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EXPLORING THE HEAD OF DEPARTMENT'S ROLE IN CURRICULUM MANAGEMENT IN THE SENIOR PHASE

by

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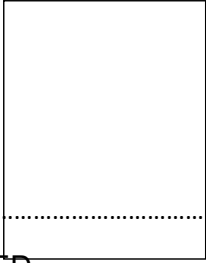
DECLARATION

I, **Micaïla Sharonic van Sasie** declare that the thesis dissertation entitled **Exploring the Head of Departments' role in curriculum management in the Senior phase** submitted for the qualification in **Master of Education with specialisation in Education Management and Leadership** at the University of the Free State is my own independent work.

All the sources in this qualitative study have been indicated and acknowledged by using complete references and in-text as provided in the reference list.

A Turnitin Report on the work produced is included in Annexure J within this document.

.....
SIGNED



July 2024
DATE

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Firstly, I want to give thanks to my Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ for guiding me throughout my studies. I want to give thanks to my family, who always encourage and motivate me in my studies, especially my mentor Reverend T.J Irion. I would like to express my gratitude to my friends for encouraging me to complete my studies.

I want to express my gratitude to the participants that participated in my study. I wouldn't be able to complete the study without you. Thank you for your patience, dedication and time, I truly appreciate it.

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ABSTRACT

In attempting to explore the Head of Department (HOD)'s role in curriculum management in the Senior phase, this study took into consideration whether curriculum implementation in the Senior phase was adhered to within a South African context. It should be noted that the expectation is that the Senior phase should prepare learners for the Further Education Training (FET) phase (DBE, 2011). In this qualitative study, the researcher aimed to explore the perspectives of Head of Departments' regarding curriculum management in the senior phase.

There is a tendency in secondary schools to focus on the FET phase to prepare learners for the Grade 12 examinations. However, the expectation of the education department is that all phases must receive equal treatment. Nevertheless, FET teachers often attend workshops for training for development, of which the first priority is resources and external moderation. This has an effect on the learner performance in the Senior phase as SMTs focus on preparing learners in Grade 12. The morale of teachers who only teach Senior phase subjects is often low as they are not exposed to professional development.

In this qualitative study, the researcher provided an interpretation and analysis of HODs insights by responding to the question, 'What is the role of the Head of the Departments' in curriculum management in the Senior phase?' This study is conducted from an interpretive paradigm that was followed with a phenomenological design to explore the HODs' views on curriculum management in the senior phase. The researcher used a functionalist theoretical framework that advocates equal and just treatment of both phases by effectively managing and leading the curriculum in the Senior phase. Aligned with functionalism theory, this study applied instructional leadership to portray how Heads of Departments require support and opportunities to manage and lead the curriculum in the Senior phase effectively in order to take on their curriculum role and explore to why Heads of Departments are not performing their duties as expected.

Purposively sample criteria were used to select the participants, namely HODs and teachers. The researcher used semi-structured interviews through interrogate the participants perception. In this study, the findings indicate that HODs are confronted

with numerous challenges that hinder them from effectively managing and leading the curriculum in the Senior phase. Furthermore, the findings also reveal that HODs had not got the opportunity to go for training in curriculum management, although they did indicate that workshops to assist teachers were provided for them. It was evident that both HODs and teachers did not undergo training, as, majority of participants indicated that they need assistance in managing curriculum effectively.

The researcher provided several recommendations from the findings of this study: regular monitoring of curriculum by HODs, assist teachers in challenges, regular department meetings to track progress of teachers, initiate professional development programmes for teachers, intervention programmes for parental involvement and effective intervention programmes for improvement of learner performances. To conclude, the HODs role in curriculum management is vital for the success of schools, especially in the Senior Phase, where learners begin to transition into a more complex subject matter. It is important for HODs to practice effective school leadership to be able to implement effective curriculum strategies that can assist in bringing stability within schools.

Key words: curriculum management, FET, head of department, instructional leadership, Senior phase

LIST OF ACRONYMS

ATP	Annual Teaching Plan
CAPS	Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement
DBE	Department of Basic Education
DoE	Department of Education
HOD	Head of Department
FET	Further Education Training
NSC	National Curriculum Statement
RNCS	Revised National Curriculum Statement
SAMS	Schools Administration and Management System
SBA	School-Based Assessment
SPT	Senior phase Teacher

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

In a South African education system, it is the responsibility of the School Management Teams (SMTs) to guarantee a holistic functioning of the school. Among other things, this also entails a quality educational environment for all learners (Tapala, 2019). Additionally, the SMT members of a school should structure and lead systematic learning opportunities for teacher authorisation and professional development. They are also responsible for monitoring learners' performance in all subjects and phases (Mestry & Khumalo, 2012). The SMT members of a school are required to direct and supervise that all subjects in their school develop properly. When monitoring teaching practices and learning outcomes, the SMT get the opportunity to identify the strengths and weaknesses within the school. The SMT members ability to leverage their strengths allows them to make constructive contributions to the school, while also effectively addressing any challenges that could have an adverse effect on the school. In order to capitalise on the strengths and try to minimise weaknesses, SMTs rely mainly on the involvement of heads of department. They are the management level the closest to the teachers (Motsamai, 2017).

This study focuses on the Head of Department's (HODs) role in curriculum management in the Senior phase. Heads of Departments often face the complex challenge of managing diverse and varied roles as curriculum leaders with a school (Joseph, 2015). Furthermore, the management and leadership of the curriculum is often delegated to the HODs, as they are tasked with academic and support programmes and the LTSM of the school. As members of the SMT, they also share the responsibility of the management, maintenance and safety of the school, keeping learner profiles safe and locked, schedules and report cards (Mthiyane, Naidoo & Betram, 2019). HODs are required to possess a deep understanding of the content within their respective fields and demonstrate expertise in guiding both curriculum development and pedagogical strategies related to their specialised subjects (Ghavifekr & Ibrahim, 2014).

According to Simkins, Coldron, Crawford & Bronwen Maxwell (2018) the United Kingdom (UK) on-the-job training addresses the difficulties that Department Heads may confront, it also draws on mentorship and coaching for assistance. These trainings provide DHs with top-notch resources and helps them with the most recent research (Corbett, 2023). DHs are provided with official and informal training and development opportunities through licensed service providers and institutions of higher learning in countries such as Canada, the UK, Malaysia, Australia, Trinidad and Tobago (Chiu, Wu, Bartram, Parker & Lee, 2023).

Due to the various responsibilities and challenges HODs face, it is often difficult to provide the necessary support and development to teachers. According to Ghavifekr et al. (2014), HODs often struggle to fulfil their administrative and instructional leadership role, as great demands are made on them as teachers and co-managers of the school. In addition to this, the amendments made to the government policies also add pressure on them, while Annual Teaching Plans (ATPs) that were amended during the Covid-19 period also play a significant factor. However, despite the obstacles they encounter, it is their duty to ensure positive outcomes across all subjects and to assist in the professional growth of the teachers within their department. The expectation in the education system that all phases must receive equal treatment (Betrum & Christiansen, 2014). However, Further Education and Training (FET) teachers often attend workshops for training development, of which the first priority is resources and external moderation. By contrast, the Senior phase teachers are often left to their own understanding and resources, as HODs often neglect to follow up with Senior phase teachers (NEEDU, 2013). This results that the Senior phase teachers are often neglected in terms of resources, curriculum coverage and the necessary support from their instructional leader, the Head of Department. They concentrate mainly on the Further Education and Training (FET) phase, which leads to Senior phase teachers feeling deprived of professional development and accessible resources. Furthermore, secondary schools will often provide accessible resources for the FET phase, such as textbooks, *Mind the Gap* learners' books, guidelines for FET assessment books, workshops for FET teachers each term, teachers receiving active support from Subject Advisors and visits to schools (Tapala, 2019). HODs should be able to give direct assistance to teachers in the school-based curriculum instruction. They must support teachers by regularly

checking their curriculum tracking. The HOD's primary duty is to assist teachers with curriculum-related issues and instruction of the curriculum through ensuring that teachers participate in Professional Support Conventions (iJika iMfundo, 2015).

This research addresses the role of the Head of Department (HOD) in managing and leading the curriculum in the Senior phase to counter the ineffectiveness of schools to mediate the curriculum effectively in both phases (Maringa, 2016). HODs are required to be involved in the management of the school, this implies that their managerial role is linked directly to teaching and learning, which can be regarded as the key function of schools' managing factors. According to Maringa (2016), SMT members, who are also considered as the management stakeholders, often experience that it is difficult to have professional conversations in detail with teachers. They also experience challenges when supporting teachers to improve curriculum coverage. Poor communication between HODs and teachers plays a crucial part in school, as an information bottleneck arises as a result. Tapala (2019) adds that it is essential to note that the lack of communication and not information sharing with teachers can create barriers between Heads of Department (HODs) and teachers, as leading to internal and external obstacles.

To conclude, it is important for Department Heads to receive intentional training and developmental programmes. Department Heads need guidance on how to structure supportive conversations with teachers as being guided on how to deal with difficult teachers.

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

In secondary schools, the focus is mainly placed on the Further Education Training (FET) phase, as teachers prepare learners for Grade 12. This results in that the Senior phase is often neglected in terms of curriculum coverage where subjects are not covered in depth. Furthermore, Senior phase teachers do not receive the same amount of training or number of workshops as the teachers in the FET phase. Moreover, they also face challenges such as limited resources, time distribution, curriculum coverage and instructional leadership support (Tapala, 2019). This makes it difficult for learners to transition to the FET band, as they do not receive the appropriate foundation for specialisation. This study focuses on the crucial aspects

of educational leadership, especially concerning to how Department Heads effectively implement curriculum strategies that assist in bringing balance and stability in schools. It looks closely at the Senior Phase, where learners begin to transition into more complex subject matter, and how the role of the DH is vital for the overall success of schools. HODs that are responsible for the Senior phase often display ineffective curriculum management in schools (Adhabi & Anozie, 2017:2). This study aims to explore the Head of Department as a role-player in providing efficient leadership and management in mediating the curriculum in the Senior phase.

1.3 MAIN RESEARCH QUESTION

The main research question of this study is:

What is the role of Heads of Departments in curriculum management in the Senior phase?

1.4 RESEARCH SUB-QUESTIONS

This main research question is subdivided into the subsequent sub-questions for the research:

- i. What does curriculum management in the Senior phase entail?
- ii. What are the experiences of the HODs in curriculum management in the Senior phase?
- iii. What are the views of teachers on the way HODs manage the curriculum in the Senior phase?

1.5 AIMS OF THE STUDY

To be able to respond to the research sub-questions the researcher pursued the following aim, namely to explore how Heads of Department manage the curriculum in the Senior Phase.

1.6 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This aim has been subdivided into the following objectives:

- i. To document what curriculum management entails in the Senior phase.
- ii. To explore the experiences of the HODs in managing and leading the curriculum in the Senior phase.
- iii. To find views of teachers on the way HODs manage the curriculum in the Senior phase.

1.7 DELIMITATIONS

This study is delimited to the experiences of the Head of Departments and teachers in the Senior Phase, with the view to uncovering how the curriculum is managed in that phase.

1.8 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A research methodology is defined as a set of procedures that researchers follow when gathering, analysing, exploring and elucidating the phenomena under study (Maree & Jansen, 2019). To add, Leavy (2017) postulates that the methodology provides a structured plan detailing how the study and research will unfold. It outlines the researcher's approach in integrating diverse research methods into a proposal that elucidates how he or she will execute the research plans. The following subsections outline the intended actions for collecting data for this study.

1.8.1 Research paradigm

Yanow and Swartz (2011) states that a paradigm is set of assumptions about important aspects of reality that give insight on a particular phenomenon in the world or society. To add, Maree and Jansen (2019) postulates that a paradigm is a perspective that elaborates on how participants understand the world. A paradigm outlines the principles that determines the research activity and sets out how researchers analyse the phenomenon under study and attempt to understand the studied participants and their actions. Leavy (2017) states that a paradigm is used as a method to understand knowledge regarding humans' interpretations on a certain phenomenon.

This research study used an interpretative paradigm to be able to explore the HODs' experiences in curriculum management in the Senior phase. The interpretative

paradigm serves as an umbrella to achieve meaning and understanding of the researched phenomena. Maree and Nieuwenhuis (2019) state that interpretivism stresses that the ability of humans to establish meaning. The interpretative paradigm enables the researcher to understand or attempting to comprehend the essence of human experiences and the interpretations of the participants on the given phenomenon (Kenneavy, Harnois, Atkinson & Korgen, 2022). The interpretative paradigm allows the researcher to understand that reality can be interpreted in a variety and contrasting manners.

1.8.2 Research approach

Creswell and Creswell (2018) describe a research approach as the set concepts and sequences that unfold the research from a range of beliefs and ideas the researcher uses to establish complete techniques of collecting, analysing and interpreting data. Hawkins (2018) adds that an approach can be regarded as a layout of all plans and detailed methods that are selected by the researcher to implement the study. Creswell and Creswell (2018) postulates that a research approach is an outlined framework for the researcher to tackle the challenges that occur in the study.

The researcher conducted this study by employing a qualitative research approach. The qualitative research approach enables a researcher to acquire a deeper understanding of the phenomenon he or she is currently exploring, through the interaction with the participants (Alase, 2017). According to Creswell and Poth (2018), qualitative research is conducted when there is a demand for researchers to analyse participants stories, to attentively listen to participants nuances and to understand the environment in which challenges are experienced by participants. This approach enables the researcher to view information from the participants' viewpoint and to attempt to comprehend the data obtained from participants (Cobin & Strauss, 2015). When following a qualitative approach, the researcher attempts to comprehend the social world we live in, as well as to try to look to why things occur in the way they do, and being concerned with trying to develop solutions for certain social phenomena (Creswell, 2012). When the researcher applies a qualitative approach; he or she must not be biased but keen to learn, empathetic when dealing with participants, adaptable and always be prepared to listen to participants when they expressed their perceptions (Hennink, Hutter & Bailey, 2020). This research is

premised on the perspectives and practices of the Head of Departments on their role in curriculum management in the Senior phase to discover how they support teachers allocated in their departments.

1.8.3 Research design

According to Thomas (2017), a research design guides the researcher on the procedures that define the researched phenomenon. It is viewed as an intricate outline of how the study will be explained during the process of collecting and analysing data (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Additionally, Loseke (2016) postulates that a research design is the set plan of how the researcher will carry out the study and which model will be used to conduct a specific research project. Qualitative research encompasses various designs, such as narrative research, ethnography, phenomenological research design, grounded theory, and case studies.

To conduct this study the researcher applied a phenomenological design. According to Thomas (2017), a phenomenological research design aims to explore or add meaning to lived experiences of human beings. This research design reflects on the experiences and behaviours of the participants. Flick (2022) adds that the participants' perspectives direct the researcher's responsiveness in wanting to understand the participants views that was discussed in semi-structured interviews with the researcher. In this study, the researcher explored how HODs narrated their personal experiences in curriculum management in the Senior phase, which influences how the researcher perceives curriculum management.

1.8.4 Data generation instruments

In this study, semi-structured interviews with the participants were applied. Semi-structured interviews are the process where the researcher talks face-to-face with the participants. Thomas (2017) adds that semi-structured interviews provide the researcher with a combined list of problems that needs to be covered or discussed in the interview. This data generation instrument allowed the researcher to collect data that was open-ended, to investigate participants' views and feelings about the phenomenon under study and to seek for deeper understanding (De Jonckheere & Vaughn, 2019). In this study, the researcher gained insight on the challenges and experiences of how HODs manage and lead the curriculum in the Senior phase.

After gathering the open-ended data from participants individually during interviews, the researcher got insight on these lived experiences.

1.8.5 Data analysis and interpretation

In this section, the researcher transcribed the semi-structured interviews with the participants, coded it and arranged into broad themes. This process enabled the researcher to identify emerging patterns. In the analysis and interpretation of data, the researcher effectively utilise *in-vivo* coding to quote the participants verbatim to ensure their voices were represented and heard in the research study and analysed data (Edmonds & Kennedy, 2013).

1.8.6 Population and sampling

Pandey and Pandey (2015) define a population as the total mass of people that the researcher observes in order to form a sample. Neuman (2014) adds that a population gives a concise overview of several individual cases that allow the researcher to extract a sample to conclude the research outcomes. In this study, the population was Heads of Departments and teachers in the Senior phase in the Chris-Hani West district. According to Moser and Korstjens (2018), when a researcher applies sampling procedures, he or she selects a particular population based on a specific criterion to explore the phenomenon. When following a sampling procedure, the researcher selects a specific sampling method, a sample size and which procedure will be most appropriate for recruiting participants in the research study (Creswell, 2007). The researcher purposively selected the sample and representation of the three schools and three HODs and three teachers from each public school, meaning, a total of nine HODs and nine teachers. The researcher chose nine teachers and nine HODs as she wanted to gain insight from each department in the schools, as HODs are allocated to different departments in schools. The sampled schools were located in the same area, which is in the researcher's geographical proximity. This benefited the researcher in respect of traveling aspects, as the three schools were in the same geographical location. The sample schools that were selected are public schools and all three are classified as Quintile 1 in the same district. The researcher chose public schools, as it more learners enrolled than private schools, which means there are more staff members.

This ensures the researcher that there will be enough participants in case a one of the participants wants to opt out of the study. The researcher selected the HODs as overseers to monitor and manage teachers in their departments to ensure that the day-to-day school activities in general function smoothly. The HOD is tasked with monitoring teachers' work to ensure that they follow their job descriptions to achieve effective quality teaching and learning (Jika iMfundo, 2015).

1.9 LITERATURE AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The researcher conducted a comprehensive review of literature pertaining to the research problem and it was discovered that, to manage and lead the curriculum in the Senior phase effectively, HODs must guide teachers in both phases and coordinate the most recent concepts and methods on their specific fields within the teachers' subject fields (Wieczorek, 2017). In the same way, when performing their role, the HOD takes on an administrative role and is duty for allocating teaching timetables to staff and managing teachers' welfare and grievance as well as timetabling duties (DBE, 2016a). Additionally, HODs are often regarded as a teacher, a subject professional and an expert in their field, a mentor for teachers and a school administrator that work with the principal (Metcalf, 2018). Nevertheless, HODs' administrative role is influenced significantly by their capability to provide efficient curriculum support for teachers.

Functionalism was used as a theoretical framework that underpins this study. According to Milton (2007), the functionalist theory takes on a system approach that regards society as a planned system of consistent structures that work together to form the social order as a whole. These structures of society or institution must work efficiently and effectively in order for the society to remain stable or function properly. Gómez-Diago (2020) states that functionalism can be seen as a theoretical perspective that focuses on the roles performed by individuals in society by social structures. This theory seeks to analyse the function of given activity within a system, i.e. whether the activity promotes or interferes with the running of the system (Gómez-Diago, 2020).

Researchers that are considered as functionalists posits that the absence of a common principle or shared values and beliefs hinders the achievement of

organisational goals (Cusmano, 2019). The functionalist theory aims to achieve social order (Storey, 2017). In a secondary school as an organisation, there should be harmony and a seamless transition between the phases. This implies that HODs, irrespective of the phase they are responsible for, should all work towards and help the school thrive as a vital social establishment.

1.10 VALUE OF THE STUDY

The significance of this study is that it explores the role of HODs as managers and leaders in curriculum management in order to improve the curriculum delivery for effective teaching and learning in the Senior phase.

It is envisaged that the findings of this study will shed light on the challenges experienced by the HODs in the Senior phase when executing their responsibilities of curriculum management. These findings will challenge the entire SMT at secondary schools to formulate strategies that will contribute to the better functionality of the entire SMT with reference to curriculum management and delivery. Furthermore, if Senior phase HODs improve their curriculum management and leadership skills, learners in this phase will also benefit from teaching and learning. The expected outcomes of teaching and learning in this phase will influence performance in this phase and learners will be better prepared for the FET phase.

1.11 ETHICAL CONSIDERATION

Firstly, in order to conduct the study, the researcher applied for ethical clearance from the General/Human Research Ethics Committee (GHREC) of the University of the Free State. The researcher received permission from the Department of Education district circuit office and principals of the three selected public schools that were chosen to conduct the research. This study became attainable to the researcher because of the participants that were the primary source of data for the studied phenomenon. The researcher took into consideration the participants' views and aimed for the uppermost level of privacy and respect towards them. The researcher first explained to the participants what the research entailed in order to engage them in the study. The researcher highlighted the nature of the study and all the necessary procedures and methods that were followed for the participants to

understand. The researcher made it clear that participation in the research was voluntarily and if any of them wanted to withdraw from the study for whichever reason, that was their right to act in that manner. Each participant finalised an agreement form as consent to be part of the study. The researcher obtained consent from participants to record the interviews and ensured them that their identities, responses and names of schools will be kept strictly confidential.

1.12 DEFINITION OF TERMS

To obtain a better comprehension of the phenomenon, this qualitative study will provide definitions for the following terms.

1.12.1 Curriculum management

Curriculum management can be defined as the process of curriculum improvement and effective implementation of it (Christie & Monyokolo, 2018). Curriculum management is the ability of a school's SMT members or teachers to manage systems, procedures, learners and resources to guarantee that teaching and learning are both effective and successful. This, in turn, will improve learner results and achievement (Mpungose, 2018).

1.12.2 Functionalism

Gómez-Diago (2020) states that functionalism can be seen as a theoretical viewpoint that focuses on the roles performed by individuals in society by social structures. According to Milton (2007), functionalism focuses on the functions performed in society by social structures that determine which given activity promotes or interferes with pertaining to the system.

1.12.3 Further Education and Training

According to Department of Education (2016) the FET phase is from Grade 10 to Grade 12. It entails of all learning and training programs included in the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) levels 2 to 4 in the school establishment. It is the level within the NQF that follows directly after the Senior phase as learners enter the FET phase after completing the mandatory phase at Grade 9 or Level 1 of the NQF.

The FET phase is not compulsory education. By definition, it has no age limit for learners and aims to promote lifelong learning on-the-job education (Corbett, 2023).

1.12.4 Head of Department

According to the Department of Basic Education (DBE) Policy (2016), the requirement of an HOD is to have three years or more teaching experience in the education field, a subject specialist and expert, a mentor of post-level 1 teachers and a person who plays a staff development and monitoring role. The HOD is responsible for developing and improving the quality of education offered to learners in school through promoting a quality and equal educational system and school environment (RSA, 2016b).

1.12.5 Instructional leadership

Instructional leadership focuses on the influence that managers have in the teaching and learning environment, including the professional development and growth of teachers, as well as learner growth in the education system (Tapala, 2019). In addition, Hallinger and Heck (2010) states that instructional leadership focuses on creating inclusive and collaborative teaching and learning conditions by emphasising both the content being taught and the methods of teaching.

1.12.6 Senior phase

According to Poliah (2009) the Senior phase can be seen as the final stage of compulsory education and beyond with learners that are normally aged around 13 to 18 years. The Senior phase is from Grade 7 to Grade 9 and consists of eight learning areas. The teaching and learning programmes in this phase are highly contextualised and integrated, which means it has cross-curricular themes or topics (Department of Basic Education [DBE], 2014). The teachers' teaching in this phase has to be classroom based rather than being a specialist approach; this allows the learning programme to be successful and allow integration to take place (Schmidt, Cogan & Houang, 2011).

1.13 CHAPTER OUTLINE

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the researcher aims to introduce the research problem that is the drive for this research study. The research questions and objectives for this research are stipulated in this chapter. The researcher provided a short background information on the research title which is “Exploring the role of the Head of Department in curriculum management in the Senior phase”. The chapter touches on the value of the study and provides explanation of concepts that are critical for a proper understanding of the study.

CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

The following section includes essential research literature, drawing from theoretical models and practical evidence of the role of the Head of Department’s role in curriculum management in the Senior phase. This chapter addresses the aims of the study by looking at the role of the Head of Department in supporting the Senior phase teachers and the challenges they experience in curriculum management.

CHAPTER 3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter focuses on the method used in this exploration of the Head of Department’s role in the Senior phase. This section discusses the following; research paradigm, research approach, research design, sampling procedure and data analysis technique.

CHAPTER 4 DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION

This chapter focuses on the analysis and interpretation and presentation of data collected from the semi-structured interviews with HODs and teachers from the Senior phase. The focus of the interviews was on the role of the Head of Departments in curriculum management in the Senior phase.

CHAPTER 5 FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter presents the findings from the presentation and analysis of data. Conclusions are drawn from this data and recommendations are made in line with research title of the study.

1.14 CHAPTER SUMMARY

In this chapter, the background of the study was provided. The problem statement that informed the study was introduced and the value of the study was emphasised. The research question and aims of this study were posed along with the delimitations of the study.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The literature review addresses the aims of the study by studying the role of the Head of Department in supporting the Senior phase teachers and the challenges they experience in curriculum management. This is established from theoretical work and empirical evidence on the Role of the Head of Department as the middle manager as an instructional leader, focusing particularly to the Leadership and Management of the Teaching and Learning curriculum in the Senior phase of public schooling in South Africa. This chapter gives an in-depth discussion on the theoretical framework that directs this research study.

The management of the curriculum is one of the key managerial functions that fall under the duty of the School Management Teams (SMTs) of a school environment. A SMT should manage and lead the school in a manner that discriminates against no-one, and not gets drawn into personal issues of the staff members. Instead, it must focus on implementing the curriculum in order to promote the performance of learners (Wieczorek, 2017). Heads of Departments (HODs) who are part of the School Management Team (SMT) play a crucial role in overseeing the educational activities and academic progress within their respective departments. According to Shoma, Daud and Subramanian (2016) Heads of Departments (HODs) at public secondary schools must be responsible for guiding, overseeing, and enhancing high standards of curriculum implementation within their departments.

2.2 THE ROLE OF HEADS OF DEPARTMENTS IN CURRICULUM MANAGEMENT IN THE SENIOR PHASE

According to Leithwood (2016), in a school environment, the Heads of Departments (HODs) can be considered as ideal for the management of the curriculum, as their duties, responsibilities and roles have a direct influence on the functioning of the school. Additionally, HODs are regarded as the bridge that connects SMT members and teachers. This allows them to raise teachers' morale, organise suitable

resources for the school, and ensure that there is curriculum development at the school (Ghavifekr & Ibrahim, 2014). The HODs' role is to support teachers with strategies in developing their subject matter and in implementing classroom management skills (Leithwood, 2016).

To ensure that curriculum delivery is managed successfully, the Head of Department as the middle manager of the organisation plays an important role as an instructional leader in the Senior phase. The Personnel Administrative Measure (PAM) document (DBE, 2016) stipulates that a Head of Department (HOD) carries the responsibility for ensuring the efficient operations of the assigned department. At the same time, the HOD is expected to be engaged in class teaching and to ensure that learner performance is promoted. This document outlines the expectation for Heads of Departments (HODs) to be actively involved in the school management, emphasising their role in supervising a fundamental function of schools.

According to the Department of Basic Education (DBE) policy (2016), an HOD takes on the role of a teacher, a subject specialist, a mentor of teachers, and a supervisor who encourages staff development and monitors them. This expertise of the HOD should occur in both phases, as the HODs are responsible for two or more Senior phase subjects and two or more FET phase subjects to supervise regularly (Mavuso, 2022). This is done with regular meetings with subject teachers once per month, before and after internal and external moderation. For this reason, moderation should occur regularly in both phases per term (iJika iMfundo, 2015). Additionally, iJika iMfundo's (2015) states that HODs need to enhance their ability to be able to perform their professional role of building teachers' strengths to improve teaching and learning. Furthermore, HODs are expected to guide teachers in both phases and coordinate the most recent innovations and methodologies within their respective fields so that can assist teachers' subject fields (Wieczorek, 2017). In the same way, when performing their role, the HODs take on an administrative role and are responsible for the allocation of teaching load and managing employee well-being and scheduling responsibilities (DBE, 2016). Additionally, HODs are often regarded as teachers, a subject specialists and experts in their respective fields, a mentor for teachers, and a school administrator that work with the principal (Metcalf, 2018).

Nevertheless, the HODs' administrative role is influenced significantly by their capacity to offer sufficient curriculum support to teachers.

According to iJika iMfundo (2015) HODs are often required to take up new roles and responsibilities. For example, they are required to sit in on teacher recruitment and teachers' disciplinary hearings. Furthermore, their roles also extend to administrative and financial responsibilities of the school. However, in the midst of these added responsibilities, HODs often find themselves not prepared, trained or equipped with the necessarily skills to handle given responsibilities, hence they are faced with management challenges (Salleh, 2016). These challenges often lead to role ambiguities, role conflicts, tension and sometimes stress amongst HODs. For this reason, in order to fulfil these responsibilities, a healthy and objective environment should be created by the principal to be able to support the HODs so that the teaching and learning environment can be improved (Nicholson et al., 2016).

Leithwood (2016) states that HODs can be regarded as the key members of the SMT who provide instructional leadership to teachers and are forces of change in their fields. Moreover, Ghavifekr and Ibrahim (2014) state that the role of the HOD involves mobilising teachers under their supervision and providing support to help them address curriculum coverage issues through professional conversations. Salleh (2016) adds that supportive conversations with teachers can enable them to develop the pedagogy of learners' learning and the quality of the teaching and learning environment. According to Maringa (2016), HODs are responsible for a subject or a phase and have to be involved in teaching at the same time alongside managerial efficiency within their department and school. It is their duty to provide guidance to teachers on the latest innovations on the subject method. They also provide techniques, evaluation and aids to teachers on how to improve their teaching and learning environment effectively. In aiding teachers, HODs are expected to collaborate with their colleagues to uphold high teaching standards and ensure continuous academic improvement within the school community (Mavuso, 2015).

As instructional leaders who lead and manage the staff, HODs are expected to help teachers in accomplishing positive professional relationships with learners. Furthermore, when assisting teachers, HODs should evaluate the training needs of the teachers, leading them to grow professionally in their subjects (Al Hosani, 2015).

HODs should lead by example and provide assistance to teachers through mentoring and managing external challenges. Thus, HODs can be seen as curriculum leaders, as they lead teachers and ensure that the school as an organisation function smoothly. HODs are chosen to head a department, subject or phase as they possess expert knowledge of a particular subject (Bryer & Barret, 2014).

The HOD's leadership role as a middle manager can be summarised as the following responsibilities:

- teaching and learning;

- extra- and co-curricular activities that can be divided into the following: being in charge of a subject, coordinate assessment, provide guidance, coordinate and control activities, share responsibilities of organising and conducting of extracurricular and co-curricular activities;

- educator development and appraisal; and

- communication and general supervising activities (Mavuso, 2013).

2.2.1 Teaching and learning

When schools practise leadership that strengthens classroom instruction, the result is that learners' performance increases and the quality of teaching improves (Hallinger, Moosung & Walker, 2012). HODs as instructional leaders should be well-equipped with proficiency and expertise within the designated subject area. They specialise in being able to manage and lead teaching and learning activities in their perspective departments. In addition, HODs should communicate these skills and knowledge effectively with teachers and learners so that a deep understanding of the subject can be cultivated to create interpersonal relations (Hallinger & Murphy, 2013).

HODs are required to demonstrate a great extent of comprehension of the values of the assessment of teaching and learning so that they can attend to the ever-changing curriculum and be prepared to make comprehensive adjustments to the curriculum, when necessary (Bush, 2023). It is important for HODs to regularly check whether teachers comply with the curriculum requirements. HODs are required to

check teachers' files, their scheme of work, alongside their set lesson plans for the term, learner mark sheets and phase schedules. This ensures that HODs track the teachers' work compliance as well as the set teaching and learning objectives (Manaseh, 2016). Furthermore, HODs should encourage and support teachers to perform their work to the best of their ability by guiding them on how to comply with the current policy and curriculum as it changed drastically with the Covid-19 period. Lastly, in compliance with the South African context of HODs, the PAM document, HODs have a lot of responsibilities as they are required to manage classroom activities as well as manage activities outside of their classrooms, to be able to ensure that the academic standard of acquiring runs smoothly.

2.2.2 Extra- and co-curricular activities

Mazlan, Mazlan and Esa (2014) state that HODs are involved in various activities outside the classrooms. These activities play a vital role in the teaching and learning process, as they contribute and support what happens in the classroom. The HODs manage and lead the following factors under extracurricular activities, in charge of a subject or phase, their participation in the development of school policies, how HODs coordinate assessment, provide guidance to teachers, and control activities in their departments.

2.2.3 HODs are in charge of a subject or phase

According to Heystek (2016), HODs are required to be in charge of subject or a phase, where they perform administrative duties related to their subject, supervise teachers in the specific phase as well as managing their own workload. As an instructional leader, the HOD is expected to enhance learner and teacher performance. HODs should provide support structures to teachers in order to ensure that classroom improvement takes place and learners excel in the school work (Liu, Hallinger & Feng, 2016).

2.2.4 HODs develop instructional programmes for their department

According to Cox (2016), HODs are responsible for developing a policy or instructional programme for their department. HODs are a direct channel or link between the SMT and teachers in terms of communication. Their primary

responsibility is to oversee and guide teachers on the latest changes on the notions of curriculum and how these affect internal instructional programmes. These instructional programmes entails the following; coordination of curriculum, supervising and evaluation of instruction and to mentor learner progress (Hallinger, 2011).

Quality instructions need to be promoted in order to influence learners' results positively. When HODs develop policy or instructional programmes in their department, they need to ensure that teaching and learning yield great performances from teachers and learners as well as keep up to date with the latest trends in education and curriculum matters (Al Hosani, 2015). As instructional leaders and managers, HODs are expected to execute tasks that are aligned with the school's overall vision. These tasks consist of setting and sharing goals related to curriculum duties, and building and leading teams, such as ensuring that grade heads execute minimal administrative activities (Mthiyane et al., 2019).

2.2.5 HOD coordinate assessment

Mthiyane et al. (2019) state that in order to coordinate assessment successfully in schools, the HOD must have knowledge of various assessment techniques in order to guide the teachers on what techniques they can apply in their perspective subjects, content or form of assessment. Additionally, Heads of Departments need to guide teachers on the application of the different form of assessment, for example, informal assessment that provides feedback on learner improvement purposes and formal assessment that allow teachers to evaluate learners' progress in their subjects (Ndoziya, 2014).

Assessing learners' performance plays a crucial role in learner readiness for the FET phase, as their ability to cope with the workload is tested. After evaluating the learners by means of formal and informal assessment, teachers give feedback on learners' progress and their level of competency to parents via report cards (Metcalf, 2018). However, regardless of the fact that HODs are not always in the classrooms of the teachers to be able to see what they are assessing, HODs still have the responsibility to monitor and evaluate teachers' assessment activities in their department. Assessment evaluation in the Senior phase plays an important role for

teachers as they provide an analysis for HODs on learners' progress on assessment tasks (Silva, 2016).

2.2.6 HODs provide guidance to teachers

According to Hargreaves and Fullan (2012), HODs acts as an influential role in shaping the school's vision and the shared vision between teachers in developing their departments by promoting learner excellence. Moreover, HODs should guide teachers by setting direction and sharing ideas with teachers in order to align with the school's vision. However, for the curriculum to be implemented successfully, HODs should provide training and resources to teachers so that they can complete identified tasks in the ATPs successfully (Leithwood, 2016). HODs as supervisors are responsible for leading and managing their designated departments. Leadership and management are critical when ensuring curriculum management. Mampane, (2017) adds that for HODs to manage their departments successfully it is important to maintain sustainable connections and trust effectively amongst staff members (Govender, 2018).

2.3 CURRICULUM MANAGEMENT IN THE SENIOR PHASE

2.3.1 CURRICULUM MANAGEMENT

Curriculum management can be defined as the process of curriculum improvement and the effective implementation of it. Moreover, Donmayer and Wagstuff (1990, in Christie & Monyokolo, 2018) state that the school should take on the responsibility for executing the primary function of the education system, which includes managing, teaching and learning. However, for this primary function to be implemented successfully, the principal, deputy and the co-curricular managers, which are the HODs, must fulfil their curricular roles to be able to ensure that there is effective curriculum improvement in the school environment. Katzenmeyer and Moller (2009) state that curricular managers spend little time supervising classrooms and working with the teachers to improve instruction for effective teaching and learning in school.

According to Naidoo and Petersen (2015), curriculum management can be seen as the process of overseeing the coordination of systems, protocols, and personnel to

facilitate successful educational instruction and acquisition of knowledge. Furthermore, Hoadley, Christie and Ward (2009) states that the management and leadership of curriculum are interconnected and essential for effectively implementing curriculum in educational institutions. Additionally, Wenner and Campbell (2016) adds that leadership involves providing guidance and establishing a sense of purpose, while management encompasses the supervision of personnel, efficient task execution, and the establishment and maintenance of structures and processes. Effective curriculum management hinges on the critical interplay between leadership and management. Understanding this relationship is the key to success (Maringa, 2016). According to Kyahurwa (2013), curriculum management involves academic leadership, instructional leadership, and the management of the teaching and learning process within a school. It encompasses the interpretation and implementation of the curriculum policy statement. To add, Mogale, Malatji, & Mphahlele, (2022) state that the term 'curriculum management' refers to the coordinated effort of all stakeholders to effectively implement and achieve the set curriculum goals and standards.

The major responsibility of the SMT members of a school is to manage the curriculum successfully. Buthelezi, Hlengiwe and Msweli (2021) states that for SMT members to manage and lead the curriculum successfully, they need to know the subject content and techniques of all the subjects in their designated fields so that they can support or facilitate teachers in their subject matter. Furthermore, Mpungose (2018) states that SMT members should be able to enquire, change and adapt to the current curriculum, with the set of values promoted by the school, in order to fulfil the necessities of the learners. When executing curriculum management, it is important for managers to be well acquainted with the content coverage regarding the curriculum that he or she will have to manage, along with the teaching strategies and approaches that will be required for effective instructional and curriculum management and leadership (Mampane, 2017).

Head of Departments duties consist largely of curriculum responsibilities and may find their decisions they make might be at odds with those of the principals and deputies (Buthelezi, et al., 2021). In addition to this, HODs as curriculum managers can be considered as team leaders of their departments, monitors of teachers'

curriculum coverage process, co-ordinators of phase development workshops, while at the same time be teachers themselves (Naidoo & Petersen, 2015). According to Chabalala and Naidoo (2021), HODs are in control of leading teachers within the department they oversee so that they are able to manage the results of learners and the content coverage of teachers in curriculum implementation. Moreover, Mampana (2017) states that HODs play a vital role in managing and leading the instructional programme and promoting a positive academic environment in the school. To add, Hallinger (2011) states that HODs need to be well equipped with the mission and vision statements of the school along with the goals the school aims to achieve. Thus, HODs need to ensure that the school's mission statement is made visible to the learners and teachers of the school (Ng, 2019).

However, HODs sometimes find it difficult to manage both phases effectively, as their workload is often faced with challenges that occur in the school environment. In the same way, this can lead to a negative impact on the achievement of the school's objectives, learner development and the teaching and learning environment. Consequently, Hoadley et al. (2009) state that curriculum management entails the managing of systems and procedures as well monitoring personnel to ensure that successful learning and teaching occur. It puts emphasis on the planning, implementation of curriculum, monitoring and evaluation of the teaching and learning environment to promote increasing levels of learner achievement (Maringa, 2016). In order to maintain performance in the school, the principal should play a positive role in the school setting as a curriculum manager alongside the HODs in all the phases of the school (Schollar, 2018). Additionally, according to Hargreaves and Fullan (2012), HODs should be able to "develop, voice and to act on their sense of purpose".

According to Spaul (2013), a lack of instructional leadership support to teachers can have a negative impact on curriculum implementation. Principals should be able to share responsibility with HODs improvement in curriculum delivery in school. HODs should understand that it is important to follow three functions when managing the curriculum in school, i.e. coordinating the curriculum coverage by teachers, supervising and evaluating instruction of teaching and learning, and monitoring learners progress and professional growth of teachers (Hallinger, 2011).

Furthermore, Li (2014) adds that for curriculum managers to support teachers effectively they have to let teachers participate in development learning programmes and educational professional developmental programmes.

This improves the outcomes that are dependent on the change of practices, knowledge and attitudes through the teachers they have to lead, especially teacher development in the Senior phase, as it is an essential factor of teacher education development and peer learning for the Further Education phase (Mavuso, 2022). Buthelezi, et al., (2021) states that, to be able to validate the quality of education there should be a formation of a positive culture and an improvement in individual teachers' skills. Thus, regardless of the phase they teach, teachers must be able to obtain the resources to manage classroom challenges with confidence through support from their HODs. According to Naidoo and Petersen (2015), it is expected of curriculum managers to work alongside the principal to develop a shared commitment and common vision of excellent teaching in each phase for curriculum improvement and learner development.

2.3.2 SENIOR PHASE

Dempster, Ramnarain, Thomson, Grussendorff and Mchunu (2015) state that the Senior phase can be defined as learning that takes place in the final stages of mandatory education with learners that fall in the age category of 13 years and above. Furthermore, the Senior phase provides specialisation, depth and rigour, which prepare learners to utilise their capabilities in order to see which path they want to follow in the FET phase (Mavuso, 2022). Additionally, the experiences learners obtain in the different subject fields allow them to develop the necessary skills they will need to make positive subject choices for the FET phase and their future (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012). However, for learners to achieve their potential, teachers need to support and advise them to gain all the opportunities that the curriculum can possibly provide them. Teachers should enable learners to develop the attributes and skills for learning so that they can improve learners' results (Taole, 2015). To add, Mavuso (2022) states that the Senior phase curriculum further expands, introducing additional subjects such as Technology, Economic Management Sciences and Arts and Culture. This phase now focuses on preparing learners for more specialised subjects they will encounter in the Further Education

and Training (FET) phase. The FET phase is crucial, as it prepares learners for higher education, vocational training, or entering the work force (Maringa, 2016).

The Senior phase should create opportunities for learners that allow them to develop their capabilities, skills, attributes, life and work that lead to a continued focus on literacy, numeracy, and health and well-being (Dednam, 2011). Teachers should support learners in finding their necessary passion in any subject field so that they can move on to future learning and employment, which allows learner to take control of their own learning process (Badugela, 2012). According to Matshidiso (2015), there is a need for the subject advisor role to be clarified in the Senior phase, as they need to specify the nature of the curriculum implementation and curriculum delivery support that need to be provided for Senior phase teachers. To add, Tapala (2019) states that the senior phase assessment requirements should be consistent with the FET phase, as it can improve and develop the quality and status of each phase. In addition, Matshidiso (2015) concurs that when HODs ensure that the development of textbooks and quality assurance of cataloging and LTSM are a top priority in the Senior phase, it can alleviate a lot of the burden of the Senior phase teachers, as they often have the largest, often overcrowded classes.

Ramabulana (2017) state that a class becomes overcrowded when the number of learners exceeds the optimum level and delays the teaching and learning process. West and Meier (2020) adds that overcrowding can be defined as a non-conducive learning environment where learners in the classroom lack sufficient material and attention. Furthermore, Mngomezulu (2015) concurs that teachers faces challenges in managing the curriculum at classroom level when classes are overcrowded. Learners in overcrowded classrooms lose concentration and focus, and focus on distractions that lead to them to fail to take note of important curriculum content (Mthusamy, 2015). According to Marais (2016), learners who lose concentration and focus on distractions tend to disturb the whole class, which leads to disciplinary and management problems.

According to Mosala (2019), HODs should ensure that the training of teachers is in place or occurs regularly so that it can provide a foundation for teachers in curriculum implementation, which can lead to a harmonious teaching and learning environment for teachers. However, workshops or training are conduct by the

officials of the DoE and role-players in education is often directed to the FET phase teachers on curriculum mediation (Mosala, 2019). These workshops provide teachers with a list of topics that need to be handled throughout the year and which amendments occurred during the course of the year (Wieczorek, 2017). Consequently, Senior phase teachers who do not attend such workshops do not experience the follow-up support for implementing the curriculum successfully and where to generate new ideas for learners' learning and the teacher-learner role in the teaching and learning environment (Phakathi, 2015).

2.3 EXPERIENCES OF THE HODS IN CURRICULUM MANAGEMENT IN THE SENIOR PHASE

Grootenboer (2018) states that HODs play a crucial role in implementing curriculum management in the school setting. The supervisory role of the HOD can be categorised into two roles: their professional role consisting of their administration, and operational duty, where they ensure that the establishment of curriculum structures is essential for ensuring the efficient functioning of academic departments. This means that HODs need to ensure that there is seamless harmony between the Senior and FET phase (Programme to Improve Learning Outcomes (PILO), 2017).

The Head of Department (HOD) plays a crucial role in the school by supervising human interactions and fostering teacher relationships to enhance the quality of teaching and learning (Mogale, et al., 2022). In the same way HODs are required to work together with the teachers to improve the curriculum coverage as well as assisting teachers in problems related to the curriculum (Chireshe, 2013). However, coordinating the curriculum to ensure that there is effective staff development can be time consuming for HODs, with the result that they mostly focus on the Further Education Training phase (Mavuso, 2022).

As the Head of Department of a phase, HODs need to provide effective resource management to curriculum evaluation at school level, most importantly, to oversee curriculum development at class level. However, in some cases it is difficult for HODs to implement these skills, as there is a limited number of meaningful contributions from teachers in supporting curriculum development when going to internal and external moderation centres (Pausigere, 2016). Furthermore, HODs

are often referred to as curriculum specialists, but they do not receive structured training on curriculum development. Moreover, HODs experienced that many teachers are ill informed regarding curriculum in theory and practice, especially novice teachers entering the school system (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). Nevertheless, HODs often do not supervise these inexperienced teachers by holding regular meetings per term, nor controlling and delegating their development in curriculum and the teaching and learning environment. In the same way, Senior phase teachers are often neglected in respect of support from the Head of Department in terms of the procurement of resources, as the Further Education Training phase are prioritised, while they are new entry-level teachers (iJika iMfundo, 2015).

According to Metcalf (2018), HODs should assist teachers with the problems they encounter regarding curriculum coverage and support them with content knowledge acquisition. However, HODs often experience that it is difficult to have professional, detailed conversations with teachers. They also experience challenges when supporting teachers to improve curriculum coverage. Poor communication between HODs and teachers plays a crucial part in school, as it results in an information bottleneck. Irvine and Price (2014) adds that poor communication and a lack of sharing information can be a barrier between HODs and teachers, as not sharing information with teachers leads to not being able to successfully overcome internal and external barriers.

According to Nicholson et al. (2016), subject advisors need to make follow-up visits to schools so that they can verify whether the training is implemented effectively. The HOD can play as a link between the subject advisor and the teacher, where the subject advisor's role can be seen as the intermediary between the curriculum policy and implementation in the classroom (Seobi & Wood, 2016). The subject advisor plays an important role in ensuring that teachers obtain the necessary support and guidance; however, the HOD has direct contact with the teachers, with the result that the subject advisor only makes follow-up visits and regular meetings, as it is the HOD's duty. Consequently, when HODs do not create meetings on classroom development teachers ends up facing difficulties in the classroom, which causes them to rely on their abilities (Thorpe, 2014). As the direct link with the subject advisors, HODs should ensure that teachers are in contact with their subject

advisors so that teachers gain the necessarily insight and support on their subject, which will be able to assist them to alleviate difficulties they encounter in their classroom and specific learning areas by assessing and monitoring teachers' performance (Queen-Mary & Mtapuri, 2014).

Murphy and Bleiberg (2019) state that the challenges faced in curriculum leadership and management by HODs are often neglected in South Africa. Ogina (2017) concurs that HODs, who form a vital part of the school's workforce and being members of the SMT, need professional development and growth in order to be able to executing their duties to the best of their capabilities. Furthermore, Tapala, Fuller and Mentz (2020) state that HODs experience an abundance of challenges they face in their work such as "lack of time, poor communication, lack of experience and work skills and knowledge underdevelopment, changes in education policy and curriculum and lack of support". In addition to this, Buthelezi et al. (2021) add that HODs are responsible for overseeing the curriculum implementation and required assessments in their designated fields or phases of learning, to be up to date with recent innovations, amendments and approaches of teaching, which they must provide to the teachers in their departments and oversee their application in classrooms. Moreover, Cobin & Strauss (2015) concurs that allocation for subjects on the timetable, school culture, protocol and lines of reporting is directly overseen by the HODs as impediments to the successful execution of their work. Additionally, HODs experience that it is difficult to execute their work in a negative school culture, as it leads to low morale among teachers, leading to poor performance in their departments (Mmaoldock & Maroun, 2018).

2.4 VIEWS OF TEACHERS ON THE WAY HODS MANAGE THE CURRICULUM IN THE SENIOR PHASE

According to Mthiyane et al. (2019), when teachers do a term analysis to see which learners passed or failed, it allows the HOD to pinpoint areas where the teacher excelled or struggle in delivering the subject matter. However, when there are no regular meetings by HODs, teachers often find it difficult to adapt to the new curriculum, especially novice teachers. Furthermore, in order to provide quality teaching and learning in a school environment, teachers need regular professional

growth sessions to be able to assist them with curriculum implementation in their respective subjects to improve professional development (Mestry, 2017).

The learning and teaching materials (LTSM) play a vital role in the teaching and learning environment as this help to guide the teacher in their perspective subjects to help learners excel (Roberts & Simpson, 2016). In order to do this, HODs play a crucial part in the resource management department. When obtaining LTSM, HODs are required to know how to budget for resources so that they can effectively procure, distribute, maintain and receive the school's resources (Ogina, 2017). This is neither an easy nor an automatic process, as HODs are limited by the school's budget and not fully trained to handle their challenging work, as the role of HOD requires both administration management and curriculum management with leadership attributes (Kaushik & Walsh, 2019). There is often a lack of quality assurance and catalogue development of textbooks for teachers to improve and develop the teaching and learning environment effectively (Mestry & Khumalo, 2012).

However, to be able to guide Senior phase teachers, HODs must have suitable knowledge of which resources and materials are required in a particular class, grade and various department each Senior phase subject is divided into. Thus, they should know the purpose of the specific resources and what they are required for (Maringa, 2016). The principal should ensure that HODs have thorough insights into curriculum leadership and management so that they can know how to handle the curriculum, evaluate and monitor implementation in order to analyse the performance of the teachers and learners (Dosunmu & Adeyemo, 2018). Furthermore, curriculum management is no minor duty that the HODs take on; they must obtain in-depth knowledge of the subjects as well mastering the content of the subjects they oversee (Buthelezi et al., 2021). However, HODs can be excellent as teachers, but we often see that they can also be very poor as mentors to teachers. As young novice teachers enter the working field, they have no experience whatsoever and only know the curriculum based on their knowledge as students (Li, 2014).

According to Phakathi (2015), teachers often find it challenging to cover the curriculum, as the time allocated is sometimes not enough for the content the subjects entailed in the Senior phase. This results that those teachers only focus on the required SBA curriculum coverage rather than to guarantee that learners master

the learning intended curriculum in the FET phase. Furthermore, the Senior phase plays a vital role in teaching learners the ability to engage in critical thinking where learners should be able to communicate their ideas clearly to the teachers and to make sound decisions and judgements for their future (Schmidt et al., 2011). However, due to the lack of workshops to strengthen their teaching and learning, teachers are ill-equipped to teach all the aspects of the subjects they teach (Liu et al., 2016). They stick to the content they are familiar with, which leads to a poor grasp of knowledge content of learners in the FET phase, and also has an effect on the poor matriculation results (Mampane, 2017).

To add, teachers focus on implementing the curriculum according to their different frames of experience with the subject, which implies that each teacher responds differently to curriculum change (Al Hosani, 2015). Teachers tend not to change their strategies or teaching practices easily, as they believe that these experiences they have gathered during their years of teaching are enough (Alade, 2011). This leads to teachers struggling to adapt to curriculum change, since they are accustomed to what they are familiar with (Cheung & Wong, 2012). Furthermore, when teachers are faced with curriculum change, it is not about resisting curriculum change; it is the fact that they may be unsure about what change requires of them. Teachers are faced with doubts about their ability to succeed in implementing the amendments that was made to the curriculum (Wieczorek, 2017).

In the Senior phase, most teachers are trained for at least a combination of two disciplines within a subject and are not fully equipped in all three disciplines within subject. This leads that not all three disciplines enjoy equal teaching, which have a direct influence on the FET phase subject (Rajoo, 2012). According to Jackson, Michelson & Munir (2023) the word 'discipline' is cited in the context of academics, and should not be confused with school discipline. School discipline refers to the action teachers use to discipline learner behaviour when they disrupt the ongoing educational activity in the classroom. Hence, in this section, the academic aspect of discipline is explored. The term 'discipline' can be defined as a "branch of learning or knowledge" (Maddock & Maroun, 2018). In an academic sense, a discipline involves the practice of study of a certain category of experience and the methodologies of it. Furthermore, a discipline can be described as the body

of subject matter made up of concepts that can be taught systematically. In addition, discipline refers to a specific area of study which consists of a branch of knowledge recognised by a certain distinctiveness (Maddock & Maroun, 2018).

However, due to teachers not being equipped to teach all three disciplines, for example, Economic Management Sciences that is an integrated teaching of Accounting, Business Studies and Economics (Mpofu & Maphalala, 2018), teachers are often biased towards their specialisation, with the result that they only focus on the discipline they are comfortable with teaching. This creates a notable gap with the other two disciplines, with the results that the learners are not equipped with all three disciplines' knowledge in the FET phase, because the teacher only focused on one or two disciplines (Leepo, 2015).

Nevertheless, teachers face challenges related to the subject matter they are teaching based on the need for them to master and understand the content of the three-discipline-integrated subject (Phakathi, 2015). For example, in the integrated subject Economic Management Science, the three disciplines, Accounting, Business Studies and Economics have their own new developments in terms of theory and conceptualisation. When the EMS teachers are not up to date with these new developments, it creates a gap of knowledge for the learners to choose one of those subjects as the specialisation in the FET phase (Mpungose, 2018).

Next, when teaching Natural Sciences at a Senior phase level, teachers need to lay the basis of further studies in more science disciplines, such as Life Sciences, Physical Sciences, Earth Sciences or Agricultural Sciences. These subjects prepare learners for active preparation in a democratic society that values human rights and promotes a responsibility towards the environment (DBE, 2011). However, teachers are reluctant and resistant to teach all three disciplines, as it is often time consuming and does not allow them to focus on the required assessments of the current curriculum. Due to the limited knowledge on the other two disciplines teachers often avoid teaching it. This is seen when the Grade 9 learners enter the FET Phase. In the FET Phase learners are required to understand certain concepts that are formed in specialised ways, which entail the process of knowing and understanding specialised subjects (Mpofu & Maphalala, 2018).

However, not all teachers teach a three-discipline integrated subject in the Senior phase. Teachers who teach Language, Mathematics and Life Orientation also face challenges to implementing the curriculum successfully. Teachers are required to have an acquisition of content knowledge on the subject that will help learners to fit into a post-schooling working environment (Tuncay, 2016). Teachers need to be up to date with the nature of the subject matter, the context required for the current curriculum, and being in touch with the challenges of the curriculum (Zhao & Watterson, 2021). Senior phase teachers regularly face challenges in terms of the subject matter and they need professional development to be able to master and understand the context of the subject and its amendments. Teachers' professional growth and development have become crucial in the Covid-19 period (Kenneavy, et al., 2022). Regular workshops need to be implemented for teachers to be equipped with a variety of teaching strategies so that they can keep up to date with the curriculum change.

Nevertheless, due to the lack of training and support for teachers in the Senior phase, they struggle to stay up to date with the amendments of the curriculum. The curriculum change that occurred during the Covid-19 period led to teachers not able to differentiate between teaching and learning and the amendment made, which resulted in a gap between teachers' teaching and students' learning (Kallio & Halverson, 2020). Attending workshops can assist Senior phase teachers to produce quality work and improve their teaching strategies. It also helps teachers to stay in touch with subject advisors who delegate what teachers need to do per term through regular mediation meetings arranged by the Head of Department (Orkibi & Tuaf, 2016). Due to the pandemic and recent developments in South Africa, we need to take into account that the curriculum has been experiencing multiple reforms and added amendments. Teachers are faced with changes in the curriculum that teachers need to adapt to and implement in their teaching planning (Al Lily, 2020). In addition to this, these expectations create new challenges for teachers' learning and teaching environment, as teachers have to follow various new approaches in terms of learning, teaching and assessment (Joseph, 2015).

To conclude, a huge burden is placed on the HODs as curriculum managers, which leads to them often failing to check the files of the teachers regularly as well as

provide valuable guidance on how to improve their teaching and learning environment.

2.5 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

According to Whitehead (2013), a theoretical framework can be regarded as the language of researchers to represent their studies, as it serves as a guide or frame to explain their study outcome. Imenda (2014) adds that a theoretical framework provides a study with the methodical background and shows how the study is based on existing literature. It helps the researcher to establish an understanding of existing literature and also provides direction to the researcher. Functionalism will be used as a theoretical framework that underpins this study. According to Milton (2007), functionalist theory takes on a system approach that views society as a system comprised of interconnected structures that collaborate to create the societal as a whole. These structures of society or institution must work efficiently and effectively in order for the society to remain stable or function properly. Gómez-Diago (2020) states that functionalism can be seen as a theoretical perspective that focuses on the roles performed by individuals in society by social structures. This theory seeks to analyse the function of given activity within a system, i.e. whether the activity promotes or interferes with the running of the system (Gómez-Diago, 2020).

Functionalists posit that without a collective conscience or shared values and beliefs, achieving organisational goals would be impossible (Cusmano, 2019). The functionalist theory aims to achieve social order (Storey, 2017). In a secondary school as an organisation, there should be harmony and a seamless transition between the phases. This implies that HODs, irrespective of the phase they are responsible for, should all work towards and contribute to the success of the school as a social institution.

Grobler, Looock and Govender (2012) state that an HOD should maintain the standards of assessment practice in schools and ensure that teachers have a fair understanding of assessing policies. Furthermore, Ghavifekr et al. (2014) concur that HODs are required to offer assistance for strategies that needs to be implemented in the classrooms and development and implementation of the subject matter by teachers. Additionally, HODs must be able to provide monitoring and evaluation of the

instruction and resources that can enhance the teaching and learning in a particular subject. Leithwood (2014) also states that HODs are faced with the responsibility to report to the principal about current problems and challenges the school experiences. Moreover, they also carry the responsibility of teaching, examining and regularly doing routine visits in their department.

Functionalism emphasises that each component in a system (organisation) must function or operate for the coherent and overall performance of a system. In this way it is imperative that HODs carry out their curriculum management duties such that they contribute to the achievement of the main purpose of effective teaching and learning. In addition to functionalism, an instructional leadership model will be used as a conceptual framework.

2.6 INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP MODEL

Instructional leadership focuses on the direction and management of curriculum in the teaching and learning environment, including the professional growth of teachers, as well as learner growth in the education system (Heystek, 2016). According to Breyer & Barrett (2014), in instructional leadership, the emphasis is on teaching and learning as well as the behaviour of teachers in their relation with learners. For this reason, the instructional leadership model focuses on the direction and impact of influence, instead of on the influence process itself. In addition to this, Hallinger and Heck (2010) states that instructional leadership focuses on creating an effective teaching and learning in the school environment. Instructional leadership can be described as inclusive and collaborative by nature, which focuses on what is being taught and how it is being taught (Naidoo & Petersen, 2015). Bush (2023) further elaborates that instructional leadership focuses on central activities of the school that are managed and lead by the principal and other team members. Teamwork plays an essential part in instructional leadership. Bush (2023) expands that for instructional leadership to be implemented successfully there must be cooperation amongst all staff members in the school.

Furthermore, Bayar (2016) concurs that instructional leadership ensures that school-based leaders or SMT members take on the responsibility to contribute positively to learners' performance and the career development of teachers. The SMT members

of a school take the lead in ensuring success in teacher development. Additionally, the SMT members are expected to provide support in instructional processes to guarantee success in all subjects, as they are considered as managers who take control and align the schools' academic vision and mission. Moreover, according to Irvine and Price (2014), instructional leadership is a process that depends on how the SMT members cooperate with teachers to increase learner performance. In addition to this, Jita and Mokhele (2014) state that instructional leadership guidance and effective leadership occur when SMT members empower teachers and when the School Governing Body (SGB) or stakeholders in school work together to enhance learners' achievement and development. SMT members as instructional leaders play a critical role in ensuring school effectiveness which is measured by how learners perform in all subjects in the school (Khan et al., 2011). Instructional leadership from the HODs can improve learners' performance in the Senior phase by assisting teachers actively and ensuring that teachers take part in leadership roles, such as grade heads, subject heads, etc. (Leepo, 2015).

According to Khan, Ahmad, Ali, & Rehman (2011) in instructional leadership, the emphasis is on teaching and learning as well as the behaviour of teachers in their relation towards learners. For this reason, the instructional leadership model focuses on direction and impact of influence, instead of on the influence process itself.

However, Li (2014) states that principals are not the only instructional leaders in the school anymore. The responsibilities are now shared among the principals and HODs. Furthermore, HODs are directly involved in the teaching and learning environment, as principals are loaded with administrative duties and the disciplining of learners. To ensure that curriculum delivery is managed effectively, the Head of Department – the 'middle manager' – plays an important role as an instructional leader in the Senior phase (Leithwood, 2016).

According to Maringa (2016), instructional leadership can be regarded as the roles and responsibilities allocated to curriculum managers, for example, the principals and HODs. Curriculum managers who practise instructional leadership ensure that leading and managing teaching and learning take place as the core principle at schools. The instructional leadership model determines whether the HODs enhance their role and relate to teachers in order to develop teaching and learning in the

Senior phase, as well as their capacity to improve learning outcomes in that specific phase (Naidoo & Petersen, 2015).

According to Phakathi (2015) Head of Departments plays a key role in building objectives and goals for school readiness and creating an effective teaching and learning environment. However, as HODs are faced with many responsibilities, they often invest little effort in empowering Senior phase teachers with the necessary development programmes, mentoring and support for effective curriculum delivery (Hallinger & Moosung, 2013). In addition to this, Wenner and Campbell (2016) state that SMT members do not have the same duties and responsibilities, which makes it difficult to understand their roles in the teaching and learning environment.

According to the Personnel Administrative Measure (PAM) document (RSA, 2016), a Head of Department (HOD) is expected to

engage in class teaching, be responsible for effective functioning of the department and organise relevant related extra-curricular activities so as to ensure that the subject learning area or phase and the education of the learners are promoted in a proper manner.

Moreover, in order to guarantee that the curriculum is complied with in each phase, the Head of Department is required to organise and manage material resources, and attain the procurement and development of books that promote the teaching and learning activities conducted by teachers in classrooms (NEEDU, 2013). Additionally, HODs are responsible for “effective language policies and programmes, good time management, coherent planning and coordination” in the teaching and learning process (NEEDU, 2013).

According to Seobi and Wood (2016), at most public schools there is often a lack of systems to create effective management of the curriculum in the Senior phase. This leads to HODs struggling to develop, sustain and monitor the teaching and learning environment in the Senior phase. HODs often face management variables in the Senior phase, which have an impact on the curriculum management of the HODs; for example, time, monitoring and support to Senior phase teachers so that teachers can plan effectively for curriculum coverage and delivery.

Furthermore, as the HODs are part of the School Management Team (SMT), we look closely at how they as curriculum managers lead the school, and how they fulfil their role as monitors in the Senior phase in order to promote change and teacher connectedness to the curriculum (Phakathi, 2015). For successful management to occur in a school environment there must be an effective flow of communication amongst SMT members and teachers. The Head of Department often uses meetings and circulars to reinforce feedback on successes and achievements about their department and the school (Mogale, Malatji, & Mphahlele, 2022). Furthermore, communication is an important factor in the Head of Department's role in curriculum management, as it enables HODs to cooperate with the SMT members and teachers in order to maintain a good teaching and learning standard (Stephenson, 2010). Whilst it is important that curriculum management should be led by the SMT, the principal should identify certain specific functions and tasks that must be performed by each member of the School Management Team. The actual nature of the role which each member should play must be known to them (Mpungose, 2018).

The researcher used a functionalist theoretical framework that advocates equal and just treatment of both phases by effectively managing and leading the curriculum in the Senior phase. Aligned with functionalism theory, this study applied instructional leadership to portray how Heads of Departments require support and opportunities to manage and lead the curriculum in the Senior phase effectively in order to take on their curriculum role and explore to why Heads of Departments are not performing their duties as expected.

2.7. CHAPTER SUMMARY

In this chapter, the researcher explored the HODs' role in curriculum management in the Senior phase to be able to understand and gain more information into the phenomenon under study. The literature reviewed the roles of the HODs in managing and leading the curriculum. This means that HODs manage post level one teachers, what should be taught, how it should be thought by distributing the latest curriculum template and finally analyse learners' progress and performance through a term analysis. However, this research recognised that HODs are teachers who teach 85% of their timetable cycle, as well as attend to their administration duties.

This research has sought to gain insight on how HODs support Senior phase teachers, how HODs assist and find ways for Senior phase teachers to get more training and development in their fields or perspective subjects. Consequently, they are faced with challenges such as lack of support and mentoring from the DoE, a limited budget to support teachers, and some struggle to apply leadership traits and styles especially in the Senior phase. Upon thorough examination of the literature review, it became evident to the researcher that HODs encounter challenges when managing and leading the curriculum in the Senior phase. These challenges have a direct influence on the teachers in their department and the learners. HODs currently face constraints like time, content gap in grades, novice teachers that struggle to manage the curriculum, parental involvement, and administrative duties. The literature review mentioned numerous strategies that HODs can apply in managing the challenges they experience in the Senior phase.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In this research study, the researcher explored the management of curriculum in the Senior phase by exploring HODs' perceptions. The participants perceptions in this study were explored in order to understand how they manage and lead the curriculum and how these perceptions influence their daily activities in the workplace. The following chapter will address the methodological characteristics of the study, which are discussed under the following sub-headings: research paradigm, research approach, research design, sampling procedure and data analysis technique and finally, the ethical consideration of the study. These aspects are vital when addressing the research main question and sub-questions that guide an in-depth comprehension of experiences of HODs in managing and leading the curriculum in the Senior phase and at the same time providing adequate support to teachers allocated in their departments. This chapter elaborates more on the research methodology that the researcher briefly elucidated in Chapter 1.

3.2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Maree and Jansen (2019) define research methodology as a planned proposal that is followed when researchers collect data, analyse the gathered information, explore and describe the studied phenomenon. To add, Leavy (2017) describes a methodology as a framework of how research study unfolds, and how the researcher combines the important aspects of a research into a proposal that explains how the researcher will accomplish research plans. There are three methodologies a researcher can use to collect data, this includes qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods. Johnson and Christensen (2014) state that quantitative methods focus on numerical data and following theories and expectations employing quantitative data to establish accuracy. On the contrary, qualitative data focus on descriptive data that provides an in-depth explanation of context and its focus is on problems that emerges in the field. However, mixed-methods research, according to Morse and Niehaus (2016) involves both qualitative and quantitative methods. Mix-methods research is used when a researcher cannot use a single method to respond to a question. The researcher premised this study on a descriptive and interpretive perspective, which allows the HODs to describe their experiences and perceptions towards curriculum management in the Senior phase. The following subsections outline the intended actions for collecting data for this study.

3.3 RESEARCH PARADIGM

Yanow and Swartz-Shea (2011) define a paradigm as a set of expectations about important aspects of reality that give insight into a particular phenomenon in the world or society. A paradigm can be established as a description that elaborated more on how participants perceive the world (Maree & Jansen, 2019). A paradigm outlines the principles that determine the research activity and set out how researchers analyse phenomena under study and an attempt to understanding the world and behaviours of the participants in the study. Leavy (2017) states that a paradigm is used as a method to understand knowledge regarding humans' interpretations on a certain phenomenon. Killam (2013) concurs that a research paradigm confirms that reality is created in different ways that are dependent on how someone understands it. The following examples of paradigms can be used by a

researcher to conduct their study, namely interpretive, post-positivist, participatory, pragmatist and constructive paradigms.

This research study used an interpretative paradigm to explore the HODs' experiences in curriculum management in the Senior phase. The interpretative paradigm serves as a tool to achieve meaning and comprehension of the researched phenomena. Maree and Nieuwenhuis (2019) state that interpretivism stresses that capability of a participant in the study to establish meaning. The interpretative paradigm enables the researcher to understand or understand the lived experiences of participants and their interpretations on the given phenomenon (Thomas, 2017). The interpretative paradigm allows the researcher to understand that reality can be seen in alternative and contrasting ways. Additionally, according to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), when the researcher applies the interpretivism paradigm, the reality is approached through the participants' own experiences. The researcher relies on how the research questions are answered through the participants' experiences, as there is no particular answer to it.

Through this paradigm, the researcher managed to apply alternative perspectives and diverse interpretation of the individuals in this study regarding the leadership role of the HODs in the teaching and learning environment in the Senior phase. By using this paradigm, the researcher was able to analyse data based on the views of the Head of Departments and the experiences of the Senior phase teachers on curriculum management. When using the interpretive paradigm, the researcher is obligated to interact in the partakers environment to be able to create meaningful interpretations from the participants' narrated stories and lived experiences. Magnusson and Marecek (2015) state that interpretive researchers affirm that the main reason for the study is to discover the participants' understanding on researched phenomenon by listening to participants deliver the experiences they have encountered in their desired way, and through their own interpretation.

The researcher used the HODs and teachers' perceptions for data of this study and their interviews connected with their experiences were the primary source of this research study. The researcher was able to study the phenomenon sufficiently and thoroughly through the qualitative research study. The main goal of this qualitative study was to explore how department heads and teachers perceives the effective

management of the curriculum in the Senior phase, without assuming and generalising their points of view to prior literature reviewed. The interpretive researcher gives every participant an opportunity to narrate his/her experiences without their interpretation be limit by existing literature (Klenke, 2016).

3.4 RESEARCH APPROACH

Creswell and Creswell (2018) describe a research approach as the planned ideas and framework that unfold the research from a range of beliefs to a set method of collecting, analysing and interpreting data. Hawkins (2018) adds that an approach can be regarded as a layout of all plans and detailed methods that are chosen to deal with in-depth in the research. The research approach is a set proposal for the researcher to deal with problems that occur in the research study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Creswell (2014) concurs that a research approach is an outline for the researcher to complete the research, which consists of the inclusion of philosophy, research design and data collection methods. I conducted this research using the qualitative approach to collect data that would offer a detailed description of the phenomenon being studied.

A qualitative research approach allows a researcher to acquire a deeper understanding of the phenomenon he or she is currently exploring, through the interaction with the participants (McGrath, Palmgren & Liljedahl, 2019). According to Creswell and Poth (2018), qualitative study is premised when there is a demand to enable researchers to elaborate on their stories, to attentively listen to participants and to understand the environment in which challenges are conveyed by participants. This approach enables the researcher to view collected information from the participants' perspective and analyse the data that were obtained (Cobin & Strauss, 2015). When following a qualitative approach, the researcher attempts to understand the social world participants live in, as well as to try to look why things occur in the way they do and being concerned with trying to develop solutions for certain social phenomena (Creswell, 2012). Leavy (2014) states that qualitative study is when researchers study the social reality about challenges that happen in the setting participants live in and then elucidate their own understanding on what they have studied.

When conducting a qualitative study, the researcher must not be biased towards participants, he or she must be keen to learn about the studied phenomenon and be able to listen carefully when participant narrate their stories (Hennink et al., 2020). However, McGrath, et al., (2019) states that in a qualitative approach the participants' perspectives play a major role in the study of the phenomenon, which can be time consuming for the researcher, as he or she deals with the lived human experiences and this is often seen as a subjective approach to research. Furthermore, Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2011) state that the researcher is very attentive to all aspects of the research process. This encompasses the conceptualisation and interconnections between each phase of the research process, demonstrating the significant influence the researcher wields throughout the entire process.

3.5 RESEARCH DESIGN

According to Leavy (2017), in a qualitative study a research design can be seen as the process of creating a detailed layout for the research study. Thomas (2017) concurs that a research design guides the researcher on the procedures that will be needed explain the researched phenomenon. It is defined as a blueprint of how the research will unfold during the data collection and analysis process (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Additionally, Loseke (2016) postulates that a research design is a detailed plan on how research should unfold and which model will be used for conducting a specific research study. Research designs are categories of inquiring within a research approach that offer the researcher a set direction for methods in a research study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Furthermore, Creswell (2012) states that the purpose of a research design is when the researcher seeks to provide valid and accurate answers to main research question of the study. Gray, Wong, Rempel, and Cook (2020) claim that the research design explains how the researcher will explore the given research phenomenon and which strategies will be used in conducting the study. Qualitative research consists of several designs, which consists of the following: narrative research, ethnography, phenomenological research design, grounded theory and case studies.

The qualitative researcher conducted the study with a phenomenological design. According to Thomas (2017), a phenomenological research design aims to explore or add meaning to lived experiences of human beings. This research design reflects on the experiences and behaviours of the participants. Flick (2022) postulates that the researcher's awareness is guided by the perspectives of the participants when attempting to comprehend their experiences and make sense of their interactions with the researcher. In this study, the researcher explored how HODs narrated their personal experiences in curriculum management in the Senior phase, which influences how the researcher perceives curriculum management. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) add that when the researcher applies the phenomenological research design, the aim is to give the most appropriate description of the phenomenon that is being studied. This is to ensure that the participants' interpretations of the phenomenon are conveyed and not the researcher's interpretation. In this study, through the phenomenological design, the researcher explored the role of the HODs in curriculum management in the Senior phase and the views of the Senior phase teachers on how the HODs manage and lead the curriculum. Lastly, according to Carduff, Kendall and Murray (2018), when applying the phenomenological design, the researcher should understand the importance of personal perspective, and interpretation should be portrayed in an objective manner. By employing this method, the researcher can acquire a deeper understanding of the motivations and behaviour exhibited by the participants.

3.6 RESEARCH SITE

Data were collected at three schools in Cradock, Inxuba Yethemba Circuit, Chris-Hani West district. The researcher selected the studied schools on purpose because of their geographical location, quintile, learner enrolment and grade. The three schools were located within the researcher's geographical proximity, with one of them being the researcher's workplace. The sampled schools' location benefited the researcher in respect of traveling aspects and, traffic, as it was easier to travel to participants. The three schools were all public schools, Quintile 1 no-fee schools, which means they function on a similar scale and guarantee a greater number of HODs and teachers because of their number of learner enrolment. This widened the sample number for the researcher.

3.7 POPULATION OF THE STUDY

In this study, the researcher wanted to gain insight on how HODs perceives their role as curriculum managers in the Senior phase to lead and manage the teaching and learning environment successfully. In relation to the population of this study, the researcher strived to obtain data from HODs and teachers in the Chris-Hani West district. The study of population is the total of participants that the researcher observes to form a sample (Pandey & Pandey, 2015).

3.8 SAMPLE OF THE STUDY

According to Moser and Korstjens (2018), when a researcher applies sampling procedures, he or she selects a particular population based on a specific criterion to explore the phenomenon. When following a sampling procedure, the researcher selects a specific sampling method, a sample size and which procedure will be the most appropriate for recruiting participants in the research study (Gringeri, Barusch, & Cambron, 2013). Next, Glaw et al. (2017) postulate that when a researcher applies the sampling procedure a clear aim is representing the selected population. Additionally, the sampling describes how many observations, focus-group discussions, interviews or cases will be conducted to collect rich data from the sampled population.

According to Hawkins (2018), the qualitative researcher follows a non-probability sampling procedure where researchers identify a specific population to explore a comprehensive topic, or when the total population is unknown or unavailable. Furthermore, a non-probability sampling procedure consists of four main aspects, namely convenience sampling, purposive sampling, snowball sampling and theoretical sampling (Bhandari & Pritha, 2020). In this research, a purposive sampling procedure was used. Purposive sampling is a strategy where the participants are identified through preselected criteria relevant to a specific research question. According to Patel (2015), in a purposive sampling procedure the members of a sample are selected with a 'purpose' to represent a phenomenon in relation to a key criterion. In this study, the researcher employed a purposive procedure as the participants were chosen deliberately. For this research, the HODs and Senior phase

teachers had knowledge and an understanding of the role of the HOD in curriculum management in the Senior phase, which is the researched phenomena.

When selecting the participants, the researcher followed the following criteria:

The sampled schools were located in the same area, which is in the researcher's geographical proximity. This benefited the researcher regarding traveling aspects, as all three sampled schools were located in Cradock, the Chris Hani-West district in the Eastern Cape.

The participants that were sampled comprised three HODs and three Senior phase teachers from each school; this was to be able to explore the phenomenon in depth. This gave us a total of nine HODs and nine teachers. However, two HODs and one teacher withdraw from the research, bringing the participants to a total of fifteen participants.

The sampled schools that were selected were similar in learner enrolment and status and were all public schools in the same township. These schools fall under Quintile 1–3, no-fee schools and are in the same geographical location, which is Cradock.

The researcher chose purposive sampling procedure as the HODs have a managerial role that has been delegated to empower, train and monitor post-level one teachers into productivity. The HODs' insights into curriculum management in the Senior phase helped the researcher to explore the phenomenon more in-depth. The Senior phase teachers who are also participants could convey how they viewed or perceived the HODs role in curriculum management in the Senior phase and how the HODs supported them in implementing the curriculum successfully. Furthermore, as participants the HODs were able to reflect on how they perceived curriculum management and how they had to lead and support the Senior phase teachers. The teachers who were employed were expected to be permanently employed at the schools and have experience of, or are allocated to the Senior phase.

3.9 DATA GENERATION METHOD

According to Rose, Baffoe-Djan and McKinley (2019), data collection instruments are confirmed methods that researchers use to gather data for analysis. These

instruments consist of the strategies and methods the researcher will use when collecting the data from the participants. The most common qualitative data collection instruments researchers use consists of questionnaires, interviews, document analysis, focus groups, tests language elicitation tasks, quantities and observations (Rose et al., 2019).

Data were collected for a period of nine months. The researcher reviewed the literature on curriculum management in the Senior phase and analysed the policy document related to HODs before interviewing participants. The researcher asked the participants to give suitable times for interviews with them. The researcher met the HODs and teachers at the times that suited their individual schedules. The interviews mostly took place after school and during their free time in order not to interrupt their teaching and learning. The researcher explained to the participants what the study entailed, gave each participant a summary of the purpose of the research and how their replies would benefit the study. The researcher used the qualitative approach for this study as it deals with the experiences of the participants that involve a deeper exploration of the participants' perspective (Marshall & Rossman, 2014). Interviews were used to investigate the challenges experienced by HODs in the Senior phase. Their responses to the main and sub-questions gave me an understanding of their experiences when managing a curriculum. By using follow-up questions to their responses, they were able to shed more light on the factors that enable them to do their work as well as those that are stumbling blocks in their daily responsibilities. Data from the interviews will be explained further in the next chapter. This research is premised on the opinions and experiences of the Head of Departments on their role in curriculum management in the Senior phase to discover how they support teachers allocated in their departments.

The researcher in this study performed semi-structured interviews with the participants.

3.9.1 Semi-structured interviews

In this study, the semi-structured interview method was used for collecting data. When the researcher employs the semi-structured interview method, the researcher does not have to adhere a particular list of questions. Instead, there is a set plan for the phenomenon under study to be discussed (Packer, 2018). The sequence of

questions the researcher uses do not have to be followed in a particular manner, but they must be open-ended to allow the researcher to obtain answers more freely. According to Magnusson and Marecek (2015), in semi-structured research, researchers employ a set list of questions to extract information from participants, but the interview format allows for more expansive responses beyond just specific answers to predetermined questions. This allows participants to narrate their stories and experiences more freely, as they are not being restricted to answer the questions in a specified manner.

Semi-structured interviews allow the interpretivist researcher to interpret what the participants respond to questions to build a deeper understanding on the phenomenon under study (Hlasa, 2022). A semi-structured interview method allows the researcher to probe deeper, where needed, as well as allowing participants to elaborate more on their experiences without necessarily focusing entirely on the questions or schedule (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The researcher makes use of probes to be able to follow up on questions in the interview schedule. A probing technique in a qualitative data collection method is when the researcher looks for more answers or an explanation on issues under discussion. This technique allows the researcher to get more clarification on some issues by encouraging participants to elaborate more on their lived experiences (Thomas, 2017).

According to Bhandari and Pritha (2020), the semi-structured interview method allows the researcher to address the issues that were identified in the research study in advance. This data collection method gives the researcher enough time to gain information as well as distributing the questions to the participants to avoid a last-minute scramble. The interview schedule guides the researcher and participants in a structured manner to avoid participants feeling uncomfortable during the interview. Klenke (2016) concurs that the semi-structured method is very flexible and adjustable. It allows the researcher to be spontaneous, and takes the liberty to change or skip questions. When utilising this tool, the researcher can use the participants' responses to modify the sequence of questions or reword them as needed. However, the researcher must ensure that the interview questions focus on the central issues of the research questions (Thomas, 2017).

According to Thomas (2017), when conducting a semi-structured method, the researcher must be able to apply patience as one of the key attributes, as he or she will be required to sit patiently through each interview with the participants. This process is seen as a time-consuming affair by researchers. Tracy (2013) states that semi-structured interviews allow for in-depth exploration and create an opportunity for researchers to expand upon existing information. Semi-structured interviews assisted the researcher in acquiring information on the phenomenon by conversing with interviewees (Maree & Nieuwenhuis, 2019). In this study, the interview questions that the researcher used were open-ended, designed to explore the views that HODs and teachers have towards curriculum management in the Senior phase. The researcher conducted individual interviews with HODs and teachers. The researcher asked HODs different questions from the questions she gave to the teachers, because the HODs are in managerial positions, and they must manage and lead the smooth implementation of curriculum by teachers. Participants were interviewed on their availability. There was a total of six HODs and eight teachers, and indicated a scheduled time for the semi-interviews that suited their individual timeframes.

3.10 TRUSTWORTHINESS

A qualitative research attempts to demonstrate the systematic nature in order to obtain an in-depth understanding of a phenomena that are being studied without losing sight of the subtleness of the researcher's deep subjectivity of the context. Qualitative research always prioritises rigor and truth. Ensuring trustworthiness is crucial in establishing the credibility and reliability of qualitative findings, given their subjective nature. The concept of trustworthiness in qualitative research comprises various essential elements, such as credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. In this study the researcher will attempt to use an interpretive validity which refers to the researcher's sensitivity and mental processes in order to capture and interpret the meaning of behaviours of the people engaged and involved in the studied phenomenon, in this case, using an interpretive validity process in order to capture the role of the HODs in curriculum management in the Senior Phase.

3.11 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Before starting with any research activities, a researcher must adhere to the ethical considerations required by the institution. According to Tapala (2019), when the researcher conducts empirical research, he or she needs to consider the ethical aspects that will protect the rights of the participants involved in the research. To add, Thomas (2017) states that ethics deal with morality of human behaviour during a research process. Next, ethical considerations aim to prevent harm to happen to participants involved by applying strict ethical principles during fieldwork. This ensures that the participants' rights are always protected. According to Leavy (2014), ill-treatment and ill-use of participants in the study must be avoided, and the researcher must clearly state how the findings of responses will be used in the study. The ethical considerations of a research study are integral of guiding the actions and duties of both the researcher and the participants involved. The participants were told by the researcher that their responses were confidential and that their identity would be protected. The researcher gave the participants consent forms to fill in in order to give permission that they would participate voluntarily in the study. The researcher made it clear that participation in the study was voluntary and participants could withdraw from the study at any time. The interviews with the participants were held in secluded spaces, free from interruption. The researcher recorded all responses for later analysis and facilitated and guided the interviews so that it did not get out of control.

In compliance with the ethical principles the researcher followed the following steps:

3.11.1 Permission to conduct research

Before commencing a research study, the researcher needed permission to conduct the study. Maree (2019) defines permission as the process to seek for consent to do a particular thing. Furthermore, according to Tapala (2019), a researcher cannot commence any research without a letter of approval from the ethics committee of the university where the researcher is registered at. This process ensures that the researcher follows the required ethical considerations to protect the rights of the individuals with respect and consideration (Maree, 2019).

The researcher firstly obtained ethical clearance from the University of the Free State. Next, the researcher applied for permission from the Eastern Cape Department of Education and District Circuit Office. Thirdly, the researcher requested permission from the principals of the three selected schools to conduct the study. Lastly, the researcher gained consent from the participants to interview them. The researcher adhered to all ethical guidelines specified by the ethics committee during the data collection process.

3.11.2 Informed consent

Wiles (2013) postulates that informed consent consists of providing participants with information of what the study entails,; how their replies will be beneficial to the study,; and providing them the opportunity to decide whether or not they want to be part of the study. The researcher gave each participant a consent form that seek their permission to be part of the study. The form described the aim of the study, and by finalising the form, the participants gave their permission to take part in the study. The researcher informed the participants that their involvement in the study was optional and not mandatory. They were also informed that if they wished to opt out from the study for whichever reason, they could do so without any penalty or prejudice (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

3.11.3 Confidentiality of participants

The researcher respected the participants' confidentiality and privacy during this research. Maree (2019) explains that the researcher should assure the participants that their responses in this study are confidential and would not be exposed to users that do not have authority over it. The researcher made sure that she maintained this stipulation. The researcher made sure not to identify participants in the study. Instead, she used pseudonyms and maintained privacy during interviews. The researcher asked participants' consent to record the interviews, and the recorded interviews are kept safely by the supervisor.

3.11.4 Protection from harm

Leavy (2014) states that when a researcher collects data, it should be noted that research ethics requires researcher not to harm participants during the collection

process. Harm in a research study could take any form; it can range from physical to psychological damage. It is the researcher's responsibility to prevent that any form of harm occurs to the participants in the research study.

In this study, the researcher took measures to avoid using disrespectful or derogatory language that could potentially harm or shame the participants. The researcher prioritised maintaining a peaceful and harmonious atmosphere throughout the interviews.

3.12 DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

The researcher collected data by using semi-structured interviews with HODs and teachers separately. The researcher reviewed literature on curriculum management and the Personnel Administrative Measure document on duties and requirements of HODs to be able to examine for uniformity in what the HODs and teachers told. The researcher collected data using audio-recordings and transcribed it. Creswell (2012) states that a researcher transcribes data to make sense of the information provided by participants. The researcher coded the transcribed data and organised the data into themes to make it more comprehensible.

According to Patel (2015), in a qualitative data analysis process, the researcher uses a range of procedures to be able to produce a detailed explanation of the phenomenon that is studied. To add, a data analysis can be described as a set of guidelines for reducing and examining data to be able to arrive at a valid conclusion on the themes that are identified about the phenomenon under study. This process is to comprehend the qualitative data that were collected during the fieldwork (Bradbury, 2015). Furthermore, data analysis can be regarded as the process of analysing text, organising data and creating themes out of collected data, and lastly, presenting and interpreting the data. Data analysis consists of the process where the researcher arranges collected data into classifications for better comprehension. During the analysis process the researcher arranged the responses from participants under mutual themes, phrases and patterns that combined the raw data into more understandable information. Qualitative data analysis can be defined as the elucidating and categorisation of linguistic material that create assertions about the inferred of meaning about the phenomenon and what it presents; thus it these are

subjective and present social meanings (Flick, 2014). Patel (2015) argues that when a researcher starts the coding process, he or she labels the different sections of text that address the issues of the phenomenon that is being explored. After the researcher has coded the data into sections, the researcher is required to categorise the data into group sections. Next, the researcher should put the data into themes to be able to check if there are patterns that stand out under the phenomenon. The researcher goes through a process of constant comparison in order to see how the themes relate to one another. After this process, the researcher reduces the capacity of data by writing down interpretations of new text. This stage refers to the process of introducing possible explanations regarding the phenomenon (Bradbury, 2015).

In this study, the researcher used a content analysis to analyse the data in order to explore the experiences of the HODs and Senior phase teachers and analysing the similarities and variations of information provided by them. Bernard, Wutich and Ryan (2017) describe content analysis as collective methods for systematically encoding and analysing data. Researchers applies these techniques across social sciences to explore participants narratives into comprehensible information as information gathered by participants can sometimes be straightforward or complex. Maree and Nieuwenhuis (2019) state that when a researcher applies a content analysis technique, he or she has to categorise patterns in the information that were collected and organise it inductively into themes. The researcher provided and interpretation of the participants' narratives in a logical manner by analysing and categorising information based on commonalities and distinctions. In essence, Ritchie et al. (2014) describe content analysis as a functional process that allows researchers to identify and elucidate context and social sciences to convert meaning. Researchers must carefully choose a data collection method that is appropriate for gathering and analysing data. Qualitative data collection involves directly interacting with data, and linguistic methods allow participants to freely express their opinions and experiences (Rose, Baffoe-Djan & McKinley, 2019).

3.13 CHAPTER SUMMARY

In the above chapter, the researcher explored the methodological approaches of the study which consists of the following; research paradigm, approach, design, data

collection process, data analysis, trustworthiness and the ethical principles that would lead the research study. The researcher gave reasons why qualitative approach is appropriate for this study and what data collection techniques would be followed. Next, the researcher explained what sampling procedure would be used, how the participants were selected, and which sample frame was stipulated. For the data collection process, the researcher used semi-structured methods with a list of predetermined open-ended questions. The researcher discussed the platform that would be used for the participants to voice their understanding of the researched phenomenon, namely the role of the HOD in curriculum management in the Senior phase.

CHAPTER 4

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS, AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The following chapter elaborates on the research design and methodology that the researcher applied. In this chapter the researcher seeks to analyse and interpret the data collected through semi-structured interviews with the participants on the research phenomenon, '*Exploring the role of the Head of Departments in curriculum management in the Senior phase*' under study. The qualitative data of this study that were collected from participants, consisted of seven HODs and eight teachers from three public schools in the Cradock Township, were thematically analysed. The researcher will present the information that were transcribed and structured in this chapter. Additionally, this chapter will present empirical data that will confirm or object to what the literature provided.

To be able to protect the identities of the individuals and schools, as well as adhere to ethical considerations, the researcher selected codes for schools, namely School 1–3 (S1–S3). Teachers from School one (S1) are coded SPT 1–3 (Senior phase teacher 1–3). These codes allocated to teachers ascending in chronological order, e.g. SPT1–9. The HODs are also coded in the chronological order HOD 1–9. Creswell and Poth (2018) state that it is important for researchers avoid using participants' identifiable identification when analysing data in order to protect participants. The researcher used a qualitative approach to be able to gather a thorough comprehension of HODs perceptions on curriculum management, different context and meanings of the literature.

In the table below, the researcher provided a representation of coding of schools and participants in the study.

Table 1: Representation and coding of schools and participants in study

<i>Representation and coding of schools and participants in study.</i>		
Area: Chris Hani-West District Cradock		
SCHOOLS SITED (codes allocated)	PARTICIPANTS IN STUDY	
	HEADS OF DEPARTMENTS (codes allocated)	TEACHERS (codes allocated)
S1	HOD 1	SPT 1
	HOD 2	SPT 2
	HOD 3	SPT 3
S2	HOD 4	SPT 4
	HOD 5	SPT 5
	HOD 6 (withdrew from study)	SPT 6
S3	HOD 7	SPT 7
	HOD 8	SPT 8
	HOD 9 (withdrew from study)	SPT 9 (withdrew from study)
PARTICIPANTS	7	8

The data in Table 1 indicate that the participants were HODs and teachers. The researcher allocated the schools in numerical order (S1–S3) and SPT 1–9 and HOD 1–9 signify the teachers and HODs in chronological order. The researcher collected the data effectively, and after collecting the data, she analysed it inductively. Creswell (2012) states that after the data collection process, the researcher has to transcribe the data in order to make practical sense of the data gathered from the participants. Following the transcribing of data, the researcher conducted an analysis on it, which is to reduce data in order to dictate and oversee the responses provided by the participants. The researcher then presented the data with the intention of providing an overview of it (Creswell, 2012).

4.2 DATA ANALYSIS

In this qualitative study, the researcher used semi-structured interviews, allocating thirty minutes to each participant. The interviews were concluded within the anticipated times. Each participant indicated a suitable timeframe that suited their

schedules to the researcher. The researcher gave the participants the interview questions beforehand, and during the interview recorded the responses as each participant was narrating their stories. The researcher used an audio-recorder to capture all the participants' responses in order to transcribe and analyse the information at a later stage. During the interviews the researcher gave the participants sufficient time to respond to the questions, and they were given the liberty to reply to questions in the language they were comfortable with.

The researcher presents the extracts from the participants responses verbatim, without misinterpreting or changing them. When the collection process was completed, the researcher carefully listened to the recordings in order to familiarise herself with the data before transcribing the data. After familiarising herself with the data, the researcher simultaneously transcribed it. The transcriptions were read through thoroughly by the researcher to gain a deeper understanding of the data and identified patterns and subthemes. When a researcher identifies pattern and subthemes, it is called initial immersion. This process involves the development of new ideas, reducing data to make sense of the information as a whole before starting with a systematic analysing process (Leavy, 2017).

The researcher made notes while writing down ideas when gathering the data to be able to extract meaning. According to Kenneavy et al. (2022), the process where researchers make notes while exploring data is called memoing. This process is the practice of writing notes of what the researcher gained from exploring the data. Creswell and Poth (2018) concur that memoing assists the researcher in tracking the development of ideas through analysing data and at the same time allows the researcher to track the progress of code and theme development. When the researcher identifies patterns, Neuman (2014) postulates that the researcher must study patterns of similarities and differences across the responses of participants and tried to understand their diversity. For this study, the researcher searched for the same or similar responses and patterns from the participants, and those who had the same response to the same question were highlighted. The researcher grouped the similar responses from participants together to create subthemes. The information on particular themes and subthemes were explored and revised in a separate Word document to make data more controllable. The researcher reduced the data to most

important and main patterns, to establish a meaningful understanding that could be analysed to answer the research question (O'Leary, 2019).

In an attempt to draw a conclusion for the findings the researcher reread the transcripts several times, which allowed her to establish relations, patterns, differences and any similarities that can occur from the analysed data. To build emergent patterns from the collected data, the researcher consulted the literature and transcriptions from semi-structured interviews for cross-referencing (Creswell, 2014). The researcher categorised the collected semi-structure data so that the emerging themes could be formed. In doing so the researcher checked for emerging topics from the transcriptions. After establishing the themes, the researcher divided the data into sub-categories to make the data more manageable. This step allowed the researcher to analyse and interpret the themes alongside the different codes that were used in the data collection process. The researcher applied coding in order to analyse the data inductively. This approach allowed the researcher to focus on any new, emergent themes that might arise from the data (De Vos et al., 2011). The researcher immediately encoded important data during the transcription of interviews to adhere to or support the qualitative richness of the phenomenon which was:

Exploring the Head of Department's role in curriculum management in the Senior phase

The researcher presented the themes and subthemes in Table 2. Data were separated into coherent sections that represent responses collected in interviews with participants. The empiricist combined the data analysis and related back to what was scribed in the recent literature. The process of memoing and simultaneously engaging with texts and current literature enabled the researcher to develop a deeper comprehension by analyse and correlate it with recent literature (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

In the following sections, the researcher presented data from the documents.

4.3 PRESENTATION OF DATA, INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The semi-structured interviews that were conducted with the HODs and Senior phase teachers were transcribed, coded and arranged into broad themes. This process enabled the researcher to identify emerging patterns. *In-vivo* coding was used during the data analysis and interpretation, which allowed the researcher to quote the participants verbatim to ensure their voices were represented and heard in the research study and analysed data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The data were divided into five broad themes that were subdivided into subthemes in accordance with the questions and aims and participants' responses. The themes identified from the literature review are presented in the following table.

Table 2: Outline of themes and subthemes

THEMES	SUBTHEMES
4.2.2.1. Curriculum Management (CCM) and Challenges related to Curriculum Management (CCM)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Curriculum Management Role ➤ Curriculum Management in Senior phase ➤ LTSM ➤ Absenteeism
4.2.2.2. Curriculum Management and Leadership Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Regulating and Monitoring Teachers ➤ Annual Teaching Plan (ATP)
4.2.2.3. Implementation of Curriculum in the Senior phase	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Devices used to support teachers ➤ Language barrier ➤ Time allocation
4.2.2.4. External barriers in managing curriculum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Parental involvement ➤ Subject advisors

The researcher next discusses the five themes that emerged from this study.

4.4 THEME 1: CURRICULUM MANAGEMENT AND CHALLENGES RELATED CURRICULUM MANAGEMENT

This specific theme emerged from the introductory question, which questions whether the HODs understood the concept of curriculum management. This question was asked to collect facts on whether HODs were aware of the importance of curriculum management, and how they could implement it effectively in the teaching and learning environment, or their departments. Teachers in the Senior phase were also questioned on their understanding of curriculum management in their interviews. In the empirical investigation the HODs and teachers postulated that curriculum management entails how teachers instructs the content to learners and how learners receive it. According to Naidoo and Petersen (2015), curriculum management refers to managing systems, procedures and individuals to achieve effective learning and teaching. Participants concurred that curriculum management entails how teachers execute the instruction assessment that the DBE requires the learners and teachers need to do during each term. Teachers further elaborated that curriculum management involves the development, planning, managing and evaluating of curriculum. It is largely managed by the Assessment Teaching Plan (ATP). Head of Departments (HODs) stated that they have to ensure that the teachers in their departments have the necessary ATPs, monitoring tools and required SBA programmes for the subjects for teachers to manage the curriculum effectively. As reported by Ramabulana (2017), curriculum management and leadership cannot be separated, as both are intertwined and are critical for curriculum implementation in schools. Curriculum management is no minor duty that the HODs take on; they must obtain in-depth knowledge of the subject as well master the content of the subject they oversee (Mestry, 2017).

The following section analyses the responses given by participants with regard to effective curriculum management.

4.4.1 Curriculum management role

This subtheme elaborates on the curriculum management role of the HOD. The focus of this subtheme is on the actions and activities of the HOD as a middle manager at school level and how the HOD ensures the improvement of curriculum

delivery in their department. A number of curriculum management roles were identified from the interviews with the seven HODs. The interviews with the HODs reflected that it is important to apply the elements of planning, organising, leading and control when implementing their curriculum management roles. This ensures that HODs manage the teachers in their department by providing them with the latest Annual Teaching Plans, Curriculum Assessment Policy Statements, Moderation Tools and Assessment Plans. It was stated in the literature review that curriculum management puts emphasis on the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the teaching and learning environment to be able to promote increasing levels of learner achievement (Maringa, 2016). The participants indicated that their role in curriculum management was to ensure that the teachers in their department have their ATPs and adhere to the required assessments programmes. They concurred that it was important to check regularly whether teachers are up to date with the curriculum by monitoring their work. The HODs disclosed that it was their responsibility to address the challenges in their department regarding the curriculum and classroom management. HODs further elaborated that they supervised educators, monitored extracurricular activities and advise the principal regarding division roles. It is evident that the HODs expect that the teachers must be equipped adequately enough to be able to follow the ATP diligently and understand how assessments plans are drawn up. It was clear from the interviews that the HODs relied heavily on the ATPs to guide teachers and ensure that they covered of the curriculum. It is clear that their goal is primarily to ensure that the teachers do the required assessments prescribed in the ATPs. The researcher observed that novice teachers did not know how to implement the ATP as they did not have experience in implementing the curriculum. They struggled immensely with adjusting to the curriculum coverage requirements. The HODs responded as follows to their role in curriculum management.

HOD 1 (S1) disclosed that his management role was,

Well, mine is to make sure my teachers in my field, they've got all the ATP's. If there's any changes, they will be so informed and of course to maintain their subject assessment plans if there's any, challenges I must step in and I must try to provide some kind of help. (HOD 1).

HOD 2 (S1) responded on his role as,

That is to ensure the ATP is on path within the framework and the assessment programs on track to address our challenges regarding the ATP and our curriculum (HOD 2).

HOD 3 (S1) indicated that his role was,

OK, my role is number one is oversight. Number two, I have to do control. I have to do overviews. I have to make sure there are regular subject meetings. It's also important for me to make sure that my teachers are in a position to present, to teach and to control the learning environment. And also, very important for me is to make sure that my teachers can do classroom management so that they can be in a position to have the correct atmosphere or conditions for teaching and learning to take place (HOD 3).

HOD 4 (S2) responded on her role in curriculum management as,

Uh. Then age of what I understand is that you must first check the teacher's preparation books. So, now I'm signing them. I'm checking them each and every week and I'm signing them so that I can see where they are or where they are behind with the ATP so that they can know. And also, I'm used, I'm checking the moderation tool and assessment plan. Where they are using them or else. I'm checking if ever what the progress for the curriculum is each and also come up with an intervention programme (HOD 4).

HOD 5 (S2) disclosed that her role as a department head was,

Uh. Amongst others, the roles of an HOD in curriculum is engaging in class teaching. Supervising educators, monitoring extra-curriculum activities and advising the principal regarding the division of roles, meaning which teachers to teach what and also the control of tests, examinations and memorandums (HOD 5).

HOD 6 (S3) responded that his role was,

Uh. It is to manage the, the educators in your department on their work, the test, the classwork that are given according to the department specifications. (HOD 6).

HOD 7 (S3) elaborated as follows on his role in curriculum management,

OK. Start off with the planning. For example, now this is 2023, so we have to plan for 2024 during the end of the term in October. We can't just plan 2024 in 2024, we have to plan for that then after planning for that. You know, as an HOD you have teachers under your department. You are assigned a role to make sure that to see to it that those teachers perform their duties very well. If they need help, you have to assist them. If you also need help, you also consult the principal to play their roles and they must make sure that they understand their roles, just like an HOD. To make sure that he understands what roles he must play (HOD 7).

Department Heads should ensure that they have a curriculum management plan that enables them to routinely schedule and plan one-on-one conversations with the teachers in their department. This provides the DHs with a framework which allows them to support and guide teachers (Bush, 2023).

4.4.2 Curriculum management in the Senior phase

The Senior phase can be seen as the final stage of compulsory education and beyond with learners normally aged 13 to 18 years (Poliah, 2009). The Senior phase is from Grade 7 to Grade 9 and consists of eight learning areas. This subtheme emerged on the question that was asked to HODs on the challenges they face related to curriculum management in the Senior phase. This theme relates to the ability of HODs to manage and lead a curriculum effectively in the Senior phase. HODs are required to be in charge of a subject or a phase. This allows them to perform administrative duties related to their subject, supervise teachers in the specific phase as well as manage their own workload. As an instructional leader and a middle manager, the HOD is expected to enhance learner and teacher performance. Heystek (2016) states in the literature review that HODs should provide support structures to teachers to ensure that classroom improvement takes place so that learners can excel in the schoolwork. The HODs reflected on the challenges they experienced in managing and leading the curriculum in the Senior

phase. HOD 1(S1) responded that due to the large classes in the Senior phase it was often time constraints that prevented one to manage the curriculum in the Senior phase successfully.

Your Grade 12s are very much involved there, so you must build a quality foundation in grade 10 and 11 for grade 12 to be to be a good year for our learners. But Grade 8 and 9 you will see the big overcrowd, big classes, overcrowding also prevalent and that of course influence your quality of learning and teaching (HOD 1).

HOD 2 (S1) confirmed the above statement that time frame in the Senior phase is very limited and makes it difficult for HODs to manage it effectively.

Time frame, when you look at time when I'm talking about time frame, is the time in which we have to complete our curriculum, uhh, especially when it comes to our Senior phase in our schools (HOD2).

HOD 3 (S1) responded that the challenges he experienced in the Senior phase have more to do with novice teachers adapting to a curriculum, and struggling to manage it successfully.

Very important is new teachers adapting to the conditions of the school, to the culture of learning at the school, to the lack of enough textbooks, enough resources from the Internet. That is a serious challenge because I think teaching you have moved away from, from the traditional culture of learning where the learners used to compete against each other so and that where teachers use the chalkboard nowadays, I think more is there are more online resources that needed to be applied, there is more variety of textbooks. So those are challenges that we experience at the senior level and it's difficult for us to put those in the hands of our teachers so that they can be enabled to do their teaching and learning at that high level of development (HOD 3).

HOD 4 (S2) concurred that teachers in the Senior phase found it difficult to adapt to the curriculum and to implement it during exams.

Some other challenges some of the teachers in the Senior phase, according to on my curriculum, so by the teachers don't understand how

to set the Question Papers and also how to mark the essay questions, so I'm always each and every term where they mark. So, I have to explain same thing now and again (HOD 4).

HOD 5 (S2) postulated that departments heads are not trained and struggle to manage the challenges in the Senior phase and do not get the required support from the DBE.

Some other challenges some of the teachers in the Senior phase, according to my knowledge on curriculum, so by the teachers don't understand how to set the Question Papers and also how to mark the essay questions, so I'm always each and every term where they mark. So, I have to explain same thing now and again (HOD 5).

HOD 6 (S3) responded that the challenge he faced in the Senior phase were the shortage of textbooks, learners who did not do their work, and the lack of parental involvement,

As I said, it is the textbooks and the learners that do not do their work and the non-participation of parents when we involve them (HOD 6).

HOD 7 (S3) responded that there was a relevant gap between the Senior phase and the FET phase, learners struggled to adapt to the curriculum due to their poor literary skills and their ability to comprehend the curriculum,

GET phase. I should think there is a gap between GET phase and FET. Because we have. For example, I am teaching Natural Science Grade 8. Yes, I was also teaching Technology Grade 8. I was surprised in February when I give them notes. There are still learners who can't even write properly like the other one. We are using English as a medium of instruction. That I can tell you when I saw those notes, it was like as if she's writing it in Venda or in these Xhosa languages. I said why are you writing like this? So, there is that gap. I don't know what is happening in in the GET phase. That is why there are learners there whom I think they do not belong here; they need to be registered at specialised schools. We have those challenges here. They can't even write their names (HOD 7).

The researcher analysed from these verbatim and quotes and subthemes that it is evident that HODs face many challenges related to curriculum management. Department heads stated that they were not trained on their role in curriculum management, and it was clear that they are not acquainted with how to manage the curriculum in the Senior phase effectively. Time constraints was one of the major challenges because HODs could not manage their departments successfully. Most of the participants shared their views that time constraints hindered their production. Tapala, Van Niekerk and Mentz (2020) state that HODs experience an abundance of challenges in their work such as “lack of time, poor communication, lack of experience and work skills and knowledge underdevelopment, changes in education policy and curriculum and lack of support”. Lastly, HODs sometimes find it difficult to effectively manage both phases as their workload are often faced with challenges that occurs in the school environment. In the same way, this can lead to a negative impact on the achievement of the school’s objectives, learner development and the teaching and learning environment.

The challenges that the HOD faces related to curriculum management. The focus of this theme is to show how the HOD deals with the challenges they face in respect of curriculum management, as well as how they minimise these challenges. A number of challenges related to curriculum management (CCM) were identified from the interviews with the seven HODs. Department heads are the forces of implementing change; they often encounter constant challenges related to controlling and directing curriculum management in their departments, and at the same time they have to supervise whether teachers implement the curriculum successfully to ensure teaching and learning takes place in the classroom. HODs encounter a range of challenges in ensuring that curriculum take place, these obstacles often hinder their daily activities. This issue is raised by Mestry & Khumalo (2012), namely that there is often a lack of quality assurance and catalogue development of textbooks for teachers to improve the teaching and learning environment effectively. The following subthemes emerged from the theme of challenges related to curriculum management: learning and teaching materials (LTSM) and absenteeism.

4.4.3 Learning and teaching materials (LTSM)

This subtheme relates to the learning and teaching materials (LTSM) that teachers use as resources for effective teaching and learning to take place. According to Maringa (2016), the learning and teaching materials (LTSM) play a crucial role in the teaching and learning environment, as teachers use it as a guide that can improve learners' performance. In order to do this, their HODs play crucial part in the resource management department. However, HODs often struggle to provide teachers with appropriate LTSM as there is often a lack of it. This issue is supported in the literature. As Phakathi (2015) states, there is often a lack of quality assurance and catalogue development of textbooks for teachers to improve the teaching and learning environment effectively. There is a plea for E-learning and providing teachers with online resources, as these eliminate the procurement of textbooks that are often not returned by learners. The responses provided from the HODs and teachers show what impact the lack of resources has on the teaching and learning environment and their productivity.

HOD 2 (S2) stated that the lack of LTSM was one of the major challenges that a department head experienced.

The first challenge is time and LTSM. A lack of resources and also a lack of. Parent participation within our school (HOD 2).

Similarly, HOD 3 concurred that,

in general, its number one new teacher coming in adapting to the school. Number two, availability of LTSM. Number three, more electronic resources. Those are challenges and then of course the culture, the learning culture at our schools is starting to dwindle a little bit. You don't have that type of culture anymore. So those are some of the general, uh challenges (HOD 3).

One of the teachers also expressed how the lack of LTSM and resources affected his teaching environment,

Firstly, it's the internal as I can say it's the internal problems at school. Firstly, there is not enough resources. Secondly, we as teachers are not permitted to use the copy machines in the office and that's a big problem

in our school because we don't enough books then how can we make copies and provide them to the learners that's a big written in my case (SPT 2).

SPT 4 (S2) further agreed the lack of resources could be very time consuming for a teacher, as she often had to write on the board and adjust it evenly between six classes.

Learner resources. To me, we do not have access to textbooks in my subject, so all notes and activities have to be copied or written from the board. This takes a very long time seeing that we have about six classes in every grade (SPT 4).

Lastly, HOD 7 (S3) responded that due to the school being a no-fee school, the lack of resources was a dominant factor in their school, which was very challenging.

Yes, it is there. The resources firstly, we don't have enough resources because our schools are no fee schools. So, it's a challenge to get extra material to duplicate you know more papers for children and the parents, they don't, parents from our community are not working, you know. So, it's a challenge to have to have extra material for learners (HOD 7).

DHs should be provided with official and informal training and development opportunities through licensed service providers and institutions of higher learning in countries such as Canada, the UK, Malaysia, Australia, Trinidad and Tobago (Chiu, Wu, Bartram, Parker & Lee, 2023). This will enable DHs to effectively implement strategies and practice leadership in schools.

4.4.4 Absenteeism

This subtheme conveys the influence teachers have on the effective management of the curriculum. The researcher observed that absenteeism has a major effect on the smooth functioning of the school. It is often the case that teachers take leave, are booked off for medical reasons, or there is a bereavement in the family. This has an effect on the smooth running of the school, as there is then no teacher available to teach that classes. However, the Educator Assistants (EAs) available now provide some means for those learners to be supervised. Nevertheless, this still leaves the

learners not be taught in the absence of their teacher. The HODs stated that absenteeism was challenge for them.

HOD 4 (S2) disclosed that absenteeism played a major role in curriculum management. HODs often have to utilise the teachers to fill in the gap of those absent teachers, this leads to teachers having to teach more than the stipulated teaching allocation in the PAM document.

Some of the challenges that we experience, uh is the shortage of teachers and because of the shortage of teachers, it happens that sometimes we have to change teachers from what they are teaching or from what they are trained for and also uh, shortage of books sometimes and absenteeism from teachers (HOD 5).

HOD 7 (S3) concurred that HODs often have difficulties in catering for classes that do not have teachers. It sometimes happens that a number of teachers are absent on the same day, which has a tremendous impact on the functioning of the school day.

This is what I just said, absenteeism, teachers, learners. It's one of the challenges and these changes from the department. The other thing when it comes to learners, I can tell you. Even now I was sitting just there. I gave them the project during the beginning of this term. The closing date was last week. I should think it was a deadline, but they are still submitting and the department, if you say Leonard did not, you can't just give him or her zero. You will account for that. Have to run away from the school, go to their homes and ask for projects or just a simple task. These are one of the challenges. The other one what I said the leaves from the educators, even the HODs. Look at this year, we have about 5 to 6 teachers who are on leave. Somehow incapacity leave, normal sick leave. So, there are those challenges (HOD 7)

Heads of departments encounter numerous challenges in curriculum management. These challenges often hinder the smooth functioning of the school and cause a delay or backlog in the implementation of the curriculum. The teachers responded that the lack of resources played a major role in the implementation of the curriculum

and the successful management of it. HODs disclosed that teachers themselves often becomes a challenge itself for the smooth functioning of the school. However, in the midst of these added responsibilities, HODs often find themselves not prepared, trained or equipped with the necessarily skills to handle given responsibilities, hence they are faced with management challenges (Salleh, 2016). These challenges often lead to role ambiguities, role conflicts, tension and sometimes stress amongst the HODs.

4.5 THEME 2: CURRICULUM MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP TRAINING

This particular theme explores whether HODs and teachers were trained on how to manage and lead the curriculum. In the empirical investigation, the participants' responses disclosed that the majority of the participants did not receive training from their specialist officials or DBE on how to manage and lead the curriculum in their departments successfully. This claimed is supported in the literature that states that HODs are often referred to as curriculum specialists, but they do not receive structured training on curriculum development. Moreover, HODs experienced that many teachers are ill-informed regarding curriculum in theory and practice, especially novice teachers entering the school system (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). This theme elaborates on whether HODs conduct or initiate professional growth for teachers related the management of the curriculum. The theme further explores whether HODs are aware of the importance of ensuring the smooth functioning of the teaching and learning environment. This can only be achieved if the HODs manage and lead the curriculum effectively. Furthermore, Ogina (2017) states that HODs, who form a formidable part of the school's workforce and being members of the SMT, need training and development in order to be able to carry out their duties to the best of their capabilities.

The following section analyses the responses retrieved from HODs and teachers with regard to training for curriculum management and leadership. The subthemes that emerged from this theme are regulating and monitoring teachers, Annual Teaching Plans (ATP) and moderation tools.

4.5.1 Regulating and monitoring teachers

As instructional leaders who lead and manage the staff, HODs are expected to assist teachers in accomplishing positive working relationships with learners. Furthermore, when assisting teachers HODs should evaluate the training needs of the teachers and lead them to grow professionally in their subjects. HODs should lead by example and provide support to teachers by coaching and outsourcing external expertise or factors. Thus, HODs can be seen as curriculum leaders, as they lead teachers and ensure that the school as an organisation function smoothly. In the literature review it was stated that curriculum management is no minor duty that HODs take on; they must obtain in-depth knowledge of the subject as well master the content of the subject they oversee (Satori et al., 2018). HODs are chosen to head a department, subject or phase as they possess expert knowledge of a particular subject. However, in order to execute all of these above responsibilities, HODs need to be trained adequately to be able to provide guidance and leadership to teachers. To expound on this subtheme the researcher focused on the question: *'Have you received curriculum management and leadership training as an HOD?'* The majority of the participants stated that they were not formally trained; instead, they often receive circulars or notices through their subject advisors to attend workshops on curriculum management and leadership training programmes. The HODs indicated that it was important for development to take place in their task and they were eager to be formally trained. In addressing this matter HODs responded in the following ways.

HOD 1 (S1) indicated,

Well not formally, uh the department come once in a while. They come to teach you how to do school management. But it is very elementary. It is something that you can take a teacher paper guide and read through it. So, there is no formal extensive or intensive training for HODs regularly must I put it (HOD 1).

HOD 3 (S1) concurred that he did not go for training formally but do receive circulars,

And no, we have not received formal training, but there are regular meetings at least two or three times a year between us and the

department where the subject advisors or the education specialists come to us and help us in terms of our roles in our schools (HOD3).

HOD 5 (S2) disclosed that she had also not received training.

Not as such. As I have mentioned before, we don't get training. You only get to know what you are to do when you have to do it. No training at all (HOD 5).

HOD 7 (S3) responded that he had enquired from the principal on training courses but had never received any. He uses manuals to guide him.

I think I may be asking the principal or I should think the best answer you can get is from the department. I, I thought I would be introduced, you see to what you are saying to go for leadership training course, management training course. I just being told this is what we have to do. Fortunately, we also have uh manuals. Yes, you see I just read that, but I never went to any kind of training leadership course or management course and unless they are still coming, I'm not sure (HOD 7).

However, HOD 2 (S1) disclosed that he had received training.

Yes, as an HOD, I received management and curriculum training as well as training as a principal. When it comes to curriculum, what we did was how to manage our curriculum, how to allocate our time, and how to allocate our time effectively in order of us to convey to our staff members how to how to plan in order for them to complete the ATP. The advantages are as that I thought they taught us how to manage the curriculum correctly and how to focus on the important aspects and how to deal with the important aspects with our curriculum, especially with ATP (HOD 2).

HOD 4 (S2) concurred that she had also received training and it helped her to manage her department effectively.

Yes, I've received the training, so the advantage is that at least I know how to manage uh, my curriculum and also how to manage my department also as a whole and also, I must know how to use the Annual

Teaching Plan and also how to check the exam guidelines so that I am able to monitor my educators and assist my educators. But the disadvantages, is that some we don't have the subject advisor for. For EMS on my GET. So why? We're using our own knowledge of which we don't even know whether we are using the correct ATP or not. We do. We don't even have them Exam Guideline, we're only using the ATP (HOD 4).

HOD 6 (S3) disclosed that he also received training.

Yes, I do. As I have said, I do have a certificate (HOD6).

This subtheme also explores the teachers' responses on how HODs regulate and monitor them.

SPT 1 (S1) responded that his HOD regulated and monitored him occasionally.

The ... HOD has asked me throughout the year and last year that I have to come to him if I have any issues uh ... he did reach out to me once or twice but most of the time it's for formal assessments. Throughout the term we don't really speak about the curriculum but in the past, he did tell me that I need to come to him if I have any problems I need to come and speak to him and he will sort out the problem (SPT 1).

SPT 2 (S1) disclosed that her HOD did not regulate or monitor her progress. She also did not know who her HOD is,

And as previously mentioned, the HOD does not regulate or monitor any progress in my subject (SPT 2).

SPT 3 (S2) concurred with SPT 2 that the HOD at their school did not regulate or monitor their progress, but he was previously regulated as follows,

Let's say makes use of IQMS, which we done twice a year. It consists of planning, developing and appraisal. You can also diagnose any problems in the curriculum and then he helps me to remedy it (SPT 2).

SPT 4 (S2) responded that her HOD regularly checked on her progress and if she needed assistance in any manner,

He checks in with me regularly to make sure I am on schedule and he moderates all my assessments before they are done (SPT 4).

SPT 5 (S2) added that her HOD regulated and monitored her on a weekly basis,

She requires me to submit my portfolio and learners' portfolio to see if I'm still within the curriculum and submitted weekly preparation books (SPT 5).

SPT 6 (S2) disclosed that her HOD regularly scheduled subject meetings and visited her class to see how far she was with the ATP.

As I have said earlier that our HOD, usually they there are meetings that are scheduled for our department that is Maths and Science. So, the HOD will ask how far are you and check with the ATP if you are still on the track with ATP and their visits from the HOD to come into your class while you are busy teaching and she will just sit there and look how are you teaching, how are the learners all that stuff and times she will take the workbooks, the books of the learners to check if this thing that you said you have done it reflects on the learners' books (SPT 6).

DHs should utilise a variety of devices and documents for their one-on-one conversations with teachers. When using this evidence, their engagements will become richer and more practical. In their conversations with teachers, DHs are expected to record their findings and records of decisions taken and agreements made during the conversations (Jackson, Michelson & Munir, 2023). These conversations will enable DHs to manage teachers' classes that are absent as the DHs will have sufficient material from teachers.

4.5.2 Annual teaching plan (ATP)

This subtheme explores how HODs track teachers' progress on implementing the curriculum. Most of the HODs indicated that they mainly used the Annual Teaching Plan (ATP) to track teachers' progress on the required SBA assessment tasks they need to complete for each term as well as manage their departments effectively. The ATP is a recovery curriculum that is designed to amend the negative effect Covid-19 had during 2020-2024 and is therefore a temporary deviation from the original

curriculum. The participants mostly responded that they used the ATP to monitor if teachers were re on par with the required curriculum coverage for each term.

HOD 1 (S1) responded as follows on the question of tracking teachers progress,

We will use the ATP and of course you make sure your assessment program is on par up to date (HOD 1).

However, HOD 2 (S2) disclosed that he used the analysis of results.

By analysis of results of the learners, classroom visits and uh monitoring and moderation of learners' books (HOD 2).

HOD 3 (S1) indicated that he tracked the required curriculum coverage stipulated in the ATP.,

Very important there for me to track, is to do the coverage, the content coverage. Uh, where they have to complete those different tools or where they have to complete different rubrics. To make sure that that there's proper curriculum coverage or content coverage. And that, we compare that of course with the teaching plan and with the CAPS document so that we can make sure that the teacher is more or less at the same space where they need to be in terms of the content that must be covered. The SBA tasks that must be completed at the specific time frame. So, um, that is basically the tools that I use to track the teachers. And of course, I do give each teacher an opportunity at our subject meeting to give a report back on the progress that are being made in his or her classes (HOD 3).

HOD 4 (S2) responded that she tracked her teachers' progress by retracting an analysis from SASAMS to see the learners' progress.,

Uh. We are the, we are using the analysis. Each and every term we are checking on our analysis, how many level one up to level seven. If ever we see that difference are all in Grade 8. We having most of the level one that means it fails so how can we can do to be able to, to reduce those numbers. Then we are coming up with the solution and also the strategy how to deal with them. So, we are advising some of our educators each

other so how we can come up with the strategy to deal with the level ones (HOD 4).

HOD 5 (S2) indicated that she used the required QMS visits to track teachers' progress.

I think, as I've mentioned already before, that we have a template that we use. Yes, we have a template that we use and also by going and doing, sometimes you go and do class visits. For we have, what you go call it? QMS, with QMS the second term and first term we need to do class visits. So that's how you track if they are on time. And we also track we also have the curriculum coverage tool that they fill in. That is one of the ways that we use. And also, by checking their results. After writing the exams we have analysis of results. That's also another way of tracking them (HOD 5).

HOD 6 (S3) indicated that he also used the ATP as year plan to track teachers' progress.

We do the year-plan. So, we go according to the year-plan (HOD 6).

HOD 7 (S3) responded that he conducted regular meetings with his teachers to see that the indicated assessment in ATP had been done.

We do have monthly meetings and monthly moderations to check the work. If they are behind, how do they catch up with extra classes, etc. (HOD 7).

This section explored how HODs manage, regulate, monitor and track teachers' progress in their departments. The researcher also explored whether HODs had training to help develop and improve the performance of teachers in their departments. In observing the HODs during the research, the researcher established that three out of the eight HODs had received training as HODs. They had an expectation as newly appointed HODs to be trained in order to run their department smoothly. The researcher also observed that HODs often had to rely on their own insights and capability to run their departments efficiently. In observing the HODs during the interviews the researcher established that it was important for HODs to be committed to their department in order to instil a sense of discipline amongst

teachers and themselves. HODs should create a positive working environment for the teachers in their department. This is only done by leading by example and interacting with the teachers. They must have knowledge of the subjects in their departments in order to lead and manage the teachers. It is important for them understand the Annual Teaching Plans they distribute to the teacher to analyse at the end of the term if the SBA requirements have been reached. The researcher observed that three out of the eight teachers stated that the HODs required of them to have portfolios for both teachers and learners. Two teachers stated that the HODs did not regulate and support them. The last three stated that the HODs regulated their work by checking how far they were with the ATP and if their work was up to date.

4.6 THEME 3: IMPLEMENTATION OF CURRICULUM IN THE SENIOR PHASE

This theme explores the implementation of the curriculum in the Senior phase. The researcher asked the participants in the semi-structured interviews for teachers: *'How does the HOD in your subject field supports you to implement and manage the curriculum?'* By asking this question, the researcher wanted to explore how teachers implement the curriculum successfully with the support of their HODs. This is confirmed in the literature review by Satori et al. (2018) that HODs are responsible for executing curriculum in their departments or phases of learning, to be up to date with the recent methods and approaches of teaching which they must share with their teachers, and oversee their teachings in classrooms. Teachers are considered as the forces of implementing change, while encountering constant conflicts related to implementing, managing and directing curriculum amendments while teaching and learning in the classroom environment (Ramabulana, 2017). Furthermore, in order to ensure that there are quality teaching and learning in a school environment, teachers need regular training to be able to support them with curriculum implementation in the respective subjects to improve professional development (Mestry, 2017). The subthemes that emerged from the theme of implementation of curriculum in the Senior phase are devices used to support teachers, language barrier, and time allocation.

4.6.1 Devices used to support teachers

This subtheme explores the devices that HODs use to support and guide the teachers in their departments. According to Hoadley et al. (2009), the reason for the lack of management in the Senior phase is that curriculum managers are often not trained to lead and manage instruction and provide curriculum-supporting devices for teachers. In the same way, this can lead to a negative impact on the achievement of the school's objectives, learner development and the teaching and learning environment. Furthermore, due to the lack of training and support for teachers in the Senior phase they struggle to stay up to date with the amendments of the curriculum. The curriculum change that occurred in the Covid-19 period and led to teachers not being able to differentiate between teaching and learning created a gap between teachers' teaching and students' learning (Kallio & Halverson, 2020). The researcher interviewed seven HODs in order to get first-hand insight into the devices they use to support and guide the teachers. This subtheme was expounded on the question: *'What devices do you use to guide and support Senior phase teachers?'* The HODs responded as follows to this question.

HOD 1 (S1) indicated that the ATP was one of the primary devices used to guide and support teachers, along with regularly visiting them, which also helped to see if they were up to date with curriculum coverage. It was also the most effective.

The most effective guide will be physical observation. To check physically if your teachers are on par uh if the norms and standards are okay. Uh Where there is no effective, there is no effective tool for me to guide other than taking the moderation tool and to use as a way to make sure our teachers our senior teachers are in par according to the ATP. So, your ATP, if, if there is a, some of the subjects mix makes provision for your job already covered. So, I can used that cover dates to make sure my teachers are well guided. If not guided, maybe they are falling behind they need to provide plans on how to catch up effectively (HOD 1).

HOD 2 (S1) concurred that visiting teachers could be effective to support teachers in implementing the curriculum, with

meetings, informal discussions and regular class visits (HOD 2).

However, HOD 3 (S1) responded that visiting teachers were not enough and he wanted each teacher to have a projector, Wi-Fi router and copy machine to improve their teaching and learning environment in the classroom, but unfortunately the school lacked the funding.

Uh, at the moment the devices are challenging at our school because of the lack of funding. But uh if I was in the position. I would have said, I would have tried my best to make sure that each from their subject teachers do have, uh a projector for example. Have access to a WIFI router. Have access to enough a photo copy paper. Have photo copy machines and make sure they have at least their own personal printer or in their classes. To add that to that to the state sponsored laptops that they have. If I was in a position, I would have given them that but due to the lack of funding at our schools it's not easy (HOD 3).

HOD 4 (S2) responded that she used the textbooks and previous question papers as devices to support and guide teachers in her department.

It's the textbooks. Uh. Textbooks, uh, previous Question Papers. We are also researching on the computers (HOD 4).

HOD 5 (S2) responded that she motivated the teachers to do their work actively.

What devices do you use to guide and support them? The first advice is to make them understand that they can do it. You give them motivation just by giving them motivation and um what else? By keeping the motivation if they understand that they can do it and also that you are there for them. Then it's easy for them to work (HOD 5).

HOD 6 (S3) stated that the media centre was available for teachers as a guide.

We do have a media centre with internet. So, we do have internet. It does help us (HOD 6).

HOD 7 (3) responded that their school had a program for the Senior phase learners that can be seen as a career exhibition for learners to familiarise themselves with the career path they want follow.

Me and Mr Rasmeni, I should think it was the beginning of this term. We had a program that we need to connect with the GET schools. Not only, the GET phase here at our schools because there are other schools surrounding here like Solomon Akhena Primary and Inxuba Primary. So that they come here. We acknowledge the fact that we don't have computers that is functional but few of those computers we have what you called a career exhibition here those students or learners must be familiarise with computers and technology. We go and open our workshops and we market our schools this is what we are doing. There are carpenters, electrical engineers, civil engineers and even computer studies. Even to our Grade 8s and 9s our learners who are in GET is what we are doing, they come so that we familiarise with them how to search for information that provide an opportunity, we have that for them'(HOD 7).

Curriculum coverage conversations are one of the most important practices for DHs in curriculum management. The practicality of conducting these conversations, however, relies on a lot of technical and adaptive factors such as time and relationships as well as DHs having very little time to spare due to their heavy teaching schedules (Bush, 2023). DHs should ensure that they provide efficient guidance to teachers by supervising which devices they need to improve their teaching and learning environment.

4.6.2 Language barrier

This subtheme emerged from the responses of the teachers that language is still one of the barriers they face in implementing their curriculum successfully in the classroom. Teaching an additional language is one of the challenges that two teachers indicated in the work production. However, the barriers were not the same, as the one teacher encountered the language barrier amongst the learners and the other with the HOD allocated to her. Their responses were as follows.

SPT 2 (S1) disclosed that the learners struggled to respond in English and found it difficult to communicate with her. She further indicated that the literacy gap between learners was also a challenge for her.

Besides the absence my HOD, the main challenge that we actually face within implementing the curriculum is the language barrier. That's one of the main things that the learner struggle with as the school that I'm teaching at is an Afrikaans school, so English is just an additional language ... language, so learners have difficulty understanding and then speaking English back. It's quite a struggle to get them to speak back. Another challenge is the gap between the learners. Since I've started here, majority of the time it was the, the stronger learners outweigh the weaker learners. But within this year specifically, the weaker learners are outweighing the stronger learners. So, the gap between them is very difficult to implement the curriculum and the assessments without not having to go back to teach them the basics (SPT 2).

However, SPT 4 (S2) indicated that her department head did not understand Afrikaans as a subject and this language barrier made it difficult for him to support her in implement and managing her curriculum effectively.

Um. My HOD is Xhosa speaking and does not understand Afrikaans. This makes it difficult for him to support me with implementing and managing my curriculum. He does, however, provide me with my annual teaching plan and assessment plans. He checks up regularly on my progress and supports me when I need help to enforce discipline in my classroom (SPT 4).

As much as DHs support and have conversations with their teachers, they are expected to have one-on-one supportive conversations with their principals regarding curriculum coverage and the devices they need to support teachers. These conversations between the DHs and principals give platforms for DHs to share their experiences and challenges for the subjects that they lead and discuss solutions collaboratively with their principals or deputy principals. This will enable them to obtain the material they need to ensure that their departments run smoothly (Corbett, 2023).

4.6.3 Time-allocation

This subtheme emerged from the teachers' responses that time allocation is one of the challenges encountered in executing the curriculum successfully in the Senior phase. According to Phakathi (2015), teachers often find it challenging to cover the curriculum, as the time allocated are sometimes not enough for the content the subjects entailed in the Senior phase. The teachers have to conduct their lesson plan in the allocated time assigned to them per learning area. Teachers have to complete their curriculum coverage in their allocated times as well as ensure that the necessary assessment tasks are completed in that period that usually lasts 30–50 minutes. Public schools have large numbers of learners, which often lead to overcrowded classes. Overcrowded classes make it difficult for teachers to give attention to all the learners, especially to those learners who need special attention. This is in accordance with West's (2020) view that states that overcrowding is a non-conducive learning environment where learners in the classroom lack sufficient material and attention. Furthermore, Mngomezulu (2015) states that teachers find it difficult to manage the curriculum at classroom level when classes are overcrowded. Lastly, learners in overcrowded classrooms lose concentration and focus, and then focus on distractions, which leads to them to fail to take note of important curriculum content (Muthusamy, 2015).

Teachers responded as follows to the question.

SPT 3 (S1) indicated that the allocated time for his subject was not enough as sometime he could not finish the required curriculum in time.

Okay, the external factors include some things that we have no control over as teachers, let's say natural disasters, COVID-19 and then there's suddenly a change in the curriculum and allocation in time and let's say it's not proven yet that we can finish that curriculum in that time, that certain amount of time. And then another factor is natural disasters such as flooding or destruction of school infrastructure, we have no control over that whatsoever. We just have to adjust the curriculum (SPT 3).

SPT 4 (S2) concurred that time management was one of her challenges as she struggled to teach all the concepts,

Time management definitely. Especially in a language there is so many aspects and concepts to teach. It just feels like I am sometimes struggling to teach all it all in the time that we have (SPT 4).

SPT 5 (S2) stated that the 40 minutes allocated to her was not enough to teach her practical subject.

The main challenge is time allocation is very limited, very limited time to accounting. I think like the 40-hour period or the 40 minutes period is not enough a day because accounting is a practical subject. So, I need to ensure that the learners actually do by themselves, what I've demonstrated. So, usually I don't have enough time to demonstrate and then let the learners do as well (SPT 5).

SPT 8 (S3) stated that teachers often try to close that curriculum gap that they did not have enough time to cover all topics required by the curriculum.

Yeah, I think the challenge in implementing the curriculum is when the kids have got gap content like this stuff that they haven't caught up. So normally the challenges you need to now call back to their former grade and try and make them understand what they're supposed to be learning in the higher grade, which is not an easy thing because you end up losing time as you're trying to close that gap. So that's one of the challenges. So, it's the content. The kids might not have sufficient content to be able to comprehend what they're supposed to learn in the higher grade. And the other thing is the time. Most of the time we lose. Most of the time we lose tuition time due to various disturbances, like maybe the meal might be late or maybe the kids are coming in late in class. The kids have got a game, so sometimes we lose some of that most of that time. So those are the challenges that I think are there. Those are the two that I'm coming to mind at the moment (SPT 8).

In this theme and subthemes, the researcher observed that the HODs used the moderation, analysis and intervention tool to guide the teachers. It is also notable that the most effective guide is to physically observe teachers with regular class visits. However, this means that HODs need to visit the teachers' classes to see

where the challenges occur. It was noted from the responses from the teachers that some of the HODs did not all execute their curriculum management role. HODs often do not supervise these inexperienced teachers by holding regular meetings per term, nor control and delegate their development in curriculum and the teaching and learning environment. Regular meetings are indicated as a means to track and support teachers. One of the HODs stated that the use of proper devices to assist teachers with was currently challenging at the school due to a lack of funding. He saw devices such as printers and projectors in the classrooms as a necessity for teachers and wants teachers to move from the traditional way of teaching by endlessly writing on the chalkboard. However, in the literature review it was stated that HODs need to have regular meetings with subject teachers once per month, before and after internal and external moderation. It should also be noted that moderation should regularly occur in both phases per term (iJika iMfundo, 2015).

4.7 THEME 4: EXTERNAL BARRIERS IN MANAGING CURRICULUM

This theme explores the external barriers HODs experience in managing the curriculum successfully. The HODs indicated a number of external barriers they encounter in managing the curriculum successfully in the Senior phase. HODs are faced with barriers such as lack of support and mentoring from the DOE, limited budget to support teachers, and some struggle to apply leadership traits and styles, especially in the Senior phase (Kaushik & Walsh, 2019). These barriers are of such manner that the HODs are not responsible for the consequences thereof. However, it still affects the curriculum and school negatively. The researcher explored this theme by asking the HODs the following question, '*What external factors or barriers do HODs encounter in managing the curriculum successfully in the Senior phase?*' The HODs indicated a number of barriers they encountered in managing the curriculum successfully. In addressing this theme, the researcher divided the theme into the follow subthemes, parental involvement and subject advisors.

4.7.1 Parental involvement

This subtheme discusses the involvement of parents in their children's education. Parental involvement in schools has significantly declined, which has led to quality education in schools also declining (Sesinyi, 2020). Relating from the South African

Schools Act 84 of 1996, section 3(1) (RSA, 1996), establishment is made for paternal involvement in schools, stating that parents have a duty towards their children's education. However, the participants responded that they normally engaged parents on all platforms. Nevertheless, some parents are engaged in the learner's education, while other parents do not. Teachers indicated that learners did not do their homework and they could see that parents were not involved in the schooling of their children. The HODs and teachers responded as follows to this subtheme.

SPT 6 (S2) indicated that parental involvement is one of the external challenges she faces in implementing the curriculum successfully,

My challenges, I think it will differ from other teachers because my challenges with my subject, is the learners. They are not doing their work. You'll give them work in the class or homework they are not doing the work. Even with the parents, are not involved with the learner's school work because I will ask the parent to come and the parent will complain to me about the behaviour of the child at home. Whereas, I want the parent to help me with the behaviour of the child at school. So, there there's a gap between the parent and the school in terms of this process of teaching and learning. So, it feels for me I'm the only one, the parent and the learner are not involved in this (SPT 6)

One of the HODs indicated that one of the challenges is the non-participation of the parents when the school tries to involve them.

As I said, it is the textbooks and the learners that do not do their work and the non-participation of parents when we involve them (HOD 6).

Parental involvement is crucial in the development of a child's performance as well as for a child's comprehension of the academic achievements. Parents must ensure that learners engage with their homework and should be actively involved in the education of the child. This ensures that they receive quality education at home and at school.

4.7.2 Subject advisors

This subtheme explores how subject advisors provide support and professional development to teachers teaching in the Senior phase. The majority of the teachers stated that they had not received training from professional development workshops nor support from their subject advisors. These teachers responded that they had to rely on their own insights and did not know who their subject advisors are. According to Seobi and Wood (2016), subject advisors play an important role in providing support and guidance to teachers. However, the HOD has direct contact with the teachers, which leads thereto that the subject advisor only does follow-up visits and not regular meetings as is the HOD's duty. Subject advisors, in terms of the schools, are experienced teachers who are available as a resource for teachers who have questions about curriculum, lesson plans and any school relationships. Subject advisors are also known as mentor teachers in their specialised subjects that help teachers to implement the curriculum and engage students with the discipline. Nicholson et al. (2016) state that subject advisors need to do follow-up visits to schools so that they can verify whether training is implemented effectively. The researcher asked the teachers if they attended any professional development and support in the Senior phase subjects. The participants replied to the question, '*Have you received any training on how to manage and implement the curriculum successfully in your perspective subject?*' The participants responded as follows to the question.

SPT 1 (S1) responded that he had not received any training for the past two years since he started at the school.

I don't think the school or the HOD or the Department has informed us of any uhm training that is available again My HOD don't really know about Technology and most of the training goes to the FET phase there is very little training or no training for Senior phase teachers and not only for Technology but I can say across the border (SPT 1).

SPT 2 (S1) concurred that she had also not received training, and only received training from a mentor at school who helped her to set a question paper.

I've not received any specific training from my HOD specifically. I like I said, I haven't really had contact with him or her, but I did receive some sort of training from a mentor teacher at school. That's the only training I've received where she basically just taught me. How to set up a paper or what specifically should be in the paper? How the curriculum, what did they expect from us and all of that stuff. But the training specifically? No, I haven't received training on the subject (SPT 2).

SPT 3 (S1) disclosed that the training that he received was at university level and did not have any professional development and support.

Yes, I have received training. It was part of my modules that I have done in university which is SBE school-based experience it also, train us how to set out lessons plans daily and weekly to in which have to allocate time that we have to spend in certain topics. In my years of teaching? I wouldn't say so. It is only my two years in university. The first year was one month and then six months but I have but I have actually really promising mentors which helped me a lot (SPT 3).

SPT 4 (S2) responded that she also only had training on university level and still had to go for professional development.

At Varsity level I did, but not as a teacher yet. The benefits I would describe is being able to plan better by knowing and understanding what is expected from you by your curriculum. Disadvantages is the fact that everything is taught contextually, no practical implementation was taught (SPT 4).

SPT 5 (S2) stated that she had received training, but only for Grade 12 and not for the Senior phase subjects that she also teaches,

Yes, I would say I did receive, but it was only for Grade 12, not the other grades. Not for EMS per se. It was only for Grade 12. I didn't receive the training for EMS (SPT 5).

SPT 6 (S2) disclosed that she had also not received training, she could also not recall if she had received any training in her years of teaching,

No, no, I'm not sure. Because I'm not sure whether before. For now, no (SPT 6).

SPT 7 (S3) responded that he had received training and that the DBE was very supportive,

Yes, yes, yes. The Department of Education is very supportive. It's very supportive. Like for example, you've got a subject advisor in Technology, subject advisor in each day who are supporting us, they do tell us but what has been expected from you for the term one, term two, term three, term 4, even the task which we have to do, they are very supportive. Otherwise, the training we have done almost all these years, each and every year there's a training for technology to tell us maybe the curriculum has changed or the curriculum has not changed. They are supportive 100% in my subject, specifically Technology and also in EGD (SPT 7).

SPT 8 (S3) responded that his subject advisor is very supportive and he had received training,

Yes, yes, yes, we do get that the subject advisors you normally hold. Subject advisors from the district office normally hold workshops especially at the beginning of the year so that they orient any new teachers and if your needs have not been met then you can actually notify the subject advisors. And some do come, especially those that are local. The other ones might be based far away and they might not be able to pitch, but the ones that I work with, luckily they are local, they just within reach them in town (SPT 8).

In the theme and subthemes, the participants' responses reflected that parental involvement is lacking at schools. Teaching and learning only take place in the classroom and at home the learners are not assisted by their parents. The participants also stated that parents did not attend meetings, which shows their lack of involvement in their children's education. Time management was one of the challenges that the participants faced and they struggled to cover the prescribed curriculum in the allocated time. The researcher observed that only two out of the eight teachers had received training in the Senior phase. However, one of the

participants went for training but it was only for Grade 12 and not her Senior phase subjects. Only two out of the eight participants received visits from their subject advisors and went for professional development. However, as the direct link with the subject advisors, HODs should ensure that teachers are in contact with their subject advisors so that teachers gain the necessary insight and support on their subject, which will be able to assist them to alleviate difficulties they encounter in their classroom and specific learning area by assessing and monitoring teachers' performance (Queen-Mary & Mtapuri, 2014).

4.8 CONCLUSION

To conclude, teachers indicated that HODs only manage the curriculum when the year ends. Throughout the year the HODs only check if SBA assessments were conducted. The teachers disclosed that HODs sometimes did not follow up on whether they were managing their curriculum successfully and if they encountered any challenges. They often have to rely on their own insights. However, the responses from the HODs disclosed that they do manage the curriculum, regardless of the fact they that they do not physically visit the classes. Furthermore, HODs stated that they made sure to distribute the ATPs on time. They also assisted the teachers in their departments in the challenges they experience in their subjects by monitoring their curriculum coverage and classroom management.

4.9 RESEARCH FINDINGS

This research is based on the functionalist theory. The researcher discussed the findings from a functionalist viewpoint, and the literature review in Chapter 2 of this research study.

This research study investigated the views of HODs on curriculum management in the Senior phase. In total 15 participants were sampled from three schools from Cradock in the Chris-Hani West district. The researcher used semi-structured interviews to collect data from participants. The researcher then thematically analysed the semi-structured interviews in order to interpret and comprehend of the participants' views and perceptions regarding curriculum management in the Senior

phase. In this chapter, the researcher discussed the findings in perspective to the participants' views on the phenomenon through the use of functionalism theory.

4.9.1 Functionalist theory

This theory is grounded in a system approach that regards society as an organised system of interrelated structures that work together to form the society as a whole. These structures of society or institution must work efficiently and effectively in order for the society to remain stable or function properly. Gómez-Diago (2020) states that functionalism can be seen as a theoretical perspective that focuses on the roles performed by individuals in society by social structures. This study advocated HODs' perception to be heard on how to maintain or achieve social order in secondary schools by ensuring there is harmony and a seamless transition between the Senior and FET phases. The researcher based the study on a functionalist perspective because HODs have the responsibility to carry out their curriculum management duties to contribute to the achievement of effective teaching and learning. Functionalists posit that without a collective conscience or shared values and beliefs, achieving organisational goals would be impossible (Cusmano, 2019). For the school to function equally, HODs should provide assistance for strategies that need to be implemented and development of the subject matter by teachers. Functionalists seek to analyse the function of given activity within a system, i.e., whether the activity promotes or interferes with the running of the system. The researcher used the functionalist theory to analyse whether HODs support and develop teachers professionally by regularly monitoring the teachers' progress in the Senior phase.

4.9.2 Empirical Findings

These findings of this research validated that, indeed, HODs do not manage the phases equally, and ensure that both phases contribute to the achievement of effective teaching and learning. However, the researcher observed that HODs are expected to manage their departments effectively, even though they were not trained in curriculum management. This indicated that HODs were not equipped and developed enough to manage their departments and support and guide the teachers effectively.

The findings revealed that HODs are confronted by numerous challenges in managing the curriculum, which often affect the function and smooth running of the teaching and learning environment. HODs disclosed that they have the shared responsibility to contribute positively to learners' performances and the professional development of teachers (Corbett, 2023). However, teachers indicated that HODs did not contribute to their professional development and only visited them for moderation and the required SBA tasks. There were also cases where teachers did not know who their HODs were, which disclosed that HODs did not physically visit and monitor their teaching and learning environment.

This indicated that HODs did not cooperate with teachers to increase learner performance. DHs should utilise a variety of devices and documents for their one-on-one conversations with teachers. When using this evidence, their engagements will become richer and more practical. In their conversations with teachers, DHs are expected to record their findings and records of decisions taken and agreements made during the conversations (Jackson, Michelson & Munir, 2023). These conversations will enable DHs to manage teachers' classes that are absent as the DHs will have sufficient material from teachers.

Furthermore, the teachers in this study expressed that the HODs did not ascertain that they do what is expected of them so that they can yield positive results. It was discovered that the majority of the teachers were not trained and did not go for professional development in their years of teaching.

The findings divulged that those teachers who went for training only went for Grade 12 training and not for the other grades. It is important for DHs to visit teachers in their department so that they can have one-on-one conversations with teachers to find where they need support and how they can improve their curriculum and classroom management (Chiu, Wu, Bartram, Parker & Lee, 2023).

Curriculum coverage conversations are one of the most important practices for DHs in curriculum management. The practicality of conducting these conversations, however, relies on a lot of technical and adaptive factors such as time and relationships as well as DHs having very little time to spare due to their heavy teaching schedules.

The findings also revealed that HODs struggle to obtain parental participation in their community. The HODs and teachers in this study expressed that the parents' involvement and their interest in the education of their children has experienced a significant decline. It becomes a challenge for HODs and teachers to manage a curriculum, support learners and ensure learner discipline if parents do not provide their children with the necessary support in academics and learner discipline. It was also perceived that HODs do not get support from the DBE. As stated by the HODs, the DBE only visits underperforming schools. The majority of the teachers also indicated that their subject advisors were also not in contact with them. However, two teachers indicated that the subject advisors did assist them in professional development and curriculum support.

To conclude, the findings in this study revealed that the morale of those teachers who did not receive professional development support was low and they felt demotivated, as they had to rely on their own insights. The demand for the functionalist theory in this study was to comprehend why HODs in the Senior phase did not fulfil their duties as expected. This issue is supported in the literature that states that HODs experience that it is difficult to execute their work in a negative school culture, as it leads to low morale among teachers, leading to poor performance in their departments.

4.10 CHAPTER SUMMARY

In this section, the researcher presented a comprehensive analysis of the findings from the semi-structured interviews conducted with Heads of Departments (HODs) and teachers. As stated in the introductory paragraph, this research objective was to present the observed findings and to analyse gathered data, which have been divided into themes and subthemes that originated from the research sub-questions. The first theme that emerged from this study was curriculum management, and this theme aided in exploring whether HODs were capable to manage and lead the curriculum effectively. Findings disclosed that HODs face many challenges related to curriculum management that affect how they manage their departments. The second theme responded mainly the second research sub-question on the experiences of HODs in curriculum management in the Senior phase. The general conclusion was that HODs are confronted with many challenges, with some emanating from teacher

absenteeism, learner discipline, non-participation of parents and the education system. It is evident that HODs play a crucial role in the implementation and management of curriculum.

The next theme dealt with curriculum management and leadership training. This theme assisted in determining whether HODs were trained in managing and leading the curriculum effectively. It was discovered that most of the HODs were not trained; they did not know how to manage the curriculum in the Senior phase effectively. The primary goal of this study was to investigate the role of HODs in curriculum management and their perceptions in implementing it. This aim was ultimately fulfilled through the discussion of the two themes. Teachers also disclosed that HODs did not regularly monitor and assist them or provide a platform for professional development. Instead, they distribute ATPs without enquiring whether teachers managed and covered the curriculum.

The final theme dealt with external barriers that influenced curriculum management in the Senior phase. This theme was employed to respond the last sub-question on the views of teachers on how HODs manage and lead the curriculum. It was determined that the majority of the teachers were not in contact with their subject advisors and did not attend professional development courses or workshops. Teachers also indicated that the HODs only monitored whether they can manage and implement the curriculum at the analysis of scheduled at the end of the year.

The researcher summarised findings by identifying recurring themes in the data. This is apparent in the systematic approach employed to analyse qualitative data clearly emphasises rigorous structured methodology. Furthermore, the researcher employed a content analysis method inductive merging information from recorded information. In addition, the study findings were compared to the theoretical framework by the researcher to confirm the relevance of functionalism theory within the study. Lastly, the researcher discussed the findings of the study, presented and analysed the findings which is aligned to the previous chapter of research methodology.

CHAPTER 5

STUDY SUMMARY, IMPLICATIONS OF THE FINDINGS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In the preceding chapter, the researcher provided an in-depth analysis and interpretation of the data gathered from semi-structured interviews. The analysis in this study was grounded in the theoretical framework supporting a qualitative research approach addressing the research problem. Chapter 4 delved into the themes and subthemes from the data analysis. In this chapter, the researcher provided an overview and recommendations obtained from reviewing related literature and the data collected with qualitative data collection methods listed in the previous chapter. This chapter consists of three sections. Firstly, the implications of findings will be shared; secondly, recommendations will be provided; and lastly, the chapter summary of the study will be portrayed.

5.2 SUMMARY OF THE STUDY

The first chapter provided an overview of the research by presenting the background information. It outlined the research problem and the specific aim and objectives of the study. This chapter discussed the importance of the study, which wanted to address the challenges related to the viewpoints of HODs towards curriculum management in the Senior phase. The researcher outlined the main research question and sub-questions to be able to collect data on the problem explored. This chapter briefly provided an explanation of studied methodology and research design that were thoroughly discussed in Chapter 3. Lastly, the chapter provided the ethical considerations the researcher had to followed and the layout of the research.

In Chapter 2, the literature review and theoretical framework were covered. In order to identify the gap that is not addressed by previous studies, the researcher reviewed several literatures to be able to link the current study with related studies. The insights obtained from the literature review played a pivotal role in shaping the theoretical framework that underpinned the study.

The qualitative methodological aspects of the study were outlined in Chapter 3. The researcher discussed why semi-structured interviews were used in this study. An explanation was provided on the population and sample, along with the sampling criteria of the study.

In Chapter 4, the researcher presented the study's findings and interpretations. This section examined the viewpoints articulated by Heads of Departments (HODs) concerning curriculum management in the senior phase. The researcher used content analysis to analyse collected data. Themes and subthemes were established to divide data into structures that are both easy to handle and cover all aspects. The researcher used data analysis to address the research questions and uncover similarities and differences in how Heads of Departments view curriculum management in the senior phase.

5.3 IMPLICATIONS OF THE FINDINGS

The findings from the empirical findings in Chapter 4 were arranged in the data presentation and interpretation. The researcher then provided a summarised presentation of these findings in alignment with the research sub-questions.

5.3.1 Curriculum management in the Senior phase

HODs responded that curriculum management is the process of curriculum improvement and the effective implementation of it. They indicated that for effective curriculum improvement in their departments, they ensured that each teacher that was assigned to their department received the ATPs, moderation tools and CAPS documents. They disclosed that for effective curriculum management in their departments they applied the elements of planning, organising, leading and control when implementing their curriculum management roles in school.

In the empirical investigation the HODs and teachers postulated that curriculum management entails how teachers instruct the content to learners, and how learners receive it. Participants concurred that curriculum management basically entails how teachers execute the instruction assessment that the DBE requires the learners and teachers need to do during each term. Teachers further elaborated that curriculum management involves the development, planning, managing and evaluating of the

curriculum. Teachers disclosed that HODs did not monitor their curriculum effectively or check whether they were managing it successfully. They indicated that they faced numerous challenges, but they did not get support from their HODs in managing these challenges.

The limited participation of parents in their children's education impedes the effectiveness of teaching and learning. HODs and teachers stated that the lack of parental involvement was one of the difficulties encountered in managing the curriculum effectively. They indicated that parents should be involved in multiple activities aimed at improving teaching and learning at school. Teachers indicated that when parents were involved in the curriculum it contributed to the thriving of the school and ultimately the growth of the learner. However, HODs and teachers disclosed that parents in the community became less committed to attending the activities of the school. HODs indicated that they invited parents to attend meetings, but most of them did not cooperate, nor helped in ensuring that learners did their work so that they could manage the curriculum effectively. Parents must realise that they need to work with the teachers to achieve quality education and improve learners' academic and sport performances.

5.3.2 Experiences of HODs in curriculum management in the Senior phase

HODs disclosed that they experienced numerous challenges in managing the curriculum. These challenges often hinder the smooth functioning of the school and causes a delay or backlog in executing the curriculum. They further disclosed that teachers themselves often became a challenge in the smooth functioning of the school. HODs disclosed that the majority of them were not trained on their role in curriculum management and it was clear that they were not acquainted with how to manage the curriculum in the Senior phase effectively.

In this section, HODs indicated that time constraints were one of the major challenges to why HODs could not manage their departments successfully. The HODs indicated that the DBE only regularly visits underperforming schools and that they were eager to attend any training sessions as they wanted to develop professionally in their role as curriculum managers. Instead, they often received circulars or notices through their subject advisors to attend workshops on curriculum management and leadership training programmes. The HODs indicated that it was

important for development to take place in their production and they were eager to be formally trained. They must have knowledge of the subjects in their departments in order to lead and manage the teachers. It is important for them understand the Annual Teaching Plans they distribute to the teachers in order to analyse at the end of the term if the SBA requirements have been reached.

They further disclosed that funding in the school was also one of the challenges, as the schools did not have the required resources to ensure the smooth running of the schools. HODs stated that the use of proper devices helped them to assist teachers in their classroom management, but this was a barrier at the school due to a lack of funding. They saw devices such as printers and projectors in the classrooms as a necessity for teachers and wanted teachers to move from the traditional way of teaching by endlessly writing on the chalkboard. Lastly, HODs disclosed that they made use of regular meetings as a means to track and support teachers.

5.3.3 Views of teachers on the way HODs manage the curriculum in the Senior phase

Teachers disclosed that HODs did not execute their curriculum management role. They also indicated that HODs did not supervise them by holding regular meetings per term, nor controlling and delegating their development in curriculum and the teaching and learning environment. The majority of the teachers stated that they had not undergone professional training from professional development workshops, nor support from their subject advisors. In this section, teachers responded that they had to rely on their own insights and did not know who their subject advisors were.

The teacher disclosed that time-allocation was one of the challenges they encounter in executing the curriculum successfully in the Senior phase. They stated that they had to conduct their lesson plan in the allocated time assigned to them per learning area. Teachers have to complete their curriculum coverage in their allocated times as well as ensure that the necessary assessment tasks are completed in that period, which usually consists of 30-50 minutes. Public schools have large numbers of learners with overcrowded classes. The crowded classrooms with high learner-to-teacher ratio make it difficult for teachers to effectively interact with each learner, especially those needing extra specialised attention. External barriers also have a great impact on successfully managing and implementing the curriculum. These

challenges often hinder the production of the teachers, as learners have to leave for extra-curricular activities or the school is disrupted by water shortages. Teachers indicated that HODs only managed the curriculum when the year ended. Throughout the year the HODs only checked if SBA assessments were done.

5.4 EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

Upon thorough examination of the literature review, it became evident to the researcher that HODs encounter challenges when managing and leading the curriculum in the Senior phase. These challenges have a direct influence on the teachers in their department and the learners. HODs currently face constraints like time, content gap in grades, novice teachers that struggle to manage the curriculum, parental involvement, and administrative duties. The literature review mentioned numerous strategies that HODs can apply in managing the challenges they experience in the Senior phase.

The literature indicated that, for HODs to manage and the lead the curriculum successfully, they need to provide effective resource management to curriculum evaluation at a school level and, most importantly, oversee curriculum development at a class level. However, in some cases it is difficult for HODs to implement these skills as there is a limited number of meaningful contributions from teachers in supporting curriculum development when going to internal and external moderation centrums. HODs are referred to as curriculum specialists, but they do not receive structured training on curriculum development. Moreover, they experienced that many teachers are ill-informed regarding curriculum in theory and practice, especially the inexperienced teachers entering the school system.

HODs should assist teachers with the problems they encounter around curriculum coverage and support them with content knowledge acquisition. Numerous challenges that HODs face were highlighted, and these challenges corresponded with the participants' responses during the data collection process. It was discovered that HODs managed and led the curriculum in different ways because of the available resources and variable interpretations by school management teams.

5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE STUDY

The recommendations made in the study are based on the thematic analysis carried out in the previous study. Utilising the insights obtained from semi-structured interviews, the study presents recommendations in the field of curriculum management and leadership by Heads of Departments (HODs) to improve the effectiveness of teaching and learning in the senior phase.

Curriculum management in the Senior phase does not only consist of managing the Annual Teaching Plan and required coordinate assessments. HODs need to have knowledge of the subjects of the department they manage. In this study, the researcher observed that teachers are not supported in curriculum implementation. Not one of the HODs mentioned that they checked teachers' lesson plans and monitored whether teachers implemented the curriculum successfully. Neither did they state if they knew whether teachers were teaching the content correctly. The quality and standard of the assessments were not checked either. The Senior phase requires a lot of attention, as it lays the foundation for the Further Education and Training phase. However, if HODs do not check whether teachers are actually teaching the content in Grades 8 and 9, the learners' progress in the FET phase will be affected.

HODs will never know whether a teacher struggles if they do not regularly check up on the teachers, and ensure that teachers have master portfolios for each subject, with their yearly planners, weekly lesson plans and assessment plans. They cannot just assume that the teachers know what to do, especially novice teachers, as teaching and implementing the curriculum successfully are quite different from teaching practice.

In order for HODs to lead and manage their department successfully they need to establish a great working relationship with the teachers. This can only be done by actively engaging the teachers in regular meetings, class visitations and checking teacher's yearly planners, so that in cases of absenteeism activities are provided to the learners.

As an instructional leader who leads and manages the staff, HODs play a vital role in facilitating positive and productive working relationships with teachers. Furthermore,

when assisting teachers, HODs should evaluate the training needs of the teachers, lead them to grow professionally in their subjects by ensuring they attend professional development courses. HODs should closely work with subject advisors to ensure the professional growth of teachers in their departments. Heads of Departments (HODs) are encouraged to lead by example by providing coaching and seeking external assistance to support teachers.

However, to be able to execute all of these above responsibilities HODs need to be trained adequately to be able to provide guidance and leadership to teachers. To support the growth of HODs, the DBE should think about organising district workshops on a quarterly basis. During these events, HODs would have the opportunity to exchange their approaches to successful curriculum management. HODs must also support and guide teachers during the year to ensure that teachers manage and implement the curriculum successfully, as well as train, monitor and control how teachers manage their classroom and what environment they create for learners to be able address any challenges that occur.

Lastly, HODs should create intervention programmes on how to involve parents in learners' education as they play an important role as stakeholders of the school. Parents should be aware of how their participation in their children's schooling helps teachers to manage their curriculum effectively, as the learner gets support from both their teachers and parents.

5.6 CHAPTER SUMMARY

To summarise the study, the primary research question was reiterated:

What is the Head of Departments' role in curriculum management in the Senior phase?

In order to address this question, the researcher carried out semi-structured interviews with Heads of Departments (HODs) and teachers in the senior phase. This method allowed the researcher to gain an in-depth exploration of the participants perspective on the phenomenon. This study concluded that HODs have an effect on how teachers manage and implement the curriculum. Teachers become demotivated due to the absence of their HOD and tend to rely on their own insights,

which causes them to fail to manage the curriculum effectively. This creates a gap in content for the next grade as the curriculum was not covered effectively.

In this section, the researcher analysed the primary results of the research. This study, outlined the findings and reported on the findings of the sub-questions of this study. Lastly, the researchers suggested recommendations for further study.

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APPENDIX A: APPLICATION FOR TITLE REGISTRATION

16 September 2022

APPLICATION FOR TITLE REGISTRATION

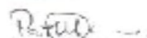
Applicant: Van Sasie, MS
Student Number: 2014107003
Discipline: Education Management
Study Code: Master's (EDML8900)

Dear Ms Van Sasie

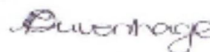
Your registered title is as follows: "Exploring the Heads of Departments' role in curriculum management in the senior phase "

All of the best with your studies.

Yours sincerely,



Prof Patrick Mafora
Chair: CTR committee



Ms CS Duvenhage
Secretary: CTR committee



APPENDIX B: ETHICAL CLEARANCE



GENERAL/HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (GHREC)

06-Mar-2023

Dear Ms Micaila Van Sasie

Application Approved

Research Project Title:

Exploring the Head of Departments' role in curriculum management in the senior phase

Ethical Clearance number:

UFS-HSD2022/1710/23

We are pleased to inform you that your application for ethical clearance has been approved. Your ethical clearance is valid for twelve (12) months from the date of issue. We request that any changes that may take place during the course of your study/research project be submitted to the ethics office to ensure ethical transparency. Furthermore, you are requested to submit the final report of your study/research project to the ethics office. Should you require more time to complete this research, please apply for an extension. Thank you for submitting your proposal for ethical clearance; we wish you the best of luck and success with your research.

Yours sincerely

Dr Adri Du Plessis

Chairperson: General/Human Research Ethics Committee

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APPENDIX C: RESEARCH PERMISSION LETTER

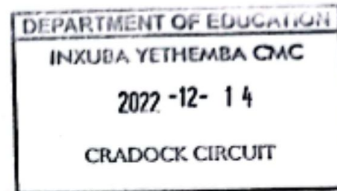


Province of the
EASTERN CAPE
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, CRADOCK

14 Dundas Street, CRADOCK 5880 *Private Bag X 82 * CRADOCK * 5880 * REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA *Tel: 048-8018637 *Cell: 060 523 6259* Fax: 048-8811389 * DATE: 7/04/2022 * Enquiries: DR. C.N. Hendricks

14 December 2022

University of the Free State
PO Box 339
Bloemfontein
9300



RE: Permission to conduct research

This letter serves to grant permission to Micaila S. van Sasie, student number 2014107003, to conduct research at the following schools: Michausdal Senior Secondary School, JA Calata Secondary School, and Matthew Goniwe Comprehensive School.

The Department of Education wishes her all the best in her research titled *"Exploring the Head of Department's Role in Curriculum Management in the Senior Phase"*.

Miss M.S. van Sasie is also requested to provide the Department of Education a copy of the final transcript.

Dr C.N. Hendricks

Inxuba Yethemba CMC manager

14/12/22

Date

APPENDIX D: PERMISSION LETTERS SEEKING FROM PRINCIPALS

40 Takbok Street

Michausdal

Cradock

5880

06 March 2023

Eastern Cape Department of Education

14 Dundas Street

Cradock

5880

Dear Sir/Madam

Permission to conduct Master of Education research

[Title: Exploring the Head of Departments' role in curriculum management in the Senior phase](#)

My name is Micaila Sharonic van Sasie and I'm a Master of Education student enrolled in the Faculty of Education with specialisation in Leadership and Management at the University of the Free State, Bloemfontein Campus.

I intend to collect my data for my research study relating to the Head of Departments' role in curriculum management in the Senior phase in the Chris Hani West district between 16 January till 20 January 2023. The following three schools will be sampled: Michausdal Senior Secondary School, JA Calata Secondary School and Matthew Goniwe Comprehensive School.

My proposed thesis title is: Exploring the Head of Departments' role in curriculum management in the Senior phase. I hereby apply for permission from your

department to conduct this research with a sample of participants consisting of three head of departments and three teachers.

The method of data collection involves semi-structured interviews with the HODs and teachers in the sampled schools. The data collection will take place over a period that is convenient for the participants. The research study will not interfere with academic scheduled time of the participants.

I hereby commit myself to the professional code of ethics for researchers which includes the following aspects:

- The participation involving this research is strictly voluntarily and participants may withdraw from research without any consequences.
- The participants information will be strictly confidential.
- The findings of the research will be available upon completion of the research.
- Permission from participants will be asked in order to record and transcribe the interview.
- Consent forms will be distributed to participants to sign, in order to adhere to the ethical issues.

My supervisor is Dr. Jonas Kabi and can be contacted to any related enquiries regarding my studies. Cell: 083 769 3977

Email: KabiJS@ufs.ac.za

Your support is highly appreciated.

I thank you for your interest in my research.

Yours faithfully



Micaila Sharonic van Sasie

06 March 2023

Date

Cell: 0630254239

2014107003@ufs4life.ac.za

40 Takbok Street
Michausdal
Cradock
5880
06 March 2023

Michausdal Senior Secondary School

Bartis Street

Michausdal

Cradock

5880

Dear Sir/Madam

Permission to conduct Master of Education research

[Title: Exploring the Head of Departments' role in curriculum management in the Senior phase](#)

My name is Micaila Sharonic van Sasie and I'm a Master of Education student enrolled in the Faculty of Education with specialisation in Leadership and Management at the University of the Free State, Bloemfontein Campus.

I intend to collect my data for my research study relating to the Head of Departments' role in curriculum management in the Senior phase in the Chris Hani West district between 16 January till 20 January 2023.

My proposed thesis title is: Exploring the Head of Departments' role in curriculum management in the Senior phase. I hereby apply for permission from your school to conduct this research with a sample of participants consisting of three head of departments and three teachers.

The method of data collection involves semi-structured interviews with the HODs and teachers in the sampled schools. The data collection will take place over a period that is convenient for the participants. The research study will not interfere with academic scheduled time of the participants.

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06 March 2023

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Luhabe Street

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06 March 2023

Cell: 0630254239

2014107003@ufs4life.ac.za

40 Takbok Street

Michausdal

Cradock

5880

06 March 2023

Matthew Goniwe Comprehensive School

Ntenetyana Street

Lingelihle

Cradock

5880

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Micaila Sharonic van Sasie

06 March 2023

Date


Cell: 0630254239

Email: 2014107003@ufs4life.ac.za

APPENDIX E: PERMISSION LETTER FROM SCHOOLS

J.A CALATA SECONDARY SCHOOL

Principal: Mrs J.B. Vorster
Tel: 048 8811041
Cell: 0836612188
Email: jacalata@telkomsa.net



John Vorster Street
Lingelthle
P.O Box 384
CRADOCK
5880

13 February 2023

University of the Free State
PO box 339
Bloemfontein
9300

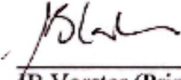
J.A. Calata Secondary School
P.O. Box 384, Cradock, 6880

2023 -02- 13

Principal: J.B. Vorster
Tel./Fax: 048 881 1041

RE: Permission to conduct research

This letter serves to grants permission to Micaila S. van Sasie, student number 20141107003, to conduct research at JA Calata Secondary School.


JB Vorster (Principal)

APPENDIX F: PARTICIPANTS' CONSENT FORM

Micalla Sharonic van Sasie

Cell: 0630254239

2014107003@ufs4life.ac.za

31 March 2023

Permission to conduct research project:

Title: Exploring the Head of Departments' role in curriculum management in the Senior Phase

LETTER OF PERMISSION: RESEARCH PARTICIPANT

I, TYRONE TAAI. (name and surname)
HOD member from MICHAELSDAL SEN SEC. SCHOOL (name of school) hereby give permission that the research may be carried out at the school, and that I will voluntarily participate in the study.

I understand that the participation involving this research is strictly voluntarily and participants may withdraw from research without any consequences. The participants information will be strictly confidential. The findings of the research will be available upon completion of the research.

TYRONE TAAI. 
Name and signature

12/05/2023.
Date

APPENDIX G: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR DEPARTMENT HEADS



Transcriptions
Thesis-2-2 (1).docx

TRANSCRIPTIONS

Section A: Questions to HODs

Title: Exploring the Head of Departments' role in curriculum management in the Senior phase

Interview schedule

1. How do you as HOD understand the concept curriculum management in secondary schools?
2. How do you as HOD understand the HODs curriculum management roles?
3. What challenges related to curriculum management do HODs experience in secondary schools?
4. What challenges do HODs experience in managing the curriculum in the Senior phase specifically?
5. What skills, knowledge, values and attitudes do HODs need to manage the curriculum successfully and at the same time provide leadership for teachers?
6. Have you received curriculum management and leadership training as HOD?

If no, why not? • If yes, explain it to me the followings factors; content, format, structure, focus and • how would you describe the advantages and disadvantages of this training programme you have received?

7. How do you, as HOD support Senior phase teachers in their path in implementing the curriculum successfully?

8. What is the current curriculum management structure, nature and content of HODs roles in their perspective grades and subjects?
10. What external factors or barriers do HODs encounter in managing the curriculum successfully in the Senior phase?
11. How do you regulate and monitor the Senior phase for effective teaching and learning?
12. What devices do you use to guide and support Senior phase teachers?
13. How do you track Senior phase teachers' progress in managing the curriculum?

APPENDIX H: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR TEACHERS

Section B: Questions to teachers

Title: Exploring the Head of Departments' role in curriculum management in the Senior phase

Interview schedule

1. What do you understand under the concept of curriculum management in secondary schools?
2. How does the HOD in your subject field support you to implement and manage the curriculum?
3. What challenges do you experience in managing and implementing the curriculum in your subject?
4. Have you received any training on how to manage and implement the curriculum successfully in your perspective subject?

If no, why not? • If yes, explain to me the followings factors; content, format, structure, focus and • how would you describe the benefits and disadvantages of this training programme you have received?

5. How does the HOD regulate and monitor your progress in following the curriculum successfully?
6. What external factors and barriers has an influence on you managing and leading the curriculum?
7. How does the HOD support you in managing overcrowded classrooms to create an effective teaching and learning environment?
8. In your view, what devices do you want to receive to improve your teaching and learning environment?

APPENDIX I: LANGUAGE EDITOR'S LETTER

CORNELIA GELDENHUYS

083 2877088
corrieg@mweb.co.za

4 August 2024

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Herewith I, Cornelia Geldenhuys (ID 521114 0083 088) declare that I am a qualified, accredited language practitioner and that I have edited the following dissertation:

EXPLORING THE HEAD OF DEPARTMENT'S ROLE IN CURRICULUM MANAGEMENT IN THE SENIOR PHASE

by

Micaila Sharonic van Sasie

2014107003

All changes were indicated by track changes and comments for the author to verify, clarify aspects that are unclear, make the necessary adjustments and finalise, in particular the referencing. The editor takes no responsibility in the instance of this not being done. The document remains the final responsibility of the author.



.....
C GELDENHUYS
MA (Lin) cum laude, MA (Mus), BA Hons (French), HED, HDL, UELM

Accredited member/Geakkrediteerde lid, SATI, Membership/Lidmaatskap: 1001474 (A/E-E/A)
Full member/Volle lid, Professional Editors Guild (PEG, Membership GEL001)
Mediterranean Editors and Translators (MET: Membership 02393)
European Association of Scientific Editors (EASE: Membership 5523)

APPENDIX J: PLAGIARISM REPORT

Micaïla van Sasie EDML-5.docx

by Micaïla Vansasie

Submission date: 10-Aug-2024 02:12AM (UTC+0200)

Submission ID: 2429744871

File name: Micaïla_van_Sasie_EDML-5.docx (222.3K)

Word count: 33655

Character count: 181044