

**Exploring the Heads of Department experiences on professional development  
aspects of Quality Management System**

**by**

**BONGELA SYNCHRONIZE NYANDENI**

**Dissertation**

**Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements**

**for the Degree of**

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**Department of Education Management, Policy and Comparative Education**

**Faculty of Education**

**UNIVERSITY OF THE FREE STATE**

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**JULY 2024**

## Declaration

I, Bongela Synchronize Nyandeni declare that the dissertation entitled “*Exploring the Heads of Department experiences on professional development aspects of Quality Management System*”, submitted for the qualification of a master’s degree is my authentic independent research that has not been previously submitted to any other academic institution. I hereby affirm that all the sources that I have used in my work have been cited and acknowledged by means of complete referencing.

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Signature Date: July 2024

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All of the best with your studies.

Yours sincerely,

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Quality Management System**

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## **Abstract**

Developing Heads of departments (HoDs) is critical in meeting the increasing demand of the 21st-century education system. Development programmes have been implemented in South African schools to aid in the professional development of HoDs. These programmes are designed to improve HoDs' capacity to carry out their assigned duties successfully. However, obstacles remain. This qualitative study aimed to investigate the experiences of HoDs relating to professional development aspects of the Quality Management System. The investigation was undertaken in the South African province of KwaZulu-Natal's uThukela District. The adult learning theory was implemented to substantiate the study's analysis. This research aimed to determine HoDs' perceptions of the Quality Management System as a professional development programme and formulate recommendations on how the programme could be enhanced to be more efficient.

Following an interpretive paradigm, the participants generated meaning and knowledge based on their experiences while influencing their thoughts and societal beliefs. The study was narrated from the participants' experiences using phenomenology as a research design. These experiences facilitated HoDs to deduce meaning from their experiences with the Quality Management System as a professional development programme. In the uThukela District, two primary and two high schools were selected as sites. The sample size consisted of two HoDs per primary school and four HoDs per high school, with a minimum of two years of working experience with the Quality Management System programme. Data was obtained through semi-structured interviews and document analysis.

The study revealed that there is a need for professional development of school managers, and it is crucial for HoDs to be developed holistically as curriculum leaders. The findings further revealed that the value of professional development programmes is acknowledged by HoDs as they perceive the programmes to serve as a foundation for the transition into leadership positions and remain competent and well-informed in their careers. The study also revealed that the implementation of the QMS as a PDP has improved the quality of development of leaders, however, despite the

programme's positive aspects, QMS implementation continues to face challenges such as excessive paperwork, time-consumption and educator challenges.

Therefore, the study concludes that the implementation of QMS as a PDP is essential in improving the quality of education through the professional development of school leaders, while the QMS as a PDP still needs refinement in addressing practical challenges experienced by HoDs in schools. The study recommends that the QMS as a PDP can be strengthened through providing tailored strategies that are accommodative to the leadership roles of HoDs, such as extensive training to HoDs, providing adequate resources as support to HoDs, and finally embracing digital technologies to streamline process.

**Keywords:** Heads of Departments, Professional development programme, Quality Management System

## Table of Contents

<b>Declaration .....</b>	<b>ii</b>
<b>Ethical Clearance .....</b>	<b>iii</b>
<b>Editor’s Letter.....</b>	<b>iv</b>
<b>Acknowledgements .....</b>	<b>v</b>
<b>Abstract .....</b>	<b>vi</b>
<b>List of Tables.....</b>	<b>xiv</b>
<b>List of Figures .....</b>	<b>xiv</b>
<b>List of Acronyms.....</b>	<b>xv</b>
<b>CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY .....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 Introduction and Background to the Study .....	1
1.2 Problem Statement .....	5
1.3 Research Questions .....	5
1.3.1 Main research question .....	6
1.3.2 Secondary questions.....	6
1.4 Research Aim and Objectives.....	6
1.4.1 Research aim .....	6
1.4.2 Research objectives .....	6
1.5 Overview of the Theoretical Framework .....	7
1.6 Overview of Research Methodology .....	8
1.7 Value of the Study.....	8
1.8 Delimitation of the Study .....	9
1.9 Ethical Considerations .....	9
1.10 Definition of Key Terms .....	9

1.10.1 Experience.....	9
1.10.2 Head of department.....	9
1.10.3 Leadership.....	10
1.10.4 Professional development .....	10
1.10.5 School management teams .....	10
1.11 Outline of Chapters.....	10
1.12 Chapter Summary.....	11
<b>CHAPTER TWO: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW ...</b>	<b>13</b>
2.1 Introduction .....	13
2.2 Theoretical Framework .....	13
2.2.1 Adult learning theory.....	13
2.2.2 Principles of adult learning theory.....	15
2.2.3 Learning styles of adults.....	17
2.2.4 Inspiring adult learners .....	19
2.2.5 Four pillars of Adult Learning Theory (ALT).....	20
2.2.5.1 Adults want to be involved in the planning and evaluation of their instruction.....	21
2.2.5.2 Adults are looking for help and mentorship .....	21
2.2.5.3 Adults want to learn things directly applicable to their profession and personal lives .....	22
2.2.5.4 Adult learning focuses on problems rather than on subjects .....	22
2.2.6 Constructing adult training according to Adult Learning Theory(ALT) .....	23
2.2.7 Challenges of adult learning according to Adult Learning Theory (ALT)....	23
2.2.8 Possible solutions to adult learning according to Adult Learning Theory (ALT) .....	24
2.3 Literature Review .....	25
2.4 History of the Quality Management System (QMS) as a Professional Development Programme (PDP) .....	25

2.5 The Purpose of the Quality Management System(QMS) Development Programme (DP) in Schools .....	27
2.6 Conceptualisation of the Quality Management System(QMS) as a Professional Development Programme (PDP) .....	28
2.6.1 Formal Professional Development (PD) .....	30
2.6.2 Characteristics of formal Professional Development (PD).....	30
2.6.3 Informal Professional Development (PD) .....	31
2.6.4 Characteristics of informal Professional Development (PD) .....	31
2.7 Effectiveness of Professional Development (PD) .....	31
2.8 Benefits of Professional Development (PD).....	32
2.9 Challenges of Professional Development (PD).....	34
2.10 The Quality Management System (QMS) as a Professional Development Programme (PDP) in South African Schools .....	37
2.11 The Challenges of Quality Management System (QMS) as a Professional Development Programme (PDP) in South African Schools .....	39
2.12 The process of Quality Management System (QMS) implementation.....	41
2.13 The Quality Management System(QMS) and Development of Heads of Departments (HoDs).....	43
2.14 Significance of Professional Development (PD) to Heads of Departments (HoDs) as Instructional Leaders .....	44
2.15 Chapter Summary.....	45
<b>CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN .....</b>	<b>46</b>
3.1 Introduction .....	46
3.2 Methodology .....	46
3.3 Research Paradigm .....	47
3.3.1 Ontology .....	48
3.3.2 Epistemology .....	48
3.3.3 Interpretivism .....	49
3.4 Research Approach .....	<b>50</b>

3.4.1 Qualitative approach.....	50
3.4.2 Advantages of qualitative research.....	52
3.5 Research Design .....	<b>59</b>
3.5.1 Phenomenology design .....	59
3.6 Data Collection Methods.....	<b>60</b>
3.6.1 Semi-structured interviews .....	60
3.6.2 Document analysis .....	62
3.6.3 Data collection steps .....	63
3.6.4 Purposive sampling of schools .....	65
3.7 Trustworthiness of the Study .....	<b>66</b>
3.7.1 Credibility in research .....	67
3.7.2 Dependability.....	67
3.7.3 Confirmability.....	68
3.7.4 Transferability .....	68
3.8 Data Analysis .....	<b>68</b>
3.8.1 Qualitative Content Analysis approach.....	69
3.9 Ethical Considerations .....	<b>69</b>
3.9.1 Permission to conduct the study.....	71
3.9.2 Informed consent.....	71
3.9.3 Confidentiality and anonymity .....	71
3.10 Delimitations of the Study .....	<b>72</b>
3.11 Chapter Summary.....	73
<b>CHAPTER FOUR: DATA PRESENTATION, INTERPRETATION AND ANALYSIS</b> .....	<b>73</b>
4.1 Introduction .....	73
4.2 Profile of Research Sites and Participants.....	74

4.2.1 Profile of research sites .....	74
4.2.2 Profile of participants .....	75
4.3 Data Presentation and Analysis .....	77
4.3.1 Understanding of Professional Development (PD) .....	78
4.3.1.1 The Heads of Departments' (HoDs) experiences of Professional Development Programmes (PDPs).....	80
4.4.2 Views and experiences of the Quality Management System (QMS) as a Professional Development Programme (PDP) .....	82
4.4.2.1 Monitoring and implementation processes of the Quality Management System (QMS) as a Professional Development Programme (PDP).....	83
4.4.2.2 Perceptions of peer evaluation during Quality Management System (QMS) implementation .....	85
4.4.2.3 Experiences of the Quality Management System (QMS) as a Professional Development Programme (PDP).....	87
4.4.3 Challenges experienced during the Quality Management System (QMS) implementation.....	89
4.4.4 Strategies to strengthen the Quality Management System (QMS) as a Professional Development Programme (PDP) to effectively develop Heads of Departments (HoDs) .....	91
4.5 Document Analysis .....	93
4.5.1 Quality Management System (QMS) management plan .....	93
4.5.2 Quality Management System (QMS) pre-evaluation minutes.....	96
4.5.3 Quality Management System (QMS) post-appraisal discussion minutes on performance standards .....	99
4.5.4 Quality Management System (QMS) appraisal instrument document .....	103
4.6 Chapter Summary.....	105
<b>CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION.....</b>	<b>106</b>
5.1 Introduction .....	106
5.3 Major Findings .....	106

5.3.1 Understanding of Professional Development (PD) .....	106
5.3.2 Views and experiences of the Quality Management System (QMS) as a Professional Development Programme (PDP) .....	108
5.3.2.1 Monitoring, implementation and peer evaluation .....	109
5.3.2.2 Experiences of the Quality Management System (QMS) as a Professional Development Programme (PDP).....	110
5.3.3 Challenges experienced during the Quality Management System (QMS) implementation.....	112
5.3.5 Strengthening the Quality Management System (QMS) to effectively develop Heads of Departments(HoDs) through Professional Development (PD).....	113
5.4 Findings for Analysed Documents Relating to the Schools' Quality Management System (QMS) .....	114
5.4.1 Documents received and analysed from the participating schools .....	115
5.4.5.1 Quality Management System(QMS) management plan .....	115
5.4.5.2 Quality Management System (QMS) pre-evaluation minutes.....	115
5.4.5.4 Quality Management System (QMS) appraisal instrument document .....	116
5.5 Conclusion from the Findings .....	117
5.7 Chapter Summary.....	120
<b>CHAPTER SIX: RESEARCH JOURNEY AND CONTRIBUTION TO KNOWLEDGE</b> .....	<b>121</b>
6.1 Introduction .....	121
6.2 Introductory Summary of the Research Background .....	121
6.3 Research Journey.....	122
6.4 Lesson Learned in the Research Journey .....	124
6.5 Study's Limitations .....	126
6.6 Recommendations for Future Research .....	126
6.7 Final Words.....	126

<b>Appendices .....</b>	<b>149</b>
Appendix B: Permission Letter from the District Education Manager.....	149
Appendix B: Permission Letter to Schools .....	150
Appendix C: Permission Letter to Participants (HoDs) .....	152
Appendix D: Consent Form for Participants.....	154
Appendix E: Interview Schedule for HoDs .....	156
Appendix F: Turnitin Report.....	157

### **List of Tables**

Table 3.1: Quintile description of schools .....	64
Table 3.2: Sampling procedure .....	65
Table 4.1: Profile of research sites .....	74
Table 4.2: Profile of participants .....	75
Table 4.3: Data presentation .....	77
Table 4.4: Document analysis .....	93

### **List of Figures**

Figure 4.1: Sample from a QMS management plan booklet .....	94
Figure 4.2: Example of QMS pre-evaluation minutes of School A .....	96
Figure 4.3: Example of QMS pre-evaluation minutes of School B .....	97

Figure 4.4: Example of the evaluation post-appraisal discussion minutes on performance standards of School A .....	99
Figure 4.5: Example of the evaluation post-appraisal discussion minutes on performance standards of School AA .....	100
Figure 4.6: Example of the evaluation post-appraisal discussion minutes on performance standards of school BB .....	101
Figure 4.7: Example of QMS appraisal instrument document .....	103

## **List of Acronyms**

ALT	Adult Learning Theory
ATP	Annual Teaching Plan
DAS	Development Appraisal System
DoE	Department of Education
EGRA	Early Grade Reading Assessment
ELRC	Education Labour Relations Council
FET	Future Education and Training
FIEP	Functional Innovative Education Programme
HL	Home Language
HoD	Heads of Department
I&I	Inspect and Improve
IQMS	Integrated Quality Management System

NPD	National Development Plan
OBE	Outcomes Based Education
PD	Professional development
PDP	Professional Development Programme
QMS	Quality Management System
SMT	School Management Teams

# CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

## 1.1 Introduction and Background to the Study

Advanced teaching and learning structures are in demand for enhancing learners' overall development (Hammond, Hyler and Garderner, 2017). According to Zide (2023), Professional development (PD) has traditionally been referred to as preservice and in-service education, or staff development. The development of heads of departments (HoDs) in both their personal and professional space is essential throughout their careers (Buthelezi, Mhlongo and Msweli, 2021). Policymakers and literature writers concur that refinement of the development of managers and leaders in schools is vital to achieving the development of modern-century learners (Hammond *et al.*, 2017). With the responsibility of empowering educators to reach professional maturity. Zide and Mokhele (2018) mentioned that PD aims to prepare educators to navigate the challenges and expectations of a democratic South Africa and the global 21st century. Choy and Chua (2019) opine that the high quality of school management determines the performance of the entire school functioning system. Heads of Departments (HoDs) are believed to provide a significant impact on learner achievement, while continuously empowering and supervising educators for the benefit of learners in curriculum implementation (Sengai, 2021)

Zide and Mokhele (2018) established that educators are essential in enhancing schools through their skills and abilities. Having competent educators remains essential for enhancing education quality, emphasising the significance of continuous development for educators (Zide and Mokhele, 2018). Professional development programmes (PDPs) are defined as formal or informal activities which enable individuals to be experts in their field of work (Rzejak and Lipowsky, 2015). Rzejak and Lipowsky (2015) further added that these programmes aimed to enhance skills and knowledge that improve the daily management of an institution.

For HoDs to be effective in their duties, successful PD that increases their skills and knowledge must be acquired (Buthelezi *et al.*, 2021). The HoDs have to continue improving their professional capabilities as they strive to meet the constant shifts in schools, this shift can result in changes in professional expectations (Mayer, 2014). Heads of departments (HoDs) have the responsibility to make meaningful contributions to educators' development while improving teaching and learning (Du Plessis and Eberlein, 2017). Du Plessis and Eberlein (2017), further posit that HoDs hold a delicate position of guiding the following:

- To communicate the most recent approaches, methods, strategies, and evaluations to relevant staff members.
- To ensure the educational wellbeing of learners in their area of expertise.
- HoDs are responsible for effective functioning of their department.

Around the world, the professional growth of HoDs is a critical aspect in meeting the growing demand of the twenty-first century (Segoe, 2014). Using continuous development programmes and the evaluation of their effectiveness, countries internationally work towards addressing PD issues encountered by HoDs. In the United States of America (USA), HoDs also known as departmental chairs, attend a voluntary participant-based PDP called the Functional Innovative Education Programme (FIEP) (Eger, PISOŇOVÁ and Tomczyk, 2017). This development programme is in the form of workshops or a meeting with presentations and discussions in the presence of a programme supervisor. The FIEP provides departmental chairs with the opportunity to develop and enhance their capabilities (Eger *et al.*, 2017,). Eger *et al.* (2017) further stipulate that the focus of the programme is to provide school-centred management training aimed at supporting effective school leadership. However, Weaver, Dickson and Antonio (2019) revealed that there is a low participation rate of departmental chairs, while only a few chairs continued to attend this training after becoming departmental chairs.

According to Eger *et al.* (2017), several approaches have been implemented to enhance the poor attendance rate of HoDs in schools participating in development

programmes. These approaches include administering one-on-one Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Treats (SWOT) analysis with HoDs of schools (Eddy and Hogan, 2017); departmental meetings that contribute towards the discussions based on the advantages and significance that training has on HoDs (Eddy and Hogan, 2017); the establishment of a regulation requiring a specific amount of training hours that HoDs need annually; and lastly, training feedback forms introduced by PDP facilitators to provide feedback about the training that took place (Eger *et al.*, 2017).

In the United Kingdom where HoDs are recognised as programme supervisors or subject managers, the Leading Departments Programme was put into practice to engage and give support to HoDs in managing the operational challenges they encounter within the academic teams that they lead (Stergiou, 2020; Sengai, 2021). The programme benefits the HoDs with the opportunity to explore and make use of the ability to balance their intellectual, emotional, and political intelligence in facing day-to-day leadership challenges (Lennoxsmith, 2023). Longden (2023) revealed that curriculum coordinators in higher education institutions are accountable for strategic planning, decision making and the day-to-day operation of their departments' teaching. In addition, the Digital Career Development Programme offers structured learning and mentorships and recognises qualifications that assist HoDs in advancing their professions in the digital sector (Longden, 2023). These programmes have influenced the PD of HoDs in the United Kingdom positively.

According to Mackay and Armstrong (2021), a pilot programme called the Future Leaders Programme was implemented in Australia to professionally develop school leaders from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. The programme found that about 94% of participants improved their leadership skills and school leaders became invested in the needs of their learners' education (Mackay and Armstrong, 2021). Mackay and Armstrong (2021) state that school heads (school principals) are no longer regarded as solitary instructional leaders in schools but rather work as a team along with HoDs.

In the African context, in countries such as Uganda, HoDs have to acquire the expertise necessary to accomplish their responsibilities (Simpson *et al.*, 2016). The

Inspect and Improve (I&I) PDP was established to enhance the overall standard of leadership and management by providing learning opportunities, such as people management skills to improve HoDs' working relationships with others (Chu, Gavis and Kotonya, 2021). Chu *et al.* (2021) further mention that HoDs are offered learning opportunities during the I&I programme in the form of cluster workshops to strengthen the management systems of their schools. The I&I development programme enhances the HoDs' people management skills to improve their working relationships with staff (Kotonya and Gambhir, 2021). The evaluation of the programme completed by the World Management Survey disclosed that development support received by HoDs results in better monitoring skills and the ability to guide teachers' practices using non-judgemental approaches (Kotonya and Gambhir, 2021).

Emediegwu and Ighodaro (2016) established that to support long-term national growth, the Nigerian education system should continue to prioritise quality education. Ajani (2020) explains that various PD approaches have been established to allow HoDs to improve their management skills. In-service professional development programmes allow HoDs to reflect on their leadership and management abilities (Ajani, 2020). In addition, the Head Teacher Leadership Programme in Nigeria is a workshop designed to empower HoDs to effectively lead their schools (Olujuwon and Perumal, 2015). According to Olujuwon and Perumal (2015), this programme originated in the form of a workshop which used video clips and handbooks; participation involved designing their own learning techniques allowing HoDs to creatively work things out for themselves. Olujuwon and Perumal (2015) further attest that the workshops significantly influenced the HoDs' work performance.

In the South African context, to obtain quality in the education system, the Education Labour Relations Council merged three existing PDPs into one known as the Integrated Quality Management System (IQMS), which has been modified and is currently called the Quality Management System (QMS) (Segoe, 2014). The programme incorporates development appraisals, a performance measurement system and whole school evaluation. According to The Centre for Development and Enterprise (2015), the QMS was introduced in 2005.

The QMS was designed as a PDP to increase the education system's performance by keeping records of procedures, processes and responsibilities to upgrade the development of schools (Department of Basic Education [DBE], 2021). However, Du Plessis and Letshwene's (2020) research findings elucidate that challenges still exist, particularly inadequate subject knowledge of HoDs, undersupply of well-suited working resources and insufficient support from school principals. In addition, HoDs believe that they are not adequately empowered to perform their duties successfully (Madonsela and Proches, 2022). Therefore, this study aimed to explore selected HoDs' experiences of the QMS as a PDP.

## **1.2 Problem Statement**

Heads of Department encounter significant barriers, including overwhelming administrative tasks, insufficient training and lack of support from school managers. These issues hinder their ability to effectively lead instructional practices and implement curriculum changes. Policymakers and scholars agree that an improvement in the development of school leaders and managers is essential (Hammond *et al.*, 2017). In South Africa, existing PDPs were integrated to create one, known as the QMS, to meet education demands (Segoe, 2014). However, scholars indicate that challenges still exist particularly with HoDs, as they show unsatisfactory management and leadership skills (Kyahurwa, 2013; Tlali and Matete, 2020). According to Seobi and Wood (2016), HoDs are expected to lead and figure out new policies' implementation and practice. As a result, their lack of expertise, direction and guidance commitment causes the underuse of HoDs as middle managers in schools (Muriuki, Onyanga and Kithinji, 2020). Studies have focused their attention on the PD aspects of the QMS and their results in improving learners' performances; however, there are limited reports on the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of this development programme on the role performance of HoDs (Muriuki *et al.*, 2020). Hence, this study aimed to explore the HoDs' experiences of the QMS as a PDP.

## **1.3 Research Questions**

The study is based on the following research questions.

### **1.3.1 Main research question**

What are the Head of Departments' (HoDs) experiences of the Quality Management System (QMS) as a Professional Development Programme (PDP)?

### **1.3.2 Secondary questions**

- a. What is the Heads of Departments'(HoDs) understanding of Professional Development (PD)?
- b. What are the Heads of Departments' (HoDs) views and experiences of the Quality Management System (QMS) as a Professional Development Programme (PDP)?
- c. What challenges do Heads of Departments (HoDs) experience with the Quality Management System (QMS) as a Professional Development Programme (PDP)?
- d. How can the Quality Management System (QMS) as a Professional Development Programme (PDP) be strengthened to effectively develop HoDs professionally in their leadership and management roles?

## **1.4 Research Aim and Objectives**

### **1.4.1 Research aim**

The aim of the study was as follows: To explore the Heads of Departments' (HoDs) experiences of the Quality Management System (QMS) as a Professional Development Programme (PDP).

### **1.4.2 Research objectives**

The specific objectives set out to achieve the aim of the study are as follows:

- a. To explore the HoDs' understanding of PD.
- b. To establish the HoDs' views and experiences of the QMS as a PDP.
- c. To identify the challenges that HoDs experience with the QMS as a PDP.

- d. To explore how the QMS as a PDP can be strengthened to effectively develop HoDs professionally in their leadership and management roles.

## **1.5 Overview of the Theoretical Framework**

A theoretical framework is a brief overview which functions as a guide to constructing arguments employed in research (Vinz, ,2022). Vinz (2022) further explained that a theoretical framework is useful when explaining recent developments and demonstrating their relevance to the topic under consideration as a way to prove the topic's relevance in the discussion. The study is based on the adult learning theory. The adult learning theory (ALT) was developed in 1980 and formulated by Malcolm Knowles as andragogy – the practice of teaching adults (Knowles, 1984). The theory consists of six learning principles: motivation, readiness to learn, orientation to learn, experience, self-concept and problem orientated (Knowles, 1984). The principles of the ALT are explained as follows:

- Motivation to learn – motivation to learn becomes internal as individuals age. Adults frequently have intrinsic motivations for education.
- Readiness to learn – as individuals mature, their readiness to learn becomes more concentrated on the development task. Adults depend on previous experiences or life modifications to renew their learning readiness.
- Orientation to learn – adults must redefine their emotions and preconceptions about the experience and importance of learning. As a person matures, their temporal perspective shifts from delayed application of knowledge towards immediacy of application.
- Adult learner experience – the focus is on developing life experience or hands-on learning. As an individual matures, they acquire a growing reservoir of experience which eventually becomes a valuable resource for learning.
- Self-concept – learn at one's own schedule and style. As an individual ages, their self-concept evolves from reliant to independent learning.

- Adult learners benefit from problem-based learning which challenges their assumptions and beliefs and guides their own development. (Knowles, 1984).

The ALT together with the description of the principles guided this study. Knowles (2018) clarifies that the theory focuses on the objective that adults are self-directed humans who take responsibility for their decisions and adult learning programmes should fit this attribute. The ALT befitted the study as it assisted in establishing the experiences of HoDs of the QMS as a practice that teaches and develops them as adult learners within their careers. The theory concerning the study is explained in detail in Chapter Three.

## **1.6 Overview of Research Methodology**

The study used the qualitative research methodology since the aim was to acquire an in-depth understanding of the subject matter under investigation. According to Bhandari (2020), qualitative research is a framework where information is gathered and examined to comprehend and promote new suggestions revealing people's behaviour, attitudes and perceptions concerning a subject matter at hand. Two primary and two high schools were sampled for the study with 12 HoD participants from the uThukela District in the province of Kwa-Zulu Natal. Data was gathered using two data collection instruments, semi-structured interviews and document analysis. Data was analysed using a qualitative content analysis approach. Data analysis was done by reducing a large amount of data into smaller fragments that provided meaning (Luo 2019). The data was categorised according to the participants' responses (Luo 2019).

## **1.7 Value of the Study**

This study will provide valuable insights to school management team members, policymakers and the Department of Education. The study will highlight how HoDs experience the QMS as a PDP. To enhance leadership even further, the Department of Education (DoE) could use the findings of this study to enhance leadership training programmes that will assist HoDs in their leadership positions.

## **1.8 Delimitation of the Study**

The study focused on the QMS as a PDP in the uThukela District of the KwaZulu-Natal province. The study was limited to 11 HoDs (one dropped out) from two high schools and two primary schools with experience participating in the QMS as a PDP as the target population in the uThukela District. The limited geographic range of the sample could impact the generalizability of the findings.

## **1.9 Ethical Considerations**

A researcher should follow certain steps when researching to meet ethical requirements. I obtained ethical clearance to conduct this research from the University of the Free State and letters of approval from the DoE, the district office and the selected schools. Participants were given detailed consent forms that were filled out and signed before participation (Pandey, 2016). Participants were informed that their participation was voluntary and that they could remove themselves from the study at any time (Pandey, 2016). Participants' identities and names were kept confidential as pseudonyms were used (Pandey, 2016).

## **1.10 Definition of Key Terms**

### **1.10.1 Experience**

As stated by Michel (2022), experience refers to the knowledge or skills obtained from direct observation, participation or anything that happens and has an effect on an individual. According to Riddle (2018), experience is described as practical knowledge and skills derived from observations, seeing or feeling things, that affect an individual as well as the skills and knowledge gained through these activities.

### **1.10.2 Head of department**

According Mangali, Palaganas, Dondriano and Ignacio (2019) in the United Kingdom, HoDs are referred to as curriculum coordinators, who are educational professionals that specialise in specific subjects or educational level. Etonge (2014) described a HoD as a senior educator who is responsible for managing a specific department, such as English or science. According to Etonge (2014) a position such as a HoD in the

educational system is a key function in school leadership. Mpisane (2015) established that HoDs are middle managers who are members of the school management teams (SMT).

### **1.10.3 Leadership**

Barney and Pratt (2023) described leadership as an individual's or group's capacity to motivate and direct other members of an organisation or team. In addition, leadership is frequently linked to an individual's title, status or position within a hierarchy (Barney and Pratt 2023).

### **1.10.4 Professional development**

As defined by Rzejak and Lipowsky (2015), PD is the continuity of learning and professional training after an individual has taken employment. This training will aid them in acquiring innovative skills while maintaining current developments and progressing in their career. Parsons (2022) established that PD is acquiring additional skills through continuous education.

### **1.10.5 School management teams**

Klinck *et al.* (2023) described SMTs as a group of leaders and administrators in a school who supervise everyday school operations to promote efficient teaching and learning. Klinck *et al.* (2023) established that SMT members oversee educators while leading, managing and administering their departments.

## **1.11 Outline of Chapters**

This study comprises six chapters arranged in the following way.

*Chapter One:* This chapter served as an introduction and background of the study. The chapter provided a thorough review of the study's problem statement, essential research questions, justification and significance. The chapter also provided a brief description of the theoretical framework used and an outline of the layout and structure of the research methodology, definition of terms and chapter layout.

*Chapter Two:* This chapter provides the theoretical framework of the study, guided by the ALT which served as the foundation of this research. The chapter reviews existing literature by exploring the historical background of the QMS as a PDP, the purpose of the QMS as a PDP, the perceptions and experiences of HoDs and the conceptualisation of the QMS as a PDP, and the challenges experienced in the implementation of the QMS and its effectiveness.

*Chapter Three:* This chapter discusses the research methodology of this study. The research adopted a qualitative approach, using a phenomenological design. The chapter further examines numerous areas of research, such as the process of data collection, data analysis methodology, the importance of trustworthiness, and the ethical concerns involved.

*Chapter Four:* In this chapter, the data is presented and analysed. Through the integration of the findings, this chapter presents the analysis based on four subsidiary questions that served as research guiding principles organised into main themes and subthemes.

*Chapter Five:* This chapter discusses the findings, derives conclusions, and provides recommendations. This chapter summarises the findings concerning the existing research and addresses the identified gaps.

*Chapter Six:* The final chapter summarises my experience, the lessons acquired from conducting this research and my contribution to the corpus of knowledge. The chapter also indicates the limitations that were discovered while conducting this research.

## **1.12 Chapter Summary**

To conclude, this introductory chapter set the platform for the study by providing an overview of the research problem, research questions and their significance. The chapter laid out the study's synopsis while giving an overview of the introduction and background. It provided an overview of the research topic, highlighted its significance and outlined the study's objectives. The chapter introduced the key theoretical framework and the concepts that were used throughout the study. The next chapter

discusses the theoretical framework underpinning this study and the detailed literature reviewed relevant to the study's topic of the QMS development programme.

# CHAPTER TWO: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

## 2.1 Introduction

The previous chapter presented the introduction and background of the study. This chapter discusses the theory underpinning the study — ALT — and presents an extensive review of the relevant literature related to the research topic captured in the title “*Exploring the heads of departments’ experiences of professional development aspects of Quality Management System*”. The objective of this study was to explore the experiences of HoDs concerning the QMS as a PDP.

## 2.2 Theoretical Framework

According to Vinz (2022), a theoretical framework is a comprehensive review of current theories which functions as a road map for building justifications for research. Theories are developed in a study to explain a phenomenon, discover a connection, and formulate predictions. Sreekumar (2023) similarly argues that a theoretical framework is a structure that clarifies and reinforces theories. It is a set of concepts, ideas and assumptions that will assist a researcher in developing their own research inquiry. The theoretical framework contributes to the design, analysis and interpretation of research findings. The theory used as a lens for this study was the ALT, developed by Malcolm Knowles in 1980. Details of the theory are provided in the next section.

### 2.2.1 Adult learning theory

Merriam and Biereman (2014) believes that adult brains begin to slow down around the age of 25. Merriam and Biereman (2014) explains that this does not mean we are incapable of acquiring new concepts when we are older than 25. It simply means that we must engage in activities that keep our minds active and allow us to learn (Merriam and Biereman, 2014). Knowles (1984) claims that ALT came into existence in 1980, driven by principles as discussed below.

Formulated by Malcolm Knowles as andragogy (Knowles, 1968), the practice of teaching adults is governed by six learning principles: motivation, readiness to learn, need to know, experience, self-concept and problem-orientation. Knowles (1984) states that by incorporating these principles into teaching practices, educators can create learning experiences that address the unique needs and motivation of adult learners. Pace (2020) says that ALT investigates how adults learn, emphasising that adults learn differently from children. In a study conducted by Pace (2020) it was revealed that this theory emphasised the importance of adults drawing on their life experiences to enhance learning and their capacity to learn when they take on new social or life obligations.

According to Wiseman (2022), the theory is essential to comprehend how to successfully instruct and engage adult learners in diverse educational environments. With a focus on self-directed learning, instructors can empower adults to take control of their educational journeys and become active agents in their learning. Mukhalalati and Taylor (2019) is of the opinion that adult learners transport knowledge and life experience with them, and they desire to have the ability to employ that information in a new environment. Adults become more effective during teaching can be applied to real-life circumstances. The ALT is described as the practice of teaching adults within the classroom or in their careers (Mukhalalati and Taylor, 2019). Hence the grounding on ALT as the study was focused on exploring the overall experience that HoDs have on the QMS DP, concurrently giving insight into the challenges they have encountered while building up recommendations to strengthen the programme's effectiveness in professionally developing HoDs.

Knowles (1968) popularised the concept of andragogy to investigate the distinctions between how children and adults learn. Knowles (1984) makes several assumptions about adult learners, including the following:

- As adults mature and develop the ability to direct their own learning, they progress from reliance to greater self-directedness.
- Adult learners draw on their life experiences to enhance learning.

- Adult learners are motivated to learn when they engage in new social or life roles.
- Adult learners are problem-centred and want to apply new learning immediately.
- Adult learners are inspired to learn through internal rather than external motivation (Knowles, 1984).

The theory shows how adult learning is distinct while identifying the most relevant learning styles. Savron (2021) links adult learning with the acquisition of a certain skill to apply to a new environment. Wiseman (2022) suggests that this theory embraces principles and practices aimed at educating adult learners. Knowles (2018) adds that the theory focuses on the objective that adults are autonomous individual humans who accept accountability for their choices and that adult education programmes should have this attribute. According to a study conducted by Merriam (2017), ALT emphasised that DPs must be designed with adults in mind to be effective. There is no single unified ALT; different theories exist to meet the needs of various organisations. As Merriam (2017) attests, adults learn in an entirely distinct manner from children in the following ways:

- Adults are more self-motivated, given that they comprehend the value of education and often have a particular objective in mind when they begin studying.
- Adults are able to use their existing knowledge base to understand new concepts.
- Adults are able to resolve problems and learn new concepts much more independently (Merriam, 2017).

### **2.2.2 Principles of adult learning theory**

According to Palis and Quiros (2014), children and adults learn in very different ways and therefore distinct methods have to be employed to render effective learning for adults. These are critical considerations when developing a curriculum and setting

expectations for adult learners (Palis and Quiros, 2014). Knowles (1984) formulated the following major principles:

**a. Motivation to learn**

While some people enjoy educating themselves for the sake of learning, adult learners are inclined to get involved in educational activities that are specifically applicable to their individual interests. For example, when individuals participate in an educational course to better their prospects of getting a job promotion, the course should address their immediate needs. Internal factors such as personal growth and self-improvement inspire adult learners more than external factors such as rewards or incentives. Adults wish to learn for a variety of reasons, such as career advancement or increased self-esteem.

**b. Readiness to learn**

Adults are more likely to be eager to learn when there is a reason, such as taking on a new role or responsibility. Many adults desire to participate actively in programmes and take the initiative related to their learning. This form of learning is important for adults because it makes it possible to put into practice what they have learned in the workplace, providing them with an opportunity to discover what they can do with their newly acquired knowledge.

**c. Need to know**

Adults value repetition. Adult learning requires a great deal of repetition. Adult learners can practise new skills in a supportive setting and their self-efficacy will grow to allow them to apply those skills outside of the classroom. The more they practise a certain skill or subject, the more likely they are to master it.

**d. Adult learner experiences**

Experiences direct adults and the most valuable learning comes from making meaning of those experiences. Adults have an abundant store of experience

from which to draw knowledge and make inferences. Adult learners can benefit from experimental opportunities to understand their learning better and become enthusiastic about how what they are learning can be applied to their interests.

#### **e. Self-directed learning**

Adults evolve from being dependent to becoming more independent, preferring self-directed learning techniques. Many adults pursue self-directed learning without receiving instruction or motivation. Adult learners are more inclined to prepare, implement and evaluate their educational experiences independently.

#### **f. Problem-centred learning**

Adult learning should be centred on addressing real-world challenges and immediately implementing new information. Using challenges and circumstances to test adult learners' assumptions and ideas assists them in guiding their independent growth and development. Adults can employ critical thinking and questioning to examine their fundamental opinions, leading to improved knowledge of themselves (Knowles, 1984).

### **2.2.3 Learning styles of adults**

Baker (2022) claims that learning styles are diverse and unique to every individual and that our brains function differently as we age. Rupp (2023) argues that most adults acquire knowledge by participating in activities that enhance the three learning domains: intellectual, affective and behavioural. Cognitive relates to the subject matter, affective refers to views and opinions, and behaviour refers to their application in daily life. Rajalingam (2023) argues that adult students learn best when:

- They comprehend why something is necessary to learn or do.
- They have the liberty to learn in their own way.
- The education is practical.
- It is the right time for them to learn.

- The educational process is both beneficial and motivating.

According to Pappas (2014), educators are encouraged to be knowledgeable. Adult learners possess varied learning styles which relate to how they receive and interpret knowledge. Baker's (2022) study found that adults memorised approximately 10% of what they observed, 30–40% of what they perceived and observed, and 90% of what they observed, perceived and executed. This research shows that a combination of learning styles has proved to be most effective (Baker, 2022). Baker (2022) is of the opinion that understanding the different learning styles can assist in acquiring new knowledge and process information more effectively. To better understand the process of adult learning and their learning styles, Pappas (2014) explains how each of the common learning styles works below:

### **I. Visual learners**

These learners prefer to be offered a lesson using graphs, diagrams and examples. They depend on what the instructor is doing and often sit in the front of the room to avoid visual distractions. The most effective method to communicate is to make use of worksheets, whiteboards and questions such as, "Do you see how this works?"

### **II. Auditory learners**

These learners devote attention to every sound relevant to the teaching. "Tell me" is their slogan. They will devote special attention to the way you speak and its subtle meanings, as well as proactively engage in conversations. The best way to relate with them is through communicating clearly, posing questions such as "How does it sound to you?"

### **III. Tactile learners**

Also known as kinaesthetics, learners require physical interaction to comprehend information. "Let me do it" is their approach. They trust their intuition and feelings about what they are being taught and how learning is

facilitated. Tactile learners are pupils who will stand up and assist teachers with role-playing in the classroom.

#### **2.2.4 Inspiring adult learners**

Condon (2019) believes that creating eLearning outcomes that motivate adult learners can be difficult to do. Creating high-quality eLearning outputs for adult learners has a unique set of obstacles (Condon, 2019). According to Pappas (2014), various suggestions and approaches can assist in creating meaningful learning experiences for adult learners that can be implemented in internet-based educational programmes. Condon (2019) argues that to make learning relevant, adult learners are required to be able to recognise the relevance of what they are learning. Teachers need to subject their courses to a few key questions: How will this eLearning course equip students with the expertise they need to improve their career performance? How will the online education event you are planning empower them with the knowledge they need to accomplish a certain task? When producing eLearning deliverables for adult learners, teachers need to keep in consideration that if the knowledge is not seen as appropriate, adult learners are unlikely to recognise the genuine benefit in the educational experience. Teachers need to evaluate how each block of text or image will achieve the primary learning goals and objectives (Pappas, 2014).

Merriam and Biereman (2014) argues that projects and tasks that motivate adult learners to investigate how they acquire knowledge produce productive individuals who become involved in their individual development. Andriotis (2019) believes that developing tasks or projects which allow learners to study a subject on their own initiative and acquire knowledge from their own experiences is important. Andriotis (2019) suggests a strategy whereby the teacher proposes a query or concern and then motivates participants to independently provide answers. Teachers can also separate the learners into smaller groups and then have them cooperate in debating the issue comprehensively. In this way they will benefit from each other's knowledge and skills. Individuals who learn on their own are driven to explore other possibilities of independent study and online education, in addition to becoming actively involved in the eLearning environment (Andriotis, 2019).

Okun (2024) suggests that there is a need to give adult learners immediate feedback to ensure they may gain knowledge from their mistakes. Okun (2024) argues that feedback makes the educational experience more compelling and effective by providing instant assistance when adult learners make an error or need to learn about an additional problem-solving strategy. So too, Codon (2019) says that providing feedback will allow the adult learner to learn from mistakes by catching them as they occur and experiencing the immediate implications of that error, rather than having to wait for feedback at some later stage. Andriotis (2019) believes that to draw attention to the real-world benefits, adult learners should be informed about the real-world benefits ahead of time and reminded of them regularly. For example, teachers can provide a side note on each module that explains how the knowledge will benefit them in the real world. Andriotis (2019) thinks that this will assist adult learners to comprehend the goal of their education and become more motivated and excited.

Barker (2022) argues that cognitive overload should be considered when creating content and recommends breaking down content into small segments; enormous amounts of text can also be shortened by making use of bullet points or numbered lists. Rupp (2023) argues for creating smaller modules or eLearning courses that focus on certain subjects rather than long eLearning courses that cover an extensive variety of topics. Pappas (2014) believes that practice makes perfect and recommends including a variety of practice activities in eLearning courses to guarantee that adult learners can thoroughly absorb and recall the material. Pappas (2014) further mentions that repetition is essential, and courses require tasks that need adult learners to repeat specific procedures repeatedly, constantly reminding them of the key elements throughout the eLearning course.

### **2.2.5 Four pillars of Adult Learning Theory (ALT)**

Domenico (2020) believes that using the four ALT pillars will deliver successful training that addresses the particular demands of adult learners. Adult education enhances an individual's knowledge and skills. This, in turn, may enhance organisational performance as adult learners apply the newly acquired knowledge directly to their practice (Domenico, 2020). As indicated by Domenico (2020), understanding these

pillars is critical to establishing effective adult education programmes which correspond to the requirements and interests of adult learners. According to Merriam and Biereman (2014), Knowles suggested four pillars that can be applied to adult learning:

1. Adults want to be involved in the planning and evaluation of their instruction.
2. Adults are looking for help and mentorship.
3. Adults want to learn things directly applicable to their profession and personal lives.
4. Adult learning focuses on problems rather than on subjects.

#### ***2.2.5.1 Adults want to be involved in the planning and evaluation of their instruction***

As mentioned by Colman (2024), adult learners rely heavily on their experiences and training programmes that acknowledge this assist them significantly. Learners will use their own experiences and observations to establish comprehensive knowledge of the concept (Colman, 2024). Content that incorporates real-world examples, realistic situations and direct experience can result in a more meaningful understanding of the subject (Merriam and Biereman, 2014). Merriam and Biereman (2014) explains that although using prior knowledge can assist adults in swiftly acquiring new information, there is a disadvantage. Will (2020) explains that the experience adult learners rely upon may be out of date, inaccurate, biased or incomplete. Will (2020) further argues that adult learners should therefore be aware of these common dangers and understand how to lead themselves to their new recommendations. Understanding how to look for resources, expert viewpoints, verifiable data and relevant publications is an essential ability for adult learners (Will, 2020).

#### ***2.2.5.2 Adults are looking for help and mentorship***

According to Schnurr (2017), adult learners acknowledge that looking for an experienced mentor may assist them throughout their educational journey. Pace (2020) suggests that providing mentorship opportunities can offer significant value to both the mentor and the mentee, while also cultivating connections inside and between

teams. Learning by example is an effective way of accessing new knowledge, allowing students to obtain information fast while avoiding typical blunders (Pace, 2020).

### ***2.2.5.3 Adults want to learn things directly applicable to their profession and personal lives***

As mentioned by Domenico (2020), some learners may enjoy learning merely to comprehend something new, while adults are significantly more likely to engage in learning that is relevant to their goals, position, work or hobbies. Domenico (2020) further states that the short-term relevance can demonstrate what they will learn in the course that applies to their role. The long-term benefit is that the knowledge will assist them to function better in the position they hold (Domenico, 2020). Will (2020) believes that adults are inclined to learn purely because they want to or see a direct benefit from doing so, rather than because they are instructed or obliged to. However, just because adults have a greater degree of motivation does not guarantee that they will learn anything (Will, 2020). Adults must recognise the benefit, value, and significance of learning. Adult learners direct their own learning journey by defining their own educational needs, planning how to reach their objectives, obtaining resources and evaluating their own progress (Colman, 2024).

### ***2.2.5.4 Adult learning focuses on problems rather than on subjects***

Adult learners are problem-centred in their learning approach (Pace, 2020). Domenico (2020) argues that problem-solving promotes new learning since learners may incorporate prior knowledge of concepts, procedures, declarative knowledge and cognitive methods. Schnurr (2017) believes that adult learners create strategies for learning (constructivism) and the instructor evaluates their effectiveness. To ensure that problem-solving skills are transferred, learners should be encouraged to address issues with similar characteristics outside the classroom (Schnurr, 2017). According to the Knowledge Hub (2023), assessment should be based on the learners' ability to demonstrate their skills in solving challenges similar to those used in the classroom.

### 2.2.6 Constructing adult training according to Adult Learning Theory (ALT)

Adults learn in their own unique way and the following guidelines explain how to effectively construct training programmes (Palis and Quiros, 2014):

- When it comes to learning, adult individuals want and need to be involved in the planning, delivery and execution of their training. They want to be able to make decisions about what, when, and how they learn.
- Adults learn better when they can integrate previous experiences into the learning process. They can employ what they already know to provide a context for their learning.
- For adults, memorising facts and knowledge is not the best approach when it comes to learning. To better acquire the knowledge offered to them, individuals must solve problems and provide reasoning.

Adults are curious, typically wondering “How can I apply this information to use at this moment?” What they are learning must be directly relevant to their lives and be executable (Palis and Quiro, 2014).

### 2.2.7 Challenges of adult learning according to Adult Learning Theory (ALT)

According to a survey conducted by Stevens (2023), approximately 40% of postsecondary students are adult learners. Unfortunately, the completion rate is inadequate. Approximately 38% of adult learners drop out of college, with less than half completing their education (Stevens, 2023). Pace (2020) alleges that several obstacles inhibit adult learners from benefiting from adult education. Learning new skills and subjects can be difficult for a variety of reasons, the most significant of which are (Pace, 2020).

- **Inadequate time:** Adults frequently have full-time commitments, such as family and other dependents who rely on them, which makes it challenging to ensure adult participation and commitment to a training programme. Finding the time to devote to learning can be challenging because of balancing responsibilities with learning.

- **Self-doubt about academic capability:** Adult learners frequently believe that they are too old to complete their education. They may believe that it is too late and they have missed their opportunity. Doubt can prevent adults from pursuing training as they may feel like they are not capable of succeeding.
- **Financial barriers:** When it comes to higher education, younger students may have parental assistance. That is not always the case for adult learners, particularly for those who have to pay for their own training; financial constraints can prevent them from pursuing their educational goals (Pace, 2020).

### **2.2.8 Possible solutions to adult learning according to Adult Learning Theory (ALT)**

Brown (2019) argues that adult learners are more entrenched in their ways given that they bring perceptions derived from prior experience. Profound experience can influence learning and result in resistance to accepting new ideas or perceptions (Brown, 2019). Brown (2019) further explains that learning is frequently not one-size-fits-all; it is necessary to choose a development programme that correlates with adult learners. Stevens (2023) states that ageing may additionally have an impact on learning since humans learn less as they become older. On a positive note, the depth of learning and ability to apply this knowledge and skills on a personal level expands (Steven, 2023). Brown and Sterns (2019) offer the following possible solutions to the challenges of adult learning according to the ALT.

Flexible classes are essential since adult learners cannot attend classes at specific times and locations considering that that they have other obligations (Brown, 2019). Brown (2019) believes that the most practical solution would be to participate in online courses with a flexible completion time. This would allow adult learners to absorb information at their own speed while working (Brown, 2019). According to Sterns (2023), value for money is essential as adults have numerous financial obligations. As a result, one must consider solutions that will not place an unnecessary strain on their finances (Sterns, 2023).

Brown (2019) suggests that one alternative is to inquire whether the employer will cover the fees if the study is related to the employee's work. If not, another alternative is to pay the debts in instalments. Some academic institutions also offer loans or scholarships to assist students with their financial needs (Brown, 2019). Stevens (2023) is of the viewpoint that a support network is essential: adult learners may need to establish relationships with others who are currently experiencing similar obstacles.

Sterns (2023) states that this offers them the certainty that they are on the right track. Some online programmes combine the benefits of both freedom and a tutor who may serve as a mentor to the adult student. This reassures the learner and reduces the probability of student dropout because of disengagement (Stevens, 2023).

### **2.3 Literature Review**

By reviewing the literature, I was able to broaden the study's engagement with academic concepts. This was achieved by exploring key concepts, theories and empirical studies. This literature review consists of studies that have been carried out on the PD of HoDs conducted both locally and internationally. Through the literature consulted I have clarified the similarities and differences of scholars where necessary.

Firstly, this review considered the conceptualisation of the QMS as a PDP. Secondly, the review elaborated on PD, its effectiveness and challenges. Thirdly, the historical background and purpose of the QMS as a PDP in South Africa were explored. Finally, the perceptions and experiences of HoDs were explained. This literature review considered both international and continental studies while elaborating on the role of QMS in developing HoDs professionally. By critically analysing available literature, this chapter laid the foundation for achieving the study's objectives.

### **2.4 History of the Quality Management System (QMS) as a Professional Development Programme (PDP)**

Several initiatives have been established to strengthen accountability and management systems to improve the quality of education in schools (Department of Basic Education, 2021). In South Africa, to obtain a quality education system the

Education Labour Relations Council (ELRC) merged three existing PDPs into one, known as the IQMS, currently termed the QMS (Segoe, 2014). A QMS is defined as an organised framework that records procedures, techniques and obligations for meeting quality goals and objectives, according to a study conducted by Loeung and Safruddin (2022). Loeung and Safruddin (2022) further explain that QMS facilitates and supports the actions of an organisation while also improving its effectiveness. A high-performing school is defined by a well-structured QMS implementation.

According to The Centre for Development and Enterprise (2015), the IQMS development programme currently known as QMS was implemented in 2005. The QMS was designed as a PDP to increase the education system's performance by keeping records of procedures, processes and responsibilities to upgrade the development of schools (DBE, 2022).

South Africa's education system has made use of several development programmes. According to Dippenaar (2015), it all began with three separate programmes namely the Development Appraisal System, Professional Management System and lastly whole school evaluation. The practicality of these programmes later revealed that they lacked a connection among them and were rather viewed as "a blaming culture" (Dippenaar, 2015). During the ELRC meeting, a decision to combine these programmes into one – the Quality Management System – was taken and that resulted in the birth of the QMS (ELRC No 8 of, 2003). In November 2014, the QMS for schoolbased educators was accepted by all affiliations at the ELRC, which was later concluded in September 2019. During 2020, training and building capacity were supposed to be finalised and signed to start the programme's implementation. As a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, the intended implementation of QMS was put on hold, resulting in the programme being implemented a year later (2021) than planned (ELRC No. 2 of, 2020).

## **2.5 The Purpose of the Quality Management System (QMS) Development Programme (DP) in Schools**

In a study conducted by Abusnena (2023), it was explained that traditionally, the emphasis in education has been on teaching and learning, frequently overlooking the significance of effective leadership and management. However, as educational institutions adapt to cope with a variety of challenges, it is becoming increasingly essential to implement effective management systems (Abusnena, 2023). These systems not only provide effective administrative procedures, but they also have a significant impact on educators, influencing the quality of education delivered in classrooms (Abusnena, 2023).

Performance management is a crucial process in schools as it assists SMTs to centre their attention on fundamental issues to ensure sustainability and improvement in delivering quality education (DBE, 2021). The DBE (2021) document adds that assessing the performance standards of HoDs is vital to enhance their levels of accountability and development. According to Matorera (2018), the QMS involves identifying areas for improvement and setting objectives and targets while implementing actions to achieve those targets. Matorera (2018) further mentions that, in schools, the goal of the QMS is to ensure that the education system and processes coincide with management standards while emphasising student learning. Matorera (2018) suggests that with a QMS, schools can establish mechanisms for continuous improvement.

As indicated by Girmanova *et al.* (2017), the QMS development programme's mission is to increase the PD of educators by continually improving learner achievement while publicly achieving recognition of educational institutions. Historically, the National Development Plan (NPD) envisioned improved accountability in the education sector by 2030 (Girmanova *et al.*, 2017). This concept of NPD encouraged shared responsibility between schools and communities to improve teaching and learning (Girmanova *et al.*, 2017). In a study by Girmanova *et al.* (2022), a novel strategy motivated by quality and efficiency at the school and district levels was deployed to improve teaching and learning. Girmanova *et al.* (2022) note that the use of

performance management in schools provides the chance to support HoDs in the long term delivery of outstanding education.

As claimed by Buthelezi *et al.* (2021), a QMS encourages collaboration between departments within a school. Heads of departments (HoDs) can work together to share best practices and identify opportunities for improvement across all departments. This approach fosters teamwork and creates a culture of continuous learning which benefits both staff and learners. Diez (2018) established that the purpose of QMS was to ensure that the same information, methods and skills were used and applied consistently each time a process was performed. Diez (2018) believes that the goal of QMSs in schools is to establish and maintain continuous improvement processes, which include administrative and academic procedures, with the ultimate goal of enhancing overall school performance. The QMS is intended to standardise administrative and academic procedures, including teaching and learning processes. Loeung and Safruddin (2022) emphasise that the QMS facilitates and supervises an organisation's activities to improve its efficiency and effectiveness

## **2.6 Conceptualisation of the Quality Management System(QMS) as a Professional Development Programme (PDP)**

According to Haubeck (2023), PD in education refers to a variety of activities designed to improve educators' knowledge, abilities and effectiveness. Zide (2016) explains that PD for educators, often referred to as in-service education or staff development, has evolved to achieve various objectives. Professional development (PD) promotes the continuous growth of educators and school managers by improving the quality of teaching and learning in schools (Goldring *et al.*, 2012). Professional development (PD) has always been associated with relevant programmes and activities, but it is increasingly conceptualised as a continuous and integrated process that promotes continuous improvement in teaching and learning (Haubeck, 2023). Haubeck (2023) further states that this shift reflects an increased recognition of PD as an essential process for educators and school managers to advance in their careers and enhance their leadership roles and student outcomes.

Goldring *et al.* (2012) believe that schools can implement a QMS to improve their teaching and learning procedures. Thus, a successful QMS must be established to determine a process of continuous improvement for all school-related activities. The ability to focus on educational quality is important to QMS implementation success. According to Manickam and Srinivas (2019), for education to be of high quality, it needs to respond to all learners and their distinct approaches to learning and methods. Manickam and Srinivas (2019) further mention that an educator's profession does not only begin in the classroom. Teaching should contribute to learning, and learning should result in the intended objective of learner participation (Manickam and Srinivas, 2019). A competent educator may conduct introspection to keep track of their own strengths and weaknesses when teaching.

In schools, a QMS can be a beneficial PDP (Goldring *et al.*, 2012). Goldring *et al.* (2012) further add that the programme can assist schools in enhancing their performance, strengthening educational quality, and ensuring that learners receive the highest quality education possible. Various benefits of implementing QMS in schools have been identified.

Firstly, Stanton (2023) states that QMSs can assist schools in establishing consistent processes and procedures, which can lead to more efficient operation and better outcomes of learning. Secondly, QMSs can help schools identify areas for improvement and develop strategies to address those areas (Shongwe and Mutambara, 2023). Thirdly, employee communication and on boarding are improved as QMSs can facilitate new educators ensuring that they are trained and equipped to perform their roles effectively (Stanton, 2023). The fifth benefit is evidence-based decision making of which Manickam and Srinivas (2019) claim that the QMS can provide schools with data and information for decision making. By using data to inform decisions, schools can ensure that they are making informed decisions based on evidence. Lastly, there is an improved student outcome as the QMS can help schools improve learner outcomes by increasing accountability, providing better training opportunities and creating a safe and productive learning environment (Africano *et al.*, 2019).

Zide (2023) believes that educators are responsible for promoting successful teaching and learning in their teaching environments. Zide (2023) further mentions that in the rapidly evolving world of today, educators must not only instruct learners but also empower them with the necessary skills to navigate the complicated and unpredictable society they live in. From the viewpoint of Manickam and Srinivas (2019), the educational system's demands are constantly evolving, and it is up to school leaders to maintain their relevance. In addition, Manickam and Srinivas (2019) argue that being a part of DPs has the potential to assist school leaders in enhancing their management skills.

### **2.6.1 Formal Professional Development (PD)**

Mizell (2017) defines formal PD as learning among a group of people by means of programmes such as a college course, workshops and conferences. Mizell (2017) further adds that formal learning commonly takes place face-to-face and has goals to achieve. Formal PD can vary from a passive learning approach – which is when educators sit and listen to the facilitator take charge – to an active approach where they too have the responsibility to take part in the discussion.

### **2.6.2 Characteristics of formal Professional Development (PD)**

Professional development (PD) is one of the primary responsibilities of school leaders and a significant contributor to achieving school improvement (Stanton, 2023). Stanton (2023) adds that formal PD opportunities can improve leadership and management outcomes. Research conducted by Haubeck (2023) revealed that for a programme to be beneficial, PD needs to address factors such as (1) coherence, (2) active learning, (3) subject focus, (4) collective engagement and (5) duration as essential elements of sustained learning and progress. The previously mentioned factors by Haubeck (2023) emerged as beneficial characteristics of good formal PD.

The content development procedure will usually take longer with formal learning programmes particularly because participants involved are often entrusted with generating detailed presentations and courses and releasing them on a potentially more sophisticated platform (Hoque, 2016). Furthermore, given numerous

organisations migrating to an entirely online workforce, internet-based webinars and the sharing of screens technology can be used to ensure that distant adult learners complete the required courses (Hoque, 2016).

### **2.6.3 Informal Professional Development (PD)**

According to Johnson and Majewshka (2022), informal development is explained as training that is unplanned, spontaneous and organic. This type of learning can take place during activities such as a meeting among colleagues, learning from peers and independent research (Mizell, 2017). Tantaway (2020) concurs that informal PD includes individual activities on the part of the educator, such as observing classes and reading colleagues' narratives. According to Tantaway (2020), educators use informal conversations with colleagues and observations to improve their skills, while experienced educators participate in structured discussions to increase their level of professional learning.

### **2.6.4 Characteristics of informal Professional Development (PD)**

Haubeck (2023) explains that informal learning allows for far greater independence in content creation and consumption. Informal learning sessions are frequently unscheduled and occur by design or chance, depending on the particular learner or employee and they are usually not graded. In informal PD, which can include quizzes to assist in reinforcing learning, the stakes are not as high as in formal learning exams. Haubeck (2023) emphasises that these programmes normally consist of shorter training sessions (also known as micro learning) that can be employed for an instant review on a subject that includes business policy, product details, standards of excellence or a brief explanation of a particular task, such as demonstrating how to implement a feature in an organisation. Employees or organisation members frequently have the opportunity to contribute to informal learning content by contributing their own videos, presentations or documents (Stanton, 2023).

## **2.7 Effectiveness of Professional Development (PD)**

Heads of departments (HoDs) perceive the QMS as a development programme in schools because it focuses on continuous improvement (Hammond *et al.*, 2017).

Hammond *et al.* (2017) explain that PDPs are effective learning tools that are designed to alter the teaching methods of educators to enhance the learners' learning outcomes. These tools are needed to educate educators about the pedagogies that are required to teach these skills. Researchers such as Hammond *et al.* (2017) witnessed a level of positivity concerning teacher development programmes and learner performance within the 35 studies that they conducted. Educators who had higher levels of content knowledge and a solid foundation used what was learned at PDPs effectively.

Caldwell (2018) states that intentional research has linked teacher PD to increased efficiency. Educators' increased knowledge because of participating in PD facilitates their ability to feel more confident and motivated as effective educators (Caldwell 2018). Their increased confidence results in evidence of the educators' content knowledge. Caldwell (2018) further mentions that the study revealed that PD assisted school leaders in demonstrating distinct skills and attributes.

According to Avos (2011), educators in their survival and discovery years (educators who are new in the teaching career) frequently reported challenges with managing classrooms along with effective teaching practices. These included addressing challenges through supervision, peer observation and other informal forms of transferring practical knowledge. Avos (2011) further explains that mid-career educators desire more formal learning opportunities. These educators gain professional knowledge in subject matter, pedagogy and teaching methods courses. Educators appear to have varying preferences for their learning opportunities throughout their career cycle.

## **2.8 Benefits of Professional Development (PD)**

Ransom (2023) thinks that PD can assist in enhancing one's skills as an employee, leading to new opportunities and professional advancement. PD entails improving abilities, qualities and competencies that will assist in succeeding in the workplace (Ransom, 2023). Ransom (2023) further adds that, to advance your career, you could be interested in acquiring knowledge to enhance your PD. According to Condon (2019), PD assists in becoming a better employee. This can provide additional

opportunities for professional advancement such as promotions or lateral transfers (Condon, 2019). Condon (2019) mentions that PD can play a role in becoming a desirable candidate by increasing your knowledge and degree of skill and expertise (Condon, 2019). There are many benefits to engaging in PD.

According to Lahoria (2023), an employee's confidence can be increased through PD. Lahoria (2023) further states that learning new skills and talents can improve your confidence and make you feel more comfortable in your position as your knowledge evolves. Feeling more confident improves one's ability to fulfil employment tasks.

Employees with confidence are more likely to accept new opportunities, make educated decisions and demonstrate leadership qualities (Condon, 2019). Parsons (2022) is of the opinion that PD can enhance one's hiring potential through increasing knowledge, skills and abilities. Parsons (2022) adds that employers could perceive you as a more desirable applicant if your skills are enhanced as a result of PD. If employers consider you a qualified candidate, they may choose to hire you above the competitors (Condon, 2019). Through PD one can develop skills that improve both hard and soft capabilities in the place of employment (Franzoni, 2023). Franzoni (2023) explains that hard skills are job-specific knowledge acquired through training or educational institutions, whereas soft skills are personal habits that determine how you function, such as communication.

Lahoria (2023) believes that developing one's skills can assist one in becoming an expert in one's profession, sharing expertise with new colleagues and identifying opportunities for promotion. Du Plessis and Letshwene (2020) believe that another strategy for strengthening your career is to find a mentor or role model. Du Plessis and Letshwene (2020) argue that a mentor can help you keep track of and achieve your goals. Mentors can also teach one new skill or offer advice. Du Plessis and Letshwene (2020) think that to be professionally developed one needs a mentor or role model that has characteristics that you aspire to, so you can comprehend what they do and how they got to that stage in their career. Mentors can also provide information about additional employment opportunities or positions that align with your preferences and demands (Du Plessis and Letshwene, 2020).

## 2.9 Challenges of Professional Development (PD)

Du Plessis (2013) argues that education and training policies give priority to quality and efficiency in a country's educational system. Du Plessis (2013) also claims that the mission of any education system is to provide quality education and training, empowering learners to engage in lifelong learning and become productive citizens. Achieving this goal demands the development of educators professionally, as well as access to high-quality resources (Madonsela and Proche, 2022). Academic achievement in primary schools is generally low (Bold *et al.*, 2017). Bold *et al.* (2017) opine that overcrowded classrooms and a shortage of qualified educators have contributed to inadequate learner achievement. According to Shohel and Banks (2012), teaching and learning are integrating rapidly with the current evolving education and digital technologies. Educators are consequently expected to acquire knowledge and upgrade their expertise constantly, while some countries have implemented traditional teacher PDPs to address professional teacher qualification (Shohel and Banks, 2012).

According to Zindi (2024), PDPs do not always lead to professional learning regardless of their intentions. Zindi (2024) notes that educators were seen to have experienced improvement in their teaching strategies, but this improvement was not connected to development programmes in place. As criticised by Geldenhuys and Oosthuizen (2015), PD can be misdirected and lack implementation. Geldenhuys and Oosthuizen (2015) stated further that such programmes tend to lose direction in instilling knowledge that is required for teaching and lack attention to support for student learning. Hammond *et al.* (2017) believes that the knowledge that educators share during PDP which is supposed to enhance their students' learning during teaching can sometimes be insufficient. An international study conducted by Hammond *et al.* (2017) in four districts in the United Kingdom held the view that financial investment in PDPs had little influence on the development results of educators. Hammond *et al.* (2017) further add that the study revealed that teacher practices and student education had remained the same or even deteriorated within a period of two to three years, while about \$18 000 was spent per educator.

Bold *et al.* (2017) claim that the level of professionalism of teachers in educational institutions is a significant indicator of student success. What teachers know, do, and care about is important (Bold *et al.*, 2017). Burns and Lawrie (2014) argue that challenging working conditions are the most significant obstacle to proper professional growth for educators. Difficult working conditions are exacerbated by overcrowded classrooms, the possibility or probability of sexual harassment or abuse, an absence of respect from school leaders and community members, violence in, to and from educational institutions, an abundance of students who are in need, and a scarcity of teaching and learning materials (Burns and Lawrie, 2014). The above conditions are often highly demotivating for educators, both individually and cumulatively, and negatively impact educators' practice, all of which are critical to effective performance in the classroom (Burns and Lawrie, 2014).

Gouthro (2018) notes that many economically weak countries often possess unstable education systems, which can be characterised by poor leadership, low administrative competence, or insufficient budgets and cannot provide educators with competitive salaries, conditions of employment, and opportunities for career growth compared to other professions. Unstable environments frequently lack skilled personnel who can assist educators in acquiring content, such as effective instructional or assessment procedures (Gouthro, 2018). Gouthro (2018) further argues that such countries also lack structures and incentives to encourage and support the professional growth of educators. Time management is necessary for participation in DP, according to Zindi (2024). Zindi (2024) explains that time management is essential in university settings where instructors have responsibilities outside of teaching and learning. One of the difficulties in accomplishing PD is the extensiveness of the paperwork (Zindi, 2024). Parsons (2024) claims that educators who have adequate PD resources are more likely to enhance their quality of life. They are inclined to evolve in terms of their skills and knowledge, which will benefit and improve learners' educational experiences (Parsons, 2024).

According to Northfield (2013), novice leaders might encounter additional difficulties because of occasional unfavourable views of leadership. Northfield (2013) explains that new leaders frequently transcend leadership misconceptions formed by prior

administrations. One of the most difficult tasks for a new school leader is establishing credibility with individuals or groups who maintain formal or informal authority within the school environment (Northfield, 2013). Harrison *et al.* (2022) explain that educators may be unaware of the numerous opportunities for PD provided within their workplace. There is more to PD than specialised educational courses. Peer classroom observation, coaching, conversations, networking and action research conducted in the classroom are all involved.

Gemeda and Tynjälä (2015) explain that the lack of competence in the educational system is frequently reflected in the lack of professionalism among educators. Educators are demotivated by strict, hierarchical educational institutions. Those who are exhausted can resist efforts to improve their professional skills, particularly if PD does not lead to advancement in their careers or the classroom (Gemeda and Tynjälä, 2015).

According to Hammond *et al.* (2017), PD occurs in several forms, including pre-service training, in-service training, work-based training, seminars and mentoring programmes. Traditional PDPs do not always satisfy the requirements and interests of educators, learners and society (Hammond *et al.*, 2017). Gulamhussein (2014) claims that traditional one-time training is ineffective at providing educators with the knowledge and abilities they need to become effective educators. According to Gulamhussein (2014), the one-time workshops assume that the only challenge educators face is a lack of knowledge of effective teaching practices and that when that knowledge gap is corrected, educators will be empowered to adapt. Assumptions such as these suggest that traditional one-time workshops fail to adequately address educators' necessities and frequently neglect educators' actual challenges (Gulamhussein, 2014).

Professional development programmes (PDPs) that have been poorly constructed frequently use incompetent facilitators and learning methodologies that reflect budget constraints and face logistical problems (Harrison *et al.*, 2014). These factors could result in educators doubting the quality of development programmes and regarding them as unnecessary. Harrison *et al.* (2014) also blame inadequate policies and

finances for the failure of PD. Inadequate policies and practices result in disorganised training for educators. This manifests as scheduling challenges, poorly coordinated programmes and an insufficient budget (Harrison *et al.*, 2014).

Professional development (PD) plans may be inadequately ambitious, resulting in programmes that fail to align with more extensive visions of teaching practices and learning (Cruz *et al.*, 2016). Cruz *et al.* (2016) further explain that some programmes can be ineffective because of poor design, a lack of consistency, and a detachment from the classroom, which hinders educators' ability to improve their teaching practice and student learning outcomes. Harrison *et al.* (2022) add that PDP can contribute to inadequate education and a lack of support from school heads, restricting professional development opportunities and obstructing educators' growth and effectiveness in the classroom. Jaca (2013) thinks that these programmes can sometimes lack a collaborative element that could prevent the retention of knowledge, higher-level thinking skills and ownership of learning. Professional development programmes (PDPs) can result in an absence of autonomy and ownership causing educators to lack a sense of autonomy and ownership over their professional development, which affects their engagement and effectiveness (Jaca, 2013).

Wil (2020) argues that taking the above elements into account and prioritising educator development would be beneficial to both educators and learners. Wil (2020) adds that educators cannot control students' development, but they may influence the educational environments and encourage children to acquire knowledge. Developing educators to become the best at what they do is one of the most effective strategies to enhance student learning and, ultimately, to enhance academic and school performance (Wil, 2020).

## **2.10 The Quality Management System (QMS) as a Professional Development Programme (PDP) in South African Schools**

The implementation of the QMS in schools should result in the accomplishment of desired objectives and the smooth operation of procedures (Buthelezi *et al.*, 2021). According to Heubeck (2023), an effective factor that improves QMS implementation in schools is the proactive participation of education authorities who have actively

driven schools in the region to become involved in management by providing schools with resources and providing educators and management teams with the necessary training required to set them up. The purpose of QMS is described as follows (ELRC, 2003):

- To assess individuals for salary rewards. This is fulfilled through a yearly evaluation of educators who perform satisfactorily to receive a 1% salary increment.
- To recognise the needs and support systems to develop educators, schools and district offices.
- To observe an institution and its employees 'performance.
- To allow for continuous growth of employees.

School management teams (SMTs) should work as a team to develop a culture of improving teaching and learning (Tachie and Mancotywa, 2021). Maphutha (2018) is of the opinion that PD is overshadowed when formative and summative evaluations are applied together, simply because summative evaluation is linked to salary progression while performance management is aimed at developing educators. According to Maphutha (2018), educators are therefore persuaded to centre their attention on the demand for summative evaluations to gain salary progression.

The American Federation for Teachers (2016) and the National Education Association (NEA, 2010) have called for reforming the USA's educator evaluation systems due to inadequate existing evaluation systems. The above associations highlight the importance of using multiple measures to assess educator effectiveness while emphasising the importance of PD. Callahan and Sadeghi (2015) claim that PDPs enhance student achievement and can lead to significant school improvement when properly designed and implemented.

Professional development (PD) focuses on educating leaders and managers to engage in difficult conversations which may transpire during an evaluation briefing (Tachie and Mancotywa, 2021). According to Tachie and Mancotywa (2021), school

managers must acknowledge that their roles have shifted from performance evaluators to staff development. The belief behind QMS is that it promotes transparency and accountability while observing the effectiveness of an institution (ELRC, 2003). Based on the above literature it can be suggested that to strengthen this programme firstly schools need to establish clear goals and objectives for their QMS development programme and communicate these effectively to all stakeholders involved. Secondly, school SMTs should invest time and resources in training their staff so they can play an active role in implementing and monitoring the system. Thirdly regular audits of the QMS should be conducted to identify areas of improvement.

Lastly, schools should regularly review their QMS documentation to ensure it remains current and aligned with best practices in education.

According to Cruz *et al.* (2016), the quality of education provided to learners depends heavily on the quality of teachers available which in turn depends on the quality of their own PD. The implementation of QMS allows for the acceleration of change and meets the needs of the education system (Pavlovic, 2019). The scholar adds that educators administer what is to be taught, which gives them direct contact with learners. Potential educators perceive that educating is a process of conveying knowledge from instructor to learners, while learning entails acquiring or retaining information and applying skills.

Hoare (2022) believes that learners wait like empty containers that need to be filled with education while educators provide the service of doing the filling. Mizell (2017) comments that within education, the quality of teaching and leadership in schools are contributing factors to the ability to increase learners' achievements. The author believes that to invigorate educators' performance level, PD is the only plan of action that schools have (Mizell, 2017).

## **2.11 The Challenges of Quality Management System (QMS) as a Professional Development Programme (PDP) in South African Schools**

Research findings by Madonsela and Proche (2022) reveal that challenges still exist, particularly inadequate subject knowledge of HoDs, undersupply of well-suited working resources and insufficient support from school principals. Madonsela and

Proche (2022) claim that HoDs believe that they are not adequately empowered to perform their duties successfully. According to Hammond *et al.* (2017), many PD initiatives appear inefficient at promoting improvements in teacher methods and student learning. A study conducted by Haubeck (2023) revealed that PD is not always relevant to the professional learning of HoDs. As district-controlled PD is typically onsize-fits-all, educators felt it did not address their needs. Haubeck (2023) believes that the number of schools incorporating professional learning in their daily work schedule is increasing. Some educators are so good at performing their duties that they cannot help but share their expertise. These schools use built-in mentoring cycles to facilitate and develop PD sessions by using educators and school leaders.

A study conducted by Kimeu and Maina (2018) reporting on the ratings of educators by the QMS, noted that most educators were rated above average. Kimeu and Maina (2018) add that the implementation challenges of QMS persist. This includes the following:

1. Lack of evaluator time: SMTs often argue that evaluators require sufficient time to complete accurate evaluations. However, as the reporting requirements for schools have expanded evaluators' time has become increasingly limited (Kimeu and Maina, 2018).
2. Lack of evaluator skills: Most evaluators lack detailed knowledge of the content areas in which they evaluate educators, particularly in secondary schools. Professional development (PD) for evaluators is not frequent or complete (Madonsela and Proche, 2022).
3. Resistance to change of traditional teaching methods: Older educators tend to resist moving away from their traditional teaching methods (Haubeck, 2023).
4. Lack of financial support: The implementation of the QMS requires time and dedication. Schools may need to invest in infrastructure upgrades and the purchase of certain tools. A lack of financial support can hamper the development process (Shongwe and Mutambara, 2023).

5. Lack of standardisation across different schools: When implementing the QMS each school has their unique needs that require customised solutions (Haubeck,2023).

In a study conducted by Shongwe and Mutambara (2023), results suggested that the lack of resources influenced how QMS was implemented as schools may not have the necessary resources which can hamper the implementation of QMS. Haubeck (2023) also argues that the DoE does not provide adequate technical support for the QMS which obstructs effective implementation. Despite the challenges posed by the establishment of the QMS, if implemented successfully, it can result in significant improvement in institutional performance and educational outcomes.

## **2.12 The process of Quality Management System (QMS) implementation**

According to Loeung and Safruddin (2021), the implementation of QMS in schools is a systematic process aimed at enhancing the overall quality of education delivery. A QMS in schools entails the formalisation of recorded processes, procedures and accountability to achieve quality policies and objectives that lead to continuous improvement (Loeung and Safruddin, 2022). Hoare (2022) adds that it also demands the analysis and identification of stakeholders' needs, the implementation of an appropriate QMS framework, and the monitoring and measurement of performance. Furthermore, Hoare (2022) believes that the proactive participation of education authorities and stakeholder involvement are critical for the successful implementation of the QMS in schools.

The implementation of the QMS in schools has been extensively researched and several recent studies have suggested that PD offers more advantages than disadvantages and improvements for schools (Diez *et al.*, 2018). Diez *et al.* (2018) claim that the primary goal of implementing the QMS in educational institutions is to strengthen the quality of education by encouraging continuous improvement of school performance. The implementation of QMS is as follows:

### 1. Periodic workshops

According to Burns and Lawrie (2016), the purpose of a workshop is to provide a platform that transfers information among people. Like the classroom, there are various activities such as readings, demonstrations and presentations. Burns and Lawrie (2018) state that an expert in the field of study becomes a facilitator while educators become the learners. Workshops can last several hours, a full day, several days or even a whole week. On their return to their schools, educators are expected to implement what was taught at the attended workshop (Burns and Lawrie, 2018).

Workshops bring together a group of people from diverse backgrounds to unfold new content and analyse and synthesise ideas from other colleagues. Workshops bring about uniformity within the education system; what is done at school X should also be implemented at school Y (Burns and Lawrie, 2018). Information given is highly dependent on being delivered by facilitators. These workshops are considered to follow the traditional teaching method (Burns and Lawrie, 2018).

### 2. In-class observation

According to Reños and Pontillas (2024), classroom observations entail lesson observations, usually by their peer (educator) or senior personnel (HoD). Observations are a way of measuring and keeping a record of educators' behaviour and their way of mastering what is to be taught. Classroom observations can be brief or lengthy sessions depending on the content that needs to be covered. Helain (2013) explains that classroom observation feedback given by an observer allows the assessed participant to be aware of their strengths and weaknesses. According to Colman (2024), feedback enables educators to improve their classroom instruction. Reños and Pontillas (2024) further add that classroom observations allow for the evaluation of inequality where certain learners are treated differently from others.

### 3. **Single-session seminars**

Knott *et al.* (2022) bring to light that seminars are performed in both face-to-face and virtual modes. The scholar adds that during these seminars, a group of people gather intending to have a conversation about a subject matter. Seminars are usually

conducted by keynote speakers who are experts as a means to give direction to the intended discussion (Knott *et al.*, 2022). During seminars the attendees are motivated to put the acquired skills to work in their workspaces. Seminars provide the opportunity for participants to engage with one another on a level which can lead to upgrading their careers (Knott *et al.*, 2022). However, seminars can be rather expensive as all travel and accommodation costs are at the expense of the traveller.

### **2.13 The Quality Management System(QMS) and Development of Heads of Departments (HoDs)**

Loeung (2020) argues that HoDs are responsible for managing the quality of education in their respective subject areas. Heads of departments (HoDs) therefore play a crucial role in the QMS development programme in schools (Loeung 2020). As indicated by Safruddin (2020), a QMS can play a substantial part in the development of HoDs in schools. These are some of the ways that a QMS can aid in the development of HoDs:

- a. Standardisation of procedures: the QMS can aid in the standardisation of administrative and academic procedures, in addition to the teaching and learning process. This can help HoDs understand their duties and obligations, which can lead to enhanced performance (Diez *et al.*, 2018).
- b. Training and development: the QMS offers workshops in which individuals can contribute and clarify areas of concern. This training and development can assist HoDs in acquiring new knowledge and skills that contribute to better performance (Diez *et al.*, 2018).
- c. Advocacy and support: HoDs together with the SMT member are responsible for advocacy and training at the school level. The QMS includes workshops where individuals can discuss and clarify areas of concern. This training and development can assist HoDs in acquiring new knowledge and skills that will contribute to better performance (Matorera, 2018).
- d. Collaborative problem-solving: The QMS emphasises collaborative problem solving activities. HoDs can participate in problem-solving activities with other

educators to assist with cultivating new ideas and strategies for improving teaching and learning (Matorera, 2018).

## **2.14 Significance of Professional Development (PD) to Heads of Departments (HoDs) as Instructional Leaders**

As instructional leaders, PD is essential for HoDs to cultivate successful leadership behaviours, foster cooperation and drive continuous improvement in educational settings (Buthelezi *et al.*, 2021). According to Hallinger and Lee (2013), PD is necessary for HoDs as instructional leaders to further develop their abilities as leaders and facilitate school-based professional learning. Hallinger and Lee (2013) further mention that PD is essential in strengthening educational practices and promoting collaboration while ensuring continual progress. Campbell (2017) emphasises the need to empower HoDs to lead transformation effectively as opposed to simply receiving information about it. Campbell (2017) believes that effective PD equips HoDs to reconcile leadership and managerial duties, ensuring that schools operate effectively and that learners succeed academically.

The transition toward a more collaborative and reflective approach in educational leadership emphasises the significance of continuous development for HoDs in adapting to evolving educational landscapes (Campbell, 2017). Mizell (2017) affirms the critical importance of HoDs as instructional leaders who specialise in subject policy, subject planning and the implementation of teaching techniques. Mizell (2017) further explains that instructional leadership has a significant and beneficial impact on teacher success and student achievement results. Hennessey *et al.* (2015) demonstrated that school-based professional learning influenced practices and thinking by using interactive lessons to address teaching challenges. Hennessey *et al.* (2015) argue that today's leaders should focus on developing the ability to foster an achievement culture within the school system rather than solely administering management activities such as planning, organising and scheduling functions, as well as public relations. A study conducted by Jayaweera *et al.* (2021) found a connection between instructional leadership practices and PD characteristics, potentially leading to improved instructional practice. This study found that leaders at all levels required

subject matter knowledge and an understanding of student and teacher learning processes (Jayaweera *et al.*, 2021). Buthelezi *et al.* (2021) highlight the significance of enhancing instructional practice capabilities among administrators and teachers and their active participation in PD to achieve this goal.

## **2.15 Chapter Summary**

This chapter presented a literature review which served as a comprehensive exploration and analysis of existing research concerning the study. This literature review chapter explored and critically analysed the existing knowledge of this research area in various sections such as considering the conceptualisation of QMS as a PDP, PD, the historical background of the QMS in South Africa and lastly the perceptions and experiences of the HoDs of the QMS as a PDP. The next chapter presents the research methodology, data collection tools and data analysis approaches used in the study.

## CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

### 3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter explained the theoretical framework that grounded the study and reviewed the existing literature on the experiences of HoDs and the QMS DP. This chapter expands on the methods employed in the study. Girardin (2023) believes that by employing an organised and systematic methodology, researchers may ensure that their study is consistent and that other scholars and the academic community can trust it at large. The purpose of this chapter is to examine the various phases and processes carried out for gathering and analysing data. This methodology chapter presents an in-depth description of the research paradigm that served as the study's foundation, the qualitative research methodology, the research paradigm and how phenomenology influenced the design. The chapter also describes the sampling procedures employed for identifying participants, in addition to the tools used for data collection and analysis. In conclusion, trustworthiness and ethical considerations are carefully considered.

### 3.2 Methodology

The concept of methodological position or assumption refers to the fundamental factors that shape the selection and application of research methods, procedures, or techniques for data collection and analysis (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020). In a study conducted by Roux *et al.* (2023), a research methodology is described as the strategies and techniques employed by a researcher to discover, choose, process and explore information about a specific research question. Roux *et al.* (2023) is of the opinion that a well-designed methodology is crucial as it establishes transparency and accountability in research. Eppstein and Salinas (2023) further describe a research methodology as a comprehensive framework designed to assist researchers to remain on course, resulting in a smooth, efficient and manageable process.

According to Eppstein and Salinas (2023) research methodology entails adopting an appropriate research design, data collection methods and data analysis procedures, all of which are crucial in ensuring that the research study is credible in answering the research questions. According to McCombes and George (2023), a methodology examines the data collection tools and the analysis methods that were used within a study. McCombes and George (2023) believe that this section explains what the researcher did and how they did it to allow the reader to evaluate the reliability and validity of the study by critically examining the methodology and data. To accomplish the objective of this study, the researcher positioned this study within an interpretivism paradigm to access a range of methods that effectively addressed the research problem.

### **3.3 Research Paradigm**

According to Kyngäs, Mikkonen and Kääriäinen (2020) a research paradigm is a methodology, framework, or structure used to conduct research. Kyngäs *et al.*, (2020) claims that a paradigm is the foundation for a study that investigates how knowledge is understood and researched. Nickerson (2023a) refers to a paradigm as a collection of thoughts and opinions which functions as a model for research. A research paradigm assists in determining how a research study is to be conducted (Ulz, 2023). Perera (2018) defines a research paradigm as a theoretical framework or an assumed set of ideas on how problems should be addressed. Perera (2018) further describes a research paradigm as having four pillars attached to it, namely ontology, epistemology, methodology and methods. Cropley (2022) expands on these terms as follows: Firstly, ontology refers to the nature of our beliefs about reality. The basic ontological position is that a single verifiable and non-subjective reality exists. Secondly, epistemology claims reality is a social construct with multiple facets and is relative to a given context. Epistemology is a discipline of philosophy that examines the foundations of knowledge in addition to the method of attaining and validating it. Thirdly, methodology is defined as an articulated, theoretically informed approach to the production of data. Lastly, methods are defined as the specific means of collecting and analysing the data. According to Mahuba (2020), there are two distinct concepts – ontology and

epistemology – among all research methodological concepts. Ontology and epistemology are discussed in detail in the sections below.

### **3.3.1 Ontology**

According to Mahabuba (2020), ontology relates to the nature of reality and the kinds of entities that exist. It studies what kinds of entities exist, how they are classified, and how they are related to one another. Mahabuba (2020) further explains that ontology concerns our views about the nature of reality and the social world. It is an essential component of any research, given that it establishes a structure for research philosophy and design relating to the nature of existence. Ormston *et al.* (2014) assert that ontology explores the inquiry of the possibility that there exists a social reality independently of human concepts and interpretations. As a result, ontology is important in establishing the conceptual underpinnings of research and directing the selection of adequate research methodologies and techniques (Ormston *et al.*, 2014).

This study focused on the perceptions of HoDs of their experiences with the QMS DP, which are assumed to be influenced by numerous realities as evidenced by statements made by participants during interviews. The perceptions of HoDs, their experiences, attitudes and values and the larger social and cultural framework in which schools are embedded, all contributed to the ontological perspective, which is mirrored in the dynamics of the PD of HoDs. This research investigated the viewpoint of HoDs about the QMS as a PDP. Interviewing and interacting with HoDs in schools assisted the researcher in better comprehending their perspectives and leadership techniques.

### **3.3.2 Epistemology**

Martinich and Stroll (2023) explain that practically all humans aspire to have an understanding of the world they live in, and many of them construct various concepts to assist them in doing so. Martinich and Stroll (2023) further assert that because several aspects of the natural world cannot easily be explained, most individuals are likely to give up and remain content with whichever level of understanding they have been able to acquire. According to Al Saadi (2014), the epistemological assumptions that we make about knowledge influence how we go about revealing knowledge of

social behaviour. Philosophers are captivated by their concept of comprehending the world (Al Saadi, 2014). As a result, they dedicate themselves to an effort to construct theories by going further in their investigations than other people, and it is from this that they can formulate a philosophy of the subject in question (Martinich and Stroll, 2023).

According to Sol and Heng (2022), epistemology is the study of knowledge, including its nature, origin and restrictions; a knowledge of epistemology is, therefore, essential for establishing the methodology for research. Sol and Heng (2022) further mention that epistemology refers to the assumptions we make about the nature of knowledge or how we could acquire knowledge about the world. Epistemology is a manner of perceiving and comprehending the world (Mahabuba, 2020). Mahabuba (2020) adds that epistemology concerns the information that constitutes appropriate knowledge and how it should be gained and interpreted.

According to Alharahsheh and Pius (2020), it is an internal element within a researcher that can affect the researcher's ability to distinguish between what they consider to be right and wrong. Alharahsheh and Pius (2020) argue that epistemology is also concerned with how a researcher attempts to acquire knowledge to reach its true form. To be able to comprehend the experiences of HoDs, I generated data by employing various research instruments across the different sampled school settings by proactively interacting with the participants along with the applicable documents.

### **3.3.3 Interpretivism**

The study adopted the interpretivist paradigm. Husam and Abraham (2020) define interpretivism as a paradigm that considers humans as creators of their own meanings and knowledge based on their experiences which cannot be explored in a way similar to physical phenomena. Interpretivists shape their own society and believe that humans understand the same reality in different ways (Thomson, 2015). Hepler and Cloud (2022) describe interpretivism as an event analysed using a society's beliefs, norms and values. I found the use of the interpretivist paradigm to be beneficial for this study as interpretivism involves the use of a dialogue with the participants. The

interpretivist paradigm relies on questioning and observation to comprehend a phenomenon being investigated, in this case, HoDs' experiences of the QMS (Thomson, 2015). I engaged with the participants of my study in a dialogue through interviews, which led to the use of qualitative methods. For this study, the interpretivist paradigm was beneficial as meaning was created from the participants' experiences regarding the QMS development programme conducted in their workplace. The use of interpretivism as an approach focuses significantly on questioning and observation to uncover or generate extensive knowledge of the subject matter being studied, making the paradigm appropriate for this study.

### **3.4 Research Approach**

A research approach, according to Dudovskiy (2022), is the plan or procedures selected by a researcher to collect, analyse and interpret data to promote understanding of a phenomenon. It plays a significant part in shaping the research design and methodology. Dudovskiy (2022) further explains that a research approach guides the selection of research design, methods and techniques; it is a general plan outlining how the researcher intends to conduct the study. The research approach selected is determined by the research question, the nature of the phenomenon being studied and the available data (Dudovskiy, 2022). The data for this study was gathered by asking the participants, who were the HoDs, to share their experiences from their practical and natural contexts through interviews. As a result, the study took a qualitative approach to answering the main question: *What are the HoDs' experiences of the QMS as a PDP?*

#### **3.4.1 Qualitative approach**

This study aimed to explore the HoDs' experiences of the PD opportunities inherent in the QMS. For this research, the qualitative research approach was employed. The qualitative method was used as a directive in understanding the meaning of the participants' experiences of the QMS as a PDP. The participants' understanding was revealed through an analysis of the participants' interview responses. Giardini (2023) is of the opinion that qualitative research attempts to acquire knowledge and

comprehension of the lives of individuals and opinions by analysing their social behaviour. Giardini (2023) clarifies that data obtained through qualitative research centres on the opinions of individuals and emotional responses. The use of qualitative research was appropriate for this research as the study explored and investigated real-world situations while gathering the participants' experiences and behaviours (Moser and Korstjens, 2017).

Bhandari (2020) explains that qualitative research is gathering and examining data that is non-numerical to better understand an idea and the involvement or the judgement of others. Branum (2023) adds that qualitative research is useful in revealing people's behaviour, attitudes and perceptions of a certain topic. In my effort to uncover the nature of experiences that HoDs have with the QMS development programme, it was essential to consider their attitudes, feelings and perceptions concerning the QMS as a PDP (Branum, 2023). Hammarburg *et al.* (2015) is of belief that the qualitative approach assists a researcher in discovering potential problems in the topic of discussion. Using carefully worded, clear and thought-provoking questions I aimed to show not just the personal and cultural views, but also the potential challenges encountered by HoDs in terms of the QMS as a PDP (Branum, 2023).

Qualitative research attempts to make meaning of a phenomenon that people experience and to investigate how they construct meaning in their behaviours and actions in their everyday lives and natural settings (Cropley, 2015). To find the response to research questions on human behaviour and the cultural values that influence it, scholars such as Girardin (2023) suggest employing qualitative methods for the research to produce an output that is valuable, innovative and trustworthy as knowledge is observed, categorised, compared and evaluated. Branum (2023) maintains that, despite its data being generated in words, qualitative research searches for meaning, perspective and motivation rather than attempting to determine cause and effect. Branum (2023) further adds that this research methodology functions effectively to identify abstract elements like gender roles, social norms and ethnicity that may not be readily evident.

The qualitative approach was appropriate for this study as the study made use of written text; HoDs shared their constructed meanings and behavioural actions within their natural setting, which were schools. Based on these qualities of the qualitative method, this method made it possible to answer and explore the research questions posed in this study. Finally, my choice of this method is consistent with my adopted research paradigm given in the subsection below. The following advantages led to the researcher's decision to use the qualitative approach.

### 3.4.2 Advantages of qualitative research

As demonstrated by Mohajan (2018) qualitative research is significantly more experiential and focused on capturing people's thoughts and perspectives; this has importance, but it can also present many more obstacles than merely collecting facts. Here are some advantages of qualitative research:

- a. **In-depth understanding:** The study was aimed at exploring the Heads of Departments' (HoDs) experiences of the Quality Management System (QMS) as a Professional Development Programme (PDP). Consequently, adopting a qualitative methodology was deemed necessary. According to Creswell (2013), qualitative research enables researchers to gain a deep and detailed understanding of the subject under investigation. Creswell (2013) further states that this is particularly useful when exploring complex social, psychological or cultural phenomena.
- b. **Rich data:** Paulo, Gustavo and Norberto (2019) are of the opinion that qualitative methods generate rich, descriptive data, often in the form of text, images or narratives. This richness allows for a nuanced analysis of the research topic, providing insights that may not be captured through quantitative methods alone (Paulo *et al.* 2019).
- c. **Flexibility:** Denzin and Lincoln (2018) opine that qualitative research is flexible and adaptable during the use of interviews as a data-gathering technique

(Alharahsheh and Pius, 2020). In contrast to a quantitative approach, which employs strictly organised data-collecting techniques like surveys, researchers can adjust their approach based on emerging findings, allowing for a more responsive and dynamic research process (Denzin and Lincoln, 2018).

- d. **Contextualisation:** Patton (2015) posits that qualitative research allows for the exploration and understanding of the context in which a phenomenon occurs. This is crucial for interpreting findings accurately and making meaningful connections between variables (Patton, 2015).
- e. **Theory building:** According to Creswell (2017), qualitative research is well-suited to theory building. Creswell (2017) further adds that through the analysis of patterns and themes in the data, researchers can develop or refine theoretical frameworks that contribute to the academic discourse in their field.
- f. **Participant perspectives:** Creswell and Creswell (2017) argue that qualitative methods emphasise capturing the perspectives of participants. This was made feasible by adopting a qualitative research approach instead of a quantitative one because the latter encourages the generalisation of findings to broader populations (Creswell 2020; Creswell & Poth, 2018). This is particularly relevant at the master's level, where understanding the lived experiences and viewpoints of individuals can provide valuable insights (Creswell and Creswell, 2017).
- g. **Exploratory research:** Qualitative research is often used in the early stages of an investigation when the goal is to explore a topic, generate hypotheses and identify relevant variables for further study (Guest, Bunce and Johnson, 2006).
- h. **Holistic approach:** Qualitative research allows for a holistic examination of a phenomenon, considering various factors and their interrelationships. This can be especially beneficial when studying complex, multifaceted issues (Miles, Huberman and Saldana, 2014).
- i. **Naturalistic setting:** Qualitative research often takes place in naturalistic settings, allowing researchers to observe and understand behaviour in

realworld contexts. This can enhance the ecological validity of the findings (Stake, 1995).

- j. **Personal connection:** Qualitative methods often involve direct interaction between the researcher and participants, fostering a personal connection that can lead to richer data and a deeper understanding of the subject matter (Denzin and Lincoln, 2018).
- k. **Social construction of reality:** Qualitative research acknowledges that reality is socially constructed and subjective. This perspective is particularly relevant when studying social phenomena and human behaviour (Berger and Luckman, 1966).

### 3.4.3 Disadvantages of qualitative research

To follow are the disadvantages of qualitative research:

#### a. **Subjectivity and bias**

Mohajan (2018) is of the opinion that one of the primary pitfalls of qualitative research is the potential for subjectivity and bias. Since qualitative data collection and analysis involve human interpretation, researchers may inadvertently introduce their own perspectives, beliefs or prejudices into the study. Mohajan (2018) declares that this subjectivity can affect various stages of the research process, including the formulation of research questions, data collection and the interpretation of findings. According to Creswell and Creswell (2017), the presence of bias can compromise the credibility and objectivity of the research. Creswell and Creswell (2017) advise researchers to engage in reflexivity, acknowledging their own biases and taking steps to minimise their impact. Member checking, peer debriefing and triangulation helped enhance the rigour of the research in this study (Mohajan, 2018).

#### b. **Limited generalisability**

According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), qualitative research often focuses on specific contexts, groups or settings. Consequently, the findings may not be generalisable to broader populations or different circumstances (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016). Rahman

(2023) says that depth and context-specific understanding can limit the transferability of findings to other contexts. Rahman (2023) further mentions that to mitigate this shortfall, the study needs to define the scope and boundaries clearly, recognising that qualitative findings are context dependent. While the goal of qualitative research is not necessarily to generalise, the study can enhance the transferability of the findings by providing rich contextual details and engaging in purposive sampling to capture diverse perspectives (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016).

### **c. Small sample sizes**

Miles, Huberman and Saldana (2014) describe qualitative studies as typically involving smaller sample sizes compared to quantitative research. While this is intentional, as qualitative research emphasises depth over breadth, it can raise concerns about the representation of the broader population. Mohajan (2018) explains that researchers need to carefully justify their choice of sample size based on the research question and the depth of understanding required. To counteract this, the researcher sampled the relevant sites and participants for the study and furnished an elaborate account of the research facets and participants to facilitate the applicability of the study in similar contexts (Rubin, 2021). According to Miles *et al.* (2014), the emphasis is on selecting participants who can provide rich and varied insights rather than aiming for statistical representation. Thematic saturation, where new data ceases to provide additional insights, is often used to determine sample size adequacy (Mohajan 2018).

### **d. Time-Consuming**

- Denzin and Lincoln (2018) are of the opinion that qualitative research is known for its in-depth and detailed nature, making it a time-consuming process. Data collection through methods like interviews, observations and document analysis, coupled with the intricate process of qualitative data analysis, can extend the duration of the study (Denzin and Lincoln, 2018). The data collected from the participants was analysed through content analysis to categorise the

data into manageable themes that were derived from what the participants shared.

As established by Charmaz (2014), researchers and stakeholders need to be aware of the time demands associated with qualitative research. I ensured that proper planning with realistic timelines was in place; for example, I planned to collect data within two months, but my planning was for three months which allowed space for any challenges that may arise during data collection within the targeted two months. The trade-off between time investment and depth of understanding was carefully considered when choosing the qualitative methods (Denzin and Lincoln, 2018).

#### **e. Difficulty in replication**

According to Miles *et al.* (2014), replicating qualitative studies can be challenging owing to the uniqueness of each research context and the role of the researcher's interpretation. The complex interplay of contextual factors makes it difficult to precisely replicate qualitative investigations (Miles *et al.*, 2014). Rahman (2023) explains that while replication may not be a primary goal of qualitative research, researchers should provide detailed descriptions of their methods and procedures to enhance transparency. To mitigate the replication challenges associated with qualitative research, data from several sources were compared in this study, allowing the researcher to detect consistency and inconsistency in research (Rahman, 2023).

Inconsistencies could direct other scholars to areas that require further investigation where the findings could be a foundation for similar studies in different contexts. (Rahman, 2023; Charmaz, 2014).

#### **f. Potential for interpretation errors**

Gaille (2018) claims that qualitative data analysis involves the interpretation of text, images or other non-numeric data. Gaille (2018) explains that the risk of misinterpreting participants' perspectives, actions or meanings is inherent in this interpretative process. Charmaz (2014) suggests that researchers must adopt rigorous and systematic approaches to data analysis, including techniques like constant

comparison, member checking and inter-coder reliability checks. I documented the analytical process and engaged in peer review to help minimise the potential for interpretation errors (Charmaz, 2014).

#### **g. Resource intensive**

Patton (2015) is of the belief that qualitative research can be resource-intensive in terms of time, personnel and financial resources. Patton (2015) adds that skilled researchers, extensive training and the dedication of sufficient time to the study are essential components. Denzin and Lincoln (2018) suggest that researchers need to secure adequate resources for qualitative studies, recognising that investment is necessary to ensure the quality and rigour of the research. Budgeting for training, participant compensation, transcription services, and other logistical considerations is crucial for successful qualitative research (Denzin and Lincoln, 2018).

#### **h. Ethical challenges**

According to Yardley (2008), the immersive nature of qualitative research, where researchers often engage directly with participants, can introduce ethical challenges. Maintaining confidentiality, ensuring informed consent and addressing power dynamics are critical considerations. Paulo *et al.* (2019) state that researchers must adhere to ethical guidelines and seek institutional review board approval for their studies. Open communication with participants about the research objectives, potential risks and benefits was essential in this study to establish and maintain trust throughout the research process as it is paramount to ethical qualitative research (Paulo *et al.*, 2019).

#### **i. Limited quantification**

According to Creswell and Creswell (2017), qualitative research typically lacks the numerical precision associated with quantitative methods. While this is intentional, it can make it challenging to quantify and compare certain aspects of the data. According to Paulo *et al.* (2019), researchers should be transparent about the qualitative nature of their study and acknowledge the limitations in terms of quantification. To mitigate the limitation of quantification, the study included participants who were sampled from

both primary and secondary educational settings (Paulo *et al.*, 2019). The researcher used the theoretical framework and research questions as a guide to discover appropriate and relevant information to provide credible findings (Almeida *et al.*, 2017). The interviews were conducted using appropriate questions that were consistent with the study's aim and objectives (Almeida *et al.*, 2017). The study took advantage of existing documentation that supplied demographic and contextual information, allowing researchers to provide extensive and layered descriptions in response to the research question, to ensure that credibility, transferability and reliability were maintained (Almeida *et al.*, 2017).

#### **j. Dependence on researcher expertise**

Gaille (2018) explains that the success of qualitative research is highly dependent on the skills, experience and expertise of the researcher. Gaille (2018) further adds that adequate training in qualitative methods, reflexivity and an understanding of the research context are crucial for meaningful results. As suggested by Anouk *et al.* (2023) researchers should invest in training and continuous development of qualitative research skills. Collaboration with experienced qualitative researchers, mentorship and peer feedback can contribute to the refinement of the researcher's expertise (Anouk *et al.*, 2023). Member checking was used in this study to ensure that the researcher interpreted and analysed data accurately and generated appropriate conclusions. This minimised bias in the methodology and ensured consistency between the study purpose, question and methods, permitting the researcher to address the research topic with integrity (Anouk *et al.*, 2023).

#### **k. Difficulty in controlling variables**

Denzin and Lincoln (2018) mention that unlike experimental designs common in quantitative research, qualitative research may struggle to control all relevant variables. Gaille (2018) adds that the dynamic and evolving nature of qualitative studies can introduce challenges in establishing and maintaining control. According to Rahman (2023), complete control over variables may not be feasible in qualitative research, but researchers can enhance the credibility of their findings through careful consideration of contextual factors. This study provided a detailed description of the

research setting, participants, and any changes to the study protocol to contribute to transparency (Rahman, 2023). According to Denzin and Lincoln (2018), qualitative research offers valuable insights into complex phenomena and researchers must carefully navigate these disadvantages to ensure the credibility, rigour and ethical conduct of their studies. Each disadvantage presents an opportunity for researchers to make informed decisions, implement rigorous methodologies, and contribute to the ongoing dialogue about the strengths and limitations of qualitative research (Denzin and Lincoln, 2018).

### **3.5 Research Design**

Research design is a logical technique for integrating study components to address the research topic, including data collection, measurement and analysis (Jansen 2023). McCombes (2023b) believes that a research design is a researcher's technique for evaluating research questions using empirical data. Sign (2023) describes a research design as a plan or framework used to conduct research while outlining the overall approaches and methods that will be used for analysing data. Sign (2023) is of the belief that a well-constructed research project must include a clear and clearly defined research topic, an accurate data collection plan and a procedure for interpreting and analysing the data. According to Bhandari (2023), the research design process is a systematic and structured approach to verifying that the methods match the research objectives, resulting in high-quality data collection.

#### **3.5.1 Phenomenology design**

For this study, phenomenology was employed as the research design. Phenomenology promotes the narration of an investigation from the point of view of the participants' experiences (Teherani, 2015). Teherani (2015) defines phenomenology as a qualitative research approach that analyses the appearances of things, how things appear in our experiences and the ways we experience these things. According to Good (2023), phenomenology is the study of meaning which seeks to explain the nature of things. Good (2023) further explains that phenomenology is a type of research that requires an in-depth understanding of the participants' thoughts and perceptions of the phenomenon being studied.

Phenomenology aims to capture what has been experienced along with how it has been experienced based on first-person accounts (Creswell, 2013).

Umanailo (2019) is of the opinion that in phenomenology, the aim is not to explain the phenomena but rather to describe them while paying attention to the surrounding emotions, behaviours and actions. According to Neubauer *et al.* (2019), phenomenology is an effective approach for studying a phenomenon through the lens of those who have experienced it first-hand. The descriptive phenomenology method diversified the researcher's investigation of HoDs' experiences of the QMS as a PDP in schools, allowing the researcher to examine the study through the participants' eyes. The design broadened the study's lenses by assisting the researcher in removing the QMS as a PDP's assumptions and analysing the QMS through the eyes of the participants. This method was best suited to this study given that HoDs constructed meaning and narrated their experiences with the QMS as a PDP under exploration.

### **3.6 Data Collection Methods**

Data collection is a methodical procedure of putting together and measuring information in an established arrangement that generates answers to relevant questions (Creswell, 2020). According to Barret (2018), data collection methods are employed in qualitative research to obtain rich and comprehensive data on human experiences and perspectives. Barret (2018) further adds that the target for data collection is to represent quality evidence, which leads to credible answers to questions. In this study, data were gathered using two data collection instruments: semi-structured interviews and document analysis.

#### **3.6.1 Semi-structured interviews**

An interview provides a strong foundation for data collection in qualitative research (Abawu, 2017). For this study, data were gathered using semi-structured interviews to explore the participants' experiences concerning the investigated phenomenon of the QMS as a PDP. As explained by Leedy and Ormrod (2020), semi-structured interviews are frequently employed in qualitative research to obtain new data and explore the

participants' thoughts and beliefs about a particular topic. Magaldi and Berler (2020) mention that semi-structured interviews are investigative interviews that focus on a specific subject. Girardin (2023) is of the opinion that a semi-structured interview is open-ended and allows innovative ideas to emerge throughout the interview as a result of what the interviewee says. Girardin (2023) proceeds to clarify that during semi-structured interviews, the interviewer normally has a framework of themes to question. Semi-structured interviews are a combination of structured and unstructured interviewing, that entail loosely structured questions that permit the interviewees to fully express themselves (Girardin, 2023). Although the overall sequence of questions may remain the same across all individuals interviewed, the interviewer might not strictly adhere to the established structure of questioning but vary the questions according to circumstances (Doyle, 2022). Doyle (2022) further suggests that in preparation for a semi-structured interview, several questions are compiled beforehand though during the interview, the interviewer may ask additional questions or discuss additional topics not specifically planned.

Semi-structured interviews were preferred in this study as they permitted the researcher to compare participants' perspectives by providing an opportunity to explore relevance to the study (Girardin, 2023). The researcher chose this particular kind of interview because it allowed the researcher to establish a connection and relationship with the participants. Semi-structured interviews were of assistance in granting the opportunity to probe and gather in-depth data to provide credible findings on the phenomena being studied. The participants were allowed to share their experiences with the QMS as a PDP during the interviews, allowing the researcher to be adaptable and to interpret the data in the participants' own descriptions. The use of semi-structured interviews was beneficial to the study as the interviews allowed participants to share their in-depth knowledge and experience of the QMS as a PDP. Creswell and Creswell (2020) concur regarding the proposed method of conducting one-on-one interviews.

The interviews took place at participants' convenience. The researcher conducted one-on-one interviews for most of the interviews. The researcher kept records of when

and where each participant was to be interviewed as a reminder of the various scheduled interviews. During the interviews, all questions were standardised, so every respondent received the same questions written in the same way. The interview protocol was beneficial to this study given that it allowed the researcher to acquire information about the research topic from the participants.

### **3.6.2 Document analysis**

According to Eads (2023), document analysis is a qualitative research method that involves reviewing and evaluating printed and electronic documents to uncover meaning, gain understanding and attain a conclusion. Gross (2016) stipulates that document analysis is a form of written work that describes, explains and gives instructions regarding certain attributes of a phenomenon. Document analysis examines and interprets data to extract meaning to gain an understanding and develop empirical knowledge (Vos and Mutekwe, 2017). Dalglish *et al.* (2020) define document analysis as the evaluation of physical and electronic documents to interpret them to develop meaning from the information provided. Document analysis is beneficial in reducing ethical concerns that occur with using other qualitative methods (Morgan, 2022). The researcher critically evaluated data from relevant documents to determine their relevance to the research questions posed. The documents that were examined generated sound conclusions and recommendations were made by the researcher.

Document analysis plays a crucial role in most triangulation methods. Document analysis contributed value to this study because it is a cost-effective research method that can provide rich, detailed data while reducing ethical concerns to allow for triangulation (Vos and Mutekwe, 2017). In addition to the above QMS documents analysed, the documents mentioned below from each school were analysed:

- a. **QMS management plan:** This document explains how and when QMS is conducted in each school. The document has the names of individual participants and how QMS will be conducted.
- b. **QMS pre-evaluation minutes:** This is documentation of meetings that were held prior to the QMS being conducted, where all the necessary information to

prepare for conducting the QMS was shared among the persons involved in schools.

- c. **QMS post-appraisal discussion minutes:** After conducting the QMS, a meeting that provided feedback was documented.
- d. **QMS appraisal instrument:** This document explains how the appraisal of educators was conducted.

### **3.6.3 Data collection steps**

Before any meetings or negotiations with the participants, after receiving approval from the University of the Free State ethics review committee, I visited the research site and negotiated access with the participants. I sent letters requesting permission from the principals of the selected schools to use the schools as study sites. As proof, I have attached a copy of the permission letter from the University of the Free State's ethical review committee (Appendices C, D and E) and an approval letter from the KwaZulu-Natal DoE (Appendix A). On various days, I met with the school principals of the sampled schools. The principals were very busy at some schools, resulting in my having to inform the deputy principal about the study instead. From the conversations I had I could tell that the principals and deputy principals were interested in my proposed study, resulting in their granting of permission to continue.

During the meeting with the intended participants, I was given adequate time to explain the study's rationale, potential benefits and risks involved, and the types of participants required. Upon request from the participants, gender equality was preferred. I distributed the handouts to the participants, which included detailed information about the study along with the consent forms for the participants to read.

Before my departure, the participants and I exchanged cell phone numbers as a tool to ensure effective communication. After telephone communication with the participants, I continued my research journey by visiting the schools during the appointment days scheduled by the participants. This was to acquaint myself with the participants and coordinate an interview schedule. Some participants preferred face-to-face interviews, while others preferred questionnaires. During the interviews, one of

the participants decided not to continue with the interview, resulting in the study being conducted with a total of 11 participants instead of 12. The study was conducted in two primary schools and two high schools in the uThukela District in Kwa-Zulu Natal province in South Africa. One primary school and one high school of the sampled schools were situated in township areas, while two of the remaining schools were situated in the urban area. A township is a geographical region that endured racial segregation during the apartheid era, resulting in limited development (Tshatshu, 2016). These schools are commonly referred to as township schools (Naidoo, 2021).

Sumida and Kawata (2021) identify urban schools as those that are located in towns or cities, serve a larger student population, have access to more resources, including funding from the government, and have been equipped with modern facilities such as libraries, labs and computer rooms. The schools are classified in a quintile system which categorises them according to socioeconomic status, determined by assessing mean income, unemployment rates, and overall literacy competence in the school's geographic area (Ogbonnaya and Awuah, 2019). Table 3.6.4 below summarises the school quintiles and the communities they serve, including the fee requirements and stationary logistics reported by Ogbonnaya and Awuah (2019).

**Table 3.1: Quintile description of schools**

<i><b>Quintile</b></i>	<i><b>Community</b></i>	<i><b>School Fees</b></i>	<i><b>Stationary</b></i>
1	Poor background	Non-fee-paying schools	Supplied to learners
2			
3			

4	Affluent community	Fee-paying schools	Learners buy their own stationery
5			

Table 3.1 above profiles that quintiles 1–3 schools serve disadvantaged communities. These schools provide learners with all the essential educational supplies needed to assist these communities and do not collect school fees. In contrast, quintile 4-5 schools serve wealthy communities with parents paying for school supplies and school fees for their children.

### 3.6.4 Purposive sampling of schools

A purposive sampling technique was employed to select schools. Nikolopoulou (2022) argues that purposive sampling is a class of non-probability sampling in which units are selected because they display characteristics that are required in a sample. Frost (2024) agrees that in purposive sampling, researchers use their expertise to select participants with particular characteristics that the researcher needs during the process of gathering data. Forest (2024) acknowledges that purposive sampling is useful when you require information-rich examples or intend to make the most effective use of limited resources.

Document analysis contributed value to this study considering that it is a cost-effective research method that can provide excessive detailed data while reducing ethical concerns to allow for triangulation. For this study, two primary and two high schools were selected. The sample size consisted of two HoDs from each primary school and four HoDs from each high school. Purposive sampling best suited the study as participants were selected based on their knowledge and experience in the basic education sector concerning the QMS programme as outlined in the table below.

**Table 3.2: Sampling procedure**

School sample size	Participants sample size
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<p><b>Purposively select primary schools with a minimum of two HoDs per school.</b></p> <p><b>Total number of primary schools = Two (2)</b></p>	<p>Purposively select two HoDs per school with a minimum of two years' experience in the QMS programme. Total =Four (4)</p>
<p><b>Purposively select High Schools with a minimum of three HoDs per school.</b></p> <p><b>Total number of high schools =Two (2)</b></p>	<p>Purposively select four HoDs per school with at least two years' experience in the QMS programme. Total = Eight (8)</p>

### 3.7 Trustworthiness of the Study

According to Norman *et al.* (2020), trustworthiness is a significant component of qualitative research; it refers to the extent to which a study's findings are credible, transferable, dependable and confirmable. As previously stated in this chapter, the study used various methods to increase its credibility. Data achieves trustworthiness by being credible, transferable, dependable and confirmable (Devault, 2019). To ensure trustworthiness and genuine validation, more than one data collection instrument was used, as well as a member checking technique and data triangulation (Stumpfegger, 2017). Member checking ensures credibility and reveals that the findings are accurate and honest (Statistic Solutions, 2020).

The member check technique occurs when the data are interpreted and confirmed by sharing them with the participants involved (Birt *et al.*, 2016). Member checking was used as a tool to verify the accuracy of the data. For this study, member checking was achieved by returning the transcribed interview sessions to the participants to proofread for validation purposes (Birt, 2023).

Bhandari (2021) recommends triangulation as another tool that enhances the validity and credibility of data. If data are unreliable and invalid, any conclusions drawn from them can be distorted and will have little practical application. For this study, in addition to member checks, data triangulation was employed. As defined by Heale and Noble

(2017), data triangulation is the collection of data from multiple sources in research. To achieve what the scholars have given voice to above, participants from four different schools were chosen. In the event where their responses were showing differences, the responses were compared to relevant literature. Alternatively, if the data given did not provide new, unique insight into the research problem and were irrelevant to the study, that data were discarded. This study triangulated the data collection instrument using semi-structured interviews and data analysis (Bhandari, 2022). According to Bhandari (2024), trustworthiness in qualitative research should ensure that there is credibility, dependability, confirmability and transferability in the study.

### **3.7.1 Credibility in research**

According to Paulo *et al.* (2019), credibility refers to the extent to which the findings of a qualitative study are believable and trustworthy. Norman *et al.* (2020) claim that ensuring credibility in qualitative research involves demonstrating that the study accurately represents the perspectives and experiences of the participants.

To enhance credibility, this study employed techniques such as prolonged engagement (extended time in the field), member checking (seeking participant feedback on findings), and triangulation (using multiple data collection instruments) (Norman *et al.*, 2020).

### **3.7.2 Dependability**

Dependability, sometimes referred to as reliability in qualitative research, addresses the stability and consistency of the study's findings over time and under different conditions (Paulo *et al.*, 2019). Paulo *et al.* (2019) further add that it is comparable to the reliability criterion in quantitative research. According to Norman *et al.* (2020), to establish dependability, researchers should clearly document and describe their research procedures, ensuring that the study could be replicated or that similar results could be obtained under similar conditions. Consistency in data collection, analysis, and interpretation processes contributes to the dependability of the study (Norman *et al.*, 2020).

### **3.7.3 Confirmability**

Korstjens and Moser (2018) explain that confirmability pertains to the objectivity and neutrality of the research findings. It addresses the extent to which the data and interpretations are shaped by the participants and the context rather than the biases or perspectives of the researcher (Korstjens and Moser, 2018). It is similar to the objectivity criterion in quantitative research. According to Nyirenda *et al.* (2020), researchers aim for confirmability by maintaining an audit trail, documenting their decision-making processes, and being transparent about their own biases and preconceptions. Peer debriefing and reflexivity (reflecting on one's own role in the research) are also common strategies used to enhance confirmability (Nyirenda *et al.*, 2020).

### **3.7.4 Transferability**

Korstjens and Moser (2018) explain that transferability in qualitative research refers to the extent to which the findings can be applied or transferred to other contexts or populations beyond the immediate study. It is akin to external validity in quantitative research (Korstjens and Moser, 2018). Nyirenda *et al.* (2020) are of the opinion that, while qualitative research does not typically seek generalisability in the same way as quantitative research, it can achieve transferability which is about providing readers with enough information to assess the relevance and applicability of the findings to other situations. Rich and thick descriptions of the context, participants, and research process contribute to enhancing transferability (Munthe-Kass *et al.*, 2020). To ensure transferability in the study, I presented and described the findings from the data profusely, offering sufficient elaboration on the research study sites, participants, and methodologies for data collection (Munthe-Kaas *et al.*, 2020).

## **3.8 Data Analysis**

Calzon (2021) defines data analysis as the process used by researchers when analysing data to answer research questions. Calzon (2021) further claims that this technique helps to reduce a large amount of data into smaller fragments that make sense. Data analysis is the interpretation of data gathered using analytical reasoning

to determine patterns, relationships and trends (Calzon, 2021). However, data need to be prepared before being used in the data analysis process.

### **3.8.1 Qualitative Content Analysis approach**

Following the data collection steps, such as establishing questions, cleaning the data, and omitting unnecessary information, the gathered data from the participants were organised. Luo (2019) defines qualitative content analysis as collecting data in the form of written, spoken or visual language to discover the purpose of the intended study. In qualitative content analysis, data are based on written human language categorised into different phrases, images or words (Reis and Kowalczyk, 2021).

The use of qualitative content analysis was preferred for this study, as data produced by the participants' experiences were analysed and categorised into themes and concepts. During the interview, the interviewer asked a set of open-ended questions that were related to the study. These questions were recorded and later used as part of the process of qualitative analysis. In analysing the obtained data, the following general guidelines provided by O'Conner and Gibson (2003) listed below were used:

Step 1: Organising the data/responses

Data were organised by grouping together all the responses for each question; for example, all the data gathered for question one were grouped together.

Step 2: Finding and organising ideas and concepts.

Similar ideas and concepts were put together based on the participants' responses.

Step 3: Build the overarching themes from the data.

A possible connection between the data analysed was used to form an overarching theme.

### **3.9 Ethical Considerations**

Ethical considerations are essential in research, given that they ensure that research is conducted respectfully, fairly and responsibly. The researcher provided ethical

consideration by ensuring that the participants provided informed consent prior to their participation. Ethics is a critical aspect of the research procedure that should be implemented throughout the study and not just within particular sections (Kyngäs *et al.*, 2020). The ethical rule of social research is that participants should not be harmed (Singh, 2019). When conducting a qualitative study, researchers should prepare for any ethical difficulties and establish an approach for addressing them, according to Bhandari (2021). The consensus is that these kinds of problems emerge only during data collection (Bhandari, 2021).

The process of the investigation was thoroughly explained to the participants, making them aware that they could withdraw from the study whenever they desired to do so. The participants' identities and names were not revealed as the information gathered was private. A participant's form of agreement was provided to further explain in detail how the study would be conducted. This form was briefly discussed at the beginning of the interview to seek any clarity or questions that the participant may have had. As confirmation of the agreement, the participants acknowledged their understanding of the conditions mentioned to them.

Singh (2019) opines that for research to be credible, the researcher needs to evaluate any potential harm or risk involved in protecting the dignity, privacy and identity of the participants. Ethical protocol was observed by following this procedure:

- I requested permission from the University of the Free State to conduct the study.
- I requested approval from the DoE, the District Office and the selected schools.
- The participants were given informed consent forms to read and sign before their participation. These forms were explained to them for their understanding.
- Participants were informed of their voluntary participation and their right to withdraw from the study at any stage they may desire to do so.

- Participants' identities and names were kept confidential as pseudonyms were used (Singh, 2019).

### **3.9.1 Permission to conduct the study**

The researcher was granted permission to conduct research in schools by the KwaZulu-Natal DoE. The request was approved, and the researcher was given permission to continue with the study. Before beginning the study, the researcher sought and received approval from the University of Free State's Ethics Committee.

This was required to meet ethical standards and ensure that the researcher followed and respected the university's ethical code of conduct. After obtaining ethical approval to conduct this study, the researcher contacted selected schools to obtain permission to use them as research sites.

### **3.9.2 Informed consent**

As explained by the Manti and Licari (2023), informed consent is a fundamental principle of research ethics that entails informing potential research participants about the study and obtaining their voluntary consent to participate. The process includes an understanding of the research and the risks involved. According to Creswell and Creswell (2020), the provision of informed consent to participants serves as evidence of adherence to ethical protocols. To comply with ethical guidelines, the researcher provided all participants with written consent forms describing the process, purpose and potential risks of the study. Informed consent was sought to ensure that study participants had a thorough understanding of the study's details and provided their signatures prior to the start of the study. Furthermore, informed consent was used to ensure that the individuals involved in the study were fully informed of their right to participate or refrain from participating at any point during the research process (Creswell and Creswell, 2020).

### **3.9.3 Confidentiality and anonymity**

In a study conducted by Kang and Hwang (2023), confidentiality is described as the privacy of the participants' information; this includes preventing anyone outside of the

project from linking individual subjects with their responses. According to Kang and Hwang (2023), anonymity means that the project does not collect identifying information about individuals or that the study cannot link individual responses to participant identities. The researcher adopted precautions to protect participants' confidentiality using pseudonyms to protect their privacy and identity.

The identities of the respondents were effectively anonymised by using codes or pseudonyms to separate their names from their responses. Participants were encouraged to exercise caution by refraining from using information that could disclose their identities. The researcher stored the hard copies of the responses in a secure, locked location for future research or academic purposes (Lune and Berg, 2017), while the electronic copies were stored on a password-protected computer where the identity keys were kept independently from the data.

### **3.10 Delimitations of the Study**

In the quest to investigate and analyse the experiences of HoDs in relation to the QMS DP, it is crucial to acknowledge the limitations and constraints that may have influenced the outcomes of this study. Firstly, due to time constraints and the scope of the study, a limited number of HoDs were interviewed, which may limit the ability to generalise the findings (Jansen, 2018). In addition, the study focused solely on public schools, excluding private and international schools, thus potentially limiting the diversity of perspectives and practices (Jansen, 2018).

Furthermore, as with any qualitative research, there is a potential for bias in data collection and interpretation despite efforts made to ensure objectivity and validity. Lastly, the study relied heavily on self-reporting by the HoDs, which may introduce a social desirability bias (Dimitrios and Fountouki, 2018). It is important to keep these limitations in mind when interpreting the results and recommendations of this study. It is critical to consider these limitations when interpreting the study's findings and recommendations.

### **3.11 Chapter Summary**

This chapter discussed in detail the research methods and design that were employed in this study. The study aimed to explore the HoDs' experiences of PD by means of the QMS. Through the use of the qualitative research approach, the researcher described the procedures that the study followed. The chapter explained the employment of phenomenology as a research design and the suitability of the design for the study. The chapter further explained the sampling methods and the data collection instruments that were used to ensure that data were gathered and analysed effectively. To ensure ethical considerations, the chapter listed the measures followed by the researcher. The next chapter introduces data presentation and analysis.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: DATA PRESENTATION, INTERPRETATION AND ANALYSIS**

### **4.1 Introduction**

The previous chapter explored the study's research approach and methodology in detail. In this chapter, the results derived from the participants' collected data are presented and analysed to fulfil the study's primary objective which was to explore the experiences of HoDs of the QMS as a PDP. According to Calzon (2021), data analysis is the procedure researchers use to obtain and analyse evidence that leads to more effective decision-making. For this study, the qualitative content analysis approach was used to analyse data. The data collection and analysis addressed the main question, "What are the Heads of Department's' experiences of the QMS as a PDP?"

Data was obtained using semi-structured interviews and document analysis to acquire the desired in-depth information from the participants. The participants were interviewed face-to-face and I prepared a set of questions beforehand for the participants to respond to. I employed probing questions when necessary to assist participants in clarifying the significance behind their responses. In this chapter, an analysis of various documents concerning the study was done. These were the QMS

management plan; the QMS pre-evaluation minutes; the QMS post-appraisal discussion minutes; and the QMS appraisal instrument. The process of document analysis entailed categorising and coding the information included in the texts in an organised way. This systematic method allowed me to identify important patterns, themes and trends that could be used to guide the research findings.

This chapter is divided into four sections: 1) Profile of the sites and participants; 2). Data presentation and analysis; 3) Document analysis; and 4) conclusion of the chapter. The participants' identities and the schools' names were kept anonymous by using pseudonyms, P1 to P11 to adhere to the ethical principles outlined in Chapter 3. The four schools as research sites were identified as follows: School A and School AA for primary schools 1 and 2 and School B and School BB for secondary schools 1 and 2.

## 4.2 Profile of Research Sites and Participants

The study sampled four schools, comprising six HoDs from the primary schools and five HoDs from the high schools. Tables 4.1 and 4.2 present comprehensive profiles of the research site and the participants.

### 4.2.1 Profile of research sites

Two primary schools and two high schools from the uThukela District were sampled during the study. Comprehensive sampling profiles of the schools are provided in Table 4.1 below.

**Table 4.1: Profile of research sites**

School Name	Number of Principals	Number of Deputy Principals	Number of Hods	Number of Learners	Quintile Category
School A	1	1	3	750	4

<b>School AA</b>	1	1	4	943	2
<b>School B</b>	1	2	6	1 313	2
<b>School BB</b>	1	2	5	815	4

According to the table, the schools vary in some respects, such as the number of HoDs and the total number of learners. The table also depicts a variation between the primary and high schools as the primary schools each have one deputy principal while the high schools have two in each school. However, all the schools share the profile of having one principal in each school. As specified in the table, School A, a primary school, has one principal, one deputy principal, three HoDs and a total of 750 learners. In the other primary school, School AA, there is one principal, one deputy principal, four HoDs and 943 learners. High School B has one principal, two deputy principals, six HoDs and 1 313 learners. High School BB has one principal, two deputy principals, five HoDs and 815 learners. As demonstrated in Table 4.1, School A and School BB are categorised as quintile 4 while School AA and School B are categorised as quintile 2.

#### 4.2.2 Profile of participants

**Table 4.2: Profile of participants**

<b>School</b>	<b>Participant Code</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Number Of Years as HoD</b>	<b>Name of Phase</b>	<b>Highest Qualification</b>	<b>Grades and Subject/s Taught</b>
School A	P1	F	4 years	Foundation Phase	BEd (Bachelor of Education)	Grade 3: All subjects
	P2	F	7 years	Intermediate Phase	BEd Honours	Grade 4&5: English HL (Home Language)

School AA	P3	M	5 years	Foundation Phase	BEd Honours	Grade 1: All subjects
	P4	F	4 years	Intermediate Phase	BEd (Bachelor of Education)	Grade 6: IsiZulu HL, Life Skills
School B	P5	M	7 years	Senior Phase (Science)	BA (PGCE) (Bachelor of Art, Postgraduate Certificate in Education)	Grades 8 & 9: Life Sciences
	P6	F	9 years	Senior Phase (L/O)		Grades 8 & 9: Life Orientation
	P7	M	6 years	Further Education and Training (FET) Phase (Commerce)	MEd (Master of Education)	Grades 10 & 11: Accounting
		P8	F	5 years	FET Phase (Languages)	BEd Honours BEd
School BB	P9	F	5 years	Senior Phase (Languages)	BEd	Grades 8 & 9: English HL
	P10	M	7 years	Senior Phase (Science)	BEd Honours	Grades 8 & 9: Physical Sciences
	P11	M	8 years	FET Phase (Commerce)	MEd	Grades 11 & 12: Business Studies

Demographic information about the participants is summarised in Table 4.2 above. Two HoDs were interviewed in both School A and AA, and four HoDs were interviewed in both School B and BB. The participants' gender, prior experience as an HoD, the phases they manage, their highest qualifications and the grades and subjects that they taught are indicated in the table above. Table 4.2 demonstrated that there were six female participants and five male participants. The HoD with the most experience had nine years of experience (P6), and the HoD with the least experience had four years (P4). Four HoDs obtained both a BEd honours and a BEd. Only two HoDs had an MEd and one HoD had a PGCE.

According to Table 4.2, two HoDs managed the Foundation Phase in their schools and taught all the subjects in grades one and three. Two HoDs managed and taught English HL, IsiZulu HL and Life Skills in grades four and six in the Intermediate Phase. Table 4.2 revealed that four HoDs managed the Senior Phase teaching Life Sciences, Life Orientation, English HL and Physical Sciences in grades eight and nine. In the FET Phase, three HoDs managed and taught Business Studies, Accounting and IsiZulu HL in grades 10, 11 and 12.

### 4.3 Data Presentation and Analysis

A summary of the four major themes that emerged from the data collected is presented in Table 4.3 below.

**Table 4.3: Data presentation**

Objective 1	Themes	Subthemes
The HoDs' understanding of PDPs	1. The HoDs' understanding of PD	The HoDs' experiences with PDPs

<b>The HoDs' experiences of the QMS as a PDP</b>	<b>2. Identifying the QMS as a PDP</b>	Implementation and monitoring of the QMS as a PDP  Perceptions of peer evaluation during QMS implementation
<b>Perceptions of HoDs regarding the QMS DP</b>	<b>3. Views on the QMS as a PDP</b>	
<b>Challenges HoDs experience with the QMS PDP</b>	<b>4. Challenges experienced during the implementation of the QMS as a PDP</b>	Strengthening the QMS as a PDP to effectively develop HoDs

Table 4.3 above provides a comprehensive summary of the primary themes and subthemes identified during the analysis. The first major theme is “Understanding of PD” with the sub-theme: The HoDs’ experiences of PDPs. The second theme is “Views and experiences of the QMS as a PDP” with three subthemes: Monitoring and implementation of the QMS as a PDP; Perceptions of peer evaluation during QMS implementation; and Experiences of the QMS as a PDP. The third theme is “Challenges experienced during the QMS implementation”. The final theme is “Strengthening the QMS as a PDP to effectively develop HoDs”. The following sections discuss each theme and sub-theme identified during the data collection procedure.

#### **4.3.1 Understanding of Professional Development (PD)**

The participants comprehended PD as continuous training that cultivates and enhances the skills of being a HoD. The analysed data indicated further that being professionally developed equips HoDs with techniques that help them advance in their careers. Some participants noted the following:

What do you understand by the term professional development? (Present your views on the importance of HoDs to be developed professionally?)

*Professional development is cultivating a person to be better at the job that they do; it is equipping them with knowledge, skills, and techniques to be able to do the job. (P2)*

*Professional development is when a person continues to train or educate themselves, to acquire new skills and knowledge that will assist in growth in your career. (P3)*

*Professional development is where HoDs partake in different bodies that will enhance their teaching skill. Professional development equips HoDs with skills, knowledge, and materials to keep up with the ever-changing evolutions in the education sector (technology in the education sector). (P9)*

Further probing the participants on their journey with PD programmes, the participants explained that they had attended various PD workshops on programmes such as the QMS, Outcomes Based Education (OBE), CAPS, and others:

*For example, I attended the workshop for QMS, the workshop for OBE, and then later the curriculum changed to CAPS. (P1)*

*I have attended programmes called EGRA [Early Grade Reading Assessment] and the Jiki Mfundo curriculum programme. (P2)*

*I have attended the HoD management workshop, which is also conducted annually for three days, depending on the agenda. (P5)*

Data gathered from the participants revealed that HoDs shared a similar understanding of PD, highlighting its role in enhancing skills and knowledge critical for their leadership and career growth. The participants collectively acknowledged the value of PD programmes in their professional journey, citing specific examples such as QMS, OBE, CAPS, EGRA, and the Jiki Mfundo curriculum. The participants noted that these programmes, including annual HoD management workshops, have played a significant role in their continuous professional enhancement. Therefore, the data analysed illustrated that PD is perceived as a crucial element for the professional growth and effectiveness of HoDs, ensuring they remain competent and informed leaders in their field.

#### **4.3.1.1 The Heads of Departments' (HoDs) experiences of Professional Development Programmes (PDPs)**

Sharing their experiences of PDPs, the participants confirmed that they helped them to be confident, to be able to effectively handle challenges and to stay informed and assisted them in easily adapting to their leadership positions. Participants expressed that attending PDPs enhanced their confidence in their working environments in the following ways:

Explain the experience that you have with some of the development programmes that you have attended before? (How have these programmes shaped and grew your teaching philosophy, what theories drive your teaching?).

*All the PD workshops have led me to be confident. They have led me to face the challenges that the school system is exposed to currently. (P1)*

*Professional development creates the opportunity to uplift one's confidence and self-esteem in his or her duties in order to work effectively in their leadership role. (P6)*

*These programmes have equipped me to gain confidence and take pride in the work that I do. To try and better myself in order to do justice to the learners that depend on me for their education. (P11)*

Probing further, the participants shared how PD has prepared them to address challenges experienced in the workplace effectively:

*To me I view professional development of HoDs to be very positive, it allows us to be able to face challenges and overcome them during the development growth. (P3)*

*It is importance to have managers and leaders to be developed professionally in order to make room for HoDs to cope in the modern world. During these programmes HoDs are equipped with skills and knowledge on how to address learners and challenges faced in a skillful manner. (P9)*

*Professional development is giving a person an upbringing to improve their career. It is indeed very much important that HoDs are developed professionally. Simply because we need to be directed in our job. Working with people is never easy because we are unique and every one of us reacts to situation differently. So giving professional training*

*on how to address challenges and be able to effectively handle working with people can be very much helpful. (P11)*

The participants also indicated how PDPs keep them informed:

*Our education system is constantly evolving. The way, we studied is not the same as the way education is being conducted today. Through professional development programmes, I am kept informed with the changes taking place. (P1)*

*Most of the development programmes I have attended were very informative and developmental. The workshops have groomed me into the leadership positions that I hold. I have gained administration and organisational skills. (P3)*

*In my understanding, the term professional development is associated with gaining new skills through continuous education in one's career training. This is to improve your knowledge and skills in your work field. It is of great importance that HoDs to receive professional development in order to be able to lead educators under their departments to the best of their ability. (P6)*

As the participants expressed, being in a leadership position is not an easy job. The participants highlighted how PDPs influenced how they adapted to their leadership positions. P1 noted:

*Professional development programmes provide me as a leader, with the ability to adapt to the changes that occur in the workplace. In order to be aligned with leadership changes, as educators we need to be developed professionally to become better and meet the daily changes of leadership.*

P4 also shared how PDPs develop their content knowledge in teaching and learning:

*These workshops become a steppingstone which makes it easier to adapt into a leadership position and become productive as a manager. These development programmes have been beneficial as they have allowed me to learn new content in teaching and learning.*

P10 added:

*To professional develop, it means to groom and shape an individual to better within the career that they do. Our education system is ever-changing and therefore needs*

*managers who evolve with the times. It is important to develop HoDs professionally in order to educate HoDs with new methods of leadership that come in the education sector.*

The experiences shared by the participants highlight the multifaceted benefits of PDPs for HoDs. For example, as the participants established, the PDPs are spaces where they grow as curriculum leaders, administrators and teachers. The participants confirmed that these programmes have significantly boosted their confidence, enabling them to manage ongoing challenges within the school system effectively. The data revealed that attending the various workshops instilled a sense of confidence and preparedness to face the current educational challenges as the development programmes were highly informative and instrumental in grooming them for leadership roles and enhancing their administrative and organisational skills. As the data analysed established, the benefits of the programmes are that they serve as a foundation for the transition into leadership positions and enhance managers' productivity while contributing to acquiring new content knowledge in teaching and learning. Overall, the participants' experiences indicate that PDPs are crucial for the holistic development of HoDs, helping them grow as curriculum leaders, administrators and effective educators.

#### **4.4.2 Views and experiences of the Quality Management System (QMS) as a Professional Development Programme (PDP)**

As acknowledged by the participants, the QMS is meant to be a PDP initiated to enhance teaching and learning methodologies. The participants believed that the QMS PDP is a standardised framework that assists educators, including HoDs, to understand their managerial responsibilities to improve their performance levels. They expressed the following:

As an HoD, what are your personal views on the QMS development programme? Go into details about your experience with the programme, has it adequately developed you holistically as an HoD.

*Quality Management System is a PDP that focuses on developing educators and management persona in schools to improve teaching and learning strategies. (P1)*

*Quality Management System develops HoDs to assist educators understand their duties while increasing their level of performance through development. (P11)*

*The Quality Management System is a PDP that provides a standardised framework followed to keep a record of employee performance for education. (P9)*

The data presented provides an in-depth understanding of how participants experienced the QMS programme as a PDP. The participants agreed that the QMS PDP assists HoDs to improve teaching and learning by developing them as curriculum managers. According to the participants, the QMS PDP provides HoDs with the required skills that help them manage educator performance and improve teaching and learning outcomes. According to the data, the growth of HoDs promotes educator development.

#### **4.4.2.1 Monitoring and implementation processes of the Quality Management System (QMS) as a Professional Development Programme (PDP)**

To understand the QMS as a PDP, HoDs were asked about the monitoring and implementation processes in their schools. Participants described the QMS' implementation and monitoring processes as a system administered by conducting classroom visits, lesson observations and peer evaluations. The participants discussed their experiences with the QMS PDP monitoring procedure as follows:

When was QMS implemented, during the period of QMS in your school, when is it usually conducted and how is it conducted?

*QMS was recognised in 2020 in our school, but the process of implementation began in 2021. This was due to the distraction of COVID-19 restrictions that were in place. We usually conduct the processes of evaluation twice a year, in June and November. (P1)*

*QMS started in 2021. It is an evaluation programme that keeps track of the educator's performance standard. It is used as a direction to guide educators during their teaching.*

*Records of the classroom observations are kept. QMS is conducted twice a year, during the mid-year and at the end of the year. We conduct QMS by having classroom visits and observations where educators are evaluated by their peers and HoDs during a lesson. (P4)*

*QMS is a development programme, implemented in 2021 in my school. During QMS, we usually do class visits where our peers and management go to the educator's class to observe their lessons. After the lesson observation has been completed, feedback and complements are delivered. During QMS, the educators teaching results are kept for record purposes. (P8)*

Probing further, the participants shared how the QMS PDP is implemented at their workplaces:

*QMS entails formalising an education system that enables proper evaluation and monitoring of educators and school performance. It is implemented through classroom visits and observations whereby educators are evaluated by their peers and HoD during their teaching and learning. It is a way of assessing educators to make room for improving our teaching strategies for the betterment of our learners. The performance standard paperwork is completed and kept for record keeping. (P4)*

*During QMS implementation, we conduct classroom observations where educators are observed during their teaching. This is done in order to keep record of the challenges that educators encounter during their teaching and learning. Each educator is measured and rated according to a performance standard. After classroom observations record keeping is completed, feedback for each educator is given and strategic planning to better teaching and learning is conducted. (P7)*

*QMS PDP measures the performance of educators in line with their respective roles and responsibility. During the implementation, classroom observations are conducted. This is where an educator is observed while they are teaching a lesson. After the lesson observation has been completed feedback and complements are delivered back to each educator. (P9)*

Participants explained that the QMS as a PDP in schools was initiated in 2021 and involves systematic monitoring and implementation through classroom visits, lesson

observations and peer evaluations. Despite a delay due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the QMS PDP is now conducted bi-annually, in June and November.

The participants reported that the evaluations aim to maintain and improve teaching standards, with educators observed by peers and HoDs to identify challenges and guide strategic planning. Detailed records of these evaluations are kept, and constructive feedback is provided post-observation to aid professional growth. As the HoDs indicated, the processes promote collaborative PD and continuous improvement in teaching quality. In addition, discussions among staff members on the implementation process are held, and documentation is kept as confirmation of the QMS PDP's implementation. Educators are evaluated based on performance standards, and feedback serves as a reference and proof of record keeping, emphasising the challenges and opportunities for development identified during classroom observations.

#### **4.4.2.2 Perceptions of peer evaluation during Quality Management System (QMS) implementation**

The data analysed indicated that the participants shared a common view concerning their peers and positively acknowledged peer evaluation as a method that enables them to develop professionally. The participants noted that the procedure generates a sense of motivation and a desire to advance professionally. Some participants said the following:

Personally, how does it feel to be evaluated by your peers during your teaching?

*I feel good about being evaluated since QMS is about an individual being able to measure their level of capability. QMS has equipped me with the skills to view the peer evaluation process positively. I learn from my peers, and they can also learn from me. What helps me a lot is that I constructively take the comments and use them to grow professionally. (P3)*

*Peer evaluations give me positive feelings and motivation to make job-related changes; it made me grow and advance my career professionally. It helps me to change and improve my quality of teaching and leadership position. (P5)*

*Personally I feel comfortable because during these evaluations people with different experience come together and work hand in hand. As an HoD, there is a lot that I learn from my junior peers regardless of me being their leader. (P6)*

*Being evaluated by my peer is good for me. This is where I am encouraged to put in more effort during my teaching. This is where I uplift my level of standard. I feel at ease and comfortable as I know that someone will give me constructive feedback in order to improve where necessary. (P9)*

However, the process is not without its challenges as some participants explained that being evaluated by one's peers can invoke feelings of anxiety, a fear of intimidation, making mistakes and feeling exposed. P2 and P4 revealed the following:

*At first, even the thought of knowing that your peers would be there looking at you while teaching was intimidating. One only thinks about what if they make mistakes or are not good enough during their teaching. Knowing that you will be given feedback regarding how you conducted a lesson was frightening. After a few years of doing QMS, I learned a lot and new strategies that I didn't know before. (P2)*

*No matter the years that you have as an experienced educator, the anxiety always kicks in during QMS. It can be daunting to have the experience of a peer assessing your teaching. One always feels exposed to having someone else in your personal space. (P4)*

P8 and P10 shared their experiences of peer evaluations:

*During peer evaluation you become intimidated simply because you are afraid to make a mistake or you may think that your peers may view your teaching as not good enough. With all the practice that I gained over the years being observed has certainly become easier with time. (P8)*

*Peer evaluation is never easy. In the beginning it is scary as you are aware that you have your peers watching you while you teach. (P10)*

The participants' perceptions of the peer evaluation process of the QMS implementation revealed a nuanced perspective. While the process was generally viewed positively, with participants acknowledging its role in fostering PD, motivation and career advancement, it also brought challenges. The data indicated that peer

evaluation helps HoDs measure their capabilities, learn from peers and make constructive job-related changes, as highlighted by the extracts. However, feelings of anxiety, fear and intimidation are common, as described by participants. Despite these challenges, the long-term benefits of gaining new strategies and improving teaching quality signify the overall positive impact of peer evaluations on professional growth.

#### **4.4.2.3 Experiences of the Quality Management System (QMS) as a Professional Development Programme (PDP)**

The HoDs expressed that the QMS PDP is crucial for enhancing their professional development. The participants shared that they have experienced positive changes from the QMS PDP, empowering HoDs' managerial abilities through ongoing performance updates. The QMS PDP, as the participants alleged, brought about positivity by empowering the capabilities of HoDs as managers by continuously updating their performance standards. Under management capabilities, P1 indicated the following:

As an HoD, what are your personal views on the QMS development programme? Go into details about your experience with the programme, has it adequately developed you holistically as an HoD.

*The QMS programme is very crucial in my department. QMS allows me to keep all my records of meetings, engagements with educators, and everything that involves curriculum; this is a way of developing me. think the main purpose of QMS is to become better daily. (P1)*

*I have gained tremendously in the level of being a manager and leader in my position As an HoD I have to take accountability in everything that is happening in my department. Through QMS PDP, I have been developed to better my understanding of curriculum management. (P3)*

*Being exposed to QMS has allowed me to upgrade my leadership and work ethic. QMS has allowed me to be able to keep track of my self-evaluation. It keeps me updated on my capabilities and keeps me informed of areas that need improvement. (P4)*

Sharing further, the participants explained that the QMS PDP enhanced their performance standards as managers in their schools:

*I have become independent and a productive team player. The QMS PDP has structured me to be open-minded when it comes to understanding the learners and educators I work with. With this knowledge, I have come to realisation that we are all unique and respond to situations uniquely and therefore as a leader and manager I need to accommodate everyone's uniqueness in the workplace. (P5)*

*In my participation in the QMS PDP, I have mastered the use of the learned skills that I have been equipped with such as it has become much easier for me to handle curriculum wisely. I have learned leadership skills that have guided me to be able to supervise educators in my phase. I have gained the ability to have good work relationships with fellow colleagues. (P9)*

*On a personal level, the QMS development programme is essential for us as management staff in schools. In my years of experience, QMS has positively influenced my career. It has awakened my teaching philosophy and has upgraded my work ethic. (P10)*

The data presented provides useful insights into the beliefs of HoDs regarding the QMS PDP. The participants acknowledged the need to enhance their PD and indicated that the overall QMS PDP benefited their PD as HoDs. For example, exposure to the QMS PDP has granted HoDs greater authority in their managerial roles. The QMS PDP, as mentioned by the participants, equipped HoDs to successfully manage the curriculum. The data demonstrated that HoDs constantly engage in development such as maintaining the record of their self-evaluation while improving their capabilities in areas of enhancement.

The data revealed that the QMS PDP elevated the performance standards of HoDs by enhancing their work ethics. Participants reported that they are now competent in sustaining good professional relationships. The participants' evaluations concerning the QMS indicate that as a PDP, it contributes to the HoDs' overall development as school leaders and managers.

#### **4.4.3 Challenges experienced during the Quality Management System (QMS) implementation**

Heads of departments (HoDs) faced difficulties when implementing the QMS PDP, including issues with educators' attitudes, time consumption and too much paperwork during its implementation. Participants discussed the following:

What are the challenges that you have encountered during the implementation of the QMS programme in your school as an HoD?

*The attitude of educators towards QMS is a very big challenge. Some educators only prepare for lessons when they know it is time for QMS evaluations. Others become lazy when QMS evaluations have been completed and lack enthusiasm for doing their best in the classroom. (P3)*

*During the self-awarding of scores of educators, the issue of attitude of educators becomes problematic. Some educators give themselves higher score in the performance standards than they deserve, which contradicts from the score they have been awarded by their HoDs. (P5)*

*At times, a HoD and educator may not reach an agreement of the performance standard during classroom observation. This can result in a conflict between the two colleagues. (P7)*

The participants further expressed that the implementation process of the QMS PDP can be time-consuming:

*The QMS Annual Plan can be impossible to cater for all educators simply because of how often it required to be conducted and there is limited time in schools to conduct it thoroughly. (P6)*

*QMS is very time-consuming for us educators simply because there is no time allocated for it on the curriculum. During evaluations, too much time is consumed for classroom visits. As HoDs, our teaching and learning time becomes consumed by evaluations. I believe that QMS needs to be time-locked to minimise the lost time in teaching and learning. (P8)*

*During the period of conducting QMS there are times where we do not get adequate time to effectively implement QMS PDP during classroom observation, simply because as HoDs our job is always to teach, manage educators and also be in-charge of QMS.*

*(P10)*

*The documentation process of QMS PDP can be daunting. Starting from pre-evaluation meeting minutes that need to be conducted, post-evaluation minutes then finally coming into the QMS appraisal document that records the performance standards that are recorded during lesson observation. (P2)*

*For QMS to be fully implemented, there are a record of documentation that need to be completed as a checklist and record keeping of the process. (P7)*

*There is too much paperwork that needs to be completed when conducting QMS. The document has about four performance standards and each have criteria that needs to be addressed during lesson observation. (P9)*

As the data revealed, the implementation of the QMS PDP in schools is essential for improving educational quality and developing leaders. Evidence acquired from participants' experiences demonstrated that despite the QMS PDP's many positive aspects, its implementation faces several significant challenges including educator attitudes and excessive paperwork. In addition, the process is highly time-consuming, with insufficient time within the school schedule to conduct thorough evaluations, impacting both teaching and administrative duties. The documentation required for the QMS is extensive and burdensome, involving pre- and post-evaluation minutes, detailed appraisal documents and multiple performance standards, further complicating the implementation. These challenges highlight the need for adjustments in QMS implementation to better accommodate school environments' practical constraints. The participants also stated that performing the QMS PDP consumes a significant amount of their teaching and learning time. Participants indicated that disagreements may occur during class observations, as educators and HoDs may not always agree on performance scores. Classroom observations are also time-consuming, forcing HoDs to pause their regular duties, which is stressful and difficult. The required substantial paperwork serves as a record to confirm the effective

implementation of the QMS PDP in schools. Thus, while the QMS PDP has many positive aspects, its implementation needs refinement to address these practical challenges.

#### **4.4.4 Strategies to strengthen the Quality Management System (QMS) as a Professional Development Programme (PDP) to effectively develop Heads of Departments (HoDs)**

The HoDs proposed various strategies to improve the efficiency and strengthen the QMS as a PDP. These included conducting the QMS online, allocating time for the QMS in the teaching and learning curriculum, and expanding the duration of the QMS workshops as noted below:

What are some of the strategies that can be implemented to elevate the challenges encountered during the implementation of QMS PDP?

*QMS can have too much paperwork to be conducted. Less paperwork can make the implementation more productive. Maybe it could be done electronically it would be better. (P4)*

*With the evolving times of technology, the use of paperwork can be exhausting. I would recommend that the record keeping of QMS PDP to be conducted electronically. (P6)*

*The Department of Education should consider the programme to be shifted to digital platform, in replacement of the level of paperwork currently. (P9)*

For the QMS implementation to not interfere with teaching and learning time, the participants shared the following possible solutions:

*Firstly, it is very time-consuming for us educators simply because there is no time allocated for it within the curriculum. I believe that QMS needs to also be given its time in order to minimise the lost time of teaching and learning. (P1)*

*The QMS PDP is essential part of our development process. Taking into consideration that it is conducted during teaching and learning time and takes up too much time during lesson observations. The Department of Education should consider allocating separate implementation time that will be allocated for QMS in order for teaching and learning to be not interrupted. (P5)*

*Being an HoD has too much responsibilities and QMS PDP implementation being one of them takes too much time away from the HoDs. This results in limited time for teaching and learning. (P8)*

In a further probe, the participants established that PD does not happen overnight. For professionals to be effectively developed ongoing training is essential. Some participants made these suggestions:

*Challenges of QMS can be addressed by the department providing full support to educators through having more time in workshops or having workshops regularly (those that do mentoring and coaching). Circuit managers must ensure that QMS is conducted thoroughly in schools. They need to make school visits during QMS time to give support and ensure quality implementation. (P3)*

*As leaders and managers professional training is essential and should be conducted regularly for it to be effective. The QMS PDP should have regular informative workshops to update and reinforce educator's knowledge and skills development. (P7)*

*We need to be constantly developed and therefore the QMS PDP should be conducted at least twice a year in the form of workshop. (P9)*

Participants offered several critical initiatives to strengthen the QMS PDP in schools. The participants argued that incorporating technology into educational institutions can improve the implementation of the QMS' data analysis, conduct online QMS evaluations and create e-content. The integration of technology can transform the educational system and encourage quality improvements in schools. The participants proposed that educators adopt a continuous learning mindset which involves proper training and support for the QMS as a PDP. Offering continuous guidance and resources will assist in the proper implementation of QMS standards.

During continuous training, participants suggested that achieved successes should be celebrated and learned from setbacks to continuously improve the QMS as a PDP. The participants emphasised the importance of ensuring that schools have the necessary resources, particularly adequate time devoted to the QMS implementation, to improve programme effectiveness. By following these strategies, schools could

enhance their PD, while establishing a culture of continuous improvement that supports the delivery of high-quality education and leadership success.

## 4.5 Document Analysis

Documented sources were analysed to enhance the study's findings. The QMS management plan, QMS pre-evaluation minutes, QMS post-appraisal discussion minutes on performance standards and the QMS appraisal instrument document were the documents analysed during the study, depending on their availability in each school. Table 4.4 below presents the documents as analysed.

**Table 4.4: Document analysis**

	<b>QMS management plan</b>	<b>QMS preevaluation minutes</b>	<b>QMS postappraisal discussion minutes on performance standards</b>	<b>QMS appraisal instrument</b>
<b>School: A</b>	Available	Available	Available	Available
<b>School: AA</b>	Available	Unavailable	Available	Available
<b>School: B</b>	Available	Unavailable	Unavailable	Available
<b>School: BB</b>	Available	Available	Available	Available

### 4.5.1 Quality Management System (QMS) management plan

In all four schools sampled in the study the QMS management plan was accessible (see Table 4.4). The document outlines the school's QMS implementation schedule

and strategy. The QMS management plan is a strategic document that explains the approach for implementing and managing quality in schools. The management plan entails the comprehensive methods, processes and duties of each person within the school. The document describes the school's management operations, timeframes and performance standards. Each document consisted of developed plans for conflict resolution and evolution management to solve issues. These documents included strategies to promote continuous improvement, such as feedback and PD for staff members. The schools used this programme as a guide during the implementation of the QMS period. Figure 4.1 below shows a sample of the cover page of the QMS management plan from one of the research sites. This booklet specified what needs to be completed during each school term. The length of each school's QMS management plan varied.

**IMPLEMENTATION OF QMS MANAGEMENT PLAN  
2023**

**TERM 1 & 2**

<p align="center">February 2023 March 2023</p>	<p>Hand out QMS booklet for 2023 Training of QMS : Roles and responsibilities QMS Management Plan Work plan PL2-4 (Signed end January) Vision and Mission Table of content Principal and staff Personal details Grievance committee Develop Implementation plan (End of March)</p>
<p align="center">April 2023 June 2023</p>	<p>Self- appraisal by educators (End of April) Pre-appraisal meeting Lesson observation (End of May) Mid-year appraisal (End of June) Post-appraisal meeting Principal/ Deputy principal sign forms</p>

**TERM 3 & 4**

<p align="center">July 2023 September 2023</p>	<p>Performance review (End of July) Personal Growth Plan (Developmental Needs) (End of August) Performance review (End of September)</p>
<p align="center">October 2023</p>	<p>Self- appraisal by educators (End of October) Pre-appraisal meeting Lesson observation (4<sup>th</sup> term) Annual appraisal (End of November) Post-appraisal meeting Principal/ Deputy principal sign forms Submission of Composite score sheet to District</p>

**Figure 4.1: Sample from a QMS management plan booklet**

#### **4.5.2 Quality Management System (QMS) pre-evaluation minutes**

Only two of the four schools, Schools A and BB, had QMS pre-evaluation minutes, compiled from meetings held before the QMS PDP was conducted at the schools. During data collection for the document analysis checklist, Schools AA and B did not have QMS pre-evaluation minutes. The minutes are from meetings held in the schools as briefings on how the QMS would be conducted. These pre-evaluation minutes reflected the monitoring of performance and PD interventions for educators as part of the QMS implementation process. Overall, the QMS pre-evaluation minutes demonstrate that the school systematically plans, communicates and monitors QMS implementation to promote continuous improvement in teaching, learning and school management. Figures 4.2 and 4.3 below show samples of the two pre-evaluation minutes documents from School A and School BB.



QMS

PRE-EVALUATION MINUTES ~ 1

<u>NAME OF EDUCATOR</u>		<u>SIGN</u>
<u>RESOURCE PERSON</u>		<u>SIGN</u>
<u>DEPT. HEAD</u>		<u>SIGN</u>
<u>DATE</u>		

WHICH PERFORMANCE STANDARD/S DID YOU NEED DEVELOPMENT/ASSISTANCE ON PREVIOUSLY?
ELABORATE ON HOW YOU NEEDED DEVELOPMENT/ASSISTANCE
DID YOU RECEIVE SUPPORT FROM YOUR TEAM...ELABORATE
WHICH PERFORMANCE STANDARDS DO YOU NEED ASSISTANCE ON IN CURRENT YEAR
HOW DO YOU INSPIRE ACTIVITIES IN YOUR SUBJECT/GRADE
WHAT HAVE YOU DONE IN TERMS OF YOUR OWN PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT.ELABORATE
WHAT DO YOU THINK CONSTITUTES EDUCATOR PROFESSIONALISM?

Figure 4.2: Example of QMS pre-evaluation minutes of School A

**PRE – APPRAISAL DISCUSSION (MEETING)**  
2023  
QMS

Name of school	[Redacted]											
Post Level of educator/appraisee	1	2	3	4	Educator / Appraisee				Name/Surname			
Resource person	Name/Surname				REQV of educator/appraisee				10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17			
Date of meeting	2023				Appraiser				DH DP P Name/Surname			
Chairperson	DH				Duration of meeting				P			
Date to visit teacher	2023				Period				1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10			
Subject					Grade				R-RRR 1 2 3 4 5 6 7			
Topic of lesson	Lesson activities											
Info												
Lesson: observation instrument seen	Yes	No	Performance standards discussed				Yes	No				
Criteria for Performance standard's discussed	Yes	No	Scoring discussed				Yes	No				
Educator and appraiser have a common understanding of scoring	Yes	No	Descriptors discussed (sub sections)				Yes	No				
List of contextual factors hindering performance												
Language barrier	Not enough support from parents				Not enough support from SMT/Grade Head/Subject Head							
Class total of learners	LTSM shortage				Teacher no knowledge of subject							
Don't get work done in term	To many learners absent				Other / None							
If other please indicate :												
SIGNATURES												
ROLE	NAME / SURNAME				DATE				SIGNATURE			
Educator / Appraisee					2023							
Resource Person					2023							
Supervisor/Appraiser	DH				2023							
	DP				2023							
	P				2023							

Figure 4.3: Example of QMS pre-evaluation minutes of School B

#### **4.5.3 Quality Management System (QMS) post-appraisal discussion minutes on performance standards**

According to Table 4.4 above, only three schools (Schools A, AA, and BB) provided access to the post-appraisal discussion minute document. This document contained the minutes of meetings held after the QMS had been completed to get feedback on the performance of educators during their evaluations. The minutes indicated that the SMT met to conclude the QMS implementation. The post-evaluation minutes are essential for facilitating meaningful, providing educators the opportunity to discover areas for development and serving as a foundation for ongoing PD. The minutes of the post-evaluation include the key issues discussed, the stipulated development requirements and the support required for educators (see Figures 4.4, 4.5 & 4.6).



QMS

PERFORMANCE STANDARDS DISCUSSION (MID YEAR / ANNUAL)

EDUCATOR	
RESOURCE PERSON	
DEPT. HEAD	
DATE	
SIGNATURES	

PERFORMANCE STANDARD	SCORES	SUPPORTING INFORMATION
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		

Figure 4.4: Example of the evaluation post-appraisal discussion minutes on performance standards of School A

POST – APPRAISAL DISCUSSION (MEETING)  
2023  
QMS

Name of school					Educator / Appraiser					Name/Surname				
Post Level of educator/appraisee	1	2	3	4	REQV of educator/appraisee	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	
Resource person					Appraiser	DH	DP	P	Name/Surname					
Date of meeting	2023				Duration of meeting									
Chairperson	DH				DP				Mr. M Botha				P	Mr. AB Rich

1. SELF EVALUATION ( EDUCATOR / APPRAISEE) (Performance Standard : P1/P2 – 1-3 & P3/P4 – 1)

List performance standard recommended for development :

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. REPORT FROM RESOURCE PERSON (Performance Standard : P1/P2 – 1-3 & P3/P4 – 1)

List performance standard recommended for development :

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3. REPORT ( SUPERVISOR / APPRAISER) (Departmental Head/Deputy Principal/Principal) (Performance Standard : P1/P2 – 1-3 & P3/P4 – 1)

List performance standard recommended for development :

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

4. PANEL DECISION

LIST PERFORMANCE STANDARD RECOMMENDED FOR DEVELOPMENT (Performance Standard : P1 -4-5 & P2 – 4-6 & P3/P4 – 2-7)

- a) \_\_\_\_\_
- b) \_\_\_\_\_
- c) \_\_\_\_\_

Figure 4.5: Example of the evaluation post-appraisal discussion minutes on performance standards of School AA



QMS

PERFORMANCE STANDARDS DISCUSSION

EDUCATOR	
RESOURCE PERSON	
DEPT. HEAD	
PERFORMANCE STANDARD	5: EXTRA MURAL AND CO-CURRICULAR PARTICIPATION
DATE	
SIGNATURES	

<u>INDICATE MURAL /CO-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES ORGANISED/PARTICIPATED IN</u>	<u>DATE</u>	<u>DESCRIPTION OF ROLE FUNCTIONS</u>	<u>SIGN</u>

FINAL DISCUSSION ON SCORING:

--

Figure 4.6: Example of the evaluation post-appraisal discussion minutes on performance standards of school BB

#### **4.5.4 Quality Management System (QMS) appraisal instrument document**

Table 4.7 above illustrates that all the schools used the QMS appraisal document. The appraisal instrument document is used throughout the QMS process and evaluates the performance standards of educators. The appraisal is conducted twice during the school year, usually in the middle of the year (May/June) and towards the end of the year (October/November). This instrument focuses on evaluating the performance of educators against a predetermined standard criterion. The document consists of six pages (see Appendix B2). Figure 4.7 shows the first page of the QMS appraisal instrument document for HoDs.

**QUALITY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM (QMS)  
APPRAISAL INSTRUMENT  
EDUCATOR: POST LEVEL 1**

*(To be completed twice during the school year – June and November)*

**SECTION A: EDUCATOR AND SCHOOL INFORMATION**

**1. APPRAISEE**

Surname		First names	
Designation		Personal number	
Highest Qualification		Specialization in subject domain	
Grade / Subjects taught during current appraisal year			

**2. APPRAISER**

Surname		First names	
Designation		Personal number	

**3. SCHOOL**

Name of school		Province	
Circuit/district		Principal's name	
Telephone		Cell No	

**4. EDUCATOR'S BRIEF JOB DESCRIPTION (Subjects/Grades/Key areas of responsibility, etc)**

Teaching and assessment responsibilities	Extra-mural activities	Administrative duties	Other (Please specify)

**Figure 4.7: Example of QMS appraisal instrument document**

The above-mentioned QMS documents that were examined revealed uniformity in the implementation of the QMS DP. The documents demonstrated that the QMS has a procedural structure that all schools follow. The implementation structure followed differed slightly from school to school. In Table 4.5 above, it was revealed that not all the schools completed the QMS implementation process. The findings indicated a deficiency in the record keeping in some schools. This lack of record keeping raises doubts about the proper implementation of PD in the schools under study.

#### **4.6 Chapter Summary**

In this chapter, data generated from the participants was presented and analysed. Semi-structured interviews and document analysis were used as data collection tools. The analysis process involved the organisation and interpretation of collected data, ensuring that the research objectives were met and that the data was effectively used to address the research questions. The analysis' conclusions revealed significant themes concerning the interactions of HoDs and their experiences with the QMS PDP. These themes include a) HoDs' understanding of PDPs, b) opinions on QMS as a PDP, and c) challenges encountered by HoDs throughout the implementation of the QMS PDP. Data collection and analysis have provided valuable insights into HoDs and the QMS PDP. The following chapter presents a discussion of findings, conclusions and recommendations for future research.

## **CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION**

### **5.1 Introduction**

The proceeding chapter presented and analysed the data received from the participants' narratives on their experiences of the QMS as a PDP. This chapter discusses the findings and conclusions derived from the analysed data. It also provides recommendations for future research.

The study's aim was to explore the HoDs' experiences of the QMS as a PDP. To achieve this aim, the following objectives had to be met:

1. Establish the HoDs' views of the QMS as a PDP.
2. Determine the HoDs' experiences of the QMS as a PDP.
3. Identify the challenges the HoDs experience with the QMS as a PDP.
4. Explore how the QMS as a PDP can be strengthened to effectively develop HoDs' professionally in their leadership and management roles.

The following section outlines the findings related to these objectives.

### **5.3 Major Findings**

The study revealed four (4) major findings namely (1) Understanding of PD, (2) QMS as a development programme, (3) Views of the QMS as a PDP, (4) Challenges experienced by HoDs during the implementation of the QMS and strategies to strengthen the QMS as a PDP. These findings are discussed below.

#### **5.3.1 Understanding of Professional Development (PD)**

The findings revealed that the participants commonly comprehended PD as continuous training that cultivates and enhances their skills, expanding their

knowledge and leadership capabilities. The data further established that to be professionally developed, a person needs to be involved in continuous training and education to acquire new skills and knowledge that will assist in their career growth.

Muriuki *et al.* (2020) acknowledge that PD is development that enhances a person's needed skills and knowledge. Literature attests that PD for educators, often called inservice education or staff development, has evolved to achieve various objectives (Osamwonyi, 2016). It is recognised as the sharing of skills and knowledge by training HoDs in a direction that enhances their teaching and management capabilities (Gubbins and Hayden, 2020). Leadership PD, therefore, focuses on educating leaders and managers to engage in difficult conversations that may transpire during their work (Tachie and Mancotywa, 2021).

The data revealed that PD is continual training that occurs in the form of workshops for educators to obtain new skills and knowledge that can assist educators to progress in their professions. This links to the significance of the ALT for successfully instructing and engaging adult learners in various educational environments (Wiseman, 2022). Mizell (2017) characterised formal PD as group learning conducted through educational institutions, workshops and conferences among others. Johnson and Majewshka (2022) notes that formal learning transpires face-to-face with goals to achieve, and informal development is unplanned, spontaneous and organic training. This type of learning occurs during meetings among colleagues, through peer learning or by undertaking independent research. The participants also stated that they had participated in various PDP workshops such as on the QMS, OBE, CAPS and others and found them beneficial for HoD PD. Olujuwon and Perumal (2015) mention that PDPs can facilitate participants' transition to leadership positions. For example, the participants stated that PDPs are places where they can develop as curriculum leaders, administrators and teachers. They noted that these programmes have substantially increased their confidence, allowing them to effectively handle contemporary issues in the school system. According to the ALT, adults learn more effectively when lessons are applied to real-world situations, and they are motivated when they understand why what they are learning is essential (Mukhalalati and Taylor, 2019).

Professional development (PD) cultivates successful leadership behaviours, promoting the ability of HoDs to be better equipped to overcome challenges they experience, and encouraging continuous improvement in educational environments through improved administrative and management skills (Buthelezi *et al.*, 2021). According to Hallinger and Lee (2013), HoDs who pursue professional growth evolve as leaders. The data analysis revealed that the workshops serve as a basis for moving into leadership positions, increasing managerial productivity and contributing to the acquisition of new content knowledge in teaching and learning. Overall, the participants' experiences show that PDPs are critical for the holistic development of HoDs, assisting them in growing as curriculum leaders, administrators and effective instructors.

### **5.3.2 Views and experiences of the Quality Management System (QMS) as a Professional Development Programme (PDP)**

The study revealed that the participants perceived the QMS as a PDP that focuses on evaluating their performance and providing continuous support for improvement. Performance management is an essential procedure in schools, given that it assists the SMT in focusing their attention on vital issues to ensure sustainability and improvement in administering quality education in schools (DBE, 2021). The participants perceived QMS as a PDP consisting of a structured framework that assists educators, especially HoDs, in understanding their managerial responsibilities while enhancing their performance levels. Jayaweera *et al.* (2021) believe there is a relationship between instructional leadership practices and PD features, such as the potential for enhanced instructional practice. Jayaweera *et al.*, (2021) continued to state that leaders at all levels required subject matter knowledge and a solid understanding of their duties. According to Feder (2021), the ALT promotes adult learners to participate in activities that keep their minds active and allow them to learn. Fairbanks (2021) believes that adult learners bring knowledge and life experience with them, and they want to be able to use that knowledge in a new context. Adults become more effective during teachings that can be applied to real-world situations such as their workplace (Fairbanks, 2021)

### **5.3.2.1 Monitoring, implementation and peer evaluation**

As evidenced by the data, QMS was implemented in 2021. The participants shared that QMS as a PDP, is monitored twice a year in their schools, in June and December. The participants revealed that QMS is monitored by the HoDs and educator peers to keep track of the performance standards of educators. As stated by Hammond *et al.* (2017), PD can take various forms such as pre-service training, in-service training, work-based training, seminars and workshops and mentorship programmes.

The participants explained that the QMS as a PDP was implemented and is monitored by having, peer evaluations of lessons during classroom visits. The data demonstrated that participants frequently witnessed peer evaluation as an effective method of QMS as a PDP that permits them to further develop professionally. Participants perceived peer evaluation as a motivation to do better and felt the courage to put in more effort during their teaching. As mentioned by the participants, classroom observations are a way to maintain and improve the educator's performance standards and while overcoming the challenges that educators encounter during teaching and learning. The QMS is designed to facilitate and give support to the needs of educators through peer evaluation.

As established by Merriam (2017), the ALT emphasises that DPs must be designed with adults in mind to be effective and relevant to them. According to Burns and Lawrie (2018), workshops are facilitated by an expert in the subject being discussed, and the observers serve as the learners. Burns and Lawrie (2018) further elaborated that the objective of workshops is to create a platform for people to exchange information. Reños and Pontillas (2024) established that classroom observations are when an educator's classroom performance is observed, usually by a peer (educator) or senior personnel (HoD). Reños and Pontillas (2024) added that observations are techniques for assessing and recording an educator's behaviour and method of acquiring what is to be taught. Helain (2013) acknowledged what the participants shared when affirming that an observer's feedback during a classroom observation allows the evaluated person to identify their strengths and weaknesses.

A study conducted by Diez *et al.* (2018) revealed that QMS PDP is beneficial when it comes to school improvements. Loeng and Safruddin (2022) established that QMS PDP in schools enhances the overall quality of education delivery. From the data analysed, the participants all shared that the QMS can be a valuable PDP for schools. According to Diez *et al.* (2018), implementing the QMS PDP in educational institutions enhances the quality of education by encouraging continuous improvement in both educator and learner performance. By implementing the QMS, schools and school managers can improve their performance, enhance the quality of education, increase collaboration and make better decisions.

### ***5.3.2.2 Experiences of the Quality Management System (QMS) as a Professional Development Programme (PDP)***

According to the study, PDPs are beneficial and have contributed to improving the quality of teaching and learning. Zide and Mokhele (2018) declared that the purpose of professional development is intended to prepare educators to navigate the challenges and expectations of a democratic South Africa and the global 21st century.

The participants stated that the QMS raised educators' teaching standards, motivating them to educate to the best of their ability. The QMS provides precise guidance on how to conduct teaching and learning using performance standards. As evidenced by the participants, Muriuki *et al.* (2020) believe that education today demands highly skilled professional teachers and school leaders.

THE QMS as a PDP enhances the performance of the education system by keeping documentation of procedures, processes, and responsibilities of educators to improve school development (DBE 2021). According to Diez *et al.* (2018), the training and development of HoDs during QMS PDP provide uniformity of administrative and academic procedures as well as the teaching and learning process. Diez *et al.* (2018), further added that this uniformity facilitates how HoDs understand their duties and responsibilities, leading to improved performance.

The participants observed that, through the implementation of the QMS, they were provided detailed instructions regarding the best way to conduct educational activities.

The QMS as a PDP encouraged growth in both educators and HoDs. It aims to improve teaching and learning holistically, from developing learners to developing educators. The QMS also fostered self-evaluation, allowing individuals to identify and transform weaknesses into strengths. It was also reported that the QMS as a PDP includes the amount of development required.

Furthermore, the study indicated that the PDP strengthens educators' teaching standards by promoting self-evaluation while encouraging individuals to discover imperfections and transform them into strengths. It was also discovered that QMS entails the development level that HoDs require to be able to execute their management duties efficiently. Performance management is a significant process in schools, given that it assists SMTs in focusing their attention on basic issues that facilitate the sustainability and enhancement of quality education (DBE, 2021). According to the ALT, Barker (2020) established that adult learners have several learning styles that influence how they receive and understand knowledge. Barker (2022) believes that recognising the various learning styles is beneficial in obtaining new knowledge and processing information more effectively.

According to the DBE (2021), evaluating the performance standards of HoDs is necessary to enhance their standards of accountability and development. As revealed by existing literature, the QMS PDP entails identifying areas for improvement and setting objectives and targets while implementing actions to achieve those targets (RSA, 2021). Girmanova *et al.*, (2017) explained the National Development Plan (NPD) vision of enhancing accountability in the education sector by the year 2030. Girmanova *et al.*, (2017) continued to discuss that the application of performance management in schools grants the opportunity to assist HoDs in sustainability in delivering quality education.

This training and development of HoDs through the implementation of the QMS as a PDP generates the acquisition of new knowledge and skills, which contributes towards the performance of HoDs (Matorera, 2018). The participants declared that the implementation of the QMS has provided them with assistance during teaching and learning. The PDP has equipped HoDs with the ability to make improvements and to

share ideas as a team during the peer evaluation process. According to Tachie and Mancotywa (2021), school managers' duties have evolved from being performance evaluators to the development of educators within the department that they lead. Through the QMS, HoDs have been prepared to develop educators and develop teaching and learning strategies and concepts that aid struggling learners in simplifying what is being taught to their level of understanding. The QMS as a PDP has encouraged educators and HoDs to be flexible actioners who can overcome the developing circumstances of their roles.

### **5.3.3 Challenges experienced during the Quality Management System (QMS) implementation**

During the study, the participants shared challenges they encountered during the implementation of QMS in their schools. From the discussions, it became evident that HoDs endure difficulties such as educators' attitudes, time consumption and educator conflicts during the implementation of the QMS. Kimeu and Maina (2018) concur that evaluators typically report insufficient time to complete evaluations accurately. Kimeu and Maina (2018) further add that some evaluators revealed a deficiency in extensive knowledge of the curriculum areas in which they evaluate teachers. Despite the QMS being regarded as a development programme, evidence from participants' experiences demonstrated that challenges continue during the QMS implementation. The participants revealed that during the QMS process, the participants do not always have sufficient time and they have to accommodate the programme into their busy schedules. The QMS is incredibly time-consuming for HoDs simply because there is no time designated for the programme within the curriculum by the DoE.

The participants alleged that several performance standards that have to be achieved during the QMS have become unattainable due to the challenge of resources that they encounter in their schools, such as overcrowded classrooms due to a shortage of floor space, furniture and insufficient educational materials. The participants further shared that the lack of funding from the DoE to non-fee-paying schools ensures these challenges persist. Literature by Shongwe and Mutambara (2023) shared a similar view with their participants revealing that a lack of resources affected how the QMS is

implemented; schools may lack the essential resources, which might impede effective QMS implementation. Haubeck (2023) disclosed that the education department lacks the necessary technical support and finances to fully support the establishment of QMS in schools. Schools frequently lack the necessary technological assistance, training, and specialised knowledge to effectively implement the QMS. In addition, Shongwe and Mutambara (2023) revealed that the lack of resources experienced in schools results in an impediment to efficient implementation of the QMS.

### **5.3.5 Strengthening the Quality Management System (QMS) to effectively develop Heads of Departments(HoDs) through Professional Development (PD)**

Participants identified various essential approaches for improving the QMS as a PDP in schools. The participants alleged that by addressing these critical problems, schools can effectively achieve lasting improvements in educational quality. The data gathered demonstrated that to improve the efficiency of the QMS as a PDP, the programme implementation process could be conducted online to minimise the paperwork that the programme currently entails. The participants further revealed that it would be beneficial to have allocated time for the QMS in the teaching and learning curriculum to not disturb teaching and learning time. Brown (2019) declared that the most practical solution would be to participate in online workshops that have flexible schedules. According to the ALT, adult learners are motivated to learn when they engage in new social or life roles (Knowles, 1984). Online workshops would enable adult learners to acquire knowledge at their own pace and time while working (Brown, 2019). As mentioned by Merriam and Biereman (2014), according to the ALT, Knowles suggested that adults are looking for help and mentorship among their peers. Sterns (2023) believes that a support network is essential in current learning – adult learners need to establish relationships with others who are currently experiencing similar obstacles. Sterns (2023) further mentioned that online workshops will offer them the certainty that they are on the appropriate track; these programmes combine the benefits of freedom and a tutor who may serve as a mentor to the adult learner.

According to Gulamhussein (2014), once-off training is inefficient in equipping educators with the information and skills required to become effective in their workplaces. Gulamhussein (2014) added that having once-off workshops implies that the sole challenge that educators face is a lack of knowledge of effective teaching approaches and that once that knowledge gap has been addressed, educators will be empowered to adapt to their teaching environment. The participants stated that QMS PDP training is tightly scheduled, and that limited time is spent at the department's workshops; they proposed that increasing the duration of QMS workshops would certainly make a significant impact. Parsons (2022) established that PD is the acquisition of new skills through continuous education. Haubeck (2023) continued to say that PDPs and educational activities should be continuous and integrated into a process that encourages continual improvement in teaching and learning.

#### **5.4 Findings for Analysed Documents Relating to the Schools' Quality Management System (QMS)**

School documents covered various aspects relating to the QMS as a PDP and its implementation plan. These documents included:

- **Quality policy:** This written statement outlines the school's commitment to providing quality education and the school's objectives for achieving excellence.
- **Quality objectives:** These are specific goals and targets that a school aims to achieve, e.g. improving learner performance, enhancing educator training progress or increasing parent satisfaction.
- **Procedures and processes:** Procedures are instructions on how different activities and processes within the school should be carried out to ensure consistency and efficiency.
- **Record keeping:** This document consists of guidelines for maintaining and managing records related to learner assessments, staff qualifications, parent communication and other important documentation.

- **Management Review:** This is a document on the periodic review of the QMS by school management. The document ensures that QMS is ongoing and effective.

#### **5.4.1 Documents received and analysed from the participating schools**

##### ***5.4.5.1 Quality Management System(QMS) management plan***

The QMS management plan was accessible at all participating schools. When it was time to implement the QMS, each school developed a management plan that they adhered to. The document specifies how the QMS will be conducted, and when and where each classroom observation will occur. The dates for classroom observations varied from school to school. All the schools commonly shared the QMS implementation period bi-annually, between April and June and October to November.

Loeung and Safruddin (2022) established that by creating a comprehensive QMS management plant, schools can successfully integrate the system into their operations and strive for continual improvement in teaching and learning. According to the DBE (2022), the management plan indicates the duties and responsibilities of the school staff and describes how the QMS connects and supports the school's vision, purpose and objectives. The management plan further describes the exact methods, procedures and guidelines that will be used to ensure quality teaching and learning, administration and other school activities (DBE, 2022).

##### ***5.4.5.2 Quality Management System (QMS) pre-evaluation minutes***

Of the four participating schools, the pre-evaluation minutes were accessible at School A and School BB. The pre-evaluation minutes are completed before the classroom evaluations are conducted. During the pre-evaluation minutes, educators keep a record of their challenges during teaching and learning and their capabilities and limitations concerning the curriculum. A HoD together with an educator engage in a pre-evaluation discussion to provide educators with the necessary development support that they need before the classroom observations are conducted. The discussion is based on what is expected from the educator during classroom observation. According to Loeung and Safruddin (2022), pre-evaluation meetings

enable HoDs to identify the areas in which educators need assistance and development. The pre-evaluation minutes provide further guidance on the QMS implementation process, including using performance standards and appraisal instruments (Girmanova *et al.*, 2017). Girmanova *et al.* (2017) added that the pre evaluation minutes entail lesson preparations and mid-year and annual evaluations. During the pre-evaluation minutes, educators explore the challenges and implications associated with implementing the QMS in schools (Loeung and Safruddin, 2022).

#### **5.4.5.3 QMS post-appraisal discussion minutes on the performance standards**

The minutes of the post-appraisal discussion were only accessible at three schools (A, AA, and BB). These documents presented the minutes of meetings held following the completion of the QMS to gather feedback on the programme's implementation. The documents contained discussions and comments on how the classroom observations were accomplished. Post-appraisal meetings provide the opportunity for educators and their HoDs to reflect on their performances during classroom observation. This is where recommendations and plans for future improvement are put forward. The documents contain the processes and strategies for ongoing evaluation and improvement, and the methods for teaching and learning including staff development. As documented by ELRC No. 2 (2020), educators have an opportunity to express their concerns and get feedback during post-appraisal discussions, which also promotes transparency. The educators and their supervisors sign agreements, discuss performance standards, and share scores provided in the appraisal instrument document (ELRC No. 2 of, 2020). During the discussions, the lesson observation tools are also signed (Abusnena, 2023).

#### **5.4.5.4 Quality Management System (QMS) appraisal instrument document**

The QMS appraisal instrument document was available in the participating schools. The appraisal instrument document provides an in-depth assessment of the schools' QMS. The document outlines the criteria, techniques and recommendations used to evaluate the efficiency of the QMS in achieving each school's quality objectives. The documents provide a framework for carrying out appraisals focusing on leadership,

planning and resource management, among other topics. It also includes a checklist with a rating scale starting from one to four, in the form of a point system where one is equal to one point. This framework consists of performance standards one to six and their rating levels for each performance standard that must be adhered to during the classroom observations. The QMS appraisal document aims to verify that the QMS satisfies the necessary standards and to assist in identifying areas for development to improve the overall quality of education and school operations. The appraisal instrument documents found and analysed in the schools aimed to establish clear guidelines to promote accountability and ensure that the schools consistently met their quality objectives while striving for continuous improvement.

According to the DoE (2022), the QMS appraisal instrument document evaluates the performance of school-based educators. Dippenaar (2015) established that the document examines performance standards and the teaching, learning and assessment criteria. It provides a structured framework for evaluating performance, identifying areas for improvement and supporting the PD of educators in schools (Dippenaar, 2015).

## **5.5 Conclusion from the Findings**

In concluding this chapter, it can be stated that the absolute necessity of PD for HoDs in schools cannot be overemphasised. The findings have revealed that PDPs play a critical role in the enhancement and development of HoDs to be competent in their managerial duties. In outlining the experiences of HoDs of the QMS as a PDP, the study managed to respond to the research questions and meet the study's objectives. These included discovering the HoDs' views and experiences of the QMS as a PDP, recognising the obstacles faced by HoDs, and investigating how QMS may be strengthened to effectively develop HoDs. The experiences of HoDs on the QMS PDP vary from individual to individual, depending on their level of involvement and readiness to embrace change.

Most of the participants found the QMS challenging and full of changes as it requires them to critically review their teaching practices, make changes where necessary, and

regulate their leadership skills, which must be aligned with the school's quality objectives. Other participants have found the QMS PDP rewarding as the PDP provides an opportunity to enhance their professional development while allowing for collaboration with their colleagues from different departments. Based on the abovementioned statements and the findings of the study, it can be concluded that the QMS as a PDP is relevant to improving the development of HoDs as managers and leaders in schools. HoDs have a significant impact on the success of the QMS development programme as they play a leading role in ensuring quality standards are maintained across all subject matters within the school. According to the data findings, it was concluded that the implementation of the QMS as a PDP encountered certain challenges during implementation in schools. These challenges include the QMS PDP being time-consuming and minimising teaching and learning time, especially for HoDs who have to leave their teaching and conduct classroom observation visits.

Additionally, the data revealed that QMS consist of too much paperwork where records of classroom observations are recorded and kept for filing. HoDs further commented on the QMS PDP not being fully implemented in certain schools, resulting in the PDP not being properly employed. Acknowledging these obstacles, it is essential to conduct further investigations into what can be done to enhance the efficiency of QMS PDP. Despite these limitations, QMS continues to play a significant role in the PD of HoDs.

The findings of the study have highlighted the positive implications of HoDs and the QMS PDP on various aspects of school performance. The data indicated significant improvement in quality management practices, enhancement of communication skills, collaboration amongst colleagues, and increased motivation of HoDs in the school environment. These outcomes not only contribute to the overall growth and success of HoDs development, but they also pave the way for continuous improvement in schools. The collection and analysis of data have provided valuable insights into HoDs and the QMS PDP. Through data collection methods and various analysis techniques, a comprehensive understanding of the PDP's effectiveness and impact has been achieved. The collection of data and analysis has proven to be instrumental in understanding the effectiveness and impact of QMS PDP on HoDs. This chapter served as a comprehensive overview of the findings and recommendations derived

from the study on QMS PDP in schools. By integrating the study findings and offering practical suggestions, the study has contributed to enhancing the quality and effectiveness of education institutions. Through the implementation of QMS, schools can create an environment conducive to optimal learning outcomes, giving support to both learners and educators in their pursuit of excellence.

## **5.6 Findings and Recommendations of the Study**

**Finding 1:** There are not enough effective training and development opportunities for HoDs.

**Recommendation 1:** It is essential to strengthen the QMS PDP. This can be achieved by providing extensive training to HoDs that is tailored and accommodative to their leadership roles. The QMS training should be continuous and periodically monitored by the DoE. To enhance the programme's efficiency, the QMS PDP should include focus areas such as team management, efficient communication abilities, decision making, and issue-solving competencies. The Minister of Basic Education should consider allocating time for the QMS PDP to be implemented in schools to minimise missed teaching and learning. For the annual teaching plans (ATPs) to continue uninterrupted, time allocation for the QMS should be separated from time allocated for teaching and learning. This can be accomplished by incorporating a QMS PDP implementation plan in the ATPs provided by the DoE, specifying the time and dates that the school will conduct the QMS.

**Finding 2:** Limited resources and support available in schools for HoDs.

**Recommendation 2:** Given the challenge of limited school resources, the QMS should establish a framework that provides adequate resources and support to HoDs. This could involve the allocation of budgets for PD by the DoE, providing one-on-one mentoring and coaching opportunities for HoDs in their schools and fostering collaborative networks among HoDs from different schools to come together and share their experiences of the QMS as a PDP.

**Finding 3:** The HoDs struggle to balance administrative and instructional leadership responsibilities.

**Recommendation 3:** The QMS should prioritise administrative support for HoDs to help with their workload – this will allow them to focus more on instructional leadership and empower HoDs to drive positive change within their departments. The QMS processes could be done electronically (digitally) to save both time and paperwork.

**Finding 4:** The QMS should embrace digital technologies to streamline processes.

**Recommendation 4:** To speed up the processes, digital technologies should be integrated into the QMS system. This action will not only make the programme more efficient but also provide HoDs with valuable insights to improve their leadership strategies. Through digital technology intergrated in QMS, HoDs in schools can enhance decision making and instructional practices such as encouraging technology use among educators to enhance their confidence and competence in digital tools (Landa, Zhu, Sesabo and Machumu, 2023).

**Finding 5:** Creating a culture of recognition and appreciation.

**Recommendation 5:** It is necessary to create a culture of recognition and appreciation for the HoDs' efforts within the QMS. Acknowledging their successes and providing regular feedback will motivate HoDs to excel in their leadership roles while encouraging continuous improvement of their work.

## **5.7 Chapter Summary**

The findings, discussion and conclusion were presented in this chapter. The data findings were discussed in the order of the research questions and the themes that emerged in the previous chapter. The themes discussed were as follows: a) understanding professional development; b) identifying the QMS as a PDP; c) views towards the QMS as a PDP; d) challenges experienced by the HoDs during the implementation of the QMS. Finally, the chapter concluded with recommendations related to the findings and discussion. The following chapter describes the research process and the study's contributions.

## **CHAPTER SIX: RESEARCH JOURNEY AND CONTRIBUTION TO KNOWLEDGE**

### **6.1 Introduction**

The previous chapter provided an extensive overview of the findings from the data analysed in Chapter four. Based on the information obtained, recommendations and conclusions were provided. The findings in Chapter four revealed four major findings made during the data collection procedure. The purpose of this study was to investigate the HoDs' experiences of the QMS as a PDP. The preceding chapter outlined the study's progression, the researcher's experiences in conducting this research, and the study's contribution to the current body of knowledge. The proceeding chapter begins by providing an introduction of the background information of the research, followed by a discussion of the author's research experience. Immediately after that, the chapter emerges into the lessons acquired during the entire journey. The chapter continues with a discussion of the contribution, and the study's limits are outlined. Finally, the chapter concludes with a final thought.

### **6.2 Introductory Summary of the Research Background**

This study explored the experiences of HoDs regarding the QMS as a PDP. Scholars recognise the importance of PD. Muriuki *et al.* (2020) contend that modern education depends on highly skilled educators and school leaders. Professional development (PD) is an essential element of enhancing school teaching and learning outcomes, according to a study conducted by Muriuki *et al.* (2020). According to the extant literature, HoDs are responsible for leading and establishing robust curriculum standards in their area of specialisation (Tantawy, 2020). Professional growth that expands HoDs' abilities and knowledge is required to acquire the aforementioned attributes (Muriuki *et al.*, 2020). According to Tantawy (2020), school leadership and teaching quality are two essential elements in enhancing student accomplishment. Tantawy (2020) explained further that school leaders continually seek to develop and execute best educational practices through PD, which is the key technique for

improving educator performance levels. As a result, HoDs should be professionally developed to carry out their management duties effectively. Given the importance of HoD development, it was critical to investigate their perspectives on various aspects of the QMS DP.

### **6.3 Research Journey**

The motivation behind my decision to pursue this research study was rooted in my teaching experience, specifically my interest when it comes to the PD of leaders and managers in schools. I wanted to investigate, in particular, the influence of the QMS PDP in the management role of HoDs in schools and offer valuable insights to assist fellow school leaders and managers in their leadership roles. My research journey was also influenced by my own PD in the working environment that I have experienced. From my observations, HoDs encounter challenges in becoming proactive and productive in their leadership roles. In the first chapter of the study, I presented the research problem as a basis for the study which was to explore the HoDs' experiences of the QMS as a PDP. The subsequent study questions were then formulated:

- a. What are the Heads of Departments' (HoDs) understanding of Professional Development (PD)?
- b. What are the Heads of Departemnts' (HoDs) views and experiences of the Quality Management System (QMS) as a Professional Development Programme (PDP)?
- c. What are the challenges that Heads of Departments(HoDs) face using the Quality Management System (QMS) as a Professional Development Programme (PDP)?
- d. How can the Quality Management System (QMS) as a Professional Development Programme (PDP) be strengthened to effectively develop Heads of Departments' (HoDs) professionally in their leadership and management roles?

While formulating the questions, it was necessary to take a structured approach, beginning with an exploration of the perspectives held by school HoDs concerning their PD, their attitude towards the QMS as a PDP in their schools, the obstacles that

they encounter during the QMS implementation, and their perspectives on the potential measures that can be taken to improve the QMS as a PDP. These questions contributed to the study's primary aim of exploring the HoDs' experiences of the QMS as a PDP.

The second chapter reviewed the comprehensive literature on the topic of QMSs and PDPs from local, continental and international sources. The reviewed literature considered the historical context of the QMS in South Africa. The review elaborated on the QMS' objectives. The perceptions and experiences of HoDs were clarified while emphasising the conceptualisation of the QMS as a PDP by outlining the challenges associated with the DP's implementation and effectiveness. Chapter Two also presented the theoretical framework, the ALT, which served as the lens for this study. The ALT facilitated the investigation and is the practice of teaching adults. The ALT's six learning principles that underpin the theory were explained.

The third chapter detailed the justification for the employment of phenomenology as a research design and explained its appropriateness to fulfil the purpose of the study. The sample strategies and data collection tools used to ensure that data was acquired and analysed accurately were described. To address the sampling technique, data analysis approach, and data organisation, the chapter included a thorough explanation and discussion of the research strategy and methods used in the investigation. The interpretative paradigm, which considers knowledge a social construct, contends that it originates through individual exchanges and interactions within certain contexts. Given the goal of investigating HoDs' experiences of the QMS as a PDP, this was consistent with the qualitative research approach that was used. The chapter concluded with a discussion on how I received ethical clearance and addressed other ethical considerations.

The fourth chapter defined the research sites and outlined the methods followed to obtain the requisite permissions for data collection. I provided the study's participant selection method and the rationale for the approach used. Furthermore, I engaged in a thorough discussion of the data collection methods employed and the use of qualitative content analysis to analyse the data, notably the inductive content analysis

approach. The chapter then focuses on presenting the data and analysis. I engaged in a comprehensive analysis of four overarching themes and their respective subthemes. The major themes were: Understanding of PD; Views and experiences of the QMS as a PDP; Challenges experienced during the QMS implementation; and Strategies to strengthen the QMS as a PDP.

The fifth chapter discussed the findings from the data and integrated them with the reviewed literature and theoretical framework. This was followed by the conclusions and recommendations for further research. My experiences during the study journey are presented in the following section.

#### **6.4 Lesson Learned in the Research Journey**

This section summarises the research journey, beginning with the concept of PD and progressing to the methodological element of the study. Throughout this research, I acquired greater knowledge of PD by examining it through the perspectives of participants. This observation assisted me in understanding that PD can occur in two forms: formal and informal training. I discovered that HoDs regard the QMS as a PDP in schools, given that it demonstrates continuous improvement. The programme involves identifying areas for improvement, setting objectives and targets, and implementing those objectives. The learning process was significant because it permitted me to critically analyse the underlying motivations behind PDPs before arriving at convincing conclusions about how effective PDPs are within the HoDs' working environments.

The study further provided me with great insights into identifying the influence of PD on school managers' capacity to carry out their jobs efficiently. To begin with, I have witnessed an equivalent reaction that PDPs are influential in providing HoDs with growth, skills and knowledge that add to their leadership and management potential. The HoDs are required to attend PD programmes to effectively facilitate and support educators. Through PD, HoDs can build confidence, learn new skills and network with others. As a result, continuous growth is vital for HoDs to effectively lead and manage the school phase that they oversee, ultimately benefiting the overall school system.

My academic journey has provided valuable lessons on the significance of adequate PD for HoDs in schools. This study demonstrated the critical function of PD in enabling HoDs to effectively address the challenges that they encounter. Furthermore, the study focused on PD procedures and training and the involvement of HoDs in operational aspects of department management.

This research study has enhanced the comprehension of and efficacy in advocating for continuous improvement in the development of HoDs, with the ultimate objective of creating an ideal leadership and management environment for educators in schools. I have accumulated beneficial insights through my research experience, the first of which demonstrates the significance of authenticity in research, especially when conducting data collection, analysis and reporting. I learned skills to structure and manage research-related resources and documentation methodically. This involved organising documents logically to help retrieve concluded tasks and plan future actions based on feedback provided by my supervisor.

I have developed the ability to be persistent and receptive to criticism concerning my writing, particularly in terms of logical reasoning, the layout of my work and the presentation of the study as a whole. This capacity has greatly aided the development and progression of my academic endeavours. I have also gained the ability to anticipate future disappointments and appreciate the decisions made by participants. When I arrived at their school on the planned date for the interviews, one of the participants decided not to participate. Even though I became discouraged at times, I was confident this would be an advantage in my next research study. It assisted me in developing a tolerant perspective and realising that not every volunteer or chosen participant is likely to get involved in a research endeavour.

Concerning the Department of Education's measures, this study introduced proactive practices such as conducting the QMS online, allocating time for the QMS within the teaching and learning curriculum, and extending the duration of QMS workshops. The study contributes to our understanding of the challenges that HoDs face in terms of the efficiency of their PD when executing their duties. It focused on HoDs' perceptions and their experiences involving the QMS PDP.

## **6.5 Study's Limitations**

The study's limitations originated from its restricted geographical area, as it was conducted solely in a single province in one education district, and with a small sample of different quintile schools. Although the data is not generic, it does show trends in the QMS PDP. The study adopted a small number of HoD participants, excluding deputy principals and school principals. Even with these limitations, the study has established a solid foundation for future research.

## **6.6 Recommendations for Future Research**

Given the limitations of this study, the following future research topics are recommended:

- To investigate improving the operation and long-term viability of the QMS development programme in schools.
- To investigate improving the performance of the QMS as a PDP in stimulating the development of HoDs.
- To uncover strategies that the DoE can use to provide the necessary support for HoD PD to achieve adequate QMS implementation.
- To provide strategies for adapting the QMS implementation to meet the needs of schools with restricted resources because of their environment.

## **6.7 Final Words**

The experiences of HoDs with the QMS PDP have been vital for understanding the challenges and effectiveness of the programme. Relevant and effective training for HoDs must be provided to enable them to successfully carry out their duties and fulfil their obligations. The PDPs strengthen their performance while addressing the challenges they face. As a result, the experiences of HoDs with the QMS PDP provide valuable insights into the programme's effectiveness concerning QMS implementation in educational settings.

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# Appendices

## Appendix B: Permission Letter from the District Education Manager



**KWAZULU-NATAL PROVINCE**  
EDUCATION  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

A 842 IMPALA STREET  
PRIVATE BAG 20006  
EZAKHENI, 3381  
Tel: 036 636 9000

MNAMBITHI CIRCUIT MANAGEMENT CENTRE

Enquiries: e Nkabinde

Reference:

Date: 23 February 2023

Dear Ms. BS Nyandeni

### APPROVAL TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE KZN DEPARTMENT OF BASIC EDUCATION

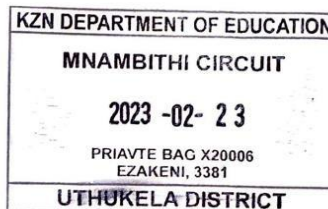
This letter serves as an acknowledgement of receipt of your request to conduct research in KZN Department of Basic Education

#### TOPIC: EXPLORING THE HEADS OF DEPARTMENT EXPERIENCES ON PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ASPECTS OF QUALITY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

1. The list of schools involved: Two Secondary Schools and Two Primary Schools in the Uthukela District
2. Target population: High Schools with three (3) Departmental Heads and Primary School with two (2) Departmental Heads
3. Period of research: From the date of signature of the letter until 30 September 2021. Please note that the Department does not allow any research to be conducted during the fourth term (quarter) of the academic year. Should you fall behind your schedule by three months to complete your research project in the approved period, you will need to apply for extension. The research is expected to request permission from the school principal to conduct research at schools.
4. The approval is subject to the following conditions:
  - 4.1. The collection of data should not interfere with the normal teaching process.
  - 4.2. A bound copy of the research document should be submitted to the KZN Department of Basic Education, Mnambithi CMC, Room 8, A 842 Impala Street, Ezakheni.
  - 4.3. You will be expected, on completion of your research study to make a presentation to the relevant stakeholders of the Department.
  - 4.4. The ethics documents must be adhered to in the discourse of your study in our department.
5. Please note that costs relating to all the conditions mentioned above are your own responsibility.

Yours sincerely

.....  
**EV Nkabinde**  
Circuit Manager – Zwelisha Circuit  
Mobile: 072 855 2376



GROWING KWAZULU-NATAL TOGETHER



## Appendix

## **Appendix**

### **C: Permission Letter to Participants (HoDs)**

## Appendix

### Research study information leaflet and consent form

Date:

Date of the research project: During the period of January 2023 – June 2023

Title of the research project

Exploring the Heads of Department experiences on professional development aspects of Quality Management System.

Principle investigator / researcher(s) name(s) and contact number(s):

Name of student/researcher: Bongela S. Nyandeni    Student number: 2013089764    Contact number: 0739549030

Faculty and Department:

Name of Faculty: Education

Name of Department: School of Education

Study leader(s) name and contact number:

Name of Study Leader (UFS staff member): DR Lulama Mgodana-Zide  
Contact number: Office: 051 718 5176    Cell: 083 864 1510

What is the aim / purpose of the study?

The study is aimed at exploring the Heads of Departments experiences on professional development aspects of Quality Management System. The study is to be conducted to get an insight of the experiences of HoDs on the effectiveness of the QMS program as a professional development program.

Who is doing the research?

My name is Bongela S. Nyandeni , I will be conducting this research to gather information about the effectiveness of the QMS professional development program , in uplifting the leadership and management skills of HoDs in schools.

Has the study received ethical approval?

Yes

Approval number: UFS-HSD2022/1686/23



**Appendix**  
**D: Consent Form for Participants**

## Appendix

UNIVERSITY OF THE  
FREE STATE  
UNIVERSITEIT VAN DIE  
VRYSTAAT  
YUNIVESITHI YA  
FREISTATA



### Consent to participate in this study

I, the undersigned,

\_\_\_\_\_ (participant's full names to be included), (the "Participant")

confirm that I voluntarily agree to participate in the research study referred to as the

\_\_\_\_\_ (the "Study") in relation to

\_\_\_\_\_ and which Study is being conducted by

Bongela S. Nyandeni

(insert the name of the researcher), (the "Researcher").

I, the undersigned Participant, further confirm that-

1. the Researcher has explained the nature, procedure, potential benefits and anticipated inconvenience of my participation in the Study;
2. I have read (or had explained to me) and understood the Study as explained in the attached information sheet;
3. I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and am prepared to participate in the Study;
4. I understand that my participation in the Study is entirely voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without penalty (if applicable);
5. I voluntarily provide the UFS and the Researcher with my personal information and consent to the UFS and the Researcher collecting, disclosing and processing my personal information in order to conduct the Study and any related activities in relation thereto;
6. I hereby acknowledge and confirm that I understand the purpose for which the UFS and the Researcher may collect, store, use, delete, destroy, outsource, transfer or otherwise process, as the context and circumstances may require and as contemplated in terms of POPIA, my personal information as set out herein;
7. I am aware that the findings of the Study will be anonymously processed into a research report, journal publications and/or conference proceedings and that my personal information will be aggregated and DE identified at such stage;
8. I also give the UFS permission to share, without notification, the collected data with other researchers at the UFS or other Higher Education Institutions. This permission is dependent on the same principles of ethical research practices, anonymity/confidentiality, safekeeping of information, and other issues listed above applying.

I, the Participant, agree to the recording of the <insert specific data collection method>.

Full Name of Participant: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Participant: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Full Name(s) of Researcher(s): Bongela S. Nyandeni

Signature of Researcher: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

205 Nelson Mandela Drive, Park West, Bloemfontein 9301, South Africa  
P.O. Box 339, Bloemfontein 9300, South Africa, T: +27(0)51 401 9111, www.ufs.ac.za



## Appendix

### E: Interview Schedule for HoDs

#### Interview Schedule

#### Exploring the Heads of Department experiences on professional development aspects of Quality Management System.

1. Tell me more about yourself, who you are and where do you come from, (you may include your employment history apart from being an educator if you have any other experience?)
2. Mention your background in the education sector, your journey as an educator? (How did you find teaching as a trainee compared to being an educator on a full time basis?) (How has your experience been in the teaching profession?)
3. Describe your role as an HoD and the level of experience that you have? What achievements will you be proud of and where do you see yourself in 5 years' time?
4. What do you understand by the term professional development? (Present your views on the importance of HoDs to be developed professionally?)
5. (Explain the experience that you have with some of the development programmes that you have attended before?) (How have these programmes shaped and grew your teaching philosophy, what theories drive your teaching?)
6. Looking back in time, what are your views on the level of professional development that you have gained since becoming an HoD? Describe how development programmes have shaped you as a curriculum leader. Can you say that these programmes are still relevant to your career?
7. Now let's talk about the QMS development programme. What is your understanding of the programme, what does it entail and when did it start in your school?

## Appendix F: Turnitin Report

Exploring the Heads of Department experiences on professional development aspects of Quality Management System

### ORIGINALITY REPORT

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