland, 2012). Knowledge and meaningful reality are constructed in and out of interaction between humans and their world. Such is developed and transmitted in a social context. Therefore, the social world can only be understood from the standpoint of individuals who are interacting within it (Scotland, 2012). In this study, I maintain that teachers construct knowledge of their role as curriculum leaders in schools as they execute curriculum-leading activities. Through these activities, the reality of teachers' experiences and understanding of their role as curriculum leaders is brought to light.

According to Cohen et al. (2011), epistemology is the nature of knowledge, how knowledge is acquired and transmitted to others. To Gemma (2018), epistemology is our view of how we come to know the world. The epistemological position of the interpretive/constructive paradigm is subjectivism (Scotland, 2012) . The epistemological assumption of interpretivists is concerned with what an individual knows and is subjective in nature. Cohen et al. (2011) state that the focus of the interpretive paradigm is to gain an understanding of the subjective world of human experiences. The epistemological position of this research is based on inductive reasoning and subjectivism. I sought an understanding of the individual (teachers') experiences and knowledge of teachers' role as curriculum leaders. Based on my ontological and epistemological positions of this study discussed above, I conducted the present study within the interpretivist/constructivist paradigm, and a qualitative research approach was deemed necessary.

4.3 Research approach

Three approaches commonly discussed in research are the qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods (Cohen et al. 2011; Creswell, 2014). I deployed a qualitative approach in this research study. A qualitative approach is usually used when little or no knowledge exists about the phenomenon or concept (Creswell, 2013). The approach is directed at understanding a phenomenon from an individual's perspective, investigating interaction among individuals as well as the historical and cultural contexts which people inhabit (Creswell, 2013).

There is relatively little empirical knowledge on teachers' experiences and understanding of their role as curriculum leaders within the South African context (Grant et al., 2010; Grant, 2017). This warrants the use of this approach, as it brings new insight into the field of teacher leadership. According to (Creswell, 2013), this approach is one in which the inquirer always makes knowledge claims based mainly on constructivist perspectives, with multiple meanings of individual experiences. This type of approach is a systematic and subjective approach, a form of social action with emphasis on the way in which people interpret and make sense or construct meaning of their experiences. By these means they come to understand the social reality of individuals (Haradhan, 2018).

I used the qualitative approach: the study aim of "exploring experiences and understanding" of a phenomenon (teachers as curriculum leaders) falls within the focus of qualitative research. Qualitative research embraces understanding, explaining, exploring, discovering and clarifying situations, feelings, perceptions, attitudes, values, beliefs, and experiences of a group of people (Kumar, 2011). Another reason for using this approach was that I gained insight into the views of the participants − on how teachers experience and understand their role as curriculum leaders in schools. Creswell (2013) explains the effectiveness of a qualitative approach in that, by occurring in its natural setting, the researcher is enriched with details from profound involvement in the actual experiences of participants. An advantage of qualitative research is that I could also read meanings into unconscious body language and behaviour of teachers. Such unspoken language occurred naturally in the context of the school and classroom environments (Babbie & Mouton, 2010). Gay, Mills and Airasian (2012) aver that qualitative research seeks to probe deeply. Probing gave me the opportunity of exploring the depth, richness, and complexity inherent in the teachers' experiences of their role as curriculum leaders in secondary schools. Their experiences were explained verbally (texts) rather than numerically. Punch (2013) describes the qualitative approach as a model that collects and works with non-numerical data.

The meanings from the teachers' experiences enabled me to investigate, describe, and analyse teachers' experiences and understanding of their role as curriculum leaders in South African secondary schools (leaving out any pre-conceived ideas).

Critiques of the qualitative research approach warn of the possibility of the presence of researchers' bias (Anney, 2014; Thirsk & Clark, 2017), owing to the subjective nature of the approach, since the researcher and/or participants may develop an attachment to the study that may distort the actual findings (DeVos et al. 2014). Conscious of this possibility, I kept detailed records of occurrences in the research sites during each visit.

Another disadvantage of the qualitative approach is that it is very time-consuming (Flick, 2011; Sallee & Flood, 2012). Much time is used as participants engage in detailed descriptions of their experiences. In some cases, participants are very lengthy in their explanations, even answering questions yet to be asked.

4.3.1 Research design

Research design is the conceptual structural plan for the choices made, including strategies employed, and processes of data collection, analysis and interpretation. In other words, it is the way researchers go about answering the research question, based on the philosophy and methodology employed (Okesina, 2020). A research design is a blueprint or a plan that describes the entire research procedure (Kumar, 2014; Christensen, Burke & Turner, 2015). I chose a case study design, in particular an exploratory case-study design. This is because a case-study research investigates a particular real-life phenomenon within specific contexts and represents a methodological choice about a unit of analysis (Norander & Brandhorst, 2018). To answer the research question of "what are teachers' experiences and understanding of their role as curriculum leaders in schools?" I used a case-study design because I sought to explore the nature of teachers' experiences and understanding of their role as curriculum leaders in schools. A case study seeks to explore the nature of a unit both in itself and as a case of something larger − a system (Nieuwenhuis, 2010). The unit in this study was teachers' experiences and understanding of their role as curriculum leaders. A case study also enables researchers to answer "why and how" research question of a study (Cohen et al., 2011) and offers a multi-perspective analysis from which a researcher studies the voices and perspectives of individuals (in this study, I studied the voices of individual teachers during individual interviews) and/or relevant groups of actors (as in the focus-group discussions I conducted), and the interaction between them (Nieuwenhuis, 2010; Bhattacherjee, 2012). Case studies can help portray richer, more contextual, and more authentic interpretation of the phenomenon of interest. I used a multiple-case design (four schools from within the Vhembe District). A multiple-case study provides robust and thorough grounds for better quality research than a single case-study design (AlQ'uran, 2010; Norander & Brandhorst, 2018). A multiple-case study such as the present study provided robust data that paints a detailed picture of the nature of teachers' experiences and understanding of their role as curriculum leaders in schools. According to Rule and John (2011), each school could be treated as a separate case, to provide answers to the research question. However, Atkins and Wallace (2012) criticise the case-study design on the grounds of possible bias, and the inability to generalise its findings. I conducted the research in a specific environment within a particular context.

A chosen research design determines the choice of data collection, analysis techniques, ethical issues, and likely constraints (Okesina, 2020). Qualitative research can adopt several designs, including case study, ethnography, narrative, phenomenology, and grounded theory (Kivunja and Kuyini, 2017).

4.3.2 Research sites

The present study on teachers' experiences of their role as curriculum leaders in school is a multiple-site case study. Since case studies, by nature, are context bound (Norander & Brandhorst, 2018), a description of the research sites ensures the situating of participants' views in context. It is also important to describe research sites in great detail, because readers may visualise these contexts in their mind's eye, resulting in a better understanding of teachers' experiences of their role as curriculum leaders in schools. That is to say, teachers' experiences of their role as curriculum leaders may be influenced by their contexts.

All four secondary schools in this study on teachers' experiences as curriculum leaders in schools are found in the Soutpansberg East Circuit, within Vhembe District. Vhembe District consists of four municipalities, predominantly Tshivenda-speaking (67%) and Xitsonga-speaking (25%), with a total population of 1,294,722 (Statistics South Africa, 2011). I obtained the sampling frame of all the schools in the Soutpansberg East Circuit from the Soutpansberg East Circuit office.

I used convenience sampling to select the four out of a total of thirteen secondary schools in the circuit offering Grades 8-12. These are two rural, and two semi-urban schools (one semi-urban school being a former Model C school). These schools were selected on the basis of geographical proximity and easy accessibility. I would have to make multiple trips or visits to each participant in order to establish a relationship and obtain data as rich and meaningful as possible (Creswell, 2009). In addition, I selected the schools on the basis of participants' willingness to participate in the study. I approached seven schools in total; and at these selected schools many teachers were willing to participate in the study. Another reason for selecting schools with many willing participants was to ensure that I would be able to have a minimum of three teacher participants in a school when I needed to generate data from FGDs.

School A is a former model C school with a predominantly White population. Its learners come from different backgrounds of relatively higher income parents. It is situated within two kilometres (km) from the central business district (CBD). Its learners come from far and near, even though it is supposed to serve only learners within its feeder zone. Being one of the two former model C schools in the whole district, it is a fee-paying relatively well-resourced school. For this reason, most parents in the surrounding areas send their children to the school. This school seems to have more classrooms than it requires. Each classroom has a SMART Board; and the most populated classroom I observed was a Grade 8 class of 36 learners. The school has many sports fields for the various sporting activities, and many other facilities enjoyed by former model C schools.

School B is also located in a semi-urban area, with learners from different backgrounds of moderate-income parents. School B lies within 4km of the CBD. Its learners also come from far and near. Although a fee-paying school, like most schools in the district, it is poorly resourced. According to my observation, the school has sufficient classrooms for the learners. It has a vast expanse of undeveloped land even though it had no sports grounds at the time data for this study were generated.

Schools C and D are rural schools, located some 11km and 15km, respectively, from the CBD, and about 5km from each other. Both schools are located under tribal authorities and chiefs. Their learners come from the surrounding villages; both are non-fee-paying schools, with learners benefiting from the national feeding scheme. Both schools, as with most schools in the district, are very poorly resourced, with insufficient infrastructure, not even a sports ground for learners (School C, although very populated has only eighteen classrooms and an administrative block. Overcrowding in School C is the worst I have seen in my sixteen years as a teacher. There were about seventy learners in one of the classes I observed. School D has four permanent and two non-permanent blocks of classrooms, and an administrative block). Each school has some form of barbed wire fencing around it. A common sight around both schools was the presence of grazing cattle.

Most learners at both schools (C and D) live either with grandparents or guardians. Some parents commute to work every day, leaving home very early and returning in the evenings. Some work far away in the cities and return home only during weekends.

A railroad runs behind School D, and it is a form of distraction for the learners. Each time a train happens to pass by lessons are interrupted for the entire duration that it takes for the train to be out of sight. Although windows of classes directly facing the rail line have been painted to keep trains out of learners' sight, the noise produced by the trains drowns teachers' voices.

The population of learners and teachers, and the quintile of each school are presented in Table 4.1 below.

Table 4.1: Summary of research sites

Schools	Number of Learners	Number of Educators	School Quintile
A	720	55	5
B	802	30	4
C	1313	40	3
D	376	14	2

4.3.3. Sampling and sample

Both the population and sample used in this study are explained below. The population of the study consists of teachers from secondary schools in the Vhembe District of the Limpopo Province of South Africa. I employ purposive sampling to "hand-pick" (Cohen et al., 2011) four schools because of their settings. Two of these schools were in a semi-urban setting, while the two others were in rural settings. Selecting schools from different settings implies that a relatively broader scope will be represented. My aim was not to compare schools, but to obtain a broader perspective of teachers' experiences and understanding of their role in leading curriculum activities. AlQ'uran (2010); Norander and Brandhorst (2018), explain that multiple-site case studies provide more robust data than single-case studies. Moreover, the amount of data obtained from the four sites was quite manageable (Mason, 2010). Gathering too

much data can impair deep, rich data analysis, which is the core of qualitative research (Marshall, Cardon, Poddar & Fontenot, 2013).

Teachers were engaged: this study seeks to explore teachers' experiences and understanding of their roles as curriculum leaders. The sample size of this study is twenty-four teachers (a principal and five Post Level 1 teachers from each of the four secondary schools). I used both purposive and convenience sampling to select the participants for this study. Purposive sampling enabled me to select "information-rich" participants for the study (McMillan, 2012), who are representatives of the study population (Laher & Botha, 2012). These participants were targeted because their involvement in curriculum-leading activities at differing levels of the school avails them a good opportunity to comment on teachers' experiences and understanding of their role as curriculum leaders in schools.

Although I worked from the premise that every teacher is a curriculum leader, I solicited the assistance of school principals who themselves had agreed to participate in the study. The principals were asked to propose five teachers in their school who exhibit leadership qualities in the manner that they execute their duties − particular characteristics being sought (Cohen et al., 2011). I approached these teachers and explained the study. I proceeded to work with the teachers who were willing to participate in the study, thus employing the use of convenience sampling. Convenience sampling, or opportunity, or accidental sampling (Cohen et al., 2011), implies using the nearest individuals to serve as participants, and data sources that are available and easy to access (Newby, 2010). These participants were selected by convenience sampling. Babbie and Mouton (2010); (Cohen et al., 2011) caution that they do not represent any group apart from their own group. Furthermore, because my intention is not to generalise the study findings to the wider population (all teachers), I found the sampling method appropriate for this study.

4.4 Data generation

To explore the phenomenon of teachers' experiences as curriculum leaders in its entirety, I made use of multiple methods to generate rich data from my interactions with the study participants. I made use of semi-structured individual interviews,

observations and focus-group discussions (FGDs). I carried out a pilot study before conducting the main study. All data were generated from July to October 2019.

4.4.1 Pilot study

Eldridge et al., (2016) define pilot studies as a subset of feasibility studies, wherein part, or a smaller scale (In, 2017), or a complete future study is carried out. I piloted part of the data-collection instruments (semi-structured interview schedule) for this study. I had not yet received permission from the Limpopo Department of Education to access the schools to observe a lesson or a curriculum-related meeting. I could not pilot the focus-group schedule because I constructed the schedule after the actual semi-structured interviews had been conducted with the study participants. I interviewed the pilot study participants in their homes.

Wolfe (2013) asserts that piloting a study has several advantages, including gaining confidence with the targeted sample. In my study, piloting gave me the opportunity to improve on how I created rapport with the participants. Piloting also helps to ascertain the feasibility, that is, how likely the research process is to be easily implemented (Wolfe, 2013; In, 2017). Piloting also affects acceptability, that is, how satisfactory the participants will find the procedures (Wolfe, 2013); piloting helps the researcher to test the data-collection and analysis plan. I was able to practise segmenting data.

The pilot study helps to check the clarity, adequacy, and quality of the semi-structure interview questions and participants' understanding of the questions, thus improving the quality of the data. The pilot study assists in enhancing the quality and efficiency of the main study (In, 2017). The pilot study helped to alert me to rephrasing my questions and/or to probe when participants gave shallow responses instead of thick descriptions; thus, I obtained rich data. I conducted the pilot study with five teachers (four Post Level 1 teachers and a principal) in April 2019.

I now present a detailed discussion of each of the data-generation techniques in the paragraphs below.

Generally, interviews provide in-depth information on participants' perceptions and experiences of an issue (Turner, 2010). Interviews allow for probing, to obtain in-depth

information. During interviews, researchers can supplement information with that from observation and non-verbal reactions. I adopted interviews guided by the aim of this study, which is to explore teachers' experiences as curriculum leaders in schools. It is argued that interviews are the most appropriate approach to studying people's experiences (Bell, 2010; Kumar, 2011). Through interviews, researchers find out what is in and on participants' minds that cannot be directly observed (Babbie & Mouton, 2010).

4.4.2 Semi-structured individual interviews

A semi-structured individual interview is a form of interview which takes place between the researcher and a participant; it covers a wide range of contexts. The interviewer asks a series of broadly framed questions. The interviewer is able to vary the sequence, change wording, and ask follow-up questions based on the interviewee's replies (Bell, Dos Santus, Masenge & Wagner, 2017). According to Yin (2016), the use of probes and follow-up prompts stimulates the participant to elaborate on the initial comment. Guided by the literature, and my research questions, I formulated a number of open-ended questions which I used as a guide during the semi-structured interviews. I asked each participant these questions to obtain in-depth information on their beliefs, attitudes, views, and ideas of their lived experiences as curriculum leaders in school; and what participants understand as their role in leading curriculum activities in schools. Although I had an interview guide, I did not ask questions strictly in the order that they appear in the guide. In the course of answering a particular question, if a participant happened to provide information on another question yet to be posed, I moved on without asking such a question again.

The use of semi-structured individual interviews allowed teachers to tell their story, thus offering rich data (Newby, 2010), and, to an extent, determining the flow of the dialogue (David & Sutton, 2011). However, when a participant happened not to be answering the question asked, I always guided the participant by rephrasing the question. This method of data generation is also good. It offers opportunities for participants who feel threatened when speaking in the presence of other people, to give information-rich data (Nieuwenhuis, 2010). Thus I gained a more detailed view (Flick, 2011). According to Bell et al. (2017), individual interviews help the researcher

gain key insights into the phenomenon, as themes derived from individual interviews can be developed further during FGDs.

As a limitation, the more unstructured the interview, the harder the interviewer works during the interview process to focus the discussion on the topic, since the interviewee determines the flow of the dialogue to an extent (David & Sutton, 2011). This limitation was addressed because I had prepared a guide for the interviews, and I followed discussions keenly. In addition, this technique is time-consuming and labour intensive (Adams, 2010; Newby, 2010). Being a full-time student, I devoted all the time and energy necessary to the study. I conducted semi-structured individual interviews with all twenty-four participants (20 PL1 teachers and 4 principals) as this was the main technique of data generation in the study. All interviews were conducted in English, and audio recorded; and most lasted between 30 to 60 minutes, with the exception of two individual interviews that went beyond 60 minutes. These participants gave very lengthy but relevant responses to almost every question. I conducted 23 interview sessions at the schools at different periods of the day, depending on the availability and convenience of each participant (interviews conducted during school hours were scheduled when a participant happened to have at least an hour without lessons, or an open period before or after break; in such a case the participant might have decided that we could use their break period as well. I ensured that my interactions with participants did not interrupt teaching and learning at the schools at any given time). One participant was interviewed at his home.

I conducted twenty-four interviews in total (six individual interviews and a FGD from each of the four schools). Marshall et al. (2013) argues that case studies should generally comprise fifteen to thirty interviews.

4.4.3 Non-participant observation

I also generated data from lesson observations of fifteen of the twenty teachers. Observation for data generation is made by the researcher's involvement in looking at and noting various activities of participants in the natural setting of their daily lives. This would occur over a long period (Creswell, 2013), systematically, not haphazardly, looking at and noting people, behaviours, events, or settings (Cohen et al., 2011).

According to Newby (2010) and Yin (2016), a researcher can be an observer in two main ways: either a participatory or participant observer (active and known or active and not known), or a non-participatory/non-participant or passive observer (inactive and known or inactive and not known). I conducted observations in a non-participatory manner. Learners and teachers were aware of my presence in the classroom, but I did not interact with the teaching and learning process in any way. I used this approach to develop a holistic understanding of the phenomenon of teachers' experiences as curriculum leaders. During observation of normal teaching in classrooms, I performed qualitative judgement on all instructional practices and behaviours I observed (Yin 2016).

Although I had planned to observe both lessons and curriculum-related meetings, I also became involved in serendipitous observation, being given the opportunity to witness teacher enactment of some non-instructional roles. For instance, on one of my numerous visits to school D, I observed a teacher engaged in pastoral care. The said teacher put a sick learner (learner was gasping for breath) in his car and rushed the learner to a nearby clinic.

Newby (2010) cautions that observation is an organised process with structures and protocols that guarantee the reliability and validity of data. In agreement, Cohen et al. (2011) explain that observation has to be controlled, in order for the researcher to achieve its usefulness. Observation can be highly structured (knowing in advance what is sought), semi-structured (existence of an agenda of issues to be made clearer by observation data), or unstructured (uncertain of what to observe). For this reason, I engaged in all three forms of observation. I engaged both highly and semi-structured forms during lesson observations, because I knew what I was interested in (how teachers perform curriculum roles during instructional activities). Although I constructed a tool with issues to focus on during curriculum-meeting observations, I also observed and noted other happenings outside the observation tool (unstructured elements), before deciding on their significance, if at all, to the study (Cohen et al., 2011).

As strength, observation, as a data-generating technique, allows previously unnoticed aspects to be seen (Babbie & Mouton, 2010). Such aspects might have been unconsciously missed, or there might have been features that participants might not

freely talk about in interview situations. In this way, observation enables researchers to access personal knowledge, rather than data based solely on participants' perceptions (Cohen et al., 2011). Observation enhances the trustworthiness of a study when used with other techniques (Newby, 2010). In this study, in addition to observation, I also made use of semi-structured individual interviews, and focus-group discussions.

Another strength which Yin (2016) elaborates on is that observation, as a data-generation technique, is invaluable, because it offers the researcher unfiltered data. The researcher sees first-hand and perceives with their own senses what is sought. This is first-hand data, not reported even by a participant. For example, the presence of scenarios such as an extremely crowded classroom in which I observed a lesson readily complemented the challenge of overcrowding and limited resources articulated by teachers. This also enhanced the trustworthiness of the findings as such scenarios are not susceptible to researchers' influence.

A limitation of observation as a data-generation technique is that the mere presence of a non-member might have an impact on the observed (Newby, 2010); and a reverse effect is possible where the activity may influence the way in which the researcher observes − the "halo effect" (Yin, 2016); although Babbie and Mouton (2010) argue that such an impact wears off within a reasonable time. There is also the possible bias of a researcher, and a lack of representativeness. Yin (2016) articulates that this can be addressed by multiple observations on different days and times; although Newby (2010) indicates that every observation is a unique event. I could not make use of this mitigation strategy because I had planned to observe one lesson per participant; this I did. However, whenever I was on a school premises, I endeavoured to chat with learners during breaks on schooling in general. This was to make myself known to learners: if I happened to go into a classroom to observe a lesson, the "halo effect" would be minimal, having already created some familiarity with some learners in that classroom.

I observed 15 lessons in total at the schools on different dates and periods of the day, depending on the availability and convenience of each participant. I could not observe five participants' lessons. For four teachers, there were too many cancelled

appointments right until the end of the data-generation period. One teacher withdrew from the study. The reason given was that she did not wish to continue participating in the study; however, she gave me verbal permission to use the interview data I had already collected.

I also observed eight curriculum-related meetings. There were four meetings within schools (two departmental meetings; Mathematics − school A, and English − school C; two whole school discussion meetings were on analysis of results − schools B and D), two district workshops (English and Geography), and two circuit meetings (matric trial memorandum discussions − Mathematics and Agricultural Sciences). Most of these curriculum meetings were led by Post Level 1 (PL1) teachers, with the exception of the Mathematics meeting (HoD), and the results analysis of school D (principal).

4.4.4 Focus-group discussions

A focus-group discussion (FGD) is a technique that brings together the researcher and a group of participants who have collectively experienced a similar situation (Kumar, 2014). Focus groups usually consist of two to three persons (small) (Yin, 2016) or seven to ten people (moderate) (Kumar, 2014; Yin, 2016). The FGs in this study were small, comprising of five, four, three and three, PL1 teachers for schools A, B, C and D, respectively. The participants in FGDs in this study are representatives of the community of teachers. They are knowledgeable on their beliefs, and perceptions of their role as curriculum leaders. These teachers have multiple interpretations about their lived experiences in performing this multi-faceted role. These teachers are facilitators of the teaching and learning process, learning area or subject specialists, models to learners and fellow teachers, interpreters and designers of learning programme materials, assessors, life-long learners, leaders, administrators, and managers, as well as pastoral caregivers to learners.

Newby (2010) distinguishes three forms of FGD. These are: (i) a group interview in which questions are given to group members, and their responses noted, but group members have very little or no interaction; (ii) a group discussion, in which the facilitator poses a series of questions one at a time on different issues, which leads to discussions and interactions among members, with the possibility of expanding the

issue beyond just answering the question; and (iii) exploration of the stability of individuals' viewpoints on an issue, and to comprehend those that lean away from the majority. In this study, I predominantly adopted the second form, with some elements of the third form. Newby (2010) explains that a combination of elements of more than one form is usually experienced. I developed a FGD protocol from issues that came out from my analysis of the semi-structured individual interviews with teachers, as well as from the lessons I observed. This explains why FGDs were the last data-generation technique I engaged in; I conducted one FGD per site. According to Bell et al. (2017), individual interviews help the researcher gain key insights into the phenomenon − themes derived from individual interviews can be developed further during FGDs. These key insights assisted me to develop preliminary understanding and to enrich any future probes.

Acocella (2011) accentuates some conditions to put in place for successful FGDs, such as a comfortable environment, and relaxed participants, who share similar interests and feel that they are equals. All these conditions were in place for the FGDs conducted to generate part of the data for this study. I conducted all FGDs at the various schools among PL1 teachers who were equal in status and enthusiastic in discussing the dynamics of their profession. The school environment where teachers work is like a second home to them, and in every way comfortable for them. In all the schools, participants chose or arranged the venue for the discussions. I initiated the conversation by stating some ground rules. These included respecting each other's views, even when there was disagreement, and not interrupting someone when speaking. I assured participants that there were no incorrect responses. Participants can ascribe multiple meanings or interpretations, beliefs, and perceptions to similar lived experiences as curriculum leaders. I assumed the role of a moderator during discussions in order to facilitate interactions among participants. I was cautious not to influence participants' views, in being biased. Yin, (2016) warns that the moderator should adopt an appropriately polite but firm style that controls the talkative participants, while stimulating those reticent ones, without influencing and biasing the group's discussion.

I used the FGD technique for a number of reasons. FGDs enable researchers to understand the mindsets and behaviours of participants (Newby, 2010). As

participants interact, group dynamics can widen the range of responses, activating forgotten details of experiences (Acocella, 2011), and releasing inhibitions that may discourage participants from disclosing information (Nieuwenhuis, 2010). The use of this method also enables participants to comment on, build on, or even disagree with one another's ideas. Such group dynamics (David & Sutton, 2011; Bell et al., 2017) offer open opportunities for new perspectives. Such perspectives can be explored to add value to the study, which is likely to maximise the generation of high-quality information or thick, rich data within limited time (Acocella, 2011).

Lambert and Loiselle (2008) argue that convergence of central characteristics of the phenomenon (in this study, teachers' experiences as curriculum leaders) across individual interviews and FGDs, enhances trustworthiness of findings. Similarly, Flick, (2011) explains that FGDs are conducted after individual interviews. If issues for discussion are derived from participants' responses to individual interview questions, this serves as feedback to participants. Such will also provide a form of member checking or communicative validity, an aspect I utilised in this study. Accordingly, Thomas (2017) explains that using both techniques (semi-structured individual interview and FGDs) ensures richer, and more detailed understanding of an existing situation.

According to Newby (2010), some critiques see FGDs as being limited to answering of questions within the group, falling short of harnessing the potential for interaction within the group. Such a perspective portrays the background to and values underpinning participants' views and opinions. This may be the case when the form of a group interview is such that questions are given to group members and their responses noted, but group members have very little or no interaction. I did not make use of this form. I desired the thick, rich information from participants that is generated only when participants interact in discussions.

Further limitations of this technique arise when dominant members within groups dominate discussions, causing less dominant ones to say very little or to follow the views of the dominant participant(s). I looked out for such occurrences, intervening by moderating and actively encouraging passive participants to speak (Yin, 2016).

Nieuwenhuis (2010); David and Sutton (2011) aver that the researcher moderates the discussion with adequate focus on the research question.

Acocella (2011) remarks that the mere presence of other people can prevent some persons from engaging, possibly influencing the kind of contribution they make during discussions. Such participants may tend to conform with the majority or to say what is socially acceptable. In addition, there is the challenge to persuade participants to meet at the same time. I conducted FGDs at the time given to me by participants of each school. It was relatively easy for the participants to assemble since they were already at school and had agreed on the time amongst themselves. I conducted a total of four FGDs. With the participants' consent, I audio-recorded each discussion session, which lasted between 30 and 60 minutes.

Furthermore, I conducted all individual interviews, and lesson observations, before the commencement of the FGDs. This was to allow for the incorporation of important issues that arose from the semi-structured individual interviews and lessons observed, into the FGD instrument. All interviews and FGDs were conducted in English, and audio recorded. Most lasted between 30 and 60 minutes, with the exception of two individual interviews that went beyond 60 minutes. These participants gave extensive, albeit relevant responses to every question. I allowed the interviewees to tell their story, and to an extent they determined the flow of the dialogue (David & Sutton, 2011). Data were generated from July to October 2019. I coded each school and participant for confidentiality purposes.

4.5 Data analysis

I thematically analysed the data in this study on the experiences of teachers as curriculum leaders. This method of analysis involves the search for and identification of common threads that extend across an interview or sets of interviews. The thematic method provides a rich, detailed, yet complex account of the data (Vaismoradi, Turunen, & Bondas, 2013). Data analysis, to Cohen et al. (2011) implies organising, accounting for the data, and explaining the data by making sense of participants' definitions or perspectives of situations, noting patterns, themes, categories, and irregularities. Crowe, Inder, and Porter (2015) define thematic analysis as a process

of interpreting qualitative data to fine patterns of meaning across the data. Thematic analysis provides an interpretation of participants' meanings. It is a means of organising and interpreting qualitative data that portrays a narrative understanding of the commonalities and differences in the description of participants' subjective lived experiences, from identified categories and themes (Crowe et al., 2015). There is no single way of analysing qualitative data. Researchers must be guided by fitness for purpose, and the unavoidable integration of analysis and interpretation (Cohen et al., 2011).

I started the data analysis during the first semi-structured interview, as I tried to make sense of what the participant was saying. During the second interview, I could observe some perspectives which were either similar or different from those of the previous participant − I probed further to understand why. This continued throughout the data-generation process. I commenced transcribing interview data as soon as I had completed the first interview. It was a time-consuming and laborious exercise (for all twenty-four individual interviews and four FGDs), with countless repetitions of each recorded statement, to make sure that I captured participants' stories verbatim.

First, I listened to each audio interview in full without writing down anything. Then I start listening and transcribing. The next step after transcribing all audio data was to familiarise myself with the data (Crowe et al. 2015). I did this by reading and re-reading each transcript several times, while also checking on reflective notes I had made of gestures and other body language. Wherever the participant's story or response to a question did not flow smoothly, I returned to the audio recording, to check whether I had missed anything in the course of transcribing, correcting the transcription where necessary. This helped me to make sense of the information. With the audio data now in text form, as observation and field notes, I proceeded to organise, code, and categorise the data into themes and sub-themes, as explained below.

I took each participant's response to a question and put it below the question, from T1A to T5A, from school A to D. I followed this pattern for every question for all data sets. I ended up with many pages of information for further filtering.

With my research questions in mind, I identified relevant portions or chunks of information from the transcripts, arranging these into segments. I named or labelled these segments differently, according to the meanings they give. In a way, I subdivided the data by associating relevant data with a code or allocating units of meanings.

I then grouped salient information from the segments into categories (initial or first coding, according to Crowe et al. (2015). I generated the first codes from reading the data. I used the same colour for codes of similar or related meanings to ease code grouping. Next, I grouped codes of similar meanings together. This is what Gale, Heath, Cameron, Rashidand Redwood (2013) refer to as code clusters. Finally, almost all codes were associated with a group. Codes that could not be linked to any group were kept aside. Then I merged groups of related codes to form categories, which were organised into themes and sub-themes.

I then combined categories to form themes and sub-themes in identifying common patterns and relationships. Thematic analysis distinguishes constructs investigators identified before, during, and after data collection. Themes started developing from the literature and relate to the research questions to be answered. Thus, the themes and sub-themes reflect the questions and sub-questions of the study.

These themes and sub-themes I interpreted, and presented participants' lived experiences, as curriculum leaders in schools. The data was analysed both deductively and inductively. Some variables already existed right from conceptualising the research problem (deductive); others emerged from the data generated through to the writing of the final research report.

As I progressed with the analysis, I continually fine-tuned my interpretations, so as to gain a deeper understanding of teachers' lived experiences as curriculum leaders in schools.

4.6 Quality control of the study

Wagner et al. (2012) caution that qualitative research can never be completely devoid of researchers' values. However, the onus lies with researchers to enhance the

trustworthiness and credibility of their study. Trustworthiness, in qualitative research, can be achieved by ensuring confirmability, dependability, credibility, and transferability (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). According to Ang, Embi, and Yunus (2016), triangulation is the strategy commonly used to established credibility, dependability, and confirmability, in order to prove the trustworthiness of a study.

4.6.1 Credibility

Credibility in a study is the rigour a researcher establishes during the research process (Anney, 2014). This involves activities that make the research more authentic, in reflecting the study findings derived from the data (Wagner et al. 2012). Credibility can be achieved in a variety of ways, including by purposive sampling, triangulation, member checking, and journal-reflectivity strategies (Lietz & Zayas, 2010). I made use of these ways during my research to ensure that the findings were derived from the data. I purposefully selected my study participants and triangulated the data sources by generating data using semi-structured individual interviews, FGDs, and observations. Triangulation helps reduce researcher's bias. It cross-examines the integrity of participants' responses (Anney, 2014). I obtained most issues I introduced to participants for FGDs from participants' responses to individual interview questions. (Flick, 2011) considers this a form of member checking. I also engaged in member checking by verbally discussing the data interpretation during my numerous visits, as the data-collection phase progressed. Furthermore, I gave raw data to some participants, and the findings to other participants, for verification. Some participants made slight changes to the raw data in terms of some word choices. All participants who participated in checking the findings were satisfied with the report. Anney (2014) also explains that member-checking helps to eliminate research bias when analysing and interpreting the results. I also kept a journal of events in the field during data generation.

4.6.2 Dependability

Dependability is consistency of evidence, a measure obtained by attesting to the accuracy of translating information from various data sources (triangulation) and allowing for reconstruction of events and processes leading to the conclusions in the study (Wagner et al., 2012). In this study, I vividly described the data-collection

procedures I employed, as well as the reason for any decisions I made during the research process. Furthermore, I triangulated the data sources. These strategies, if employed in a similar context, with similar participants, can replicate the results of this study.

4.6.3 Confirmability

Confirmability is another strategy used in qualitative research to enhance the trustworthiness of a study. Confirmability in a study demonstrates that the data and findings are clearly linked (Lietz & Zayas, 2010) to events in the study, rather than being simply the researcher's construction (Wagner et al., 2012). I made many visits to each of my research sites, from the time of initial contact with the schools, undertaking prolonged field work and engagement with the participants. The participants and I developed familiarity, and a relationship of trust, that enabled the participants to relate honest perspectives of their lived experiences. I was also very cautious not to allow my personal beliefs to interfere with my research procedures, thus eliminating any researcher's bias (Wagner et al., 2012). Moreover, I member-checked both raw data and findings to ensure confirmability.

4.6.4 Transferability

Transferability is defined as the basis on which similarity judgements are made (Wagner et al., 2012); that is the degree to which findings fit the situation beyond the study and are found meaningful. I adopted transferability as a criterion to ensure trustworthiness, by providing thick descriptions of my research sites, data collection, and analysis processes. In so doing, the findings can apply to similar settings when other researchers carry out a similar study under similar conditions. Thick description, according to Anney (2014), is the elucidation of all the research processes, from data generation, to study context, to production of the final report.

4.7 Ethical considerations

Fleming and Zegwaard (2018) outline that, at many educational institutions, collecting data from human participants for research purposes without ethical approval, places the researcher outside the institution's regulations on human research ethics. According to Abed (2015), issues of ethics are deemed to be not only at the start of a

research project, but all through the process. I sought and obtained all permissions required before I commenced the fieldwork; and I upheld issues of ethics throughout the entire study. The study protocol was approved by the Ethics Committee, Faculty of Education, University of Pretoria (number EM 19/03/01). Permission was obtained from the Limpopo Provincial Department of Education, Vhembe District Education Department, the Soutpansberg Education East Circuit, and principals of participating schools.

On my first encounter with each participant or group of participants, I introduced myself, explaining the purpose of the study, giving the three methods of data generation, how the data will be used and stored, and the benefits of the study. Benefits relate mainly as a contribution to existing knowledge on teacher leadership. I further explained to the participants that their participation was voluntary (Abed, 2015). Should they wish to withdraw at any time during the study, they had the right to do so; they would suffer no consequences (Bhattacherjee, 2012; Fleming & Zegwaard, 2018) (Fleming & Zegwaard, 2018). I stated that there was no anticipated harm that could be caused by the study activities. With these explanations, participants were well informed about the research activities. Hence, signed informed consent was obtained from all study participants prior to their participation (Bhattacherjee, 2012). Furthermore, before each interview and FGD, I sought and obtained verbal permission to use an audio tape for recording. Fleming and Zegwaard (2018) assert that the process of informed consent can be considered a contract between the researcher(s) and participant(s).

I respected and ensured the privacy of the participants by conducting individual interviews in places where participants spoke freely. In addition, I gave raw data from individual interviews in sealed envelopes to participants for member checking.

I protected participants' interests by employing the strategy of confidentiality (Fleming & Zegwaard, 2018). In this study, I coded the institutions A to D, and used pseudonyms to refer to participants to conceal their identity (for example T1A represents teacher 1 in school A). I also maintained participants' trust in using their information only for the purpose of this research study, thus ensuring their confidentiality.

4.8 Summary

In this chapter I discussed the research paradigm, design, data-collection instruments, and analysis. I also presented the criteria I used to ensure the quality of the research. In addition, I discussed issues of ethics employed throughout the study. In the proceeding chapter I present the study findings from the data collected, and interpretation of these findings.

CHAPTER 5

RESEARCH FINDINGS

5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter discussed the study design and methodology. The present chapter dwells on the study findings from data generated through individual interviews, focus-group discussions and observation of lessons, as well as curriculum-related meetings. The data were coded, and categorised, and sub-themes and themes were developed. The sub-themes and themes are linked to the research questions and confirmed by verbatim quotations from participants' responses. The biographical information of participants is presented in the following section.

5.2 Biographical information of the participants

A description of the symbols in the table is presented below.
Key: Schools: A, B, C, D; **Principals:** P; **Teachers:** T (Example: PA is principal of school A; T1A is teacher 1 of school A)

Table 5.1: Biographical information of the participants

Participants		**Gender**	**Age Bracket**	**Years of Experience in Position**	**Qualification**
School	**Key**				
A	PA	Male	45-54	5	MEd
	T1A	Male	45-54	7	BA & PGCE
	T2A	Female	45-54	26	JTD
	T3A	Male	26-35	7	BEd
	T4A	Male	26-35	8	BA & FET
	T5A	Female	26-35	4	BEd
B					
	PB	Female	45-54	3	BEd Hons

	T1B	Female	45-54	16	BA
	T2B	Female	45-54	15	BEd
	T3B	Male	36-44	15	BA
	T4B	Male	45-54	23	STD
	T5B	Male	26-35	5	BSc, PGCE
C					
	PC	Male	45-54	2	BEd Hons
	T1C	Male	45-54	11	STD, ACE & BEd
	T2C	Female	45-54	16	BA
	T3C	Male	45-54	12	STD
	T4C	Male	36-44	16	HDE
	T5C	Male	45-54	21	BEd
D					
	PD	Male	45-54	13	BEd Hons
	T1D	Male	45-54	29	STD & ACE
	T2D	Female	45-54	12	STD & FDE
	T3D	Female	45-54	25	STD & ACE
	T4D	Male	Above 55	32	BEd, STD & ACE
	T5D	Male	45-54	11	STD, ABET & ACE

Many of the participants in the study are male. Most participants are between the ages of 45 and 54. Most of the participants have more than 10 years of teaching experience and many of the participants hold a bachelor's degree.

5.3 Research questions

This study is based on the premise that the way in which teachers experience and understand their role as curriculum leaders is likely to impact the quality of teaching and learning in their schools. This will therefore impact the quality of education in South Africa.

The table below presents the research questions and interview questions on teachers' experiences and understanding of their roles as curriculum leaders in secondary schools.

Table 5.2: Research questions

Research Questions	Interview Questions
Q1: What are teachers' understanding of their role as curriculum leaders in selected South African secondary schools?	1. What do you understand by curriculum leadership? 2. What can you say about teachers' role as curriculum leaders in schools? 3. In your opinion, do you think that teachers should be regarded as curriculum leaders in schools? Explain.
Q2: What do teachers perceive to be their role as curriculum leaders in secondary schools?	4. What do you think is your role as a curriculum leader? 5. What challenges do you face in performing your role as a curriculum leader? 6. What do you suggest could be done to help you perform this role better? 7. What can you say are benefits of being curriculum leaders?
Q3: How do teachers execute their role as curriculum leaders in secondary schools?	8. Please tell me what teachers do as curriculum leaders in school. 9. Where and when do teachers perform their role as curriculum leaders? 10. Describe some positive experiences you have encountered as you engage in leading the curriculum. What are the negative experiences?
Q4: How do school managers create opportunities/spaces for teacher leadership in curriculum matters?	11. Please tell me how you create opportunities for teachers to perform their role as curriculum leaders. 12. What helps you in creating opportunities that enable teachers to perform their role as curriculum leaders? What limits your ability to create opportunities for teachers' leadership in curriculum matters?
Is there anything that you would like to tell me about your role as a curriculum leader?	

5.4 Research questions, themes and sub-themes

The findings of this study are presented in four main themes, and thirteen sub-themes. The table below presents the research questions, themes, and sub-themes derived from participants' responses.

Table 5.3: Research questions, themes and sub-themes

Research Questions	**Themes and Sub-themes**
1 What is teachers' understanding of their role as curriculum leaders in selected South African secondary schools?	***Theme 1: Teachers' understanding of their role as curriculum leaders*** Sub-theme 1: Teachers' understanding of the concept curriculum leadership • Competency in subject/content knowledge of the curriculum • Leadership in teacher-learner interaction during curriculum delivery • The ability to impart knowledge and give direction • Motivating others and being accountable in curriculum matters Sub-theme 2: The role of teachers as curriculum leaders • Role modelling • Ensuring effective teaching and learning (subject content delivery, relationship with learners and understanding the needs of the learners) • Influencing the behaviour of other teachers (inspiring, motivating, giving direction, encouraging, and supporting) Sub-theme 3: Reasons that teachers regard themselves as curriculum leaders • Content knowledge, and knowledge of learners and their

	needs, as well as contextual experience • Agents of change and transformation • Stakeholders in leading the curriculum
2 What do teachers perceive to be their role as curriculum leaders in secondary schools?	***Theme 2 Teachers' perceived role as curriculum leaders*** Sub-theme 1: The roles that teachers perceived, as curriculum leaders • Subject specialist • Leader/administrator/manager • Facilitator • Interpreter and learning programme designer • Assessor • Pastoral caregiver • Lifelong learner Sub-theme 2: Attributes of teachers as curriculum leaders • The ability to ensure collective teamwork (knowledgeable, responsible hardworking, committed, passionate and positive) • Possessing administrative proficiency (organised and proactive, time-conscious and disciplined) • Establishing positive relationships (tolerance, perseverance, good listening skills, sensitive, and compassionate) • Role model Sub-theme 3: The challenges that hinder the role that teachers play as curriculum leaders

	• Department- and school-related challenges (insufficient material resources, limited infrastructure, low achievement standards for learners, insufficient departmental support, shortage of human resources, overcrowding, heavy workload, limited time, excessive learner protection by the law, teacher vulnerability or insecurity, poor communication between DOE and schools, overcrowded curriculum content • Teacher-related challenges (poor classroom management, not being punctual) • Learner-related challenges (indiscipline, unwillingness to be committed learners, substance abuse, and no parental involvement) Sub-theme 4: Teachers' suggestions on how to improve performance of their role as curriculum leaders • Teachers' suggestions to DoE (provision of resources by the DoE, DoE and teacher collaboration before curriculum changes, support from DoE, increase learner achievement bar to 50%, provision of similar learner-teacher protection policies by DoE, and provision of social workers in schools) • Teachers' suggestions to their colleagues (to be time conscious, to attend lessons, and to be positive) • Teachers' suggestions to parents and the community (responsible community/involvement) Sub-theme 5: Benefits of teachers' role as curriculum leaders

	• Benefits to learners (prepares learners for the future, learners gain knowledge, improves learner performance and progress) • Benefits to teachers (Professional satisfaction and recognition, professional growth and improvement, motivation, and self-confidence) • Benefits to school, local community and nation (institutional recognition/positive school image, improved learner achievement and quality of education).
Q3 How do teachers execute their role as curriculum leaders in secondary schools?	***Theme 3* How t*eachers execute their role as curriculum leaders in secondary schools*** Sub-theme 1: Teachers' role as curriculum leaders in instructional activities • The role in dissemination of subject content knowledge • The role in creating a conducive teaching and learning environment • The role of pedagogy – teaching and learning strategies • The role of professional development of teachers Sub-theme 2: Teachers' role as curriculum leaders in school-based curriculum development Sub-theme 3: Teachers' role as curriculum leaders in the community

Q4: How do school managers create opportunities/spaces for teacher leadership in curriculum matters?	***Theme 4*: *How school managers create opportunities for teacher leadership in curriculum matters*** Sub-theme1: Empowering teachers • Delegating responsibilities to teachers • Creating participative structures for decision-making • Sharing vision Sub-theme 2: Professional development in curriculum matters • Providing time for continuous professional development • Providing platforms for teacher collaboration for professional development

5.4.1 Theme one: Teachers' understanding of their role as curriculum leaders

The focus of this theme is on the understanding of teachers regarding their role as curriculum leaders. The two sub-themes that provide a deeper insight into this theme are the ways in which teachers conceptualise curriculum leadership, and teachers' opinions of their role as curriculum leaders.

5.4.1.1 Sub-theme 1: Teachers' understanding of the concept of curriculum leadership

Four categories of thoughts emerged from this sub-theme, and these are presented in the paragraphs that follow. Competency in a subject or content knowledge of the curriculum: this category reveals that teachers understand curriculum leadership to embody competency in a subject, or possession of content knowledge of the

curriculum. To the participants, the possession of a rich content knowledge of the curriculum enables teachers to lead in curriculum matters. This is indicated in the responses of the participants below:

> *Ok, curriculum leadership tells me that, you must be the leader and you must know your curriculum to be able to give it over to the children (T5A).*

> *Curriculum leadership to me, it has got something to do with uh, development of an educator as an individual to be always ahead of the particular subject that he or she is teaching. The educator to me must always be on top of his game he must be… he or she must always be ready to develop himself or herself as far as the subject he/she is offering so that if there are challenges she must be one of those who will be facing those challenges head on (T5C).*

It appears from the findings that a good mastery of the curriculum content knowledge is a core aspect of curriculum leadership. The quotations suggest that teachers should be up to date with any changes and/or improvements in a subject area in order to better implement the curriculum, as they lead learners through an effective learning and teaching process.

According to the findings, some participants also responded that curriculum leadership to them means leadership in teacher-learner interaction during curriculum delivery. Teachers and learners interact in a give-and-take manner, sharing ideas as teachers guide learners during the teaching and learning process. The responses of the participants in this theme imply a belief that learners are not empty vessels to be filled during curriculum delivery. Learners are active partners in the teaching and learning process. The learners share their knowledge of a given subject matter with teachers, who set the direction and steer the lesson appropriately. The participants explained the approach as follows:

> *To me, curriculum leadership it's like when I'm a teacher or an educator neh; I'm leading the, the learners. In other words, I'm giving them direction, not meaning that I know everything. You know nowadays learners are very much intelligent more especially when they are equipped with the... with this, this technology (T2D).*

> *It means uh…curriculum leadership now is to take uh… uh…uh…steps in advancing uh…education. Uh…in management…how to manage uh schools and then how you prepare your work, making recordings, using uh…things like the timetables, class timetables, and then class uh…register and then how do you assess your learners and then how you do you interact with uh stakeholders, learners, parents and then educators (T1D).*

This finding implies that curriculum leadership is a collaborative process in which various stakeholders come on board and perform varying curriculum-related tasks, exchanging views on common goals. In this case, the goals of effective teaching and learning aim at achieving quality education.

The ability of the teachers to impart knowledge and give direction was the most common description that the participants gave as their understanding of the concept of curriculum leadership. Participants expressed that curriculum leadership means being able to implement the planned curriculum, and to direct learners to understand what they are supposed to understand within a given time frame.

> *Curriculum leadership to me, I think I must be able to implement the curriculum. That's I have to be the mediator between the students and the government or the curriculum Yes (T2A).*

> *Curriculum leadership means that one should be able to make the learners understand their curriculum and also you become the leader in that curriculum to make sure that the learners get an understanding of it. The teachers in particular, because they are the ones that have to implement the curriculum to the learners (T1B).*

> *I think uhm, with curriculum it has to do with the school, what learners do. So, curriculum leadership to me means that as an educator the set of work that has been put aside for learners I must be able to lead them through it at ease it is so that they end up understanding what is it that they have to know in the particular year of study (T2C).*

It is evident from the above quotations that teachers consider themselves curriculum leaders. The participants in this study acknowledge that teachers should be capable of transmitting the curriculum to learners during the teaching and learning process. It appears that curriculum leadership requires teachers to guide and direct learners

during the teaching and learning process, such that the curriculum connects with students' learning in a meaningful way, to achieve set curriculum goals.

During the interviews, some participants explained curriculum leadership as motivating others, and being accountable in curriculum matters. Teachers indicate that they must be responsible and accountable in the task of making learners understand the curriculum. They must also collaborate and motivate one another to accomplish their task of implementing the curriculum successfully. Two participants said:

> *Motivation, motivation, to attain that goal, I think it's as I said motivation and working together so helping each other. So, if I don't understand something, I'll go to someone else, get them help me and then so then build on the curriculum and the kids also if they don't understand I won't mind if I go to someone else and ask them for help (T5A).*

> *Uh, the curriculum leadership means you must have a responsibility and accountability with what you are doing, yes. For my colleagues or the teacher who are under me, I motivate them by saying let's work hard for these learners (T3D).*

According to these teachers in this study, curriculum leadership demands collaboration among the stakeholders, interdependence, and uplifting relationships with each other to augment morale, leading to effective teaching and meaningful learning. This implies that working in isolation may not be fruitful in the context of leading. There must be some individuals to lead while others follow at any given time. This finding suggests a give-and-take interaction and assistance as the need arises. Teachers seek improvement from one another on their content knowledge and pedagogic content knowledge, so as better to provide for the curriculum needs of learners. From the findings of a geography cluster meeting I observed it was evident that teacher collaboration was essential for mutual assistance and motivation to improve their content and pedagogic knowledge. During the meeting, the teachers shared strategies which would enable learners better to understand map work lessons. It would seem that such meetings build teachers' confidence and increase teacher efficacy in their responsibility of curriculum delivery, resulting in better accountability for student learning.

5.4.1.2 Sub-theme 2: The role of teachers as curriculum leaders

Within this sub-theme, teachers talked about their responsibilities as role models, as enforcers of effective teaching and learning, and how they influence the behaviour of teachers, as curriculum leaders.

Some participants indicated that, as curriculum leaders, they are role models to learners and to other teachers. They had the following to say:

> *If you yourself don't have a sense of responsibility you will not be able to be a good curriculum leader because you cannot pace yourself, you cannot set due dates for yourself and you fall behind. Your self-discipline is also very important if you can't control yourself and have self-discipline and be on time in your class and do the work and drive yourself, you know to urge yourself to be a teacher of your best ability then you cannot be a curriculum leader (T2A).*

> *We are the torch bearers…we are the torch bearers, teachers are the…the…the torch bearers, and the…the…the…we are professionals in fact, you see, that's why we must do that. We are professionals; we have been trained to advance that course, yeah (T1D).*

> *Ahh…, we must lead by example, when I said learners must, "learn", we are teaching them, they must go and read, they must write exam and pass. What about myself as educator, means that I must not stop studying I must carry on (T2D).*

Teachers' views of their role as models to learners and their colleagues suggest that teachers understand that they must live exemplary lives. They are conscious of the impact of their actions, behaviour, or utterances on those they serve and work with. The adage of actions speaking louder than words applies aptly here.

The aspect of ensuring effective teaching and learning through subject-content delivery, relationship with learners, and understanding the needs of the learners, was articulated by some participants as the teachers' role in leading the curriculum.

> *Ok, like I said, the teacher's role is obviously the leader, and you must be prepared, you must, you must be a lifelong learner. So, you must be prepared and know your curriculum to be able to present it to the learners (T5A).*

> *Teachers' role as curriculum leaders. Teachers must know their learners and where they understand and where they don't understand. So, by so doing the, the teacher can be able*

to solve the learner's problem. By so doing teacher will be able to understand learner's problem and teaching and learning will be effective, and curriculum will be easy for learners (T2B).

For you to be able to… know whether you have, uhm, achieved your goals; you have taught and the learners have understood, you really need to assess learners... You may give them a test, or …exam, right. And then after that you collect the evidence and analyse …whether you have achieved your goals or not. if… not… then, you really need to sit down and come up with different methods… to, equip the learners with the right things that they need to know (T3B).

The teacher's role as curriculum leaders in the first place…uhm…we are responsible for uhm…many things in uhm…in a child…in the children's…in these learners. For example, ok, their health they also come to us if maybe they're not feeling well, we must see what to do. Uh…we can't say no we are not doctors ok, I can't do anything, so ok we help them (T1C).

From the above quotations, it appeared that teachers understand that their role as curriculum leaders is multi-faceted. The role encompasses teacher capability, lesson preparation and delivery, evaluation of learner comprehension, teacher reflexivity, and provision of remedial lessons where necessary, and attending to non-academic needs of learners, so as not to hinder effective learning. The findings suggest an assumption that teachers' initial training prepares them adequately to become competent in their core responsibility. This includes ensuring effective teaching and learning through lesson preparation and delivery, evaluation of learner comprehension, teacher reflexivity, and provision of remedial lessons. In reality, this is not always the case. Teachers, particularly novice teachers, gain expertise from their colleagues who serve as role models, based on their personal ability and/or longevity in service. Teachers' initial training and in-service professional development may not adequately prepare them for multiple, and at times conflicting roles. Such roles include providing social and psychological assistance when they are expected to deliver the curriculum. Sometimes teachers struggle to cope with the situation.

During the interviews, some participants revealed that influencing the behaviour of other teachers (inspiring, motivating, giving direction, encourage and support) is the role that the teachers should perform as curriculum leaders. Teachers, as curriculum leaders, must be punctual for school, and to lessons. They must motivate and

influence one another by their manner of rendering service. The following quotations indicate this:

> *And with my colleagues, so… uh, I influence in this way, that uh, many of them, they are not used to these uh, programs like PowerPoint, they are still teaching using this old style of teaching – writing on the chalk board and that, so in fact uh, uh, I help them to show how they can use overhead projectors or machines, maybe to accelerate a little bit our way of teaching, from that old style of using a chalk and a duster, then uh, this is how I help my colleagues. Yeah (T4B).*

> *The curriculum leaders must be the… they must inspire people and then they must encourage the followers uh, and motivate them maybe to be uh, those, uh, the people who are under me they must feel free to come to me, they must feel free to approach me, yeah (T3D).*

> *Uh, always when it is my period, I try by all means to be, to go to my class in time and I think this also they can see that every time when it is my period I'm always in the class. I think this also motivates them, yeah (T4D).*

> *The roles of teachers are many. As curriculum leaders, number 1, we lead educators, we lead each other, though it has not been mentioned that you must do this. But as we are working, I copy from other educators and somebody else also copy from me (T5D).*

The meaning attached to these findings suggests that there are benefits when teachers as curriculum leaders lead by example, upholding professional ethics, and encouraging collegiality as well as collaboration in the workplace. The benefits for curriculum leaders include establishing a culture of productivity through teamwork. Despite these benefits, there are still many teachers who operate in isolation, and disregard the work ethics set by the curriculum leaders. For example, arriving late for lessons and not having a lesson plan for a lesson being delivered is unethical in the teaching profession. Yet this was the case with some teachers in this study.

5.4.1.3 Sub-theme 3: Reasons for teachers regarding themselves as curriculum leaders

This sub-theme describes teachers' reasons for regarding themselves as curriculum leaders. Teachers had diverse reasons for considering themselves curriculum leaders. The common categories identified from the responses of the participants were: their

curriculum content knowledge, knowledge of learners and their needs, and context experience, being agents of change and transformation, as well as being stakeholders in leading the implementation of the curriculum.

The participants in this study were of the view that they are experts in their various subjects. They interact with the learners on a daily basis on both academic and non-academic issues. They know and understand learners' challenges; and they also have the experience of working as curriculum leaders in different contexts. Some participants said the following in their responses:

> *In my own opinion, I recommend that teachers, they must be curriculum advisors, I mean, curriculum leaders because they are people who know more about curriculum. They know everything, they know more about the person they are dealing with. They are the only people who are uh, uh, experiencing the real situation, not a theory of it. Teachers are on the ground ... they are the people who are working in the industry, industry of making the mind of, of, of people uh, which is uh, learners, uh, uh, learner (T4B).*

> *Exactly, they must be regarded as curriculum leaders because they are, as I indicated that they are the ones who are at the grassroots level, they are the ones where things are happening and then they know the challenges which are there in classroom situations, in their communities also (T5C).*

> *I believe educators are curriculum leaders because they are the ones that deliver the curriculum… they are the fore runners, they are the ones that catch the ball and run with it…, and it depends how they pass it… even if for example, the department says maybe, they want to adopt the Cambridge method of curriculum… it's not the minister of basic education that will go and teach. It is not the MEC for education that will go and teach, it's the teachers at the grassroots levels that are still going to deliver that curriculum (T2C).*

The findings suggest that teachers are confident that without them as curriculum leaders, the curriculum will not be implemented. This confidence may translate into motivation, better commitment to attaining effective teaching and learning, thereby improving the quality of education.

For other participants, seeing themselves as agents of change and transformation in schools and in the lives of learners, justifies themselves as curriculum leaders in schools. These teachers explained that they are more concerned about bringing

change to learners' lives than simply implementing the curriculum by teaching their subject. These findings may be suggestive of the essence of leading the curriculum − bringing about holistic change and development in learners. In this way, learners would become meaningful contributors to the economy and society as a whole. It would not be productive to have learners who graduate from high school but cannot apply their knowledge to real-life situations. Another teacher's justification for regarding teachers as curriculum leaders was his experience of changing seemingly hopeless learners to successful ones. The quotations below illustrate their opinions.

> *"…we are making the child to become an independent one day and that's the main aim not just teaching your own subject… "(T2A).*

> *From what I've seen, I think they are curriculum leaders. I've experienced it. Isn't it they are the implementers? So, I measure whatever is being done by their own results. From the results that I'm seeing, looking specifically at my school, with all these problems that we have… and in terms of the learners that we always have, I think we are implementing because I've seen learners come here and their parents have lost interest… lost hope on them, and you find that we transform them… (T4C).*

Some participants indicated that teachers are curriculum leaders in schools by virtue of their stakeholder position in curriculum matters.

> *Yes, teachers must be regarded as curriculum leaders just because… we are stakeholders in fact as I can put it… without us ok, these learners cannot get this knowledge. (T1C)*

> *Yeah… that's why I said in my introductory remark that…those uh, high rank officials planning for teachers, stakeholders, ourselves must be involved because they just plan for us and then they don't know the situation to which we are working under, so we must plan together. Teachers are the… ones that are implementing…, educating…, advancing the curriculum across…the board (T1D).*

> *. You know educators are at the grassroots level, and they know what to do... Those departmental officials… in the office, they don't know what is happening here at our schools… sometimes… they give us a lot of work to do in a space of let's say three weeks, or let's say eight weeks which is not enough time because this is designed by people who are not on the ground roots. If it is designed by teachers, I think it will be better, because they know the situation on the grassroots (T4D).*

It is likely that these teachers feel frustrated and excluded from curriculum decision-making before the curriculum guidelines are given to schools. Some of the participants' responses indicated that they are expected to complete too much work within a limited time frame. Such is not possible. In addition, some subject contents are not properly aligned, wherein content appropriate to be taught at the beginning of the year is programmed for the middle or end of the year. This may require more contact time, as learners are more likely to struggle to comprehend such content. Unfortunately, teachers cannot realign the curriculum even at school level: end of-term examinations are set by the DoE, based on the curriculum content for that term. It appears that, although they are leading the curriculum in school, teachers do not claim ownership of the curriculum because they do not participate in the developmental stages of the curriculum, only in its implementation.

5.4.2 Theme two: teachers' perceptions of their role as curriculum leaders

Theme Two centres on teachers' awareness, knowledge, or comprehension of their responsibilities or what is expected of them as curriculum leaders in secondary schools. The findings of this theme of teachers' perceived roles as curriculum leaders directly address the second research sub-question of this study; "What do teachers perceive to be their role as curriculum leaders in secondary schools?" Theme Two of teachers' perceived role as curriculum leaders is supported further through five sub-themes of teachers' roles as curriculum leaders; attributes of teachers as curriculum leaders; challenges of teachers as curriculum leaders; improving teachers' performance as curriculum leaders; and benefits of teachers' involvement in leading curriculum matters.

5.4.2.1 Sub-theme 1: The role that teachers, as curriculum leaders, perceived

I present findings on what teachers regard as their responsibilities, as curriculum leaders. This sub-theme reflects the seven roles of teachers in the Norms and Standards for Educators by DoE. These roles are discussed as categories from the sub-theme, namely, teachers as subject specialists, leaders/administrators/managers, facilitators, interpreters and learning programme designers, assessors, pastoral caregivers, and lifelong learners.

Perceived role of teachers as subject specialists

As subject specialists, teachers in this study identify with and justify that teachers enable learning to occur by assisting learners to understand the content of a given subject or discipline. While some teachers indicated that, as subject specialists, they participate in selecting textbooks rich in information to obtain appropriate content knowledge of the subject, others articulated the use of subject specific language and terminologies to ground learners in the various concepts of the subject. One teacher expressed his prowess as subject specialist by flagging what he considers a misalignment of subject content with the grade level at which such content is introduced. These are depicted in the following narrations:

> *We sit together as a cluster, and then we decide which is the best book that… have got uh… thorough information that can be…imparted to learners (T1D).*

> *I have said…am not going to talk to a learner in Tshivenda in class…as much as English mothers all the subjects, all subjects have their own linguistic. In EMS we don't talk about money, we talk about capital, in geography we don't talk about many people, we talk about population. So, as much as these learners may be very bad in English, but if curriculum leaders can deliver the curriculum in the correct language, it will be fine (T2C).*

> *… in Grade 8 in Geo,…we start off when the children are trying to adapt to high school…starting with coordinates, I found that it's very difficult… that is something I need to take up with my subject head…we have to have an open relationship and open channel with the people that are actually setting that, because now every year I battle and actually I am wasting time because if I can swap around and do that later in the year I think that the children will get a hang of it in a much shorter time (T2A).*

> As with T2A above, T5C also complains:
> *… we need to be given a role to play as far as …content is concerned. I'm a Life Science educator there's some of the items or topics which I feel they were not supposed to be in particular grades…like…human reproduction…We pay special attention…only in grade 12… was supposed to be…at an early stage like in grade eight or grade 9… when they reach grade 12, they already have children… when I'm teaching, they shall be hearing say the contraceptive methods in detail for the first time (T5C).*

These findings suggest that teachers are confident in their ability to perform their role as subject specialists, and they take pride in doing so. As an English teacher, T2C is adamant about communicating with learners only in English, the language of teaching and learning of the school. This teacher understands the benefits to learners, maintaining that a good mastery of English facilitates learners' comprehension of other subjects, especially when teachers make use of subject-specific language.

Teacher dissatisfaction with their tokenistic inclusion in curriculum matters expressed earlier in 5.4.1.3 above, surfaces here once more. T2A's statement above clearly indicates that inadequate alignment of subject content consumes the much-needed curriculum contact time, without addressing the key components of the curriculum. In addition to avoiding time wastage, teachers also want to respond to learners' needs, while keeping abreast of the changing times by correctly aligning grade level and subject content. This is because a mismatch such as that indicated by T5C above implies that the learners lose appropriate knowledge when subject specialists (teachers) are not involved during the compilation of subject content.

Perceived role of teachers as leaders, administrators, and managers

Teachers in this study clearly articulated their curriculum roles as leaders, administrators, and managers in schools. As leaders, some teachers indicated that teachers participate in decision-making in school, guiding learners in making career choices, and coaching as well as mentoring student teachers. Some participants had this to say:

> *I attend most of the interviews because they sometimes call me these public schools, when there are interviews for Maths and Life Sciences (T4D**).***

> *…as teachers also, we act as career guidance to these learners, so they must make sure that they teach and equip these learners to uh, achieve what the learner wants to do in life (T3B).*

> *I think the department must interact more with teachers and … they must use teachers more often to actually change things in the curriculum…(T4A).*

> *…… in mentorship…, these learners who are doing teaching at universities…student teachers, will come from time to time. Then we mentor them. And also, if a new teacher comes in our subject, we will have time to mentor that particular person, and to shadow her or him when he or she goes to class (T1B).*

Teacher desire for inclusion in decision-making on curriculum-related matters has been ongoing. Involving subject teachers in interviews for the selection of new teachers for that subject, as reported by T4D, is a recognition of teachers' ability and competence to make valued contributions to their profession. The invited teachers may gain confidence in themselves and strive for better performance in their craft. Similarly, teachers render their services for the ultimate goal of contributing to learner holistic development. Given the opportunity therefore to own their profession, teachers are more than willing to participate in the training of novice teachers, by coaching and mentoring student teachers. Furthermore, teachers, as leaders, are able to guide learners in their career choices based on teachers' knowledge of learners' strengths and weaknesses, abilities, and competencies.

Interview data in this study show that teachers perform administrative duties by capturing records of learners' social, family, and academic information that may be used to understand the correlation between learner behaviour and learner performance. Such records may also be used to determine the nature and type of assistance to offer to learners, where necessary. This much-needed information for the school comes with a price tag for teachers. Some teachers describe their perspective as follows:

> *The teacher will uh, find the record, learner's record. The teacher will be responsible for discipline learners… If we talk about uh, learners with disabilities… The teacher will be able to screen the learner… refer that learner to the certain department (T2B).*

> *…we compile files for each learner…your file as a teacher, you need to put them in order… that gives a lot of work to the teacher (T3B).*

> *…another thing you know…we today work as administrative clerks, that's why some activities are not being attend to because we have got many tasks to fulfil as educators you…are everything in the school… we have got a workload (FGD-T1D).*

> *...teaching is being made more difficult today. The department is always overloading educators with…recording …this and that… sometimes you find that we spend most of our times…reporting things, than focusing on the learner (T5D).*

These findings indicate that, although teachers understand the importance of keeping records of learner performance for learners and schools, the DoE has not shared with teachers the purpose of capturing the same records of learner performance in many different formats. The findings also suggest that teachers perceive the DoE demand for such record keeping as an unfruitful routine, meaningless task which is time-consuming and takes teachers away from teaching. Teachers' impressions are that, since such a role does not require teaching skills, it should be performed by administrative staff.

As managers, teachers instil good classroom management by ensuring discipline, and creating a conducive atmosphere for teaching and learning. A teacher noted:

> *It's all about discipline especially in classes, everything starts with discipline in classes, because in a discipline class, you will know that learners are actually going to learn something, because they are discipline because they know when you are actually working, when you are playing and when you are doing whatever you want (T4A).*

The statement above expressing some teachers' view of classroom management indicates that the classroom is the arena for teachers to portray their craft. Effective teaching and learning are the sole *raison d'être* for schools. A well-managed class reflects teacher preparedness and engagement with learners. However, certain evidence of a well-planned lesson − a lesson plan − was not available for most lessons I observed. During focus-group discussions with the participants I sought the reasons why most of the teachers in this study do not draw up plans for lessons. These teachers' reasons vary. Some teachers maintain that lesson plans are not important; some teachers claim that they are too experienced to need lesson plans in class. Other teachers indicate that policy documents like the pacesetters give them sufficient guidance. The following are some of their responses:

> *I think…a lesson plan, it's not so important… the cycle plan is more important because you know for example, we've got two weeks to explain something to the kids… But the lesson plan just shows you what you are supposed…must do in the period (FGD-T4A).*

> *…**a lesson plan is just a document meant for officials, who can see it.** I …see the pacesetter has everything. It directs me, this is what I did, this is what am still supposed to do… But I go to class I have planned…I don't even use a lesson plan…I may note down something, give learners notes (FGD-T5D).*
>
> *…you will find that most of the work they are doing in the class, is not what is written down there…you will go some extra miles you cannot write everything you are expected to teach in the class…even if you do a summary, you find that you are eventually moving out of those written things (FGD-T1B).*
>
> *…most educators feel that they've got experience in teaching these things …is like a routine work… they know okay in this chapter I'm supposed to be teaching 1, 2, 3, 4… I have the textbook maybe to give a homework or class work… with other colleagues when we talk of lesson plans, Yoh!... some tell you it's time consuming why do all that… we already have the content in the policy book? (FGD-T4C)*
>
> *….we go to the class, without a lesson plans because, you can find myself maybe, I have got 15 years teaching that subject and I know, ok on Monday am going to do this… But in reality, I must have got uh, a work schedule how to do it and I must prepare (FGD-T1D).*

These reasons notwithstanding, what is apparent is that most teachers (suggested in the use of 'we' by *FGD-T1D* above) do not draw up lesson plans. Being experienced teachers, these teachers have developed the art of teaching such that they have a mental lesson plan and do not need to draw up a written lesson plan for teaching. On the other hand, the inexperienced teachers may not be able to present a good lesson without a lesson plan, thus robbing learners of effective teaching and learning. Another possible indication is that, although teachers complain of exclusion from many decision-making processes related to the curriculum, they do not seem eager to claim ownership of their profession. It sounds very unprofessional for a teacher to state "…*a lesson plan is just a document meant for officials…" (FGD-T5D*).

Planning and delivering lessons are areas in which teachers are the sole curriculum leaders, interacting with learners, thus performing their role of curriculum implementation as curriculum leaders.

Perceived role of teachers as facilitators

The findings also reveal that teachers, as curriculum leaders, facilitate learning for both learners and their colleagues. The following excerpts depict some teachers' assertions of their role as learning facilitators:

> *I speak to other teachers as well who is teaching and we share knowledge and information if something works for you shouldn't just keep it for yourself I only teach the grade 8 and 10 Geo but I also work together with the grade 9 and 11 and 12 teachers so we have to share that knowledge (T2A).*

> *…so, I then have to use their villages and the nearby towns so that they can have at least an idea of what goes on when we compare the two. So that they can understand it because even no matter how I can say even if I can say let us look at the uh, uh, for example let's look at India, and Britain, they are far apart (T2C).*

> *I'm having 17 tablets…4 per group then they use…that tablet …they prepare lesson…They are the ones who's going to present that lesson…I'm just a facilitator in the classroom…In the afternoon I stay with them in the school until 4:30 or 5:00pm…preparing the topic using tablets and textbooks. They Google and…find more information from that tablet after that we go to the class and present the lesson (T3D).*

> *…my role is just to take this curriculum and uh and try and make sure that I lead the learners into uh understanding what they are supposed to come up with, out of these subjects (T4C).*

> *When I'm teaching, I try to involve …almost all of my learners by asking them questions or to come up with other reasons which they think will lead us to the solutions of the problems. If all learners in the class are involved, then I think it minimizes problems (T4D).*

The above remarks suggest that effective teaching and learning takes place when learners take ownership of their learning. Some teachers facilitate such learning by introducing and presenting concepts to learners using context-familiar examples. Others facilitate by clearly articulating the lesson objectives to learners to enable learners to focus and do the bulk of the work. The work is achieved either through individual or group research and presentations, class tasks, and comments, or challenges of peers' work, and class discussions. This is because, for lessons to be

learner-centred, as the literature (Ahonen et al., 2014 & Jagtap, 2016) advocates, teachers are supposed only to direct learners, to create opportunities, and to sustain learner interest in the process of free exchange of ideas. Unfortunately, these findings stand in sharp contrast to most of the lessons I observed. The observed lessons were mostly dominated by teacher-talking, making them teacher-centred. A few, such as T3D's lesson, stood out as a purely learner-centred lesson. It seems that there is a limited mind-shift from teacher-centred to learner-centred learning. Teachers are resisting change from the traditional teaching method. This tardiness reflects teacher difficulty in performing their role as curriculum leaders in guiding, coordinating, and motivating learners to take ownership of their learning. Possibly, since learner-centred lessons have a slower pace than teacher-centred lessons, teachers may be concerned over the limited time they have to complete the seemingly overloaded curriculum content.

The findings also indicate that teachers are eager to improve on their practice, no matter the source of information for enrichment. By being facilitators to their peers during cluster meetings as well as departmental meetings within schools, teachers are modelling to learners the willingness to learn, and the importance of seeking information for knowledge building. Data collected during the curriculum meetings I observed concur with T2A's statement above.

Perceived role of teachers as interpreters and learning programme designers

In this category teachers identify with their role as interpreters and learning programme designers. The findings reveal that the participants perform this role of interpreters only by contextualising curriculum content and TLM to enhance learners' understanding. The following quotes illustrate this:

> *So yes, you study your curriculum and then you know what's in the curriculum, but you need to go through it and adjust and we don't do that; we fall in and before we know it's gone… sometimes people just like give the class and say, "there's it, do it". So, what I would say is explaining, interaction, so that you get the curriculum into their lives (T5A).*

> *…you see this lesson plan…It's my own designing…yeah…and even if now the head of department can come, that is good…you see, yeah…I take my own initiative that…as long*

as those initiatives will advance the course of the curriculum, yeah…at my situation, or at my school…(T1D).

…that I have to develop my own lesson as to how am I going to do what? -to implement or to present a lesson to the class… (T2D).

It appears that teachers are aware that their efficacy as professionals may be brought into question should they make use of TLMs, implementing the curriculum as though TLMs were carved in stone. Data from lessons I observed confirmed that some teachers attempt to adapt and contextualise the curriculum. This was mostly evident by the use of examples and references to things or happenings in the immediate surroundings of the school. Such signifies that teachers have textual intelligence, as they are able to understand the context in which they work and adapt their teaching style to enable learning to take place.

The findings further express that, where syllabus modification is required, the participants turn a blind eye. One teacher had this to say:

… in Grade 8 in Geo,…we start off when the children are trying to adapt to high school…starting with coordinates, I found that it's very difficult… that is something I need to take up with my subject head…we have to have an open relationship and open channel with the people that are actually setting that, because now every year I battle and actually I am wasting time because if I can swap around and do that later in the year I think that the children will get a hang of it in a much shorter time (T2A).

As did T2A, some teachers in a focus-group discussion also mentioned:

Even though we…have things that we call them the pacesetters, some of them looking into them we find that the topics that we are supposed to do one after each another, they are not related, they cannot link. So, but we don't have that chance to change that this topic that they say that must be done in term two, I have to do it right now in term one (FGD-T2D).

Hmm! You know, I can't deviate from what uh…I have been given to follow because at the end of the day I'm not going to set an examination. They are going to set an examination about what they have prescribed, what I must follow in the pacesetter. It's very much difficult thinking I can't, I can't take any chance. I take any chance, I'm irrelevant! Yes, you do as it's prescribed (FGD-T1D).

T2D's use of "we" suggests that she speaks on behalf of teachers. This means that exchanging the teaching of the curriculum content is a common practice, and teachers feel frustrated. The findings suggest that, in as much as teachers are able to detect the need to modify the syllabus in certain subjects, they do not engage in such modifications. This may be attributed to teacher avoidance of blame should learners underperform because of the syllabus modifications. In other words, since learners in South African secondary schools write common mid-year and end-of-year examinations set at provincial level, should a teacher modify the syllabus and fail to teach a given topic or concept programmed during that cycle, learners may be disadvantaged during the examination. Such a teacher may have to account for learners' underperformance. This means that the curriculum and assessment structure in the South African secondary school context is rigid. It does not allow for flexibility and creativity of teachers, overlooking the ability of the teachers, and preventing teachers from taking initiative, being innovative and modifying syllabus presentation, a role expected of teachers, as curriculum leaders.

In such circumstances, it is no longer the learners' interests that are being protected. Teacher professionalism is further downplayed. Having been excluded from the curriculum development process, it appears ridiculous that teachers cannot make modifications where necessary.

Perceived role of teachers as assessors

In this category, I discuss teachers' experiences of their role as assessors. Most participants in this study indicated that, as assessors, they are conscious of the type and quality of assessment for learners. They make use of assessment outcomes to determine students' learning, teacher's teaching pace, and method or strategy. Teachers also indicated that they perform their role as assessors within the classroom as well as within and beyond the school. These thoughts are captured through the following excerpts:

> *…we…assess the learners on what is being imparted to them. To find out if uh…really, they understood, so we must assess them; we have got different ways of assessment…it may be formative, baseline, or whatsoever as long as we uh…assess the outcome of what the learners have learnt (T1D).*

…sometimes …you might end up thinking that learners don't want to listen to you, whereas…the certain learner is experiencing pain or maybe hunger. So, by observing you can tell that this learner maybe, not ready to learn and then I'll find a way to say "after the class we can go to staff room", then…discuss if there's any problems …(T5B).

The expressions of T1D and T5B above suggest that teachers perform holistic learner assessment. While T1D focuses on academic assessment, T5B seems to say that both academic and behavioural assessments are important; roots of behavioural outcome may impact on academic outcomes. This implies that teachers have a good assessment literacy level on which to perform their role of assessing the effectiveness of student learning.

In order to ensure the quality of assessment for learners, teachers do not rely only on their personal ability to set tasks of acceptable standards. Thus, teachers in this study indicated that they engage in peer moderation and moderation by HoDs as per the DoE policy. However, data collected revealed that this is not always the norm. Some teachers explain thus:

… a colleague can give you and say "please can you moderate this for me and then we check and see whether everything that was supposed to be included in that particular exam…or…test is it there? (T3B).

Moderation…we do it…so that, we must not be embarrassed. Because if ever the test is set and it's below standard, so it would be a serious problem because it will be out and all over. So now it means that, those who are good in the particular aspects…they're the ones who are going to go through and check as to whether these are the things which can be given to learners or not. Yeah (T4B).

…the district will bring the test, most of the time the test will have a lot of flaws. You will realise, ah! This test was not moderated…the memo does not…tally with what is in the question paper... So…we go as a cluster or a circuit, to the circuit office, before we start marking. We check with the curriculum advisors, the mistakes that could have been there (T4C).

That's very rare, is very rare. We don't do it; we only submit the work to the seniors to moderate. Like I indicated, the amount of work we are doing, makes it impossible for us to

do like that. So, in case we do like that, the other educator will just say no it's okay it's okay without going into detail. It's rare (T5C).

It is clear from the statements above that most teachers in this study endeavour to uphold high standards on assessment tasks set within and beyond their schools. Despite the importance of quality or high standard of assessment tasks, not all teachers exercise professionalism in upholding quality. This lack of teacher professionalism in ensuring high-quality assessment tasks for learners may also be attributed to the learning culture in some schools. It is ironical that T4C blames the district for sending out assessment tasks full of errors, yet tasks are hardly moderated in the participant's school, as another participant of the same school (T5C) stated above. Some teachers still consider quality assurance of assessment tasks the responsibility of positional curriculum leaders like the HoDs. As assessors in leading the curriculum, not engaging in collaborative assessment deprives teachers of the benefits of collaborative assessment in improving their teaching practice.

Teachers in this study also use assessment data to improve teaching and learning, as shown in the following extracts:

…It also helps me to see whether should I move on or should I repeat or find other ways of showing these learners or teach these learners. There are sections that I know I excel…and there are sections that… I can't say I don't understand them. I understand them, but maybe the way I teach them is not understandable to learners. That way, I can say ok, I can try and improve if I can bring someone…(T4C).

…If I assess learners now and find that they are not performing, and I know that I have taught that part, it means that when I'm doing like a revision or a correction, I have to change the strategy of teaching, I have to implement a new method now (T2D).

I must check whether they understood what I taught them that is to evaluate. I can't just teach and go on finish the syllabus without rechecking whether they have acquired the knowledge I wanted them to acquire. If maybe they didn't, it means I must go back to that content, and I do it in a way that they must understand (T5D).

These findings illustrate teachers' understanding that the ultimate goal of schooling is effective teaching and learning. These teachers do not stop at anything before effective teaching and learning are attained for learners' transformation. The findings

also indicate that there are some teachers who knowingly do not do what is expected of them.

Perceived role of teachers as pastoral caregivers

As a category of teachers' roles as curriculum leaders, many participants in this study talked about pastoral caregiving performed by teachers: teachers responding to the social, emotional, and academic needs of some learners. The extracts below present what some teachers outlined:

> *…you must also have that like motherly or fatherly figure, where you build a relationship with the kids. They can come to you with any problem and you can help them sort that out. You're not gonna be their mother or father, but like that figure...So, it's not just the curriculum…that's how I feel with it (T5A).*

> *…teachers should be…as parents, to the learners. They are like parents as well. So, they must go an extra mile; like of course there are some learners who come from home they have got issues at home. Some they do not have parents, some, they are orphans (T3B).*

> *… we are teaching many learners here they're coming from the poor background; some they don't have parents… teachers then sometimes when they see the learner who is misbehaving they must go down to check what is the cause, rather than sayings Ah this learner is naughty, is not doing his work or homework!... most of the teachers are not doing that… you can't teach the learners who has a problem from home (T3D).*

The implication from these quotations is that teachers are aware that they are responsible for the holistic development of learners. As a result, teachers do not only concentrate on learners' academic prowess, but are also alert to any emotional, social, material, and or psychological needs in learners' behaviour; the presence of such may hinder effective learning. In reality, however, the extent to which teachers respond or react to such learners' needs varies a great deal. It is imperative for curriculum leaders to ensure effective teaching and learning. To perform this role, teachers, as curriculum leaders, engage in pastoral care for needy learners in order for effective teaching and learning to take place.

Perceived role of teachers as lifelong learners

In this category of teachers' roles, I discuss teachers' view of themselves as learners. The participants in this study suggest that teachers use different methods to gain additional knowledge, skills and expertise. These, among others, include reading, attending workshops, collaborating in PLCs (cluster), searching the Internet, and studying for higher qualifications. The excerpts below present the various means teachers employ to be abreast of evolving time and knowledge:

> *Sometimes I visit …these tourism sites so that I can…add something on my knowledge……my knowledge on nature (T1C).*

> *…say there is a certain information that I'm lacking…these days there is a technology, I make sure that I uh, have certain softwares or else, I go as far as YouTube to find certain information so that it can develop me …instead of maybe calling someone…you can also watch on YouTube as they teach and then you teach yourself from there then you go and teach your learners (T5B).*

> *The…role that I can say of the curriculum leader is to equip yourself. You must not just be happy to be a curriculum leader…further your knowledge in whatever field you are at. I find it to be very important, because if you further your knowledge you will gain even more skills, you'll gain even more understanding of certain things (T2C).*

The findings above suggest that teachers take individual initiatives to acquire more knowledge. In order to perform their role as curriculum leaders in instructional activities, influencing and leading learners and their colleagues, teachers have to keep abreast of changes and new information, by learning continuously. Despite their individual efforts, teachers in this study know that it is also advantageous to collaborate. Some participants explain:

> *…we even meet, we call it a cluster…as an EMS educator of Economics, Business or Accounting, I …have a meeting with some other teachers teaching the same subjects from other schools…we share information…we equip ourselves (T2D).*

> *I improve myself by attending workshops based on curriculum. Uh, networking with other people from different schools (T2B).*

The findings show that teachers make use of varying combinations of these methods of gaining knowledge and improving themselves. Knowledgeable teachers reflect efficacy and confidence. Such teachers are more likely to explore newly learnt methodologies for effective teaching and learning.

5.4.2.2 Sub-theme 2: Perceived attributes of teachers as curriculum leaders

In this sub-theme, I present teachers' perceptions of the characteristics teachers should possess as curriculum leaders. In order for teachers to perform the curriculum-related roles as discussed above, teachers are supposed to have certain qualities, attributes, or characteristics. Many different attributes were articulated by the teachers in this study. These are discussed in four main categories: ensuring teamwork, possessing administrative proficiency, good relationships, and role modelling.

As ensurers of teamwork, teachers should be knowledgeable, responsible, hardworking, and passionate. Teachers should reflect a positive nature. Some teachers postulate that:

> *I think with a positive attitude uhm, that's how you have to do everything. If people start seeing you in the negative light, then everything around you will go… yeah, negative. (T3A)*
>
> *…I expect the person to be knowledgeable… (T1A).*
>
> *…if we have got all teachers becomes committed, and then we uh, uh …speak one language you know, I think you know… we will tell another story… (T1D).*
>
> *…we must make sure that all these people they must come together and then we must do one thing so that we must reach at that goal, you see it (T4B).*

The findings indicate that teachers, as curriculum leaders, are collective workers, ensuring teamwork. This creates conducive grounds for sharing specialised expert knowledge, and gaining experience, thus establishing a school climate in which effective teaching and learning can take place. Each individual feel part of the whole, and assumes the responsibility of attaining the common objective.

Other teachers advance the qualities of administrative proficiency. These teachers explain as follows:

> *…as curriculum leaders, I expect the teachers in the first place to be time conscious uh …in this sense that ok, uh …in the first place reporting to work and also going…for a period, for a lesson ok,…they must be time-conscious (T1C).*

> *…I want to make sure that I honour deadlines, do my work at right time and submit all needed document in time, everything that I have to record in time…(T2B).*

> *…you need to be uhm planning ahead… If I can put it that way. So, uhm, yeah. If someone asks you something, then you should know about it… (T3A).*

The findings suggest that teachers understand that school activities appear to be on a conveyor belt. This is because all activities in school are time-dependent. Not being organised and disrespecting time is likely to infringe on the outcome of subsequent activities of an individual, other people, and the school as an organisation. These findings are in line with those obtained during lesson observations. Most teachers started and ended their lessons on time. However, this was not the case with school meetings, cluster meetings, and workshops. These often started later and finished later or in some cases started earlier than the stipulated time.

The data implies that having good relationships by being tolerant, persevering, compassionate, and sensitive and a good listener, is an attribute of teachers as curriculum leaders. This is elucidated in what some participants said.

> *be patient… sympathetic and understanding uh…to understand that all of my learners won't be able to grasp, uh, the content, at the same time… and even the colleagues are not the same… (T1B).*

> *… when you are working with people… avoid to provoke people or to do things people do not like… sympathize with people… when people say things, analyse them; find a way of responding those things positively (T4B).*

> *…I think, a curriculum leader should be someone who loves the learners, I just feel like you can't teach the learners if you don't love them. And you can't lead people you don't*

love. As a leader, generally, you must love what you are doing first to be able to lead…(T4C).

The existence of good interpersonal relationships is essential in a school because a school serves as a second family to learners and teachers alike. Feeling at home and accommodated gives teachers the peace of mind to be more committed and creative. Learners, on their part, become more curious and enthusiastic to learn.

The category of teachers exhibiting character traits worthy of emulation has been recurrent in this study. Teachers should be exemplary in everything they do and say, everywhere. Some teachers explained thus:

I think they must also be individuals of good character in the community where they live, they must be seen to be living good characters (T5C).

*To be exemplary yes. Even at school and outside you must be, learners should see you as the same person. I think if at school I'm a good teacher**,** then after school or during the weekend they find that teacher to be a drunkard or behaving not well, I think this may be a wrong impression to the learners (T4D).*

The character he's looking, he's copying from me, he's going to live it somewhere else… (T5D).

These findings indicate the power of observation in learners. Diverse as the curriculum is, teachers lead, and learners, as well as community members, learn the intended or unintended, the hidden or enacted curriculum.

5.4.2.3 Sub-theme 3: The challenges that hinder the role that teachers play as curriculum leaders

In this sub-theme, I present the roadblocks teachers encounter as curriculum leaders in school. These challenges teachers encounter form part of the overall experience of teachers as curriculum leaders. Teachers render invaluable services as they enact their role as curriculum leaders. Notwithstanding, teachers navigate their way through as they guide and direct learners and their colleagues. I present teachers' plethora of challenges in three categories, including challenges associated with the DoE and

schools, challenges associated with other teachers, and challenges associated with learners and parents.

Challenges caused by DoE and schools

The challenges teachers face as curriculum leaders associated with the DoE and schools mentioned by participants in this study include: exclusion from curriculum decision-making, insufficient material and human resources, limited infrastructure, low achievement standards for learners, overcrowding, heavy workload, limited time, excessive learner protection by the law, teacher vulnerability or insecurity, insufficient departmental support and overcrowded curriculum content.

Departmental policies and teacher exclusion during decision-making on these policies stand out as major areas posing enormous challenges to teachers as they perform their role in leading curriculum-related matters. Some teachers postulate:

> *We complain because we have got a situation where now, policies are being made uh, uh, without us they exclude us and then they just make policies and those policies we are the one who must implement those policies that why you know we usually have got complain about that. (FGD-T1D).*

> *…the pass rate there that they said it is 30%...they need to look into it…if it can be raised to 50%, that will really motivate learners to study…learners will know that "if they get a 49, they have failed". as a teacher myself, I am demotivated…A learner should be rejoicing getting maybe 75, 80% (T3B).*

> *The system is very cumbersome. Sometimes it's very hard to understand why things… change very frequently… And it's not that the teachers are not willing to follow the guidelines that are pushed down towards them. It's that they often don't understand it… the 'why' question is always asked and then very seldom you feel like you got an answer to that (T1A).*

> *…politically somewhere, somehow, some of things you implement, or you just decide to create certain rules of which cannot be suitable… now there's the issue of QPs. You are saying they are qualified to pass because they're old; but being old does not mean that they are educated (T5B).*

Central to all the statements above are teachers' disagreement with the decisions, and the non-involvement of teachers in decision-making that directly affects their work life. Teacher detachment from and non-ownership of education matters in which they are one of the key stakeholders is evident in their choice of words in the statements above, such as:

> *…the pass rate there that they said it is 30%... (T3B).*
> *…the guidelines that are pushed down towards them (T1A).*
> *…You are saying they are qualified to pass (T5B).*

These teachers' individual views above are echoed in focus-group discussion data, as shown in the following excerpts:

> *I only have one question; will you go to a doctor… if they had 30% or 40%?... I wouldn't want to go to a doctor that's got even 50% pass rate, because then I only have half a chance to survive (FGD-T2A).*

> *…learners are protected a lot…they know that they're protected. So, they know that they can do anything and…get away with anything and because the laws of the country and all the laws of the department they protect the learners… the same protection that is given to learners must be given to educators as well (FGD-T4C).*

> *…people who are affected by the ill-discipline is us, not them…people whose lives are being threatened is us and we are facing this on daily basis… So, it's a matter of just protecting your work so that your children may not die of hunger (FGD-T5D).*

> *I think when it comes to politicising the curriculum, a lot of that is really you are hiding behind the political agenda because the real problem is a lack of resources, the real problem is a lack of proper administration, the real problem is making sure that the sizes of the classes are such that the teachers can actually teach (FGD-T1A).*

Feelings of despair, helplessness, frustration, demotivation, and a strong longing for recognition are evident among the teachers in this study. These teachers want to speak for themselves because they are dissatisfied with the way in which the teachers' unions represent them. As curriculum leaders, they are supposed to be involved in or influencing curriculum-related decision-making; however, this is

not the case. The likely consequences may be unwillingness to be innovative, resulting in routine performance and poor quality of education.

In addition, shortage of resources emerges as a hindrance to teacher performance of their role as curriculum leaders. Some participants articulate the problem as follows:

> *…we are short-staffed in schools and you find that it's very difficult for me to teach a lot of grades, and I'm expected that I should be good in them, all of them; we end up being, being tired (T1B).*

> *Time is really not on our hands and if you look at uhm how teachers are actually working every day and your timetable that's so full and so on…(T4A).*

> *…another challenge is that ok, we don't have a laboratory and so you find that ok, most cases we just uh…use theory other than practicals and that in life sciences ok, some practicals are needed (T1C).*

> *… most of our learners I'm sure see a beaker or a test tube for the first time at the university (T4C).*

> *…in my school, we don't have classes. Our class, you find we're teaching more than 70 learners in a class… when it comes to the Maths and science… it will be very difficult to consult each and every learner (T3D).*

The interrelatedness of the utterances above appears as though these participants speak about the same school. Far from it: the descriptor against each quotation, apart from for T1C and T4C, reflects that these participants represent different institutions. This indicates that most teachers experience similar challenges in the different schools. Each teacher is most likely to identify with the working conditions in other schools. For instance, the heavy workload reported above by T1B from teaching different grades is confirmed by T4D in the following words:

> *…I'm teaching 5 subjects, some of them I didn't do…You know …for me to go to the class, I must prepare thoroughly, more than in the subjects that I've been trained at. Before I go to class, I have to consult other people and then…you know is very tough…This is a new subject to me, it needs a lot of preparation (T4D).*

However, some other participants have contrary opinions to those expressed above by their colleagues on teaching a subject, and on the lack of time. T3C states:

> *I don't believe in those. Yeah, because in most cases I arrive here at 6:10am. 6:30am, I'm starting with my morning studies. Then I teach Agricultural Sciences from grade 10 to 12 yeah and I manage my pacesetter well, so that uh at the end of the day I'm beyond it. (T3C).*

From a focus-group discussion on teaching a subject a teacher is not trained in, T2A articulates as below:

> *…I'm teaching such a subject that I wasn't trained in, so I don't see a problem with that. If you are a teacher there are many subjects that you can actually teach …but is problematic for scarce skills subjects like Maths or even accounting and IT, uh, science, physical science (FGD-T2A).*

Challenges caused by teachers

In this category, I present challenges that emanate from teachers themselves that deter their colleagues from performing their role optimally as curriculum leaders in school. These are captured in the complaints of some teachers in this study.

> *…the neighbours are really…the classes are so noisy, you think it's your own but it's actually them, so you sometimes need to discipline the other class as well (T5A).*

> *Teachers…, they bunk the periods… you might find that when you are teaching, there are learners outside, disturbing you, they are making noise through the windows… is also part of the problem… (T5B).*

> *Ok, the biggest one is other people not having respect for people's time…I wish they have 48 hours in our 24. They will be late, or they will… "oh you want your papers?" That happens in exams… they'll tell you to set this and then they don't use it and so on and they take a lot of your time. I think that's... (T3A).*

> *…as teachers we must avoid to abandon our classes…You find that teachers would be rotating, will be going up and down so that the time must elapse; then 5 to…will be going to the class. (T4B).*

The findings above indicate that, despite the complaints teachers heap on the DoE for making it difficult for teachers to perform their role as curriculum leaders in school, fellow teachers also pose hurdles to their colleagues. These negative experiences demonstrated by elements of reluctance and lack of commitment by some teachers in performing their role, may be attributed to teacher non-ownership of their profession.

Challenges caused by parents and learners

Drawbacks to teachers' performance of their role as curriculum leaders in school caused by parents and learners are mostly linked to learner indiscipline, unwillingness to be committed, substance abuse, and lack of parental involvement in their children's education. Teachers' experiences in this category of challenges caused by parents are narrated thus:

> *…some parents do not consider education serious…At the principal's office you find there are still much first quarter reports. We… don't give learners reports, we give parents, so that we may discuss the progress with the parent. But the parent do not appear…at the end of the year, the very same parent is there. If the learner failed, she complains, or he complains Áh! This people are not working (T5D).*

> *…when this child is troublesome at school and you call them…They don't come… For me parents' involvement, there is a problem (T4C).*

With regard to learner indiscipline, some teachers explain as below:

> *…children that don't do their part. You know they can do better but they're lazy. So, they don't do it and they are a lot of children struggling…if you tell them come to me, I'll help you, they'll say like "ahh, whatever, it's just school (T5A).*

> *Uh, we don't have something uh, that we can say we would use as a tool… to correct them…if they have done something wrong…learners seem to do whatever they want to do. I'm supposed to beg that learner to write, because if the learner does not write, it all comes to the teacher - what did you do? (T1B).*

> *…The other challenge is that many of them are heading families, their parents are either late or they work very far, they are not home every day. (T2C).*

> *…discipline is a serious problem…learners… sometimes they even come with liquor here, at the school premises. We do…confiscate such kinds of things…We do have some other adults during break, they also come here as if they are here to see learners or they're selling outside, but you find that they are selling drugs. And after using those drugs, the learner will start to misbehave…(T5D).*

Gleaning from these verbatim quotations, teachers seem helpless because they are caught between unresponsive parents, the DoE's learner protective policies, and a seemingly irresponsible community. Every other stakeholder of the school as an organisation seems to have turned a blind eye to the teachers' predicament. This may be a reason why the teaching profession is no longer attractive especially to young people; and why many teachers exit the profession once they find more attractive employment.

5.4.2.4 Sub-theme 4: Teachers' suggestions on how to improve performance of their role as curriculum leaders

Teachers, being the key role players in academic matters, know and have experience of the pedagogical shortcomings of curriculum implementation. Based on their experiences at school, teachers in this study made suggestions that could help teachers better perform their role as curriculum leaders.

Some participants in this study have this to say to ease DoE-related challenges:

On material resources:

> *I think the government needs to identify schools… that have a serious need, because it's difficult for us to deliver curriculum when the chalk board is something else! (T2C).*

> *I think it is the duty of the government to provide us with classes and the furniture then hoping that because of this new government maybe we will get new classes and possibly if we get new classes, it means new classes come with furniture (T3C).*

With regard to the curriculum, some participants suggest:

> *I think the department must interact more with teachers and … they must use teachers more often to actually change things in the curriculum (T4A).*

if they can ask us to make some contributions, read, research, and try to understand the curriculum that's going to be implemented and suggest can you make changes here and there because there are these and these problems (T4C).

…what I'm suggesting that the department must a little bit strengthen their laws so that these learners must not be overprotected… Another thing we must have…protection from…police service because these days, you can see learners are killing teachers, teachers are not safe…(T4B).

The… government must let learners to pass by themselves…So, they must just do away with qualified to pass. They must make sure that those who passed they must pass, those who are failing they must fail, because at the end of the day we're just passing them, but they know nothing (T5B).

…you expect kids to have only 30 and 40 but when you go to university must be 50 plus… a big gap… that's where first-year students are failing… they can't work for the 50 (FGD-T4A).

These findings reflect teachers' ardent desire to be substantially involved in decision-making concerning the teaching profession and curriculum issues. There is a perception among teachers that teachers' unions, supposedly teachers' mouthpieces, have become political. A possible reason for this mistrust could be that the unions have agreed on certain decisions with the department. Teachers consider such unacceptable, as mentioned in 5.4.2.3, above.

Concerning parents' and learners' challenges, a teacher in this study suggests:

I think the police cannot win this battle alone, this battle needs to be fought firstly by the parents of the learners, by the community itself, before us… they say… liquor must not be sold to underage, the community is the one who must take the responsibility of seeing to it that, that law is being followed… it will make the education to be better. (T5D).

…*if we can be given some powers as a school to say if a learner does this, come up with rules as SGB, educators and parents. Looking at specific problems for this specific school… (T4C).*

If the department can hear…I will suggest they must employ more social workers… at school… when we have problems here we can take those learners to the social workers

because sometimes you find ori, I'm doing it on my own but I fail because I can't do it for all learners… (T3D).

These teachers appear to say that DoE policies have failed teachers and schools. The community has made matters worse; it is members of the community who break laws by selling substances to under-aged children. The findings also suggest that this impacts on teacher experiences, as curriculum leaders.

On setbacks caused by fellow teachers, some participants in this study suggest:

…let us not be discouraged by the way how our learners are behaving; on our side as educators, let's try to be…if I may say, we must stand up and try and implement or to deliver our services to the fullest. (T2D).

…as teachers we must avoid to abandon our classes… (T4B).

… I think with a positive attitude uhm, that's how you have to do everything. If people start seeing you in the negative light, then everything around you will go… yeah, negative. (T3A)

The attributes of teachers articulated in Section 5.4.2.2 are also suggestions to teachers to improve on their role as curriculum leaders.

5.4.2.5 Sub-theme 5: Benefits of teachers' role as curriculum leaders

Teachers are supposed to be one of the key stakeholders in the curriculum development process, and in education in general. Teacher involvement in leading curriculum matters has invaluable benefits to learners, schools, teachers themselves, and to the nation as a whole. In this sub-theme, I present these benefits as articulated by the participants in this study. Findings of this sub-theme contribute to the perceptions of teachers and the overall experiences of their role as curriculum leaders in schools.

Three main categories stand out from this sub-theme, namely, benefits to learners, benefits to teachers, and benefits to the school and community. These are discussed in the following paragraphs**.** Some participants state that learners gain knowledge:

I really think that the learners benefit, whenever they go out of my class, they say why must we work, why can't we get off periods? and the next year when they get a more lenient teacher, they come back and say '' Ma'am we are still learning the mapwork from your

books'' and I'm now sorry that I moaned last year and I was moaning about you working so much in class. That is like a tap on my shoulder (T2A).

I think the benefits to the learners is that they, get to know uhm, maybe something that they did not know (T1B).

…the teacher as a curriculum leader learner benefit because they get more knowledge from that teacher and if learners get more knowledge, it means they pass easily…(T3C).

Other participants see benefits of teacher curriculum leading for learners in terms of improving learner performance and learner progress, articulating:

…even the learners, their benefit is to progress… (T3D).

To learners…they benefit because they can get for example if they perform well, they can get bursaries to the schools (T4D).

… as learners are getting interested…they can see educators are well prepared and…it improves their performance (T5C).

In addition, according to some other teachers in this study, teacher performance of their role as curriculum leaders benefits learners by preparing learners for the future, as seen in the excerpts below:

…for me, the main benefit of being a curriculum leader is, it adds to the lives of the learners in meaningful ways such as allowing them to go out in the Labour Market and get good jobs (T1A).

It's very beneficial to learners because at the end of the day, we want these learners to be better people of tomorrow (T4C).

…to make those learners develop to become fully grown and to understand the situation and the life ahead of them (T1D).

These findings indicate that teacher performance of their role as curriculum leaders has the ultimate goal of transforming a learner holistically from an individual with limited knowledge, to an individual with much knowledge. In this way the learner can be of service to others, by meaningfully contributing to the society.

As with learners, teachers also enjoy some gains from performing their role as curriculum leaders. Such gains include professional satisfaction and recognition, professional improvement or growth and motivation, and self-confidence. In expressing their professional satisfaction, and others' recognition of teachers' services, some teachers in this study attested:

> *…we also benefit because sometimes, they give us, if you get say 100% in your subject, they give you a certificate that may help you when you apply for other posts (T4D).*

> *For me, the benefit that I get from there, you know maybe, I will be uhm…am benefiting because if you see you are just helping a learner, and then you find that learner is up there, you become happy (T3D).*

> *The benefits, haha-haha (laughs) I think it's nice working with kids having you as a role model and I think the benefit is definitely that you are a role model and… yeah. I don't know I just love working with the kids… uhm yeah (T3A).*

These statements above epitomise teachers as those called to serve, who find happiness in making other peoples' lives meaningful, expressed in the statement "teaching is a calling". For this reason, despite teachers' complaints of being excluded from important decision-making processes, and of being underpaid, most teachers are still passionate about their profession. That said, some enter the teaching profession for other reasons than rendering service.

Certain teachers in the study describe their benefits in terms of professional growth, improvement or knowledge gain. For these teachers:

> *…being a curriculum leader obviously then, you know, you're also part of compiling the curriculum by communicating, implementing the curriculum, because you are part of the educational process where we implement it (T1A).*

> *…we gain new knowledge through workshops, uh, that is the interaction with other educators… some people who are maybe coming from the Higher Institutions, they call us, and they give us information (T4B).*

> *…a well vest teacher, a well-qualified, passionate, committed serious educator or curriculum leader will benefit a lot from learners. Every year we deal with different characters, we learn a lot (T2C).*

> *…with us, I think the benefit is that you get to know and understand uh, your curriculum, you get to have a vast or a big knowledge about what you are doing (T1B).*

The findings above attest to teachers' roles as lifelong learners and curriculum developers. The use of the collective "we" in most of the statements above indicates that these participants speak for the entire teaching fraternity. The question is: How do teachers experience their perceived roles? This section of participant (T1A)'s statement "…*part of the educational process* ***where we implement it****." (T1A)* expresses incomplete satisfaction. Ideally, teachers should be part of the entire curriculum-development process, not only at the implementation stage.

In addition to gaining professional satisfaction and recognition, another group of teachers state that they gain self-confidence and motivation to surge on in performing their role as curriculum leaders. These teachers have this to say:

> *…it's so good to meet a person you have modelled and shaped and educate, you find that that person is now having a good future…(T5D).*

> *…I get motivated because of the results that when I teach learners, I see the results that they are achieving (T3B).*

> *It also gives to the, on the part of the educator, confidence also, when you can see the product your confidence is also improving (T5C).*

> *I really think we gain uhm, confidence… actually to stand in front of people and address them is not that easy you may have a lot of things like you can't even write them down but when you go there find that they evaporate or they disappear (T5B).*

For these participants, being motivated by learner progress and transformation as a result of their services to learners, enables them to seek better strategies for improving upon their art.

As with learners and teachers, the school, the local community, and eventually the nation, benefit from the teachers' role as curriculum leaders. This is explained in some participants' words:

> *…the institution, I would say…it benefits them with results…And uhm, also getting like a good name…(T5A).*

> *…when they (learners) pass at the end of the year, next year the number of enrollments also goes up because learners are passing which is also a benefit to the school (T3C).*

> *The school benefits because it's seen as one that creates an environment where learners can be responsible leaders of tomorrow. A good school with good curriculum leaders is very good for the country (T4C).*

> *The school benefits… say we happened to produce uh, doctor in this school, maybe or a minister for that matter; that minister may come back and motivate learners. And then they can also give the bursaries (T5B).*

> *…to the school we usually, if our learners perform well, members of the community, the businesspeople, if we ask them, let's say for a toilet or anything, they come in large number to support the school (T4D).*

The findings show that learners, teachers, the school, and the community have a common goal. All parties wish to improve the quality of education, and learner achievement, producing well-trained citizens who will make meaningful contributions to the economy.

5.4.3 Theme Three: Ways in which teachers execute their role as curriculum leaders in secondary schools

The participants in this study explain how teachers perform their role as curriculum leaders by indicating what teachers do as curriculum leaders, and where teachers execute their role as curriculum leaders. I present the findings of this theme in three sub-themes, namely: teachers as curriculum leaders in instructional activities; the role teachers play in school-based curriculum development; and the curriculum leaders' role beyond the school, as they reach out to the community.

5.4.3.1 Sub-theme 1: Teachers' role as curriculum leaders in instructional activities

In this sub-theme, I discuss three categories of what teachers do as curriculum leaders in instructional activities. These are teachers' role in dissemination of subject content knowledge, in creating a conducive teaching and learning environment, in pedagogy – teaching and learning strategies − and in their own professional development and that of other teachers.

- The role in dissemination of subject-content knowledge

In executing their role in the dissemination of subject-content knowledge, teachers, as curriculum leaders, plan and prepare their lessons in order to effectively share the subject-content knowledge with learners. Some teachers in this study explain thus:

> *I have a lot of uhm research I do, on the subject I do because uhm, yeah… you have to do research, you have to stay in front of the kids... then that will help you to obtain new knowledge… for your subject… (T3A).*

> *…to teach ahh, a successful lesson you have to plan for it… for you to be able to know whether you have, uhm, achieved your goals; you have taught and the learners have understood, you really need to assess learners… analyse the evidence; whether you have achieved your goals or not (T3B).*
> *…whatever, we need to teach learners, it needs to be planned first. After …it needs to be implemented. Say for example I have to teach grade 12 agric…I need to plan what…I want to do with them. Then after planning …I need to teach to them, we work together. After that I must check whether they understood what I taught them that is to evaluate (T5D).*

Lesson observation data for T2B correlates with the statements above. I observed and noted that the teacher had a lesson plan for the lesson. The objective or aim of the technology lesson on resistors, colour bands, and component symbols was articulated verbally, but not written on the board (learners should be able to associate the component symbols with the relevant resistors). The teacher exhibited good evidence of preparation in coherent presentation of lesson. Some teaching aids used during lesson demonstration included samples of different switches and light resistors. A textbook and lesson preparation notebook were used (lesson observation notes T2B -15/08/2019).

These findings suggest that teachers are aware of their responsibility to enable learners to acquire planned knowledge as determined by the formal curriculum. This is because, by researching their subject, thus keeping abreast of any changes in subject content, teachers, as curriculum leaders, accept accountability for the transformation of learners − the essence of education.

- The role of creating a conducive teaching and learning environment

The school, particularly the classroom, is a second home to learners. Teaching and learning can only be guaranteed in a conducive environment. The responsibility rests with teachers, as curriculum leaders, in the actual space of instructional activities, to create this safe learning haven for learners. Some teachers in this study explain:

> *Teaching and managing the class because definitely we have to teach. But uh managing the classroom, uh, it's not easy because as you teach, there'll be other learners, who'll be having their pocket meetings… You must have a good way of talking to them (T5B).*

> *…we must understand the background of those learners some come to school uh, without… a meal, without…shoes or…a jersey. So…you must make uh, uh, …plans so that those learners feel comfortable so that they can understand…mm…you see (T1D).*

> *…if I prepare well, when I go to the class this may also solve the problem of discipline, because if I am not well prepared the, you know, there are some learners who are intelligent and they may find out that the teacher is not well prepared. But if I'm well prepared, I think this is to the benefit of the learners because there will be minimal problems in the class (T4D).*

In addition to teachers' statements above, data collected during lesson observations portray teachers' attempts to create a favourable teaching and learning environment. In one of the lessons, I observed how the teacher showed learners respect, and addressed learners politely. Learners felt comfortable asking questions and interacting with the teacher. There were many charts with mathematical equations or formulas on the walls in the classroom. There were inspiring sayings on the walls such as: "*Today is the day to learn something new", "The person who does the work learns", "The only way to learn Mathematics is to do it".* (Lesson observation notes T5A -07/08/2019).

This may be happening because a welcoming, orderly classroom atmosphere seems to motivate and remind learners that they are entering a learning or workspace. It may help to build learner confidence and create in learners' mind what the teacher expects of them − cooperation and performance.

- The role of pedagogy – teaching and learning strategies

Pedagogic knowledge – teaching and learning strategies − is invaluable to the art of teaching. This explains the essence of pre-service and in-service professional development for student teachers and practising teachers, respectively. Some subjects individually defy the traditional method of teacher talking throughout a lesson. The following excerpts portray this:

> *I'll draw quickly something to make it easy for them the same way… I'm also new in the subject in grade 10 so…the way I made it clear to myself I will give to the learners as well. I feel they really benefit than rather just standing there and saying this and this and this is the facts (T2A).*
>
> *… I am teaching science, and it is full of practical work. So, I must teach it crossing to the practical part of it by just doing some experiments. When learners see things alive, so they tend to like it… (T4B).*
>
> *…when they give learners extra activities, for example, to say let us have a debate in class about 1, 2, 3, and you say let us have a drama, here is a scenario, let's dramatize it… (T2C).*

The findings reflect that, in order for effective teaching and learning to take place, there is no "one size fits all". Teachers meet learners with different aptitude and different learning styles. By implication, different strategies are needed to motivate student learning. As curriculum leaders in instructional activities, teachers employ various teaching strategies depending on the grade level, aptitude, learning styles, and interests of learners.

- The role of professional development of teachers

In this category, I discuss how teachers execute their role as curriculum leaders by engaging in their own professional development and that of other teachers. Teachers

perform their role in professional development both within and beyond the school. Teachers in this study reveal that, at school, they engage in team teaching within or across subjects. Teachers also mentor and coach pre-service or student teachers from universities and participate in performance evaluation of their peers. Some teachers in this study had this to say:

> *…agriculture is a science… there are certain things that need a science educator…in the case Grade 11, we have Chemistry in Agriculture is called Basic Agricultural Chemistry…if I have something that I don't understand, I will ask any science teacher to help me. He can help me…by teaching me or by going with me to the classroom so that he can explain those things…to learners…(T3C).*

> *…When is time for IQMS, we also do peer assessment, we only do it just to show that we sign those papers not for development. In most cases, we only do it for that. The reason being that now most educators are discouraged about the remunerations, the amount that they get for that particular purpose if you talk of 1%, it's not sitting well with us, yes (T5C).*

> *…we're doing… the E-IQMS…… so, I make sure that all the issue that has to do with the computer, I do them, but I also teach the teachers, yes… Here at school (T5B).*

> ***…** training them (student teachers) … the first week of…arrival, we used – to go (to class) with them, you first teach while, they are there seeing how is the teaching taking place. From there maybe two to three days you go with him or her; she or he teaches while you are there, seeing how is she doing? From there, she used to go there alone. But when she do have a problem with the lesson, she may ask. (T2D).*

The data above on IQMS correlates with a report given by a teacher at school D after attending a workshop on IQMS. The teacher reported that the DoE is emphasising that observers should contribute ideas after lesson observations to improve upon colleagues' skills.

From the findings, teachers appear to stress the importance of professional development and skill building in the teaching career. Teachers appear to accept that they are agents of change in schools. These teachers are geared towards ensuring effective teaching and learning in a bid to improve the quality of secondary education in South Africa. However, the findings seem also to suggest that, within the school, teachers prefer accessing professional development opportunities informally from

their colleagues, rather than going through the IQMS exercise. This may be because informal professional development exercises are self-initiated and target specific areas of challenges. In addition, the IQMS exercise may simply provide a ticking of the box. The observed teachers do not receive any meaningful feedback from their observers, which could help improve upon their practice. This may be because the observers may not single out any performance standard as lacking, in order not to deprive the observed teacher of the 1% salary increase which teachers already consider too small. This also seemingly points a finger at the school developmental support group for not keeping to its mandate.

Beyond the school, teachers seek professional development for themselves and their colleagues through individual collaboration with teachers of other schools, engaging in professional learning community discussions (cluster) initiated by teachers themselves or the circuit, participating in workshops organised by the circuit, setting, moderating and marking examinations at different levels. This is expressed in the words of some participants as follows:

> *…we have a group of teachers…working together. Uhm, some of the teachers I work with is not, even in our district; but we have a group on WhatsApp…with teachers that has the same subject …so we work together and we interact on that group and try and help each other (T3A).*

> *…we usually have a cluster…We sit on quarterly basis. Uhm, like during school holidays, learners of this area they are taught in the same venue; four schools being taught in the same venue by educators of all those four schools, yeah, which means when we sit down preparing for the lesson, we'll first discuss (T3C).*

> ***…**in the workshop… you will find that I will be the one who will be presenting over there… But I will be getting information because… there're teachers who are knowledgeable also… mean the workshop we used to run will be teacher-to-teacher… when a teacher is teaching teachers, teachers will come up with a lot of ideas, yeah, that is how we learn in our district. (T4B).*

> *…you were part of it on Monday…as we were having our meeting. It was not just a memo discussion…but more than that with different kinds of planning. That's what we do outside the school…, we also have some cluster committees … all agric educators at a cluster*

level meet and discuss how far are we with our syllabus, the challenges, how to resolve them, whether to find someone who can assist us as a cluster… (T5D).

The findings show that teachers are interested in their profession and seek to improve their practice through upgrading their knowledge, skills, and attitude. The DoE seems to recognise the importance of collaborating with teachers to attain meaningful development for teachers.

5.4.3.2 Sub-theme 2: Teachers' role as curriculum leaders in school-based curriculum development

This sub-theme addresses the role of teachers in the development of the school's curriculum. Teachers in this study expressed how they initiate school projects, participate in decision-making at subject committee meetings, and in whole-school meetings to adopt school projects, rules, and procedures to guide curricular activities in their school. This is accentuated by some teachers in this study as shown below:

…in grade 8 when we do a task, we decide on subject meetings that because, the learners know Platland (pseudonym), we'll do the sketch map of the outlines of the land, use zones of Platland (T2A).

Uhm, so, our school we have the 50% as pass rate we try to encourage our learners, we don't have the smartest learners but we really do want to encourage our learners to work hard to get the 50% because 50% in life is better than 30% (T3A-FGD).

We have seen that our learners are not very much engaged in education… we agreed with parents that …these learners in the course of these three weeks they are writing preparatory exam. They are not going home. We cook for them here, they bath here…whatever they want is happening here. To take them away… from the street so that they can be full time and study (T2D).

…we initiated this idea of saying let's give these learners certificates and see if this cannot help them... the time that we do it, you find that a learner who's not even expected to do well, maybe they are getting a certificate. You find that it brings a different atmosphere, even to us as the educators, when we talk about this in the staffroom, you see there is some excitement (T4C).

The teachers' expressions above correlate with my observation notes from a meeting of the Department of Languages (English & Tshivenda) in school C. In order to solve

the problem of poor performance in the English language at the school, teachers adopted the following strategies: they encouraged learners to read widely in English, to perform oral reading only in the hearing of the teacher. Individual reading aloud in class discourages struggling learners who then refuse to read. Their HoD insists on other subject teachers teaching in English and avoiding lengthy explanations in the mother tongue, as was the practice at the time (Meeting observation notes-21/08/2019).

The findings reflect that the DoE has policies such as SASA (1996) (DoE, 1996b) and those on programme and promotion requirements (D B E, 2013). Such provide guidelines or minimum requirements on which schools should operate. Each school is expected to develop its own curriculum based on its context, values aspired to, and learners' needs and interests. This is because, since school contexts, needs and interests are different, each school is best placed to make decisions that will optimise personal teaching and learning processes and learner achievement.

5.4.3.3 Sub-theme 3: Teachers' role as curriculum leaders in the community

Teachers perform their role as curriculum leaders right in the heart of the community. The quotations below show how teachers in this study attempted to engage in the community.

> *We've got parent evenings and have a lot of parents' numbers. What I do when I see a learner is struggling, or doesn't do his work, I actually contact them and say "Ma'am, Sir, please help. This is what is happening (T4A).*

> *We are trying…at our church, to rob in learners on Sundays immediately after church wherein we talk about morals, we also offer some of the lessons…now even those who are not members of our church, they do come and attend. And I think as the years are passing by, we shall be heading towards a good direction (T5C).*

> *…I go to …the traditional court, and then…telling the parents …to become involved in their learners education and...I attend, civic meetings, wherever they are talking about issues like service delivery, I put issues and say hey! education…education in order to overcome this…let's go and tell our learners to be serious in their education…yeah (T1D).*

Apart from providing curriculum development knowledge to parents of learners at their own schools, as SASA (DoE, 1996b)requires, teachers in this study go the extra mile for other learners and parents in the community. In so doing, teachers involve everyone who should contribute to the improving of the quality of education in the country.

5.4.4 Theme Four: Ways in which school managers create opportunities for teacher leadership in curriculum matters

In this theme, I illustrate how school managers create opportunities for teachers to perform their role as curriculum leaders. In the discussions, I also infuse some factors, whether enabling or hindering, into school managers' attempts to create these opportunities for teachers. The two sub-themes are empowering teachers and professional development of the teachers.

5.4.4.1 Sub-theme 1: Empowering teachers

This sub-theme is school managers empowering teachers by delegating responsibilities to teachers, creating participative structures for decision-making, and sharing of vision.

Delegating responsibilities to teachers

In an attempt to show their recognition of teachers as curriculum leaders, some school managers in this study delegate duties to teachers. These managers indicate that assigning tasks to teachers is a means of empowering teachers to perform their role as curriculum leaders in school. Some school managers iterated the following:

> *I have appointed with the heads of departments also subject heads which have their own meetings and I get feedbacks from them uhm, on a regular basis (PA).*

> *Uh, another thing is to delegate them, give them duties, delegation also plays a very important role, because the educators will feel that I am responsible with this, and I've been given this opportunity to deal with this one (PD).*

Delegating duties to teachers is making them accountable for their contributions to the core business of the school (teaching and learning). The trust and confidence school

managers have in teachers' potential to lead curriculum matters enables school managers to assign tasks to teachers. As teachers lead in the performance of these tasks, teacher professionalism increases, with a possible increase in the quality of teaching and learning. Delegating teachers to lead in performing curriculum tasks is the practice of distributive leaders (although in this case authorised distributive leadership). This is an essential prerequisite for schools in which teachers are able to meaningfully perform their role as curriculum leaders. This finding relates to those from the curriculum meeting I observed in School B. Teachers in the Mathematics and Science department had been delegated the task of analysing and presenting results of the school's performance in the previous term (Term Three). (Observations notes 03/10/2019).

Creating participative structures for decision-making

School managers in this study explain how they create participative structures for decision-making and encourage innovative ideas. This is portrayed in their decision-making processes, as depicted below:

> *I give everyone an opportunity to come to my office with ideas…so the person will come and explain to me exactly…if it's something worthwhile…we tell the rest of the staff "this is what we want to do… this is the reasons why…this is how we are going to get to that end point, are you all with us? Are there any ones against us, why are you against us?…we put it open so that the decisions that's made is not only… from me or the SMT…teachers must feel…it's their workplace, they are the ones ultimately…doing these things that we want to introduce (PA).*

> *…we let teachers uh, tell us the problems that they are encountering in school and then they give us those problems they are facing. And then they also try and find out the solutions. How can we solve this? They come up with ideas (PB).*

> *I see myself as a democrat. I…usually give them chance to talk, sometimes I used laisse faire, I allow them to do things on their own but that I only do with those educators who are active, educators who can work without being supervised (PC).*

> *…with decision-making …immediately after coming from the SGB meeting, I have to sit down, I refer to the SMT first. From the SMT, then we go to the staff. And with the staff…we*

decide as educators whether we implement that one. But if it's a policy, then there is no negotiation about the policy, it's a matter of carrying that idea forward (PD.)

The findings suggest that teacher participation in decision-making processes in school is a mark of recognition of their vital role. School managers create participative structures for inclusive decision-making. When teachers take part in decision-making, they are empowered; they feel valued; there is a sense of belonging and ownership of decisions arrived at. Such inclusivity encourages teamwork in school. Some school managers explain further:

…educators are free to say how about doing things this way…of course there are policy issues where I strictly have to stick to them…there is a real problem, here that they brought to me…of learners coming late to school and the way they (teachers) wanted to solve it is that those learners who are late should not be allowed into the classroom. Which is not allowed as per policy. But as we engaged parents about their learners coming late and those learners not changing…I said let's try that… and to a certain extent, it works (PC).

…during trial examinations the learners were staying at school. We have done what is called incubation. The reason being that at home they are not reading…So, we thought may be the best way is to talk to these learners and other stakeholders and get these learners to school until they finish their trial examination. I have seen that there is an improvement because out of 51, 33 managed to pass with the raw marks (PD).

Teachers go out of their way to bring to fruition that which they have jointly decided upon. There is an intrinsic motivation that ignites a positive attitude in teachers, to realise their ultimate goal as curriculum leaders − learner achievement. Some school managers express their regrets on teacher exclusion from curriculum decision-making at the national level, as follows:

… they are leaders but uhm, they don't have any opportunities to give their inputs.… people that is putting together the curriculum… must uhm, open up a platform where, for instance grade 12 teachers will say… this specific part of the curriculum we can leave out because it's no longer relevant (PA).

…they need to be involved in issues regarding planning, designing, and evaluating of the curriculum because once it is imposed on the educators, they feel like it's something that is for the government…(PC).

This explains why sometimes teachers question certain policy issues which school managers can, unfortunately, not change. Teachers complain about exclusion from decision-making processes in curriculum matters at the national level. Such complaints surfaced as one of their main challenges in performing their role as curriculum leaders in school.

School managers sharing vision with teachers

As curriculum leaders, teachers are visionary; they work with the 'big picture' of the school in mind. School managers explain that, in sharing the vision of the school with teachers, they indicate their expectations to teachers as curriculum leaders. They motivate teachers as teachers engage in achieving set objectives, acknowledging teachers' commitment and good performance. The excerpts below indicate:

> *… we want to keep the standard of high level. And we also introduced a thing where we have uhm, the pass requirement is 50% for all subjects in all grades…the performance levels and achievements of the learners is discussed…if the children's achievement levels are not that good, uhm, we rather say do better teaching in future… (PA).*

> *…with teachers, it's only the issue of motivation. It's just to find a way to change their attitudes. I always speak to these educators. I also encourage them. That let's continue doing the work. There are good results in doing the work (PB).*

> *…we analyse the results…performance of each subject will be shown to all educators. If the educator didn't perform well, he or she will feel that next time, they ought to do something very good because the performance of the subject has dropped… I even ask the motivational speakers from outside to come and motivate them, so that they should know that they are part of the school, they should also play their role (PD).*

The findings suggest that school managers communicate, constantly reminding other stakeholders where the school aspires to be. School managers understand that the whole school community, especially teachers, should be among those who formulate, accept, and seek to realise the vision of the school, which should have learner success as its main focus. As teachers pursue the shared vision of the school, they collaborate, building trust and respect for one another for the ultimate attainment of better quality of education.

5.4.4.2 Sub-theme 2: Professional development in curriculum matters

This sub-theme shows how school managers provide time for continuous professional development of curriculum leaders, and how they provide platforms for teacher collaboration that leads to professional development in curriculum matters.

Providing time for continuous professional development

Continuous professional development is an essential component of the teaching profession. School managers ensure that teachers attend workshops and other training organised by the DoE, other institutions, or the school itself. Teachers are then abreast of any developments in their profession. School managers in this study said:

> *…there's workshops from the Department which uhm they can attend, and I will allow them to attend and make it possible for them in terms of transport or whatever (PA).*

> *I always encourage them to…improve their studies, just to be up to date with everything. Like now, we are busy… there is this bursary about uh ICT… (PB).*

> *…we also hold workshops in our school, we pick an aspect say on classroom management, consult educators that are good on that aspect and we allow them to…prepare something they can present in other to develop others…Sometimes we invite curriculum advisers...people from other institutions to…deal with some aspects strictly in the school and in a particular section or thing that we want the educators to be developed. (PC).*

> *…they…attend workshops, immediately we receive a circular from the department that go and attend this workshop, we give them money that go and attend…and we also encourage them to study, to further their studies (PD).*

These findings suggest that school managers are aware that it is their responsibility as the formal positional managers in school to ensure that teachers participate in continuous professional development opportunities. Being the ones who are accountable for the overall learner achievement in schools, school managers make it possible for teachers, as curriculum leaders, always to improve upon what they already know, as well as to acquire new content and pedagogic knowledge in their subjects of specialisation, and in the profession as a whole. Thus, teachers remain competent and relevant, gaining self-actualisation. Such is likely to result in increased

commitment, creativity, and productivity, in their pursuit of good educational outcomes when leading in curriculum matters. I observed some professional development encounters, such as those of English (19/07/2019) and geography (30/07/2019) teachers, respectively. During their proceedings, some teachers presented model lessons to their colleagues. The participating teachers certainly gained some content and pedagogical knowledge to improve their practice. In both sessions, there was much interaction, of teachers questioning certain processes, contributing ideas, and responding to the questions of others.

Providing platforms for teacher collaboration

This category describes how school managers facilitate teacher collaboration which enables teachers to perform their role as curriculum leaders in school. School managers endorse decisions for teachers to collaborate in school with colleagues, across schools with other teachers, and with parents of learners as important stakeholders in schools. The following excerpts indicate:

> *Departments…and subject meetings… every two weeks…if it is a subject that runs from grade 8-12, all those educators will be there, everyone…give their inputs in terms of where they are…in…the pacesetter, what…needs to be changed…a part of the curriculum which is difficult for them to teach…we arrange with someone in the same department…to come and explain that…the teacher must sit in…so that they can…equip themselves…(PA).*

> *…we are allowed …to call other teachers who are knowledgeable with that subject. We can also call the curriculum advisors uh, to come and help... (PB).*

> *…we allow them to go and help in the neighbouring schools and we do the same with…other educators from different schools… Our school is also a centre for the cluster, schools converge to our school, so that learners can come and have lessons (PC).*

These findings hold that school managers know the benefits of collaboration. Exchange of ideas and pedagogic strategies during collaborative encounters strengthens the skills, confidence, and efficacy of more experienced teachers, while building these skills and confidence in less experienced teachers. As teachers collaborate, they share ideas, and discuss concerns. Such open collaboration enhances school culture, and values such as trust, respect, and belief in effective teaching and learning.

5.5 Summary

In this chapter, I discussed the findings of the research sub-questions: what are teachers' understanding of their role as curriculum leaders in schools?; what do teachers perceive to be their role as curriculum leaders in secondary schools?; how do teachers execute their role as curriculum leaders in secondary schools?; and how do school managers create opportunities for teacher leadership in curriculum matters? These findings are to provide insights into participants' experiences and understanding of their role as curriculum leaders in school. Teachers in this study stated that they understand their role as curriculum leaders to mean teacher inclusion in decision-making and ownership of the entire curriculum development process. Teachers perceived their role as curriculum leaders in school to be multi-layered and complex. This role is performed as teachers lead instructional activities, school-based curriculum-development activities, and curriculum activities beyond the school, involving the community. In order to perform these activities, school managers empower teachers, thereby creating opportunities for teachers to perform their role as curriculum leaders in school. In the next chapter, Chapter 6, I present the interpretation of the research findings, linking them to existing literature. I also answer the research questions.

CHAPTER 6

DISCUSSION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

6.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I presented the findings and interpretations of the teachers' experiences and understanding of their role as curriculum leaders in school. In this chapter, I discuss the findings of this study in relation to literature relevant to the focus of this study, as well as how the identified themes in this study link to Grant's model of teacher leadership. These findings and interpretations are based on the research questions that I posed in the first chapter of this study. These research questions are recapitulated below.

6.2 The research questions

Main research question:

What are teachers' experiences and understanding of their role as curriculum leaders in selected South African secondary schools?

Subsidiary questions

- What are teachers' understanding of their role as curriculum leaders in secondary schools?
- What do teachers perceive to be their role as curriculum leaders in secondary schools?
- How do teachers execute their role as curriculum leaders in secondary schools?
- How do school managers create opportunities for teacher leadership in curriculum matters?

6.3 Discussion of research findings

6.3.1 Teachers' understanding of their role as curriculum leaders

This study examined what teachers understand to be their role as curriculum leaders in schools. The teachers in this study perceived inclusion in decision-making and ownership of the entire curriculum development process as the role they should play as curriculum leaders. The findings suggest that curriculum leadership includes the participation of teachers in decision-making, guiding or leading other teachers on curriculum matters. This finding relates to and supports the views of Brundrett and Duncan (2011), who postulated that the professional judgement and decision-making of teachers in leading curriculum implementation is indispensable. The opinion of Duncan (2014) also affirmed that teachers should participate in all decision-making processes that have a bearing on their work life. Similarly, Role number Three of the South African Norms and Standards for Educators mandates that teachers be leaders, participating in the processes of decision-making. I am of the opinion that the work life of teachers is mainly about the implementation of the curriculum. It therefore follows that teachers should understand their role as curriculum leaders and be part of decision-making on curriculum-related matters. The findings of this study align with existing literature on teachers' involvement in curriculum decision-making. My concern in this study is the mismatch between policy and ideals on one hand, and the reality or practice on the other hand. Teachers are involved in curriculum decision-making only at the level of schools, but excluded at all other levels, even though policy mandates teacher inclusion in curriculum decision-making at every level (circuit, district, provincial, and national).

Earlier studies by Gunkel (2010), De Villiers and Pretorius (2011), as well as Gülbahar (2017), reported that teachers understand their curriculum-leading role as that of rendering academic services to learners, teachers, and parents. In line with the findings in the literature above, the findings of this study also indicate that teachers understand their role as curriculum leaders. Teachers understand that this means being in possession of content and pedagogic knowledge, leading teacher-learner interaction during curriculum delivery, being enforcers of effective teaching and learning, and agents of transformation. These findings relate to Indicator 1, of Role 1 within Zone 1 of Grant's (2012) Model ; teachers continue to teach learners in the

classroom and improve upon their teaching. My opinion in this study is that curriculum delivery or implementation is the central activity of teachers as curriculum leaders; and teachers take pride in imparting knowledge to others. Thus, possession of pedagogic and content knowledge by teachers is indispensable for effective leadership in curriculum matters.

The findings of this study also show that teachers understand their role as curriculum leaders to mean enactment of model behaviour. The participants in this study suggest that their role as curriculum leaders means being of exemplary behaviour within and beyond the school. This finding is consistent with the findings of Loh and Nalliah (2010), Berkowitz (2011), and Ahonen et al. (2014). These researchers reported that teachers' behaviour impacts on learners academically (as teachers adhere to the values of academic excellence), and socially (as teachers uphold beliefs, norms, and ideologies that constitute the culture of schools). Learners emulate what they are exposed to by their peers, and particularly by teachers with whom learners spend the bulk of their day. This refers to Gaufberg et al. (2010), and Hyndman et al.'s (2012) hidden curriculum, the unofficial unintended lessons and values learners acquire, particularly at school. The finding also supports the views of Phillippo and Stone (2013), for whom the modelling role of teachers as curriculum leaders is a social capital. I concur with the findings of this study and the opinions of researchers such as Loh and Nalliah (2010), Berkowitz (2011), and Ahonen et al. (2014): as curriculum leaders, teachers are models of desirable behaviour for learners. Generally, learners do as they see teachers do, that is, learners observe and emulate what teachers do, not what teachers tell learners to do. The mind retains better what is observed, than what is merely heard.

6.3.2 Teachers' perceptions of their role as curriculum leaders

This discussion portrayed teachers' perceptions of their role as curriculum leaders in school as multi-layered and complex. The perceptions of the teachers in this study are expressed in discussions delving into teachers' role *vis-à-vis* the seven roles in the Norms and Standards for Educators. What teachers perceive as their role has a bearing on what teachers understand as their role in leading curriculum matters. The

findings also brought out discussions on attributes of teachers that enable the performance of their roles, challenges teachers face in performing their role as curriculum leaders, and the suggestions teachers made to overcome the identified challenges. The discussion also includes what teachers express as some benefits of performing to stakeholders their role as curriculum leaders.

The findings of this study show that some teachers perceived their role in leading curriculum matters as that of subject specialists. In demonstration of their perception as subject specialists, the findings suggest that teachers promote the use of subject-specific language and terminologies with learners. These teachers select textbooks for their subjects, and comment on subject content non-alignment. Teacher use of subject-specific language in this study lends support to the findings by Renandya (2012) and Gleeson and Davison (2016). These findings demonstrated that, by modelling disciplinary appropriate terminology in their interactions with learners, learners' understanding of such concepts was facilitated. In addition, teachers' perceptions of their role as subject specialists are also evident in teachers' disagreement with the non-alignment of grade level and textbook content for some subjects. This aspect of the findings in this study reflects those from the studies by Alsubaie (2016), who praises positive teacher contributions in textbook content composition and arrangement. Makgato and Ramaligela (2012) uphold teacher subject expertise as important in determining the nature of textbook content and mode of content presentation to learners. In Grant's Model (2012), teachers' subject expertise is employed when teachers within a school (Zone 2) interact. Teachers provide curriculum-development knowledge (Role 2) as they take initiatives in subject committee meetings (Indicator 3) to select appropriate textbooks for the school. From my perspective as the researcher, such recognition of expertise is an invitation to claim ownership, to assume responsibility from grassroots level, the level at which learners interact with the curriculum. I consider the recognition of expertise advantageous to learners. Teachers take the school context into consideration before the selection of appropriate textbooks.

Another perception of teachers' role as curriculum leaders brought forth by the participants in this study is the view of teachers as interpreters and learning programme designers. The findings of this study indicate that the participants adapt

and contextualise the curriculum content and TLMs in order to facilitate learners' learning. A similar opinion was expressed by Makgato and Ramaligela (2012). Findings from Frossard et al. (2012) reported that teachers design TLMs in line with the expected outcomes. In the Netherlands, De Vries et al. (2017) found that teachers adapt the evaluation instruments and the level of practical activities for learners after careful consideration of their classroom situation, and the time available for the activities. Similarly, Ostovar-Namagh and Gholami (2018) also established that Iranian teachers modified syllabus presentation to a cyclical approach. This occurred after determining that the linear approach imposed by the central agencies does not maximise student learning. These findings on syllabus modification in literature are antithetical to some findings in this study. Although participants in the study perceive interpretation and designing of learning programmes as an aspect of their role as curriculum leaders, the participants could not act to perform this role. The findings indicate that some participants noticed a non-alignment of topics within the syllabus yet offered the topics in the order prescribed by DoE. The rigidity and inflexibility of the South African secondary school curriculum and assessment structures leaves teachers focused on the possible content of common cycle and year-end tests and examinations set by the provincial DoE. Teachers' innovativeness, creativity, and the ability to apply their contextual intelligence in curriculum delivery appear limited by a top-down curriculum-delivery mode. Such curriculum-delivery directives may result in professional dissatisfaction and demotivation of teachers as curriculum leaders, with a possible negative effect on teaching and learning, as well as learning outcomes.

Literature portrays teachers' role as curriculum leaders as of varying dimensions. Relating to the aspect of facilitation, many researchers believe that learning is more effective when learners take charge of their own learning. Teachers, as curriculum leaders, facilitate the implementation of the curriculum by introducing the information learners need to learn, helping learners in the learning process. Teachers guide learners as learners engage in learning activities (Ketelaar et al., 2012; Kotirde & Yunos, 2014; Jagtap, 2016). Furthermore, the literature attests that teachers facilitate not only learners' learning but professional development of fellow teachers as individuals, and teachers' communities of learning (Ahonen et al., 2014). Although teachers perceive their role as facilitators of learning, studies (Qhobela & Moru, 2014; (Otukile-Mongwaketse, 2018), still attest to the use of a teacher-centred approach in

classrooms. The findings of this study corroborate those of existing literature. Teachers articulate the role of learning facilitators in the perception of their role as curriculum leaders during the interviews. However, the findings of lessons I observed revealed teacher resistance to a paradigm shift in their pedagogy from sole bearers of knowledge for learners (teacher-centred) to learning facilitators (learner-centred). This might be because of the challenges of overloaded curriculum content *vis-à-vis* limited time for coverage which seems to make the process of teaching and learning in the South African context examination oriented. It is also likely that overcrowded classrooms are another barrier to the use of learner-centred pedagogy. Teachers are aware of the benefits of learner-centred pedagogy, but contextual challenges prevent teachers from employing such. As a result, teachers tend to teach to test the learners rather than to develop learners into resourceful independent individuals.

From the present study, teachers acknowledge their role as assessors. The participants in this study indicate that as assessors of student learning, teachers set different types of assessment, depending on the purpose of the assessment. This finding relates to the notion of assessment literacy (DoE, 2000; Koh et al., 2018; & Sultana, 2019). The finding further suggests that teachers set balanced assessment tasks covering all cognitive levels, bearing in mind the different abilities of learners. Beebe et al. (2010) and Black and Wiliam (2014) allude to this diverse assessment strategy as a way of aligning teaching and learning outcomes, providing relevant feedback to learners, while determining appropriate intervention strategies for improving learning. Brown (2011) showed that teachers most often assessed learners in the cognitive and affective domains, leaving out the psychomotor domain. This differs from the findings of the present study. This may be because the teachers lacked knowledge of assessment strategies in the psychomotor domain. Covering all domains in every assessment is important, as assessment outcomes are supposed to indicate the holistic learning or development of learners.

As assessors, teachers ensure that tasks are of high quality. Findings of this study reveal lapses in quality-assurance procedures. Participants report that sometimes teachers peer-moderate assessment tasks but sometimes they do not. This activity of teacher participation in peer moderation is represented within Zone 2 of Grant's Model (2012). This study findings support those from a study in Tshwane North District of

Gauteng (Maile, 2013). The study indicated that HoDs simply append their signatures on tasks without checking on cognitive demand or commenting on the standard of the work. In contrast to the findings of the present study, Grant (2012) indicated cross-sector (cross school) moderation of school-based assessment tasks by Australian teachers. The accountability culture may provide the difference in the manner of moderation between the case of the present study and the Australian study.

The Norms and Standards for Educators (DoE, 2000) displayed the three-in-one role of leaders, administrators, and managers apropos of the seven legislated roles for teachers. (Brad & Tammy, 2010; Leithwood et al., 2010; Gumus et al., 2016) affirm teachers as leaders who participate in decision-making and in some cases lead others in decision-making. Studies have revealed that teachers are perceived as administrators and managers (Beckmann & Minnaar, 2010; Mampane, 2012; Lebor, 2016). Other studies oppose these views, stating that teachers have a low perception of themselves as leaders. Teachers do not evaluate their peers; they do not participate in decision-making on hiring new full-time teachers, nor in selecting textbooks (Xie, & Shen, 2013). The current study tends to align with the findings in the literature (Kotirde & Yunos, 2014; Mampane, 2012; Lebor, 2016) that teachers perceive themselves as leaders, administrators, and managers. The findings of this study reveal teacher participation in decision-making on the employment of a new teacher, and in mentoring and coaching novice teachers. It seems possible that the findings of Xie and Shen (2013) may be attributed to US policy emphasis on curriculum standards, and interest in high-stake examination performance. Thus, the state holds fast to its control of such important curriculum decisions.

The current study also reports the role of teachers as administrators. The findings reported that the participants record and keep record sheets of learners' academic performance, and records of personal information. Teachers in the current study perceive their role as managers mostly in classroom managerial activities such as creating and maintaining a favourable atmosphere. Such an atmosphere enhances effective teaching and learning through lesson preparation, maintenance of good classroom management, and discipline. These findings also suggest that, although teachers articulate their perceived role as managers, most teachers in this study do not draw up lesson plans − teachers complain that this is time-consuming. I argue,

therefore, that this study findings illustrate the essence of teachers' perceptions of their role as leaders, administrators, and managers in the performance of their role as curriculum leaders.

Another role expected of teachers is pastoral care. Noddings (2012), Phillippo and Stone (2013) attested to the role of teachers as pastoral caregivers. This has a bearing on teachers' role as curriculum leaders. Although not an aspect of leading the curriculum per se, the role of teachers as pastoral caregivers intertwines with teachers' role as curriculum leaders. Indicator 6 in Zone 1 of Grant's Model (2012) speaks to teachers maintaining meaningful relationship with learners, evidence of their pastoral care role as legislated in the Norms and Standards for Educators (DoE, 2000). Further findings in the literature (Ogina, 2010; Noddings 2012; Phillippo and Stone, 2013; & Sekhu, 2019) affirm teachers' provision of material, social and emotional needs to learners in need. This relates to curriculum leadership, in that teachers' effective learning may not occur for learners when these needs are ignored. Corroborating these findings in the literature, the findings of this study report that teachers perceive pastoral caregiving as one of their myriad roles. These teachers also provide material, social, and emotional care to learners who need this support. I maintain that this supportive structure is a foundation which enables these learners in need to concentrate on their academic demands. In corroboration of the findings from the literature and this study teachers are responsible for the overall development of learners. Teachers must make learners responsible individuals who can contribute meaningfully to society and the economy. The holistic development of learners also supports the concept of hidden curriculum expressed by Gaufberg et al., 2010; Hyndman et al., 2012; and MacLeod (2014), as learners learn from interactions with teachers and fellow learners.

The findings in this study further report teachers' perceptions of their role as life-long learners, who continue to augment their content and pedagogic knowledge by furthering their studies, participating in professional learning communities or cluster meetings as well as in workshops, for their continuous professional development. Similar findings were reported from a South African study by Motlhabane and Dichaba (2013), of teachers enrolled in an advanced Certificate of Educators programme, thereby sharpening their skills. In the UK, Turner and Simon (2013) indicated that

teachers enrolled for a professional master's course had gained increased confidence and a strong sense of professional identity. This came as a result of theoretical knowledge gained, and the confidence to experiment with relevant practice in the classroom. In addition, as lifelong learners in PLCs, Harris and Jones (2010) accentuated that teachers continue to learn and improve on content and pedagogic practices during collaborative interactive encounters with peers. Teachers also acquired new skills such as ICT (Song et al., 2011; Vuorikari et al., 2011). These findings speak to Indicator 2, Role 1, Zone 1 of Grant's Model (2012). Findings allude to teachers keeping abreast of new developments through attendance at workshops and furthering their studies for own professional development. Alignment of the present study findings with Grant's Model (2012) is also evident in Indicator 4, of Role 2 within Zone 4. This indicates teachers networking at a cluster meeting, providing curriculum-development knowledge to one another. Thus, as lifelong learners, teacher continuous knowledge acquisition is imperative for keeping abreast with evolving content knowledge and pedagogical practices.

6.3.3 Ways in which teachers execute their role as curriculum leaders in secondary schools

In this theme on how teachers execute their role as curriculum leaders in school, I discussed the study findings with particular attention to how teachers execute their role in instructional activities, as curriculum developers at school level, and as curriculum leaders among other stakeholders in the community.

This study shows how teachers execute their role as curriculum leaders in instructional activities by disseminating the subject content to learners. As curriculum leaders, teachers plan and prepare lessons, make use of relevant resources, and employ appropriate teaching and learning strategies to pass along the content of the prescribed curriculum to learners. Grant (2012) describes teacher curriculum-leading through dissemination of content knowledge as the centrality of expert practice. These findings support Carl's (2012) view of teachers facilitating the transfer of the planned curriculum from scripts to learners. This is the pivotal role of teachers as curriculum leaders, without which there is no schooling.

Literature on teachers' role in instructional activities affirms that teachers employ different methods to create beneficial teaching and learning environments; what Gülcan (2012) calls optimal teaching and learning situations. Erb (2010) indicates the use of equitable language, such as "we", instead of "you" and "I". The use of "we" instead of "you" and "I", allows interactive space in which teaching and learning can take place (Singh, 2014). Learners are intrinsically motivated through such interactions (Zajda, 2018). The findings of the present study are consistent with the literature that encourages teacher-learner interaction. During lesson observations I noticed that participants respected the learners. Some classrooms had inspiring sayings on the walls. This can be motivating, as Zajda (2018) avers. It is my view that a conducive learning environment is indispensable for effective teaching and learning. I further believe that a welcoming classroom atmosphere possibly attunes learners' minds and prepares them for learning, thereby maximising opportunities for effective teaching and learning.

The findings of this study further reveal that teachers execute their role in leading instructional activities by demonstrating their pedagogical knowledge. Teachers in this study engaged in appropriate teaching and learning strategies, such as making ample use of visual aids and explanations to enable learners to visualise concepts. Teachers used such aids in performing practical experiments and role playing. This aligns with Role 1, Indicator 3 within Zone 1 of Grant's Model (2012). Within the classroom, teachers design learning activities, improvising where a planned activity seems not to work, making appropriate use of TLMs or resources to bring about effective teaching and learning. However, this study found very minimal use of differentiation as a pedagogical strategy. Researchers (Baeten et al., 2010; Altinta & Özdemir, 2015; Mupa & Chinooneka, 2015) are of the view that teaching strategies should be appropriate to learners' learning styles and abilities. This means that the use of differentiation as a teaching strategy may be difficult to implement in the South African context. Reasons for this difficulty include overcrowding, limited TLMs, and a teacher-heavy workload, among other challenges. Teacher dexterity in the use of pedagogical strategies is in itself an attribute of executing instructional activities.

Previous studies (Law et al., 2010; Pollara, 2012; DuFour et al., 2013; Driescher, 2016; Mayfield II, 2018) established teacher engagement in professional development of

their peers and novice teachers during execution of their role in instructional activities such as modelling lessons and coaching. In corroboration with literature, this study findings indicate that teachers engage in team teaching in clusters or professional-learning communities (PLCs) to build skills and confidence in others (Ainscow, 2010; Steyn, 2014). Teachers coach, mentor and induct student teachers, as well as conduct performance evaluation of their peers, for instance, IQMS evaluation: Indicator 1, Role 4 within Zone 2 of Grant's Model (2012). Teacher engagement in professional development activities, whether the teacher is developing others or is being personally developed, is concomitant with exchange of ideas and skills, thus, affirming teachers as lifelong learners.

In the present study, the findings indicate that teachers execute their role as curriculum leaders by engaging in school-based curriculum development. Some teachers in this study adapted TLMs for their school; others initiated a language-improvement project for their school. This supports the aspect of problem identification and resolution (Indicator 3, Role 6 within Zone 3) in Grant's Model (2012). The views of Xu and Wong (2011), and Carl (2012), are that school-based curriculum development includes formal and informal decisions and projects in learners' interests. Such projects enable learners to gain knowledge, skills, and aptitude. Also, another school agreed on a 50% pass as its minimum pass mark for all subjects. This reflects the notion of school-based planning and decision-making (Indicator 5, Role 6 within Zone 3) in Grant's Model (2012). This school-based decision is antithetical to National Policy Pertaining to the Programme and Promotion Requirements of the National Senior Certificate − NSC (DBE, 2013) which sets acceptable minimum requirements as 40% in mathematics and home language, and 30% in any other 3 subjects. In my opinion, the school that raised its performance bar likely did so to motivate learners to work harder. The decision by the (DBE, 2013) might have been adopted to enable more learners to obtain the NSC.

Research has established that, in addition to executing their role as curriculum leaders beyond the school in PLCs, teachers execute their role as curriculum leaders by providing curriculum-development knowledge to parents and other learners in the community. In Grant's Model (2012), Indicators 2 and 3, Role 2 within Zone 4 relates to teachers engaging with parents on curriculum issues. SASA (1996b) requires

teachers to provide parents with curriculum information about their children, by so doing collaborating for the benefit of learners. This study suggests that teachers disseminate content knowledge to learners in general in the communities, irrespective of the school they attend. The teaching career is more of a calling in which people serve humanity without borders, as long as humanity requires the services of teachers in curriculum matters.

Empirical findings of this study affirm teacher ability to ensure teamwork by being knowledgeable, committed, positive, and responsible as attributes of teachers as curriculum leaders. This reflects findings by Miller (2012) and Pretorius (2013), who advocate for teachers being academically sound, creative, punctual, and good assessors. Lumpkin et al. (2014) consider as a required characteristic teachers who stand as a source of empowerment for others. Clinton et al. (2018) stress teachers being positive, enthusiastic, and good communicators. Teamwork and collaboration are important attributes to successfully lead curriculum activities. Teachers realise that working in isolation is disadvantageous. During teamwork and collaboration, a challenge shared might have already been experienced by other teachers, who might then provide strategies which worked for them.

Studies by Pretorius (2013) and Banu (2014) established the qualities of organisation, time-management and class-management skills as essential to teachers as curriculum leaders. Acknowledging this, Miller (2012) talks of maintaining pace and fairness in the classroom. This study lends support to previous studies. Some participants in this study state that teachers, as curriculum leaders, possess administrative proficiency in being organised, proactive, time-conscious, and disciplined. A relationship exists between these teacher attributes and the teacher role as leader, manager, and administrator discussed earlier in the study. For instance, a planned lesson is delivered in a well-managed, organised, disciplined classroom. Learning outcomes are well captured and documented for statistical purposes, or as data for future improvement of teaching and learning strategies. Based on the findings of this study, teachers, as curriculum leaders, are tolerant, persevering, good listeners, compassionate and sensitive, thereby establishing positive relationships with other stakeholders. Previous studies suggested interest in learners (Miller, 2012), a good sense of humour (Pretorius, 2013), and high ethical and moral values (Lupascu et al.,

2014; Sunan & Ketkanok, 2018), as attributes of teachers. A teacher is the embodiment of a combination of all these attributes. Different groups of learners and different contexts demand that teachers unleash different attributes. Although teachers possess these attributes, teachers still encounter hurdles as they execute their role as curriculum leaders. I now discuss the challenges revealed by the present study.

The myriad challenges teachers face in executing their role as curriculum leaders are aspects of teachers' experiences as curriculum leaders in school. The findings of this study suggest that most obstacles teachers face in executing their role effectively as curriculum leaders emanate from education departments and schools. One of the main challenges revealed in this study is teacher exclusion from curriculum decision-making at national level. Research carried out in other countries (Rekkor et al.,. 2013; Sirk et al., 2016,; [Estonia]; Nwakpa, 2017, [Nigeria]) and in South Africa, (Mokua, 2010; Nunalall, 2012; Taole, 2013; Mandukwini, 2016) reported a top-down approach to curriculum innovation, with little or no teacher consultation. In contrast to my findings, an earlier study in South Korea (Hong & Youngs, 2016) found that teachers refused curriculum autonomy because it was not a full autonomy. These studies suggest that curriculum content is still dictated by the central agency. Schools are only allowed to choose the subjects to offer and the number of hours per subject. Moreover, teachers perceived that the said autonomy brought job insecurity for teachers. Teachers being one of the most important stakeholders in curriculum matters, continue to suffer exclusion from other stages of the curriculum-development process. This may be because of the lack of trust in teacher competency to contribute meaningfully. Exclusion continues to frustrate and estrange teachers whose profession they should own, collaboratively leading with other curriculum experts.

Literature reported limited infrastructure (Bandele & Faremi, 2012), insufficient TLMs (Spence et al., 2013; Maharajh et al., 2016; Dvorjaninova & Alas, 2018) and human resources (Monyane & Selesho, 2012; Taole, 2015; Mahangi et al., 2016), resulting in overcrowding and a heavy workload for teachers. This study equally resonates with previous studies, as participants reveal limited infrastructure and teacher shortages. Some teachers then had to teach subjects they are not trained in, causing a heavier workload. Teachers spend an inordinate amount of time to prepare lessons on

subjects they are not trained in. Shortages of resources and infrastructure may be as a result of the increasing numbers of children in school in response to Education for All by many countries. Teacher shortages may occur because the profession is no longer attractive to many individuals. Although teacher shortages pose such a challenge to employed teachers, teachers nevertheless go the extra mile because of their love for the profession, and for the sake of children who need knowledge. Contrary to the findings of this study, (Khalid et al., 2016) showed that there were no shortages of educational resources among teachers in the Bhakkar District of Punjab-Pakistan. This contrast in the findings of these studies may be attributed to the differences in the approach employed by the governments in the different contexts in providing educational resources to schools.

Moreover, participants in the present study complain of overcrowded curriculum content, limited time, and insufficient departmental support as barriers to teachers executing their role well, as curriculum leaders. Consistent with these findings are those of previous studies by Tan and Pedretti, (2010) and Boon, (2017), who found that teachers in Ontario and Singapore complained of an overcrowded curriculum with too much course material. Khanlari's (2016) study in Newfoundland and Labrador Canada also revealed an overloaded curriculum. The overcrowded curriculum within limited time may be linked to the duration of 8 to 9 months for an academic year in most countries. The limited support from education authorities may be attributed to insufficient manpower in these sectors.

The findings of this study report that certain challenges to the execution of teachers' role as curriculum leaders are caused by teachers themselves. Pretorius (2013); and Banu (2014); and Sunan and Ketkanok, (2018) affirm possession of administrative proficiency and role modelling as attributes of teacher leaders. This differs from the findings of this study. Participants indicated that some teachers are not punctual for lessons. Some teachers have very poor classroom management skills, such that lessons in neighbouring classes are negatively affected. The role-modelling responsibility of teachers is expected to be effective at all times. Teachers who are often late for lessons, and/or are unable to manage the classroom, likely fail in their role as curriculum leaders, depriving learners of effective teaching and learning.

Learner-related difficulties that pose challenges to teachers' role as curriculum leaders in the process of teaching and learning are identified in the findings of this study. Difficulties include substance abuse, learner unwillingness, and parental lack of involvement in learners' education. Ziganyu (2010) suggested that problems of drug and substance abuse hamper effective teaching and learning. This study reports that substance abuse by learners causes learner indiscipline in the classroom, while threatening teacher authority. Drug and substance abuse by learners robs teachers and fellow learners of a conducive environment for teaching and learning.

A study in South Argentina revealed increased learner motivation in their studies from participation in lesson design and implementation (Banegas, 2019). In contrast to this earlier study, the present study suggests learner demotivation, possibly owing to low benchmark passes set at 30% and 40% in different subjects. Learner involvement in learners' educational matters must not be overlooked. The difference in the approach of interacting with learners might be a possible explanation for this difference in both findings. While a bottom-up approach was employed in the Argentinian context, a top-down approach applies in the South African context.

These study findings suggest parental lack of involvement in learners' education as a result of poverty and low levels of parental literacy. Other studies (Blease & Condy, 2014, & Nwakpa, 2017) have also reported that parental involvement is almost non-existent, according to their findings. Contrary to the findings of the present study, a Chinese study by Lau et al., (2011) in Hong Kong and Shenzhen reported positive parental involvement in their children's education. The findings of this present study warn against the negative impact of parents being uninvolved in the education of their children.

Earlier studies by Wood and Goba (2011); Mavole et al. (2017); Reyneke (2018), and Sekhu (2019) reported the need for the involvement of specialised support services. Such refers to social workers, psychologists, or guidance and counselling educators to assist teachers. In support of the literature, the findings of this study reveal teachers' demand for the DoE to provide social workers in schools to attend to the diverse pastoral care needs of learners. The presence of specialist support services for learners in need is of great importance to teachers. Such assistance will likely reduce

extra non-academic workload and allow teachers more time to spend on curriculum-related practices.

Further findings from this study are teachers' suggestion for the DoE to increase the benchmark passes of 30% and 40% in different subjects. Similar to this finding are those of The Ministerial Task Team Report of 2014 (DBE, 2014). The report recommends a raise on promotion requirements and factors on promotion in the overall minimum pass requirements for each level of pass above the basic NSC. Contrasting with the findings of this study, Wedekind (2013) suggested that pass marks between 30% and 40%, as with South Africa's NSC pass marks, are not unusual. These study findings uphold that a minimum of 50% is important as it is most likely to motivate learners to work harder.
In the next section, I discuss the study findings on how school managers create opportunities for teachers to perform their leadership role in curriculum matters.

6.3.4 Ways in which school managers create opportunities for teacher leadership in curriculum matters

The findings of this theme reveal that school managers are gatekeepers to teacher agency as curriculum leaders in schools (Angelle & DeHart, 2011; Cheng & Szeto, 2016). The discussions that follow below illustrate how school managers in this study create opportunities for teachers to perform their role as curriculum leaders.

The present context of democratisation and decentralisation of schools in South Africa (SASA (DoE,1996b) ; National Task Team on Education Management, (DBE, 2014); Norms & Standards for Educators, (DoE, 2000) is actualised in this study by school managers' practice of distributive leadership. Hadebe (2013) and Driescher (2016) showed that school managers empower teachers by delegating teachers to be in charge of certain school responsibilities. The relevance of Grant's Model (2012) to this section of the study is that Zone 3 emphasises participative leadership**.** This study confirms earlier findings. School managers appoint teachers to lead as subject and departmental heads; teachers coordinate preparation and writing of school-based examinations, and some teachers analyse results at the end of each term. The focal role of distributed leadership for the emergence and functionality of teacher leadership,

particularly in curriculum matters, is indisputable. The findings of this study differ from those of Xie and Shen (2013), Aliakbari and Sadeghi (2014) and Al-Taneiji and Ibrahim (2017), who found that school managers do not practise distributed leadership. Rather, they engaged in traditional leadership styles. These contrasting findings may be because school managers in the Xie and Shen (2013), Aliakbari and Sadeghi (2014) and Al-Taneiji and Ibrahim (2017) studies feel insecure in the presence of charismatic teachers with leadership potential.

Further findings of the present study show that school managers empower teachers by creating participatory decision-making structures to enable teachers to perform their role as curriculum leaders in schools. Some school managers present issues to the whole staff for deliberation and decision-making. These findings conform to those of Zondo (2013), who reported that some school managers make teachers vote to arrive at a decision on an issue; and to Ho's (2010) and Hadebe's (2013) views that asking teachers to propose solutions to an existing problem builds in those teachers trust and confidence in managers. Shared decision-making and collaboration are forms of empowerment opportunities for teachers to perform their role as curriculum leaders in school.

Other South African studies (Naicker & Mestry, 2013; & Fani, 2015) suggested that school managers in the respective studies practised an autocratic style of leadership that robbed teachers of any form of empowerment. These findings are antithetical to this study's finding on school managers empowering teachers. This difference may be accounted for by the bureaucratic and hierarchical school leadership practices still inherent in most South African schools.

In addition, this study unveils that school managers share the vision of the school with teachers as a means of empowering teachers and creating opportunities for teachers to perform their role as curriculum leaders. This finding aligns with Emira (2010) and Angelle and Teague (2014), who suggested that when school managers share the school vision this capacitates teachers. Similarly, Alberta Ministry of Education (2009) expects school managers who engage in sharing the vision of a school with teachers, to communicate and celebrate teachers' and school accomplishments, thus inspiring continuous growth. The argument is that, when every member of a school shares in

and understands the manager's vision for the institution, there is ownership and movement in the same direction. This leads to the attainment of a common goal, in this case effective teaching and learning, and improved outcomes.

Apart from distributive leadership, a study in Shanghai found that principals motivated teachers by recognising and awarding financial incentives for good performance (Qian & Walker, 2013). Consistent with the literature, this study found that school managers motivate teachers by commending outstanding performance, inviting external motivational speakers to talk to teachers, jointly discussing information from analysed school results, and engaging in open, transparent communication. Recognition of any kind is an important aspect that enables teachers to perform their role as curriculum leaders. Without recognition, teachers may feel unappreciated. Teachers may then become demotivated to make extra efforts towards the common goal.

Another role of curriculum leadership is teacher professional development. Steyn, (2013 & 2014) confirmed that allocating time for teachers to attend professional-development encounters creates opportunities for teachers to execute their role as curriculum leaders. This study supports evidence from previous studies. Findings are that school managers allocate time for teachers to attend workshops and professional learning community meetings within and across schools. Creating time for teachers to participate in continuous professional development is crucial, as teachers benefit enormously from the exchange of ideas and expertise with their peers. This study reveals that some school managers make use of in-house expertise, and/or invite an expert in an area to organise school-tailored professional development activities for their teachers. This finding was also reported by Qian and Walker (2013), who showed that principals in their study selected specific professional development activities for their schools. These principals engaged external bodies such as universities to supply their teachers' professional development needs. The importance of continuous professional development encounters as an opportunity for teachers to perform their role as curriculum leaders cannot be overemphasised.

A study in Malaysia found that school authorities did not allocate time or other resources in support of teacher professional-development activities Chua et al. (2020). In contrast, this study suggests that school managers allocate time and provide

transport for teachers to participate in PLC activities. This study aligns with Grant's (2012) view, which advocates for professional encounters as a means of collective sharing of knowledge on best practices for professional development. It seems possible that the school managers in the Malaysian study had inappropriate conceptions of PLCs. Qian and Walker (2013) found that Shanghai principals allowed time for teachers to plan lessons together. This differs from the findings of this study. Principals do not allocate time for joint lesson planning. In most schools, only one teacher teaches a subject in a particular grade. Where possible, joint lesson planning is advantageous. This saves time. Teachers may have the option of choosing different teaching strategies from the variety contributed by their peers during the joint lesson-planning sessions.

6.4 Contributions of the study

The present study explores teachers' experiences and understanding of their role as curriculum leaders in selected secondary schools in South Africa. This study contributes to knowledge by confirming and strengthening the corpus of knowledge on teacher leadership in schools, particularly in the South African context. Here, particularly, empirical studies on teacher leadership are relatively in their infancy. Furthermore, most studies in the field of teacher leadership in the South African context focus largely on general aspects of teacher leadership, with the exception of Forde (2010), on the teacher as a leader in the classroom. These studies are often conducted in KwaZulu-Natal province (Grant, 2010; Moonsamy, 2010; Kajee, 2011; Kumalo, 2015; & Pillay, 2015) with the few exceptions of De Villiers and Pretorius (2011): Western Cape; Driescher (2016): Gauteng; and Fani (2016): Eastern Cape. On the contrary, this study explores teacher leadership specifically on curriculum matters. From the literature I reviewed, this is the first study on the concept of teacher leadership, as perceived by teachers in Limpopo province.

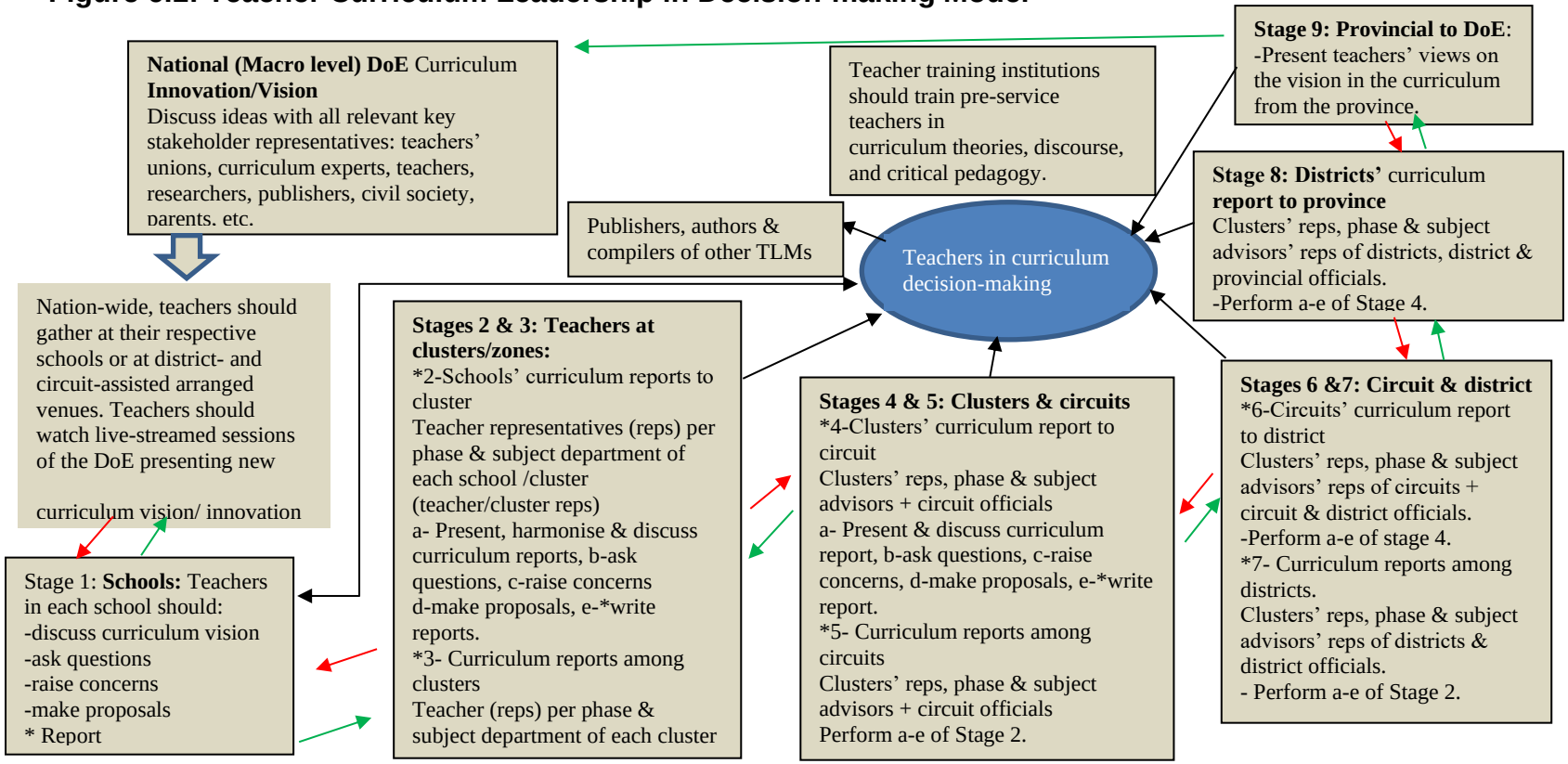
This study contributes to an understanding of how secondary school teachers experience and perceive their role as curriculum leaders in schools. The study has shown that teachers' understanding of their role as curriculum leaders in schools is shaped by their experiences of enactment, challenges encountered, and the opportunities created for them to lead in curricular matters in schools. Leading of

curriculum activities in schools is no longer solely the responsibility of top and middle leaders of schools, but also includes the role of teachers as leaders. This study attests to teachers' role in leading curriculum activities being invaluable within and beyond the classroom and school, and in the community. Their role should be facilitated by all stakeholders of schools.

The main rationale of this study is to contribute to improving the quality of education in South Africa. Teachers are expected to perform all the roles set out in the Norms and Standards for Educators in South Africa (DoE, 2000). These roles have a bearing on the curriculum. However, teachers are excluded from vital curriculum decision-making (during the various stages of the curriculum development process) at the macro level. Performance of each of these roles is directly or indirectly impacted by these decisions. An outcome of this study is the teachers' quest for meaningful inclusion in vital curriculum decision-making at the macro and meso levels. Such is expressed as a major challenge which teachers experience in performing their role as curriculum leaders in schools. This information to policymakers seeks a possible contribution to improving the quality of education in the country. Meaningful inclusion of teachers in core curriculum decision-making, would lead to teacher ownership of the curriculum. It would also lead to creativity, and total commitment to improving student learning, with subsequent improvement to the quality of education in the country.

As a further contribution from this study, I propose a model for teacher inclusion in curriculum decision-making at the various levels, as schematically presented in Figure 6.1 below.

Figure 6.1: Teacher Curriculum Leadership in Decision-making Model



Key

Summary discussions to the next level:

Discussion feedback to the previous level:

Ongoing support to teachers: 

The diagram above illustrates a proposed bottom-up leadership model for teacher inclusion in curriculum decision-making at different levels (national, provincial, district, circuit, cluster, and school). The department of education is responsible for the development of the model and the responsible education officer at each stage is responsible for its implementation. For example, principals at schools, circuit managers at circuit levels and district directors at district levels. This model implies that teacher education institutions should train pre-service teachers in curriculum theories, discourse, and critical pedagogy. This would ground teachers holistically and equip them with the relevant knowledge and skills for participation in curriculum decision-making processes at the macro and meso levels.
Publishers, authors, and compilers of other TLMs should also work in close consultation with teachers in aligning content order and grade.

Displaying the example of an innovation emanating from DoE, this model suggests that curriculum issues for discussion should be discussed as per the existing arrangement of the DoE with all relevant key stakeholders in attendance. In addition, such sessions should be streamed live, and the date and time made known to the public. The live streaming is particularly to offer mass participation of grassroots teachers; and to enable teachers to obtain first-hand dissemination or explanation of the relevant issue. This prevents the possibility of misinterpretations or diluted information to teachers through lead teachers, in cases where these lead teachers do not quite understand certain concepts. The model suggests that teachers nation-wide gather at their respective schools or at district- and circuit-assisted arranged venues (in the case of some rural schools with network and connectivity problems) to watch live-streamed sessions.

The stages of the above proposed model

Stage 1: The initial stage of this model proposes that teachers in each school, on curriculum matters, should be involved in the discussion of the vision or issue presented, asking questions, raising concerns, and making proposals on the curriculum. Teachers' views

should systematically be discussed by every teacher in each school. The school's secretary minutes all discussions, and a report is carried forward by teacher representatives to cluster/zone levels for further discussions. Henceforth, teacher representatives of each phase and subject department must participate at every stage of the discussion.

Stage 2: Meeting of curriculum school representatives within a cluster. At a cluster session, each school presents its report on the curriculum issues. All reports are harmonised and discussed, questions asked and answered where possible, concerns raised, proposals put forward, and a report compiled for presentation at the next stage. Cluster discussion sessions should be video recorded to be viewed at feedback meetings on curriculum implementation at each school. Should further concerns arise after cluster feedback is presented at schools, these concerns should be sent in writing to a curriculum cluster leader to be tabled at the meeting of curriculum clusters.

Stage 3: Meeting of curriculum clusters within a circuit. Each curriculum cluster should be represented by teacher representatives of each phase and subject department. Each cluster presents its report; thereafter the same procedure of discussion should be followed as in Stage 2.

Stage 4: Combined curriculum clusters report to a circuit. In attendance there should be curriculum clusters' representatives, each phase and subject advisors at the circuit and other circuit officials. (All discussions at circuit, district and provincial levels should be live streamed for grassroots teachers to view). A representative of all curriculum clusters combined presents its report to the circuit officials. The report is discussed by all present, questions asked and answered where possible, concerns raised, proposals put forward, and a report compiled for presentation at the next stage.

Stage 5: Meeting of circuits within a district. In attendance there should be curriculum clusters' representatives, representatives of phase and subject advisors at circuits, and other circuit officials. Each circuit presents its report; thereafter the same procedure of discussion should be followed as in Stage 2.

Stage 6: Combined circuits report to a district. In attendance there should be curriculum clusters' representatives, representatives of phase and subject advisors at circuits combined, and other circuit and district officials. A representative of all circuits combined

presents its report to the district officials. The same procedure of discussion should be followed as in Stage 4.

Stage 7: Meeting of districts within a province. In attendance there should be curriculum clusters' representatives, representatives of phase and subject advisors at districts and other district officials. Each district presents its report; thereafter the same procedure of discussion should be followed as in Stage 2.

Stage 8: Combined districts report to a province. In attendance there should be curriculum clusters' representatives, representatives of phase and subject advisors at districts combined, and other district and provincial officials. A representative of all districts combined presents its report to the provincial officials. The same procedure of discussion should be followed as in Stage 4.

Stage 9: Provincial representatives meet with officials of DoE and all relevant key stakeholders for a way forward, based on teachers' curriculum input from the grassroots level.

The model also suggests ongoing teacher support from the various levels of the department (provincial, district and circuit), school (SMTs) and PLCs, through regular in-service training such as workshops and seminars for continuous skills development in curriculum decision-making.

This study contributes to the knowledge base on teacher leadership by confirming that knowledgeable and experienced teachers are involved in curriculum matters. Their expertise goes unrecognised as they are for the most part only peripherally involved during crucial curriculum decision-making processes. The findings of this study indicate that teachers have recognised their role as agents of change, not simply implementers of decisions for change in leading curriculum matters. Thus, teachers demand ownership in matters of their profession.

The Task Team Report on Education Management (DoE, 1996a) and the Norms and Standards for Educators (DoE, 2000) challenge schools to adopt democratic management systems, and teachers, in particular, to take up leadership roles in schools. The findings of this study indicate that some policies of the Department of Education (minimum pass mark, promotion requirements) handed down to schools create worse barriers to the emergence

of teacher leadership in curriculum matters than hierarchical structures in schools. Therefore, there is a need for the Department of Education to align policy and praxis, by stipulating guidelines for teacher inclusion in decision-making on curriculum matters at all levels, especially at the macro level. This implies that each departmental level has to assist and supervise the level below it, thus ensuring that corresponding guidelines are implemented during curriculum decision-making.

6.5 Summary

In this chapter, I discussed the findings of the present study, linking these findings both to the literature I reviewed and the theoretical framework (underpinning) I chose to guide the interpretation of the data collected. In discussing the findings, I answered the subsidiary questions and main question posed in this study. I ended the chapter by stating the study contribution to research. In the next chapter, I draw the study together with a summary of the research findings, conclusions, and recommendations for practice and further research.

CHAPTER 7

SUMMARY OF RESEARCH FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 Introduction

In the preceding chapter, I discussed the findings of the study on teachers as curriculum leaders in schools. Located within the interpretive paradigm, in this qualitative multiple-case study, I investigated how teachers experience and understand their role as curriculum leaders in schools. Teacher contribution to the improvement of the quality of education in the context of South Africa would be more substantial were teachers duly recognised through meaningful involvement in crucial curriculum decision-making processes. I also examined how teachers perform their curriculum-leading role amidst the tokenistic involvement in vital curriculum decision-making processes, and the opportunities made available for teachers to perform these roles. In this chapter, I present my research journey, a summary of the research findings, limitations, and delimitations of the study, suggestions for further research, the conclusion, and recommendations for practice.

7.2 My research journey

I embarked on this academic endeavour with much enthusiasm. My enthusiasm became tainted, however, when I had to change my research topic eight months after commencement. This was because of a possible threat of not accessing one of the data sites. The following academic year I had a new supervisor, my former supervisor having left the institution. My spirits were a little dampened with yet another major change in relation to my studies. However, my new supervisor became my bedrock of support and encouragement. I piloted the interview instrument with four excited teachers (two teachers and two principals). Although I did not have to make any adjustments to the instrument, the data proved that I had to probe far deeper than I had done during the pilot phase. The pilot study gave me a slightly false taste of smooth experiences. During the fieldwork itself I experienced many failed appointments − some teachers forgot about the appointment, some read their timetables incorrectly, and there were unforeseen happenings. Almost all the participants cooperated throughout the data-generation period. One participant withdrew because she refused to have her lesson observed. The teacher refused to continue cooperating; however, she gave approval for her interview data to be used for the study. Interestingly, only a few accepted and participated in the member-check activity.

Personally, the third year of study was the most challenging. The outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic and eventual nationwide lockdown in South Africa from March to June resulted in the closure of public libraries; working from home was challenging. A major impediment encountered was the inability to authenticate transcribed data with most of the study participants selected for the exercise during the periods April-August 2020, owing to the Covid-19 lockdown. In April I lost a family sister in her sleep and six months later, in October, I lost an older brother, again during sleep. The pain and fear from the manner of both deaths undoubtedly caused the insomnia I suffered from for more than six weeks. The fatigue and unsettled mind robbed me of any ability to concentrate on my studies. However, the dark clouds started drifting away after a number of virtual encounters with the Postgraduate Faculty Student Advisor and after listening to two other students who had suffered similar ordeals, hearing how they managed to endure their storms.

I related my experience to those two students I listened to and mustered the courage and determination to forge ahead. I was further encouraged by the fact that I was working on the sixth of seven chapters when the calamities struck. Seeing the finish line so close, I soldiered on to completion.

7.3 Summary of research findings

In this section of the study, I present a summary of the key findings that emanated from participants' responses to the research questions. I summarise each key finding in relation to the subsidiary research questions posed in Chapter 1 of this study. The main question this study sought to answer was: "What are teachers' experiences and understanding of their role as curriculum leaders in selected South African secondary schools?" The sub-questions asked in order to adequately answer the main question were: (i) What is teachers' understanding of their role as curriculum leaders in South African secondary schools? (ii) What do teachers perceive to be their role as curriculum leaders in South African secondary schools? (iii) How do teachers execute their role as curriculum leaders in South African secondary schools? and (iv) How do school managers create opportunities for teacher leadership in curriculum matters?

7.3.1 Teachers' understanding of their role as curriculum leaders

Participants in this section of the study understand their role as curriculum leaders to mean participation in making vital curriculum decisions at every level (macro, meso, and micro) and stage (design, dissemination, implementation, and evaluation) of the curriculum-development process. The teachers understood their curriculum-leading role as also having knowledge of learners' needs, subject content, and pedagogical knowledge to competently direct, motivate, and lead learners in effective teaching and learning; as well as being of exemplary behaviour to both learners and fellow teachers.

7.3.2 Teachers' perceptions of their role as curriculum leaders

The findings in this section indicate that teachers perceived their role in curriculum leading as multi-faceted and complex, challenging, yet rewarding. The role is multi-faceted as reflected in the Norms and Standards for Educators (DoE, 2000), requiring teachers to serve as curriculum specialists, leaders/administrators/managers, facilitators, interpreters, and learning programme designers, assessors, pastoral caregivers, lifelong learners, and role models. Teachers identified attributes such as the ability to ensure collective teamwork, the possessing of administrative proficiency, the establishing of positive relationships, and the demonstrating of exemplary behaviour, as enhancers of their perceived roles as curriculum leaders. Furthermore, teachers' perceptions of their role as being complex arise from departmental and school-related challenges (with exclusion from vital curriculum decision-making being the worst) and teacher- and learner-related challenges. On the other hand, participants in this study perceive their curriculum-leading roles as beneficial to learners, to teachers themselves, to the school as an organisation, and to the local community.

7.3.3 Teachers' execution of their role as curriculum leaders

This study has indicated that teachers execute their curriculum-leading role through performance of instructional activities (such as disseminating subject content knowledge, creating a beneficial teaching and learning environment, employing appropriate teaching and learning strategies, modelling lessons to peers), development of a school-based curriculum (adapt TLMs, initiate language-development project, set school assessment benchmark), and leading curricular activities in the community, in providing curriculum-development knowledge to both learners and parents. Thus, this study indicated that teachers execute their role as curriculum leaders in all four zones of the analytical framework

for the study (in classroom, out of classroom, in whole-school development, and in the wider community).

7.3.4 Managers create opportunities for teacher leadership in curriculum matters

School managers in this study practice distributed leadership and empowered teachers to lead in curriculum matters by delegating responsibilities to teachers, creating participative decision-making structures, and sharing their vision of the organisation with teachers. These school managers also empowered teachers by providing time and platforms for professional development. School managers in this study also created opportunities for teachers to perform their role as curriculum leaders in school through recognition of exceptional performance in teachers.

7.4 Limitations of the study

Since research is rarely void of limitations, some limitations of this study are discussed below. Being a case study, the sample size of the study posed a limitation. The number of participants in the research indicates what may be found in similar settings; however, the findings cannot be generalised (Simon & Goes, 2013). As with case studies, similar studies in other schools or settings can support or contradict the findings of this study, since participants' realities are context-bound. However, it is possible for the findings to be transferable to sites of similar contexts.

A possible limitation of this study is that, during interviews, it is likely that the participants withhold some information about their experiences and views. The participant should have trust in the researcher to be able to provide rich data − trust is of utmost importance in generating trustworthy data. The level of trust an interviewee has in an interviewer affects the quality of interviewees' stories. Participants may be more prone to giving polite responses rather than those that are honest (Morris, 2015). In order for me to obtain truthful instead of polite data, I made use of prolonged engagement. Adopting this strategy, I made many visits to the schools, engaging with each participant a minimum of three times before conducting the interviews. These visits enabled us as participants and researcher, to become familiar with one another, building good rapport, from which trusting relationships developed (Lietz & Zayas, 2010; Anney, 2014).

7.5 Delimitations of the study

In this section, I explain the decisions I made (and reasons for these decisions) which determined the scope and defined the boundaries of this study.

I did not use a mixed-method approach because the purpose of study: “to explore teachers’ experiences and understanding of their role as curriculum leaders in schools” and the nature of the research question: “What are teachers’ experiences and understanding of their role as curriculum leaders?” necessitated the use of a qualitative approach. This approach enabled probing of what participants had to say.

Another delimitation of the study is that, although the study is on leading the curriculum, I did not use a curriculum-leadership theory as the theoretical framework or the analytical tool for the study. This is because the study focus is on teachers as curriculum leaders, which falls within the broader umbrella of the concept of teacher leadership.

I chose a case-study design on multiple sites, four schools within the Vhembe District of Limpopo Province. Multiple -site studies offer more robust data than single-case studies. A case-study design offered me the opportunity for a detailed examination of the participants in each school (Flyvbjerg, 2011), offering real experiences of participants in their real context − the school (Rule & John, 2011).

I handled every aspect of this study alone − data collection, analyses, and interpretation. Despite the fact that I took all necessary steps to ensure the validity of the study, the validity would have been improved had I used an independent decoder; or should the same study be carried out by more than one person or a group of researchers.

Furthermore, as a delimitation to this study, I did not use heads of departments (HoDs) as participants. Although they are also school managers, they are not top managers. HoDs are not better placed to create curriculum-leading opportunities for teachers than principals, who are accountable for all school enactment and procedures.

7.6 Suggestions for further research

The present study aimed to gain in-depth knowledge on teachers’ experiences as curriculum leaders in schools. Consequently, a qualitative approach with a smaller sample size was used, which prevented any generalisation of the findings. A quantitative study on teachers as curriculum leaders could be carried out, as a larger sample would allow for generalisation of the findings.

Heads of subject departments (HODs) in schools are middle managers and members of SMTs. The present study did not explore their contributions because the focus was on teachers. Future studies can explore the influence of HODs in creating opportunities for teachers to perform their role as curriculum leaders in schools.

The findings of this research reveal that teachers in this study consider teacher exclusion from crucial curriculum decision-making at the macro and meso levels as the greatest challenge to teacher leadership in curriculum matters. A longitudinal study could be conducted by the Department of Education on a bottom-up approach to curriculum decision-making. Such could lead to the development of a possible structure for a bottom-up approach for future curriculum decision-making.

7.7 Conclusion

The thorniest issue in the South African school system has been its poor quality of education. In this study, I investigated teachers' experiences and understanding of their role as curriculum leaders in South African secondary schools. The findings of the study suggest that teachers have a good understanding of their curriculum-leading role. Teachers perceived their role as multi-faceted; they perform these roles in the classroom, within the school, in whole-school decision-making, and in the community. The findings also reveal that school managers created opportunities for teachers to lead in curriculum matters in schools. However, of the many roadblocks to teacher leadership in curriculum matters, the participants articulated teacher exclusion from vital curriculum decision-making processes at the macro (national) and meso (provincial and district) levels as the gravest.

This implies that existing policies on curriculum decision-making at the macro level which recognise teachers' unions as teachers' decision-making representatives, are failing teachers. Thus, unless teachers are accorded meaningful participation in vital curriculum decision-making at every stage of the curriculum-development process (design, dissemination, implementation, and evaluation), at the macro and meso levels, teachers cannot claim ownership of their profession. Lack of ownership breeds dissatisfaction, demotivation, lack of innovativeness, and lack of resilience, which are hindrances to effective and efficient teaching and learning. Such demotivation will hamper a possible teacher contribution to the improvement of the quality of education in South Africa.

Based on the findings of this study, I put forward the following recommendations below for possible improvement.

7.8 Recommendations

- Teacher education institutions should train pre-service teachers in curriculum theories, discourse, and critical pedagogy, to ground teachers holistically, and equip them with the relevant knowledge and skills for participation in curriculum decision-making processes at the macro and meso levels.

- Further studies should be conducted by educationists to explore teachers' views on how to include teachers in curriculum decision-making at the macro and meso levels during the curriculum-development processes.

- The Department of Education should adopt a bottom-up approach to curriculum decision-making processes by sharing with teachers any forthcoming vision or innovative educational ideas. The Department of Education should ask teachers to propose or make suggestions on how to put ideas into practise.

- School principals should create a structure that allows teachers offering the same subjects to have joint lesson-planning sessions within the school and across schools in clusters. The school-management team should arrange the school programme in such a way that there is a specific day and time period allocated for this important exercise.

- Teachers, as curriculum leaders, should be involved in the production of TLMs for the purpose of insight and ownership. Publishers and authors should collaborate with teachers of specific subjects during content selection and compilation, in order to ensure proper content ordering, as well as to avoid content and grade-level mismatch.

- My study analysed only the views of teachers and school managers (principals) on the experiences of teachers as curriculum leaders. Another study may be carried out that incorporates the views of learners and other education officials such as subject advisors, in order to gain a broader perspective of the phenomenon.

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ANNEXURES

Annexure A: Permissions and Consent Letters

LIMPOPO
PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION

Ref 2/2/2 Enq: Mabogo MG Tel No: 015 290 9386 E-mail:MabogoMG@edu.limpopo.gov.za

Bessong RO
41 Stubbs Street
Louis Trichardt
0920

RE: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

1. The above bears reference.

2. The Department wishes to inform you that your request to conduct research has been approved. Topic of the research proposal: **"TEACHERS AS CURRICULUM LEADERS IN SOUTH AFRICA: EXPERIENCES OF SELECTED SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS".**
3. The following conditions should be considered;

3.1 The research should not have any financial implications for Limpopo Department of Education.

3.2 Arrangements should be made with the Circuit Office and the schools concerned.

3.3 The conduct of research should not in anyhow disrupt the academic programs at the schools.

3.4 The research should not be conducted during the time of Examinations especially the fourth term.

3.5 During the study, applicable research ethics should be adhered to; in particular the principle of voluntary participation (the people involved should be respected).

CONFIDENTIAL

Cnr. 113 Biccard & 24 Excelsior Street, POLOKWANE, 0700, Private Bag X9489, POLOKWANE, 0700
Tel: 015 290 7600, Fax: 015 297 6920/4220/4494

3.6 Upon completion of research study, the researcher shall share the final product of the research with the Department.

4 Furthermore, you are expected to produce this letter at Schools/ Offices where you intend conducting your research as an evidence that you are permitted to conduct the research.

5 The department appreciates the contribution that you wish to make and wishes you success in your investigation.

Best wishes.

Ms NB Mutheiwana
Head of Department

10/05/2019
Date

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH: BESSON RO

CONFIDENTIAL

LIMPOPO
PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT

DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION

VHEMBE WEST DISTRICT

REF: 12/1/10/8 ENQ: Matibe M.S Contact No 082 300 4774

Bessong R.O
41 Stubbs Street
Louis Trichardt
0920

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN VHEMBE DISTRICT

1. This to inform you that your request for permission to conduct research entitled "Teacher as curriculum leader a in South Africa: Experiences of selected Secondary School teachers" has been approved.
2. You are expected to ensure that your interactions with Principals and teachers of the four selected Schools will not disrupt teaching and learning activities.
3. Kindly adhere to all conditions which are outlined in the letter of permission from the Head of Department
4. Best wishes in your academic endeavours

DISTRICT DIRECTOR

2019-05-28
DATE

Thohoyandou Government Building Old Parliament Block D Private Bag X2250 SIBASA 0970
Tel (015) 962 1313 or (015) 962 1331 Fax (015) 962 5036 or (015) 962 2288

The heartland of southern Africa - development is about people

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

ENQ: Ms. Bessong R.O.
Cell: 0786134685

41 Stubbs Street
Louis Trichardt
0920
5 July 2019

The Principal
Name of school
Town

Dear Sir / Madam

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT YOUR SCHOOL

I am a doctoral student in the Department of Education Management and Policy Studies, Faculty of Education of the University of Pretoria. Currently, I am undertaking a research study titled **Experiences of teachers as curriculum leaders in South African secondary schools.** The aim of this study is to explore what teachers perceive as their role, how they enact these roles in leading the curriculum and how school managers create opportunities for teachers to lead in curriculum matters for the improvement of education quality in South Africa. This research is being carried out under the supervision of Dr. Ogina T. A., also in the Department of Education Management and Policy Studies, Faculty of Education of the University of Pretoria. We are requesting permission from you to conduct this research with the principal and selected teachers at your school.

I will conduct interviews and observations in the school. A semi-structured individual interview with each participant as well as a focus group discussion with selected teachers within the school will be conducted and will last between 30 to 60 minutes. I will use an audio-recorder after obtaining consent from the participants to ensure accurate collection of information. The interviews will be conducted at the school, at the end of lessons or at places, dates and times convenient to participants in order not to disrupt lessons. After transcription, I will give each participant their interview transcript to accord them an opportunity to confirm, add or clarify any of their information. I will observe one lesson per selected teacher. I will also observe one staff development meeting, one curriculum related meeting within the school, as well as one cluster or professional learning community meeting to be attended by teachers of the school. During each observation, I will record information gathered by taking down notes. The corresponding observation guide will be used to take down notes on activities that relate to issues in the guide.

The ethical requirements of the Faculty of Education of the University of Pretoria will guide the ethical integrity of this research. I will ensure anonymity and confidentiality of participants and institution. I will not use the real identity of the participants or the name of the school in this study. I will use pseudonyms and codes throughout all the processes of data collection, analysis and reporting. Furthermore, participation in this study will be voluntary. The participants can withdraw at any stage of the research process with no consequences or penalties. There are no anticipated or known risks to participants in this study. After the study, all data will be stored in digital format in the Department of Education Management and Policy Studies of the University of Pretoria.

I anticipate that, based on responses of participants in this study, I will be able to develop guidelines on how teachers should enact their role as curriculum leaders to enhance quality education. The results of this study will also be published in journal articles and the thesis will be available in the university of Pretoria library for public use.

For any query or additional information on this study, please contact me on 0786134685 or robessong@gmail.com; or Dr. Ogina T. A. on 0124202445 / 0721289958 or taogina@up.ac.za.

Thank you in advance for your positive consideration.

Yours sincerely,

Bessong R.O. (PhD Student) Date: 5 July 2019

Dr. Ogina T. A. (Supervisor) Date: 8 July 2019

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

ENQ: Ms. Bessong R.O.
Cell: 0786134685

41 Stubbs Street
Louis Trichardt
0920
5 July 2019

Dear Sir / Madam

REQUEST FOR PARTICIPATION IN A RESEARCH STUDY (SCHOOL MANAGER)

I am a doctoral student in the Department of Education Management and Policy Studies, Faculty of Education of the University of Pretoria. Currently, I am undertaking a research study titled **Experiences of teachers as curriculum leaders in South African secondary schools.** The aim of this study is to explore what teachers perceive as their role, how they enact these roles in leading the curriculum and how school managers create opportunities for teachers to lead in curriculum matters for the improvement of education quality in South Africa. This research is being carried out under the supervision of Dr. Ogina T. A., also in the Department of Education Management and Policy Studies, Faculty of Education of the University of Pretoria. We are requesting permission from you to conduct this research with you as a school manager.

I will conduct a semi-structured individual interview and observations. The semi-structured individual interview will last between 30 to 60 minutes. I will use an audio-recorder after obtaining consent from you to ensure accurate collection of information. The interviews will be conducted at the school, at the end of lessons or at places, dates and times convenient to you in order not to disrupt lessons. After transcription, I will give you the interview transcript to accord you an opportunity to confirm, add or clarify any of your information. I will observe one staff development meeting and one curriculum related meeting within the school. During observation, I will record information gathered by taking down notes. The corresponding observation guide will be used to take down notes on activities that relate to issues in the guide.

The ethical requirements of the Faculty of Education of the University of Pretoria will guide the ethical integrity of this research. I will ensure your anonymity and confidentiality. I will not use your real identity or the name of the school in this study. I will use pseudonyms and

codes throughout all the processes of data collection, analysis and reporting. Furthermore, participation in this study will be voluntary. You can withdraw at any stage of the research process with no consequences or penalties. Should you decide later to withdraw from the study after data collection, I will seek consent from you to use your information. There are no benefits, anticipated or known risks to you in this study. After the study, all data will be stored in digital format in the Department of Education Management and Policy Studies of the University of Pretoria.

I anticipate that, based on responses of participants in this study, I will be able to develop guidelines on how teachers should enact their role as curriculum leaders to enhance quality education. The results of this study will also be published in journal articles and the thesis will be available in the university of Pretoria library for public use.

For any query or additional information on this study, please contact me on 0786134685 or robessong@gmail.com; or Dr. Ogina T. A. on 0124202445 / 0721289958 or taogina@up.ac.za.

Thank you in advance for your positive consideration.

If you decide to participate in this study, please sign the consent form attached at the end of this document. Scan and email it to me at robessong@gmail.com.

Participant: _____ Date: _____

Bessong R.O - PhD Student) Date: 5 July 2019

Dr. Ogina T. A. (Supervisor) Date: 8 July 2019

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

ENQ: Ms. Bessong R.O.
Cell: 0786134685

41 Stubbs Street
Louis Trichardt
0920
5 July 2019

Dear Teacher,

REQUEST FOR PARTICIPATION IN THIS RESEARCH STUDY

I am a doctoral student in the Department of Education Management and Policy Studies, Faculty of Education of the University of Pretoria. Currently, I am undertaking a research study titled **Experiences of teachers as curriculum leaders in South African secondary schools.** The aim of this study is to explore what teachers perceive as their role, how they enact these roles in leading the curriculum and how school managers create opportunities for teachers to lead in curriculum matters for the improvement of education quality in South Africa. This research is being carried out under the supervision of Dr. Ogina T. A., also in the Department of Education Management and Policy Studies, Faculty of Education of the University of Pretoria. We are requesting permission from you to conduct this research with you as a teacher.

I will conduct interviews and observations at your school. You will be involved in a semi-structured individual interview as well as a focus group discussion with other selected teachers within your school. The duration of the interview will be between 30 to 60 minutes. I will use an audio-recorder with your consent to record the interview in order to ensure accurate data collection. The interviews will be conducted at the school, at the end of lessons or at places, dates and times convenient for you as participants in order not to disrupt lessons. After the transcription, I will give the interview transcript to you to confirm, add or clarify any of your information. I will also observe one lesson in your class and one staff development meeting, one curriculum related meeting within the school, as well as one cluster or professional learning community meeting you will attend. During each observation, I will record information gathered by taking down notes. The corresponding observation guide will be used to take down notes on activities that relate to issues in the guide.

The ethical requirements of the Faculty of Education of the University of Pretoria will guide the ethical integrity of this research. I will ensure your anonymity and confidentiality as well

as that of the institution. I will not use your real identity or the name of your school. I will use pseudonyms and codes throughout all the processes of data collection, analysis and reporting. Furthermore, participation in this study will be voluntary. You as the participant can withdraw at any stage of the research process with no consequences or penalties. Should you decide later to withdraw from the study after data collection, I will seek consent from you to use your information. There are no benefits, anticipated or known risks in participating in this study. After the study, all data will be stored in digital format in the Department of Education Management and Policy Studies of the University of Pretoria.

I anticipate that, based on your responses as well as the responses of the other participants, in this study, I will be able to develop guidelines on how teachers should enact their role as curriculum leaders to enhance quality education. The results of this study will also be published in journal articles and the thesis will be available in the university of Pretoria library for public use.

For any query or additional information on this study, please contact me on 0786134685 or robessong@gmail.com; or Dr. Ogina T. A. on 0124202445 / 0721289958 or taogina@up.ac.za.
Thank you in advance for your positive consideration.
If you decide to participate in this study, please sign the consent form attached at the end of this document. Scan and email it to me at robessong@gmail.com.

Yours sincerely,

Bessong R.O - PhD Student) Date: 5 July 2019

Dr. Ogina T. A. (Supervisor) Date: 8 July 2019

CONSENT LETTER

I _____ of _____school have read the information presented in the letter requesting my permission to participate in the research study titled **Experiences of teachers as curriculum leaders in South African secondary schools.** I was given the opportunity to ask questions and request further explanations about the research study. I understand that the research is being carried out by a PhD student by name Bessong R.O. under the supervision of Dr. Ogina T. A., both in the Department of Education Management and Policy Studies, Faculty of Education of the university of Pretoria.

I understand that I will participate in an individual interview and a focus group discussion, each lasting 30-60 minutes and with my consent these will be audio-recorded to ensure accurate collection of information. I am aware that these interviews will be conducted at my school, at the end of lessons or at places and times convenient to me and other participants in order not to disrupt lessons. I understand that a transcription of my interview and the focus group discussion, will be given to me as an opportunity to confirm, add or clarify any information I gave. I understand the researcher will also observe one of my lessons, a staff development meeting and any other curriculum related meeting at my school and a cluster or professional learning community meeting to be attended by teachers of my school during the period of data collection. During each observation, the researcher will record information gathered by taking down notes. The researcher will use the corresponding observation schedule as a guide to take down notes on activities that relate to issues in the guide.

I understand that the researcher will ensure my anonymity and confidentiality and that of my institution. The researcher will not use my name or the school's name anywhere in the study but will use pseudonyms and codes throughout all the processes of data collection, analysis and reporting. Furthermore, I understand my participation is voluntary, that I can withdraw from the study at any stage of the research process without suffering any consequences or penalties. I also understand that, should I decide later to withdraw from the study after data collection, the researcher will seek consent from me to use my information. In addition, I understand that there are no direct benefits anticipated or known risks to me in this research study. I am aware that after the study, all data will be stored in digital format with the Department of Education Management and Policy Studies of the university of Pretoria.

I have been made aware of the fact that participants' responses in this research may enable the development of guidelines on how teachers should enact their role as curriculum leaders to enhance quality education, and that the results of this study will be published in journal articles and the thesis will be available in the university of Pretoria library for public use.

Participant: _____ Date: _____

Bessong R.O - PhD Student) Date: 5 July 2019

Dr. Ogina T. A. (Supervisor) Date: 8 July 2019

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

ENQ: Ms. Bessong R.O.
Cell: 0786134685

41 Stubbs Street
Louis Trichardt
0920
5 July 2019

Dear parents / guardians,

INFORMATION ABOUT OBSERVING YOUR CHILD'S TEACHER IN THE CLASSROOM AS PART OF MY RESEARCH STUDY

I am a doctoral student in the Department of Education Management and Policy Studies, Faculty of Education of the University of Pretoria. Currently, I am undertaking a research study titled **Experiences of teachers as curriculum leaders in South African secondary schools.** The aim of this study is to explore what teachers perceive as their role, how they enact these roles in leading the curriculum and how school managers create opportunities for teachers to lead in curriculum matters for the improvement of education quality in South Africa.

This serves to inform you and your child that, I will observe your child's teacher during one lesson in your child's classroom. For this reason, learners will be in the classroom during my observation. The familiar classroom context of the learners will be almost fully maintained. The teacher will further explain my presence in the classroom to the learners. I will be a non –participant observer which will not interfere with the lesson. During the observation, I will record information gathered by taking down notes. The observation guide will be used to take down notes on activities that relate to issues in the guide.

The ethical requirements of the Faculty of Education of the University of Pretoria will guide the ethical integrity of this research. I will ensure anonymity and confidentiality of all participants and the institution. I will not use participants' names or the school's name anywhere in this study. I will use pseudonyms and codes throughout all the processes of data collection, analysis and reporting. Furthermore, participation will be voluntary, participants can withdraw at any stage of the research process with no consequences on them. There are no benefits, anticipated, or known risks to your child being in the lesson in which the teacher will be observed.

I anticipate that data from observation and other responses from participants in this research may enable the development of guidelines on how teachers should enact their role as curriculum leaders to enhance quality education, and that the results of this study will be published in journal articles and the thesis will be available in the university of Pretoria library for public use.

If you accept that your child participates in the lesson to be observed in this research, please complete and sign in the space provided below as a declaration of your consent.

==========

I _____ accept / do not accept that my child should participate in the research.

Parent's / guardian's signature: _____ date: _____

For any query or additional information on this study, please contact me on 0786134685 or robessong@gmail.com; or Dr. Ogina T. A. on 0124202445 / 0721289958 or taogina@up.ac.za.

Thank you in advance for your positive consideration.

Yours sincerely,

Bessong R.O. (PhD Student) Date: 5 July 2019

Dr. Ogina T. A. (Supervisor) Date: 8 July 2019

Annexure B: Field Instruments

Interview guide on teachers as curriculum leaders

Section A: Biographical information

1. How long have you been teaching?
2. What is your highest qualification?
3. In which of the age brackets do you belong: <25, 26-35, 36-44, 45-54, >55?

Research Questions	Interview questions
Q1 What are teachers' understanding of their role as curriculum leaders in selected South African secondary schools?	1, What do you understand by curriculum leadership? 2, What can you say about teachers' role as curriculum leaders in schools? 3, In your opinion, do you think that teachers should be regarded as curriculum leaders in schools? Explain.
Q2 What do teachers perceive to be their role as curriculum leaders in secondary schools?	4, What do you think are your roles as a curriculum leader? 5, What challenges do you face in performing your role as a curriculum leader? 6, What do you suggest could be done to help you perform this role better? 7, What can you say are benefits of being curriculum leaders?
Q3 How do teachers execute their role as curriculum leaders in secondary schools?	8, Please tell me what teachers do as curriculum leaders in school? 9, Where and when do teachers perform their role as curriculum leaders?

	10, Describe some positive experiences you have encountered as you engage in leading the curriculum. What are the negative experiences?
Is there anything that you would like to tell me about your role as a curriculum leader?	

Teachers' focus group discussion Guide

Individual Interview Questions	**Focus group discussion from recurring ideas and those not mentioned**
Q1 What is your understanding of curriculum leadership / What does curriculum leadership mean to you?	In response to what educators understand by curriculum leadership, some readily refer to those in positions of authorities (Provincial HoD, District directors, Circuit managers, curriculum advisers and the SMT) but not themselves as the curriculum leaders. Why is it so?
Q2 In your opinion, do you think that teachers should be regarded as curriculum leaders in schools? Explain.	a) Many educators have complained of exclusion at the national level during the design and planning stages of developing the curriculum. Why is it important to include educators at these stages? b) Most educators in this study are against the 30% and 40% accepted as pass marks in certain subjects; they are also against the promotion of learners who did not pass to the next grade. What is your opinion in these?
Q3 Where and when do teachers perform their role as curriculum leaders?	a) From the individual interviews, teachers do not seem to speak of themselves as curriculum developers. Why is this the case? b) Educators hardly talk about their role in co-curricular and extra-curricular activities, and the training of pre-service educators. Please explain why? c) Most educators do not have lesson plans indicating how they have planned and prepared a lesson. Can you explain why this happens?

Q4 What challenges do you face in performing your role as a curriculum leader? What do you suggest could be done to help you perform this role better?	a) What do you say about educators' complain of being vulnerable to learner indiscipline and violence? b) Comment on the challenge expressed by educators on the issue of being allocated subjects they are not trained in to teach. c) Some educators perceive the curriculum as politicised, hence the frequent changes which pose challenges to educators. What is your opinion on this perception?

Interview guide on school manager creating opportunities for teachers as curriculum leadership

Section A: Biographical information

1. How long have you been in your position as a school manager?
2. What is your highest qualification?
3. In which of the age brackets do you belong: <25, 26-35, 36-44, 45-54, >55?
4. How many learners are in your school?
5. How many teachers are in your school?

Research Questions	Interview questions
How do school managers create opportunities/ space for teacher leadership in curriculum matters?	1, Briefly discuss your understanding of the concept of teachers as curriculum leaders in schools. 2, Please tell me how you create opportunities for teachers to perform their role as curriculum leaders. 3, What helps you in creating opportunities that enable teachers to perform their role as curriculum leaders. What limits your ability to create opportunities for teachers' leadership in curriculum matters?
Sir/Madam, is there anything that you would like to tell me about your role of creating opportunities for teachers as curriculum leaders?	

Classroom observation guide

1. Teaching and learning atmosphere during lessons _____

   _____

2. Lesson planning/preparation and presentation _____

   _____

3. Teacher classroom management _____

   _____

4. Learner discipline during the lesson _____

   _____

5. Any aspects of teacher sensitivity to learners' differences and disabilities

   _____

6. Attempts by teacher to improve learner learning _____

   _____

7. Teacher's teaching strategies _____

8. Teacher efficacy (self-confidence, competence) _____

   _____

9. Teaching and learning support materials _____

   _____

Meeting observation guide

1. Type of meeting_____

2. Person (s) leading meeting _____
   _____

3. Collaboration during meeting _____
   _____

4. Types of activities (curricular, extra, or co-curricular) _____
   _____

5. Agenda arrived at before, during, matters added on prepared agenda _____
   _____

6. Teachers discuss freely/censored _____
   _____

7. Decision-making model (democratic, consensus, imposed) _____
   _____

8. Distribution of duties during meeting (delegated or volunteered on) _____
   _____