

**PRINCIPALS' PERCEPTIONS AND EXPERIENCES OF CIRCUIT
MANAGERS' ROLE TOWARDS THEIR CONTINUOUS
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

by

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my late parents, Thandiwe Bihi, Lekula Bihi and my late brother, Thabang Bihi. Also, to my brothers Tumelo and Thabo Bihi for giving me their support through the duration of my study; and to my son Kananelo Bihi for always encouraging me to do my best even when the circumstances were not favourable.

ABSTRACT

The study focused on principals' perceptions and experiences regarding circuit managers' role towards principals' continuous professional development (CPD). CPD programmes are viewed as critical in ensuring principals growth as educated and trained professionals. The need for principals to keep informed on changes in education rests with the circuit managers to provide opportunities through the effective implementation of CPD. Literature reveals that principals lack CPD and support from CMs which emanate from inadequate and ineffective CPD training. This inadequacy impacts school leadership by reducing the principal's confidence which leads to ineffective school management. Hence, this gap in CPD may negatively affect educational outcomes as well as the overall management of the school. Literature also states that CMs lack appropriate qualifications and experience to implement CPD training for principals. The rationale for undertaking this study was to enhance relevant CPD training, support, and the efficient development of school principals by the CMs in line with the requirements of the district. This qualitative study selected a sample of school principals based in Motheo District of the Free State province, RSA. Focus group interviews were employed, and thematic analysis was used to analyse data. Findings revealed that there was lack of proper planning, implementation, management, and leadership by CMs. It was also found that there is a dire need for the alleviation of systematic challenges like time management, financial resources, and efficient monitoring to ensure the success of CPD initiatives. Since successful CPD implementation relies on open communication and collaboration between Circuit Managers (CMs) and principals, the current CPD provision is inadequate as it is hindered by insufficient planning, lack of feedback, and inconsistent training, especially in specialised areas. To improve CPD effectiveness, CMs must adopt integrated strategies, prioritise collaboration, and address barriers such as burdensome workloads, poor time management, and the lack of communication skills to ensure that CPD initiatives align closely with principals' specific needs. The study contributes to new knowledge by recommending guidelines that CMs may use in implementing CPD activities for principals to ensure collaborative, tailored approaches of CPD implementation.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ACE	Advanced Certificate in Education
CAPS	Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement
CPD	Continuous Professional Development
CPDT	Continuing Professional Development for Teachers
DA	Developmental Appraisal
DoBE	Department of Basic Education
DoE	Department of Education
DSG	Development Support Group
ECD	Early Childhood Development
EEA	Employment of Educators Act
HOD	Head of Department
ICT	Information Communication Technology
IQMS	Integrated Quality Management System
	Integrated Strategic Planning Framework for Teacher Education
ISPFTED	and Development
MEC	Member of Executive Council
NASSP	National Association of Secondary Schools Principals
NCS	National Curriculum Statement
NDP	National Development Plan
	National Policy Framework for Teacher Education and Develop-
NPFTED	ment
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PAM	Personnel Administrative Measures
PD	Professional Development
PLC	Professional Learning Communities
PM	Performance Management
PPD	Principal Professional Development
QMS	Quality Management System
REC	Research Ethics Committee
RSA	Republic of South Africa
SA	South Africa

SACE	South African Council of Education
SAOU	Suid Afrikaanse Onderwysers Unie
SAPA	South African Principal Association
SASA	South African Schools Act
SASSP	South African Standard for School Principals
SGB	School Governing Bodies
SMT	School Management Team
TA	Thematic Analysis
WSE	Whole School Evaluation

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CHAPTER ONE

ORIENTATION TO THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

In a developing country like the Republic of South Africa (RSA), programmes like continuous professional development (CPD) are continuously changing the landscape of education and development. It is for this reason that CPD can be interpreted as a structured approach to teaching-learning that seeks to facilitate competence to attain best practice by intensifying knowledge, skills, and practical expertise for all educators (Mestry, 2017:2). In congruence, Saeed and Akhtar (2017:2) describe CPD as a planned, continuous, and lifelong process through which personal and professional qualities are developed. This means that CPD can be applied through many activities: workshops, conferences, consultations, coaching (both peer and expert coaching), and courses. These sources enhance the professional development (PD) of educators to acquire better and modern competencies to uplift the quality of teaching-learning at educational institutions.

Gomba (2019:2) adds that CPD consists of demonstrations, peer observation, mentoring and coaching, inductions and orientations, job-rotation, teamwork, and groupwork. Hence, CPD also entails the clustering of schools for CPD and combined school visits to roll-out the designing and executing of novel school improvement projects which advance the concept and functions of learning communities of practice. In this regard, Wiehahn and Du Plessis (2018:2) contend that CPD may be seen as a process through which school principals are held accountable for the outcomes of the quality of the tasks they have performed. Additionally, the South African Standard for Principalship (2015:14) clarifies that the principal has the overall responsibility for the promotion of quality assurance, and is ultimately accountable to a wide range of stakeholders for all aspects of the school's performance and its continuing improvement. The central point gleaned from the above statements gives an indication that there is a high standard to attain regarding principals' needs that could be

accelerated via CPD implementation. The DoE (2015:6) identifies these as differentiated developmental needs for professionalising principals.

These needs are:

- Enhancement of the skills and competencies of principals
- Improvement of procedures for recruiting and selecting principals
- Induction and mentoring of principals
- Professional preparation of principals

Concurring with the above, Rowland (2017:10), Arhipova, Kokina and Rauckiene-Michaelsson (2018:67) suggest that for CPD involving school leaders to be effective, five characteristics need to be observed:

- Focus on continuous opportunities for practice
- Offer principals high-quality, regular, timeous feedback on their actions and practice
- Use research-based content
- Teamwork within a community or network of others, either in person or virtually
- Programmes should be tailored to offer what each principal needs to know at that specific point in his or her career.

Wiehahn and Du Plessis (2018:3) affirm that an effective CPD programme for principals should be integrated to include educational goals to improve their schools and be guided by a coherent long-term plan to take the school to a higher level. This implies that CPD should be primarily school-based, ongoing, and promote collegial support for further learning which should be evaluated based on its impact on school development and its effectiveness. The researcher was thus conducted to examine the role of circuit managers as key officers in providing principals and their schools with administrative, technical, academic, mentoring, coaching, curriculum, and managerial support via CPD programmes (Steyn, 2022:01).

Having presented the introduction to this study, the next subsection discusses the background to the research problem.

1.2 BACKGROUND

The 21st century has been characterised by a plethora of rapid changes in the education system. These changes, together with the increased volume of administrative work, placed principals under pressure (Mestry, 2017:1; Arhipova et al., 2018:5). Lamentably, Sepuru (2018:6) asserts that principals in South Africa rarely receive appropriate support for their challenging roles as many are appointed into school leadership positions without being prepared for specific school leadership functions. In addition, they often receive little support from circuit managers who may lack the experience of the intricacies of implementing CPD programmes. Wiehahn and Du Plessis (2018:2) add that some principals encounter challenges in managing schools on a day-to-day basis especially when attempting to prioritise between higher order tasks in relation to improving staff, learners, and school performance, and routine operational demands. This means that many principals are overwhelmed by challenges relating to mainly constantly expanding duties and changing educational trends. In addition, Young (2017:7) attests that principals who often feel challenged to successfully fulfil their role as leaders, often resign from their positions because of their inability to cope with work-stress which results in burnout. Consequently, principals may fail to form positive working relations due to the isolation they experience as leaders. Hence, it becomes critical for principals to be provided with support through CPD programmes.

Arhipova et al. (2018:73) elaborate that CPD for principals must be based on a holistic view of the school, and that the organisation of the programme should consider the local community and knowledge of the uniqueness of school environments. Similarly, Bozak, Karadag and Bolat (2018:234) confirm that a holistic approach to CPD for principals involves important elements such as professionalism, delegation of duties, and use of technology, among others. There are many gaps evident in principals' quality of executing school responsibilities which precipitate challenges that can be circumvented by the implementation of effective and relevant CPD. Ndou (2022:2) who attests that circuit managers are entrusted with the responsibility of promoting CPD to deepen principals' knowledge and increase their understanding of the national school system, national goals, and societal roles, contends that this is not being effectively executed. This is supported by the DBE (2013), reflected in *Gazette Number 26324*

(3) of 2013, that reports support to principals should be provided mainly through circuit managers.

Hence, CPD for principals could be seen as an ideal trajectory to reinforce and enhance current skills while bridging knowledge and skills gaps. In this regard, Arhipova et al. (2018:73) provide a list of advantages for engaging committedly in CPD programmes:

- CPD provides more opportunities for growth, development, and job-satisfaction.
- CPD enhances commitment to self-improvement and capacitation.
- CPD boosts overall personal and professional performance.
- CPD enhances soft technological skills and new knowledge acquisition.
- CPD accesses experts in the educational sector.
- CPD enables principals to set goals and achieve them.

These advantages highlight that the purpose of CPD is to enable principals to reflect their perceptions, knowledge, skills, shortcomings, and experiences to open themselves to be capacitated to apply what they have learned to support their practical work. This can also be understood that CPD enables reflective practice to increase self-awareness which is a key component of emotional intelligence to cope with the complexities of the teaching profession to assist, maintain, and improve the quality of education at schools on an ongoing basis to attain international benchmarks.

Hence, it was imperative to investigate principals' perceptions and experiences regarding circuit managers' implementation of CPD, specifically concerning whether the support systems they provide are to the benefit of principals. As such, clear guidelines pertaining to the role of circuit managers ought to be designed and workshopped to assist principals (and circuit managers) to become more effective and efficient in their workplace via CPD programmes.

The background of the study has been outlined and this leads to the presentation of the research problem

1.3 RESEARCH PROBLEM

Continuous professional development (CPD) programmes are viewed as “the oxygen that ensures principals survive as educated and trained professionals” (Wiehahn & Du Plessis, 2018:2). Therefore, the necessity for principals to be trained continuously to master their craft should be considered as a top priority by the circuit managers. Principals’ various and unique needs should be brought to the attention of circuit managers such that can be included to drive CPD programmes. Ndlovu (2017:7) advises that some of the needs of principals can be extracted from literature that indicates the existing lack of development and support from circuit managers. This inadequacy impacts on school leadership, exposing the principal to reduced confidence and ineffective school management. This gap in CPD may negatively affect educational outcomes and the overall successful management of the school. Additionally, Spicer (2016:3) points to the demotivating school climate as one of the hindering factors that should be included in the CPD training sessions for principals to create an inviting and productive educational environment. This example clearly indicates that principals lack training in the holistic development of the school, and thus they depend on CPD to refresh and hone their skills in leadership roles. Mestry (2017:1) posits that the lack of continuous professional development influences the high failure rate in schools. Ndlovu (2017:9) lists some impediments to the successful implementation of CPD by circuit managers for school principals:

- Principals may perceive CPD as a top-down process controlled by the DoE circuit managers.
- Continuous professional development demands many hours to complete profiles, as well as to access resources.
- Barriers to successful CPD implementation such as the lack of funds and time stifle the CPD process especially in areas of literacy, numeracy, and technological know-how.

Importantly, Hodges (2018:27) prioritises methods of course-delivery, curriculum, administration, management of human and financial resources, as well as creating and supporting peer collaboration to improve the effectiveness of principals’ CPD

training. This implies that unless there is thorough CPD training and astute intervention strategies employed by the circuit managers, gaps in leading a school will always remain as challenges.

These challenges directly talk to the role of the circuit manager who is the DoE District official responsible for rolling-out CPD programmes to capacitate school principals to enhance the image of the school as contained in the PAM (Personnel Administrative Measures, 2016:36) document. In other words, the circuit manager is responsible for the upskilling of principals by ensuring that they are developed professionally so they can enhance their skills and knowledge for better leadership (Ndlovu, 2017:2). Because there is no formal or specific principalship qualification which is required as a condition for appointment, there is no reliable measure of ascertaining how ready and able principals are to cope with the complex challenges which come with the job. Therefore, Spicer (2016:8) posits that circuit managers must employ relevant intervention strategies in CPD that are aligned with the needs identified by principals. In congruence, the challenges documented in the existing literature (Spicer, 2016:8; Mestry, 2017:1; Wiehahn & Du Plessis 2018:2; Hodges, 2018:27) suggest that principals require CPD as a support mechanism to be able to cope with day-to-day activities of the school. Ndlovu (2017:2) indicates that the logical expectation is that CPD ought to be provided in the main by circuit managers who are the principals' line managers.

Section 1.3 dealt with research problems and highlighted aspects that prompted the researcher to embark on the study. The next section focused on the research aim and objectives leading to the derivation of the research question and subsidiary questions.

1.4 RESEARCH AIM AND OBJECTIVES

The aim of this research was to investigate the perceptions and experiences of principals on circuit managers' role in the implementation of CPD.

Accordingly, the following objectives were addressed:

- To discover what constitutes the role of the circuit manager in CPD implementation.
- To examine the extent to which principals perceive CPD provided by circuit managers as being effective.
- To identify areas of need for CPD interventions for school principals.
- To explore the experiences of school principals in the implementation of CPD by circuit managers.
- To identify barriers in the implementation of CPD by circuit managers; and
- To suggest recommendations that may enhance the implementation of CPD for principals by circuit managers.

1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The subsections below outline the main research question and the secondary questions that guided the study:

1.5.1 Main Research Question

The study intends to answer the following main research question:

What are the perceptions and experiences of principals regarding the circuit managers' role in the implementation of CPD?

1.5.2 Secondary Research Questions

To answer the main research question, the following subsidiary research questions were formulated and directly derived from the main research question:

- What constitutes the CPD role of circuit managers?
- To what extent do principals perceive CPD provided by circuit managers as being effective?
- What areas of need that necessitate CPD for school principals?
- What are the experiences of school principals on the implementation of CPD by circuit managers?
- What barriers hinder the implementation of CPD by circuit managers?

The researcher dedicated Section 1.5 above mainly for the establishment of the aim, research objectives and research questions while a brief explanation of the rationale for the study is provided in the next section (cf. Section 1.6).

1.6 RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

This study envisioned contributing significantly towards improving the CPD of principals by investigating their perceptions and experiences on the role of circuit managers in implementing CPD programmes. Additionally, the study's purpose was to suggest recommendations that may be implemented by circuit managers to design and implement tailor-made training programmes based on findings that emanate from the study. The study's literature review and findings may also assist in fostering positive relationships between the circuit manager and the principal which can be maintained and valued to produce improved outcomes in CPD. Also, this study may assist the Department of Education (DoE) to assess whether circuit managers are providing the necessary support to principals in improving the effectiveness of schools as it is their (circuit managers') responsibility to do so. Furthermore, the study may serve as a guide to universities that offer formal CPD programmes to principals, as well as to assess their programmes to align them with the outcomes of the research

to improve on the standards of educational management modules offered to educators aspiring for principalship.

The next section focused on the research design and methodology adopted in sourcing answers to the research questions of the study. Therefore, this section deals with the research design and methodology as well as population and sampling method employed for data gathering and data analysis purposes.

1.7 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The study employed the qualitative research approach as it was most suitable to assist the researcher in sourcing holistic perceptions of school principals regarding circuit managers' role in implementing CPD (Okeke & Van Wyk, 2017:217). Qualitative research would help unpack the phenomenon to reveal complexities and connections that may exist in the ever-changing reality of principalship (Roller & Lavrakas, 2015:2). This approach allows participants to provide the researcher with rich information to understand the experiences, situations, or processes regarding CPD implementation (Gray & Grove, 2020:429).

This qualitative research method, in line with the interpretivist paradigm, allowed the researcher to engage participants through face-to-face focus group interactions. Since the interpretive paradigm allows the researcher to view the world through the perceptions and experiences of the participants, it enabled the researcher to elicit responses that could be used to construct and interpret meanings from collected data (Ngulube, 2016:387).

Stemming from the above brief discussion of a qualitative research methodology, the next section describes the population and sample for this study.

1.7.1 Population

The research population for this study comprised of 71 secondary school principals in the Motheo District of the Free State province (RSA). These principals are referred to as the population because they comprised of a group of individuals having one or more characteristics of interest. It was therefore logical that research findings from this study should be attributed to the population either by linking them to specific or all participants (Asiamah, Mensah & Oteng–Abayie, 2017:1608). The common characteristics for any research population are described by Govender (2016:44) who states that a population is defined as a group of individuals with at least one common characteristic which distinguishes that group from other individuals. The researcher noted the difficulty of collecting information about all the units of the population, thus sampling became inevitable.

The next section deals with sampling and sampling selection.

1.7.1.1 Sampling and sampling selection

There are two sampling methods a researcher can utilise: probability and non-probability. Due to the nature of this study, the researcher chose non-probability sampling by focusing on a smaller number of elements of a given population as the basis for drawing conclusions about the whole population (Turner, 2019:8). Non-probability sampling was employed by concentrating on the purposive sampling technique which is defined as the deliberate choice of participants based on the qualities the participant possesses (Etikan, Musa & Alkassim, 2016:2). The non-probability method involves the identification and selection of individuals or groups of individuals who are proficient, possess common characteristics, and are well informed about the phenomenon of interest to promote the feasibility of the research (Okeke & Van Wyk, 2015: 235).

The Department of Basic Education [DBE] (2009:11) stipulates that circuit managers are also responsible for supporting principals in managing their schools efficiently and effectively. This implies that circuit managers must also assist in the provision of rich

information towards the professional development of principals, including ensuring that principals are supported through CPD programmes. Hence, the circuit manager is referred to as the custodian of CPD programmes for principals. The study selected circuit managers from within the district and requested them to participate in the study. Four out of the five circuit managers consented to participation.

1.7.1.2 Data Collection

Data collection is a critical first step in the data management process (Dhudsia, Gundmeier & Mukhopadhyay, 2021:2). Data can be collected by using varied methods like interviews, focus group discussions (FGDs), observations, text analysis, visual representation, and artefacts (Muthiah, Naidu & Badzis, 2020:15). In this study, the researcher employed focus group interviews as a research instrument for data collection (Interview schedule provided as Annexure: A).

1.7.1.3 Site Selection

The study was conducted in the Motheo District of the Free State province. The district is within Bloemfontein, which is a city located in the Mangaung Metropolitan Municipal area. The Motheo District was chosen for ease of access and for its strategic location near the Provincial Department of Education offices. Therefore, the schools in Bloemfontein were easy for circuit managers to frequently visit to provide CPD support. Out of the 12 circuits in the district, five circuits were selected - two urban areas and three in the peri-urban areas. The inclusion of the principals in rural schools was due to them being regularly confronted with challenges that included long distances to main training centres (Philander & Botha, 2021:1). However, principals who motivate teachers to thrive under any school circumstance increase the success of the school's performance regardless of the school's geographical location (Central SA, 2023). The profile of the schools where principals were drawn from made it easy for the possible generalisation of results. The researcher was interested to assess whether the above factors would influence the delivery of CPD training for principals.

Having outlined the sampling and sample selection, the next section focuses on the instrument used for data collection.

The next subsection focused on participant and site selection.

1.7.2 Participant selection

The criteria for selection in this study comprised of 40 secondary school principals who had been exposed before to CPD. These principals were sourced from five circuits based in the Motheo District in the Free State province of RSA. The rationale for selecting principals with five years and more experience was necessary to elicit a deeper insight regarding their perceptions and experiences of circuit managers' role in CPD implementation.

1.7.3. The interview

Mertens (2015:365) points out that there are various types of interviews used as data collection tools in qualitative research. The kind of interview selected for this study was the focus group interview. Roulston (2021:21) describes this interview as a face-to-face meeting between two or more people especially designed for consultation or a meeting where people talk to one another to solicit answers posed by questions. This interview strategy was used as a data collection tool because the researcher intended probing, asking for additional information, and seeking clarity during the interview (Ntsoane, 2017:10). Brinkmann (2022:1) confirms that a research interview is a face-to-face verbal exchange where one person attempts to elicit information or expressions of opinion or belief from another person or persons. In this study, verbal evidence was collected through the focus group interview (Remenyi, 2022:1). The purpose of focus group interviews in this study was to extract understandings of the perceptions and lived experiences of principals on the role of circuit managers towards the implementation of CPD, and the meanings they attached to such perceptions and experiences.

It can be gathered from the definitions above that a focus group interview is a qualitative research approach facilitated by a researcher.

The researcher preferred conducting focus group interviews after considering its advantage of allowing the researcher to ask a series of precise and systematically formulated questions about an area of interest on a face-to-face basis. An audio-recording device, pen, and paper were used as supplementary tools to record the deliberations during the interviews. The advantage of audio-recording (with consent) was that it preserves the responses that were articulated during the interview which could be transcribed verbatim to provide an objective authentic record of what transpired during data collection. This process was also captured through notetaking which allowed the researcher to document central facts and issues that might highlight salient parts of the focus group discussions.

The researcher employed focus group forms of interview which will be discussed in the ensuing segment.

1.7.3.1 Semi-structured focus group interviews

In this study, semi-structured focus group interviews were conducted by the researcher who posed prepared questions which led to discussions between small groups of respondents on a specific topic (Okeke & Van Wyk, 2015:299). The study comprised of eight focus group interviews that included principals, and another focus group that engaged circuit managers of the district. The reason for having separate interviews for principals and circuit managers was to reduce the potential influence of power dynamics which might have been evident during a joint focus group interview. This was done for principals to communicate their experiences uninhibited while still providing a level of anonymity in providing information about their circuit managers' role in CPD (Kry & Bunt, 2020:130). Data was drawn from the selected secondary school principals in five circuits, while four circuit managers were drawn from selected circuits. Each focus group interview was conducted for a maximum duration of 90 minutes per group.

1.7.4 Data Analysis

Data analysis is described as an attempt by a researcher to make-sense of (or interpret) the collected data (Okeke & Van Wyk, 2017:32). The researcher dissected the collected data and organised all information meticulously to provide a better understanding of the phenomenon under study. The analysis of transcripts was done through thematic analysis (TA) which is described as a strategy that is commonly used across qualitative designs (Palaiologou, Needham & Male, 2016:44). Data analysis followed the five steps advocated by Castleberry and Nolen (2018:808):

- Compiling
- Disassembling
- Reassembling
- Interpreting
- Concluding

Having looked at the qualitative data analysis for this study, the researcher focused mainly on the contextual build up to the demarcation and appropriateness of selecting and categorising the population and targeted participants of the study (cf. Section 1.1).

1.8 CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

The study which was conducted in the Motheo District in the Free State province and focused on secondary school principals and circuit managers. Principals were selected because they were the direct beneficiaries of CPD as stipulated by the Department of Basic Education (DBE). It was mainly for this reason that the target population that answered the research questions on the effective implementation of CPD included 71 principals. The level of experience and exposure to CPD was used as a qualifying criterion for participation in the study.

Variances in the level of knowledge and skills among the target population revealed that gaps existed among principals, while circuit managers' conceptualisation and

contextualisation of CPD in schools indicated differences. These existing variances evident in both parties that affect successful CPD implementation can be due to the following challenges (Wiehahn & Du Plessis, 2018:2):

- Lack of appropriate support for principals by circuit managers in the implementation of CPD.
- Lack of exposure to 21st century teaching and learning methodologies.
- Inadequate access to training in the 4th Industrial Revolution (4IR) teaching and learning processes.
- Insufficient training and exposure to information communication technology (ICT), as well as in the interconnectedness of strategies that improve teaching and learning.
- Little training in digital teaching-learning technologies.
- Lack of training in contemporary management and leadership skills.

Considering the above gaps, it was imperative that the researcher investigated the implementation of CPD in schools. Since CPD can be seen as a yardstick for measuring and monitoring performance in accordance with Departmental stipulations, corrective action towards the required output, behaviour, and control of schools' performance could be integrated through CPD interventions (Ndlovu, 2017:2).

The next section was dedicated for the limitation of the study. Limitations may directly or indirectly affect the study if not considered.

1.9 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study only focused on principals' perceptions and experiences of Motheo circuit managers' role in CPD implementation. It should therefore be understood that the findings of this study cannot be generalised to apply to other circuits and Districts in the Free State province because the sample represented only one group of educators who underwent CPD training organised by circuit managers. In a broader study, all

levels of educators should be included to provide expansive results. Also, the schools and areas from where participants were drawn were limited to one District; a wider demographic area should have been explored to present a general or provincial picture of the results of the study.

Having exhausted the major parts that composed the research design and methodology, the next section deals with the ethical considerations that the researcher had to consider when engaging the participants in the focus group interaction and afterwards.

1.10 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethics is understood as values and principles to gauge what is morally right or wrong (Okeke & Van Wyk, 2017:115). Participation in the study was voluntary and all the participants were assured of confidentiality of their identities and information through the use of pseudonyms. Ndamani (2016:156) states that ethical issues which the researcher should consider include aspects such as voluntary submission, informed consent, anonymity, and confidentiality. Participation in this study was voluntary, and all participants were provided with detailed information on the nature and purpose of the study verbally and in writing (included in the consent form). The researcher also informed the selected participants of their rights to accept or decline participation. If in agreement, participants were asked to sign the consent form after which it was securely stored in an e-file in the researcher's laptop. The exit clause was also explained by the researcher; that is, a participant was free to leave at any stage of the research process without being penalised in any way. Also, on completion of the study, participants would be provided with the results, if so requested.

Ethical clearance was also sought and obtained from the University of the Free State Research Ethics Committee (REC) before data collection could commence. This process ensured protection of people (physical and/or psychological) who participated in the research process (Okeke & Van Wyk, 2017:98). Further, permission was granted by the Provincial Department of Education to allow the researcher to engage principals and circuit managers in this research project, and to gain access to research sites.

Having dealt with the ethical considerations for this study, the next section focuses on the operational definition of major concepts and terms that formed the basis of the study.

1.11 DEFINITION OF RELEVANT TERMS

Operational definitions specifies the activities, characteristics or variables used to measure or manipulate the terms or concepts that explain a particular task (Borg & Gall, 1989:26). For example, CPD is a construct that is influenced by many variables such as teachers, principals, and circuit managers.

For these reasons, the researcher provided the explicit meaning of various key concepts included in the study.

- *Principal*

A principal is defined as an employee of the Provincial Education Department who must implement policy and be accountable to the Head of Education for the effective professional management of the school (Prinsloo, 2016:1). The principal is responsible for finance, resources, and performance of the institution, among others (Wiehahn & du Plessis, 2018:01). Kolobe (2014:15) refers to the principal as the most important component in the professional development of teachers. This includes overseeing all functions of the school and the delegation of administrative duties which might pose great difficulty if not trained well (Memela & Ramrathan, 2022:1). Thus, the principal is the beneficiary of CPD programme provided by circuit managers to ensure that principals can do their duties with diligence and efficiency (Ndlovu, 2017:16).

- *Perceptions*

Perception is described as the experience of seeing, hearing, touching, tasting, and smelling which assists us to interpret the world around. In other words, it enables humans to describe their subjective experiences (Rogers, 2017:1). For this study, perception is defined as own observations of interpretations made by principals on circuit managers role regarding CPD. It was therefore imperative that this study investigated the mode of expression concerning principals' perception on the

implementation of CPD provided by circuit managers. In this study, perceptions of principals in the implementation of CPD included barriers, experiences, and forces contextualised within the school environment.

- *Experience*

Experience is identified as the necessary knowledge and enactments in human sciences, including lived experiences in society (Daher, Carré, Jaramillo, Olivares, and Tomicic 2017: Online). It occurs in an organisation during the performance of tasks. Experience can be assessed by looking at the number of tasks that the organisation has attempted and completed to arrive at a progressive experience (Kraiger, Passmore, Dos Santos & Malvezzi, 2015:156). Experience can also be related to everyday or professional practices that might be addressed by circuit managers in analysing everyday knowledge, accounts, and stories (Barbour, 2012: xiii). For this study, experience is referred to as the way principals comprehended and experienced the circuit managers' role in conducting CPD activities.

- *Continuous professional development (CPD)*

Continuous professional development is described as ongoing learning activities that principals participate in to develop and enhance their skills (Gathara, 2019:2). In this way, the responsibility of a circuit manager to provide principals with CPD to enhance understanding of the national school system becomes a compelling duty. This is a duty to ensure that principals meet requirements in terms of the roles they were expected to execute efficiently in schools.

The training of principals focuses on the implementation of CPD where all the planning, coordination, monitoring, reporting, and record-keeping for professional development is kept up to speed (DOE: QMS for School-Based Educators' Manual, 2021).

1.12 LAYOUT OF CHAPTERS

Chapter 1: Introduction: This first chapter familiarises the reader mainly with the research questions, aims and objectives, and rationale of the study.

Chapter 2: This chapter focuses on research conducted by other researchers in similar fields of study in journal articles, books, policies, and newsletters published by the Department of Education.

Chapter 3: Research design and methodology: This chapter describes the research design, research questions, target population, research instruments, data collection procedures, and data analysis.

Chapter 4: Research findings: This chapter discusses the major finding and provides the discussion thereof.

Chapter 5: This chapter presents the summary of the study, conclusions, recommendations, limitations, suggestions for future research, and the conclusion to the study.

1.13 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter one (1) provided an orientation to the study which included the background, the theoretical principles, summary of the research design and methodological processes that were applied, the problem statement, the aim and objectives, and the research questions. The chapter also provided the layout of the chapters. The next chapter two (2) focuses on the literature review and the theoretical framework of the study.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter one presented the structural outline of the study which guided how the study was to be conducted. Chapter two deals with the literature study that assists in answering research questions. Also, it describes the conceptual framework of the study which focuses on attaining the aim and objectives of the study. Primarily, the literature review and theoretical framework discuss principals' perceptions and experiences concerning circuit managers' role in Continuous Professional Development (CPD) programmes intended to uplift principals' standard of leadership. Literature in the wider context of CPD informs us on a spectrum of issues relating to principals' CPD which includes existing problems and the new realities in the planning and implementation of the CPD process (Nasreen & Odhiambo, 2018:245). This led to the researcher perusing relevant literature to situate the research topic in proper perspective. Moreover, the purpose of conducting the literature review was to acquire an incisive understanding of relevant knowledge, especially the findings of previous and parallel studies.

Having introduced the purpose pertaining the study, the next section is devoted to the definition of literature study as described and defined by various sources.

2.2 DEFINING LITERATURE REVIEW

Efron and Ravid (2019:2) states that a literature review is the examination of scholarly literature about one's topic. Accordingly, the researcher understands the concept of literature review as the analysis, critical evaluation, and synthesis of existing knowledge relevant to the research problem, thesis, or the issue the researcher aims to explore (Hart, 2018:4). Further, Booth, Sutton and Papai (2016:10) define literature review as the process of identifying, evaluating, and synthesising written work. This

means that existing bodies of knowledge regarding one's topic of investigation must be scientifically perused, completed, recorded, and acknowledged as work produced by researchers, scholars, and practitioners. In addition, Maggio, Sewell, and Artino (2016:296) state that literature review helps any researcher to join the conversation by providing context, informing methodology, identifying innovation, omitting duplication in research, and ensuring that professional standards are met (Luft, Jeong, Idsardi & Gardener, 2022:2). In this study, the researcher understood literature review as a perusal of various sources of information relevant to the study. Hence, it was imperative that researchers revisit and review related scholarships in its entirety.

Having briefly dealt with the definition of literature review; the next subsection focuses on providing a survey of literature detailing benefits of CPD for principals.

2.3 PRINCIPALS AS BENEFICIARIES OF CPD

Continuous professional development (CPD) in this study is discussed in the context of education focusing on school principals as beneficiaries. The researcher found it necessary to first explain the term *development* which is referred to as a larger canvas which anticipates changes in behaviour and personality after acquiring new knowledge and skills gleaned from engaging in an enrichment programme or event (Engelbrecht & Ankiewicz, 2015:263). Additionally, other researchers provide an example of development by citing CPD for principals to enhance their leadership role (Abakah, 2019:40). Therefore, it is in this context CPD is perceived as maintenance, improvement, and broadening of knowledge, skills, and development of personal qualities necessary for the execution of professional duties throughout the principal's work life. Due to its formality and it being systematic, CPD is described further as training that is part of lifelong learning (Bozak, Karadag & Bolat, 2018:234).

Additionally, Nakambale (2018:81) emphasises that CPD commences with induction and then proceeds to other stages that include development and training opportunities throughout one's career until retirement. Makopoulou, Penny, Neville, and Thomas (2019:2) refer to CPD as an educational process that incorporates agents (individuals and institutions) and activities (formal to informal) that facilitate professional learning

beyond the initial point of training; hence, the notion that CPD is a continuous and lifelong learning journey that shapes some form of critical judgement and organisational strategy for school principals. Based on these conceptions of CPD, this study is developmental in nature and thus focuses on CPD as a process of improving and increasing staff competencies through access to specialised training and educational opportunities for workplace competence (Nasreen & Odhiambo 2018:246; Bozak, Karadag & Bolat, 2018:234). In other words, CPD is about continuous learning to achieve international benchmarks regarding enhancing principals' leadership knowledge and skills.

Further, Mestry (2017:2) maintains that CPD could be interpreted as a structured approach to learning that would enhance competence in practice by availing knowledge, skills, and practical experience. Nakambale (2018:2) concurs that CPD in the school context consists of any educational activity that helps to maintain, develop, and increase knowledge, in addition to honing problem-solving and technical skills to attain professional performance standards. The essence of CPD is to entrench it as part of educator-development - in this case, especially for principals. Since principals are inspirational leaders, motivators, as well as instructors, it was logical to ensure that they understood and mastered all knowledge and skills during CPD facilitations. Melesse and Gulie (2019:82) reiterate that CPD embraces the notion that individuals aspire to continuously improve even beyond the basic training initially required for the workplace.

Having looked at the definitions, interpretations and references regarding CPD, the next section of this study focuses on the contextual perspectives on the concept of CPD of teachers with emphasis on principalship.

2.4 CONTINUOUS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN DIFFERENT COUNTRIES

This section discusses literature relating to CPD for principals in South Africa and other countries. The purpose of benchmarking against other countries was to compare the implementation of training programmes related to principals' CPD, and to peruse other related literature on CPD. The first part of this discussion focuses on the international perspective, while the second part pertains to the national context.

2.4.1 International Perspectives on Continuous Professional Development

This section deals with CPD as practiced in other countries to attain an expansive insight into the phenomenon under investigation.

In Ghana, an African country situated in north-west Africa, quality education is determined by learner characteristics such as learner differences, culture, religious background, academic performance, and the level of prior learning (Ankomah, Koomson, Bosu & Oduro, 2005:4).

In Kenya, the researcher was influenced by the desire of Kenyan society to separate educational policies from politics. There is a clear division between educational policy and the role of continuous professional development for teachers (Ojiambo, 2009:133). This comparison resonates with the system of bantu education during the brutal apartheid era in South Africa, the effects of which will take decades to erase.

Also, the Nigerian education system possesses the characteristics that resemble those of the South African education system since both countries were influenced by colonial systems of unequal, oppressive, and inferior education. Thus, the researcher found it necessary to study the Nigerian education system since Nigeria and South Africa had similar challenges such as inequality of resources, discriminatory policy implementation, and the lack of ICT facilities (Asyai, 2023:164-166).

In the case of Namibia, which falls within the scope of countries that are internationally earmarked for the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) in relation to Sustainable Development Goals (SDG, 2021:2), Hailombe (2011:53) identifies the following priorities that were entrenched into its education system:

- Access to education
- Equity
- Massification
- Quality of education

The above priorities refer to all school-going ages of children who were difficult to reach in peri-urban, rural, and marginalised communities in Namibia's colonial days, like that of South Africa. The parallel features and challenges of Namibian education to South Africa are striking.

Regarding Pakistan, the researcher focused on the curriculum concerning primary education which was outdated as assessments were based on rote-learning. There was no robust system of accountability, mitigating corruption, and eradicating rampant segregation in education which all led to low levels of teacher morale (Ahmad, Raul, Rashid, Rehman & Salam, 2013:324).

In the Solomon Islands, school leaders are not trained in management and leadership, but have expertise in teaching and learning. Their appointments emanate from external stakeholders' influences and nepotism that culminates in dysfunctional schools where principals' functions and responsibilities become overwhelming (Lingam, 2011:23).

Lastly, the results of a study conducted in Vietnam indicated that there were certain socio-cultural factors that influenced the practices of Vietnamese school leaders which included demanding them to be politically, ethically, and professionally fit, in addition to assuming many peripheral roles (Vogel 2015:53). School principals in Vietnam met state standards in terms of qualifications and management expertise and were perceived to have adequate competencies in school management, especially in promoting teaching capacity and ensuring educational quality. However, Vietnamese school principals found it challenging to manage school resources, and to instruct teachers on leadership - areas that they had received little training in (Wondem,

2015:39). The education system's leadership should have provided sufficient professional and material support to roll out effective and timely CPD programmes for educators, especially in time-management skills.

Having outlined the intent of this subsection, a presentation of CPD in the selected countries is narrated below:

2.4.1.1 CPD in Ghana

Continuous professional development in Ghana was conducted interchangeably with specialised training intended to improve other areas of professional knowledge, competence, skills, and on-the-job practices (Abreh, 2018:86). Professional development, also referred to as professional learning or continuing education in Ghana, played a vital role in developing fully trained, knowledgeable, and motivated employees (Mahama, Issah & Gunu, 2022:7). The low standard of the management of education in basic schools of Ghana had become a worrying issue of the masses because basic education is globally accepted as the foundation for all levels of education (Donkoh, Donkor, Boateng, Lee, Twerefoo & Akotey, 2023:2). Gyamfi (2023:54) adds that there was little interest in evaluating and following-up on principals to assess the impact of CPD on improving their managerial capacity. Alarming, principals were exempted from CPD, even though they were supposed to manage and create opportunities for teachers' material, fiscal, and time requirements to participate in CPD programmes. Therefore, the importance of CPD to focus on principals in Ghana should be a priority so that quality leadership and management would be evident in schools (Suaka & Kuranchie, 2018:21).

Gyamfi, Yeboah, Ntoaduro, Langee and Yeboah, (2023:53) concur that CPD in Ghana was being perceived as the sole platform to maintain, enhance, and widen knowledge and skills, including the development of personal qualities necessary for the performance of professional managerial and technical duties for educational administrators, principals, and teachers. Abakah (2019:31) confirmed that there were CPD training programmes organised in Ghana at cluster-based levels, District levels,

and at periodic workshops. A study by Nyaaba, Abdul-Gafaar, Akulga and Kwkye (2023:42) indicates that educational colleges in Ghana had embarked on extensive capacity-building measures by providing compulsory CPD training on a three-year cycle with strict monitoring of compliance and efficiency in implementation. The study further revealed that for attendees to comply, they needed to keep training records of activities, credits, registration, certificates, and attendance. It was found that apart from the educational colleges offering training, there were more predominant forms of CPD such as conferences, workshops, and academic programmes that were utilised by heads of public senior high schools (Gyamfi, Langee & Yeboah, 2023:41).

Additionally, Mahama, Issah and Gunu (2022:7) assert that even though Ghana's education service appreciated the importance of CPD programmes, the findings in their study revealed that CPD programmes were not aligned with active implementation as organisers chose to focus mainly on areas for training without conducting a needs assessment, monitoring of CPD, and recommendations for enhancement. Abonyi, Yeboah and Luguterah (2020:4) contend that before conducting any training or learning programme, supervisors (circuit managers) should communicate to principals about evaluation procedures, the conditions under which the performance will be expected to occur on-the-job, and the criteria used to measure acceptable performance. These compel the CPD learning experiences to be applied in school-management practices. In other words, principals should be motivated by their supervisors to set relevant and achievable goals in the workplace by applying newly acquired competencies gained from engaging in CPD sessions.

Ghana Education Services (GES) which supported the process of appointing and promoting principals, were hindered by external bodies that manipulated the appointment processes. Gobbinah (2020:1) observed that there are still controversial issues and challenges that affect the effectiveness of a principal's work which emanates from the nature of appointments which interferes with school governance.

Principals in Ghana are appointed according to their long service and other basic requirements of the GES, but not necessarily on specific academic and/or professional training in managerial techniques or skills that would aid them in their administrative roles (Dampson, 2019:02). Dampson (2019) suggests that CPD should be supplemented by enrichment courses that would boost learner-academic-

performance. Surprisingly, the number of applicants for principalship has declined over the years. Arrieta and Ancho (2020:81) indicate that negative images attached to the position, particularly burdensome workloads, poor working conditions, inadequate salaries and rewards, and lack of enrichment programmes and technical training were key reasons for the reluctance to apply. Suaka and Kuranchie (2018:21) lament that the lack of emphasis on developing principals for leadership and management upskilling is one of the greatest challenges to the successful implementation of CPD.

U-Sayee and Adomako (2021:2) point out that most principals face difficulties in the workplace work due to the lack of professional training and exposure to ICT by supervisors. Fortunately, Ghana has initiatives that address the need to develop leadership proficiencies and skills through CPD.

2.4.1.2 CPD in Kenya

The difference between Ghana and Kenya is that Kenyan scholars portrayed CPD in a positive light. For instance, Njui (2018:5) emphasised that availing ample professional development opportunities is a key factor in achieving sustainable development. The control, organise, and manage CPD in Kenya was the responsibility of the Director of the Quality Assurance (QA) Department which is an arm of the Ministry of Education. The QA Department is an official section of the Ministry to roll-out and give credence to CPD programmes for teachers and principals (Ojiambo, 2009:143). Nyarigoti and Nyarigoti (2013:140) attests that Kenyans have focused on prioritising the design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of CPD programmes for principals. The directorate is responsible for providing appropriate in-service programmes to compensate for the shortcomings detected in education. Continuous professional development in Kenya is often executed through courses, workshops, and seminars organised locally or at regional level, depending on what the Director for Quality Assurance considers to be the needs and requirements of educators (Makori, 2018:26).

In concurrence, Makori (2018:26) who studied the Kenyan requirements for appointing principals discovered that to be appointed as a principal in Kenya, candidates should have spent a minimum of ten years in the teaching profession. In support, Chemutai,

Mulongo and Yano (2015:119) mention that these years of teaching experience remain the major yardstick for appointment into the position of principal as compared to relevant skills and qualifications. The implication is that effective and efficient principalship cannot be realised without extra enrichment training via CPD. Moreover, studies on the training of school principals in Kenya found that appointing principals without formal training in leadership resulted in principals' lack of self-confidence, being overwhelmed by administrative duties, inefficient planning, poor financial management skills, and an absence of teamwork (Makori, 2018:26). Additionally, Njui (2018:2) mentions that there are three main barriers to CPD implementation: inadequate resources, insufficient curriculum materials, and the lack of a shared vision about what high-quality instruction entails. This implies that adequate time and space must be available to implement new instructional approaches during the school year.

Disappointingly, the most fundamental problem in the preparation of principals for excellence in Kenya (even with existence of strategic planning skills), was that principals often lacked a firm understanding of the whole education process (Chemutai, Mulongo & Yano, 2015:119). It was for this reason that school managers needed to create and sustain a sound school CPD system that empowers others to make significant decisions, provide instructional guidance, advance learners' academic development, and implement school improvement plans (Makori, 2018:26). These are viable especially when schools as organisations are viewed as open systems (Lunenburg & Irby, 2022: 218). The systems theory assists school principals to form relationships that encourage structures for interdependence, and being alert to activities in the school that may cause disruption in various departments which derails the entire operational system (Umar, Danburam & Uwalaka, 2022:279).

The next section focuses on the introduction, implementation, and evaluation of the concept of CPD in Nigeria, there was also notable difference from how Ghanaians and Kenyans view CPD.

2.4.1.3 CPD in Nigeria

The administration of schools in Nigeria is the responsibility of principals whose experience as subject teachers afforded them the opportunity to assume this position of responsibility (Egwuasi, 2017:21). Similar to Ghana and Kenya, Nigeria faces the problems regarding the introduction, implementation, and evaluation of CPD. Problems of CPD implementation in Nigeria emanated from the apparent lack of follow-up visits to schools by the supervisors to gauge whether previous recommendations or reports had been implemented (Ukachukwu & Obiekwe, 2019:83). To exacerbate the CPD situation in Nigeria, Amemtenaam (2021:61) lament that principals in Nigeria lack the necessary managerial skills to cope with the extensive administration of schools which must be considered as a deficiency in the system that should be blamed for the inadequate implementation and monitoring of CPD for principals.

Continuous professional development is seen as more than in-service training in Nigeria as it covers a broader spectrum of activities when compared to Ghana and Kenya. In Nigeria, CPD activities include workshops, seminars, conferences monitoring, reflection, observation, and the execution of teachers' duties (Nwakpa, 2018:685). As such, some challenges were encountered by circuit managers in implementing strategic CPD programmes; these included the short supply of supervisors, insufficient strategic planning for training programmes, inadequate feedback by senior managers, and principals' resistance to change (Al-ajmi, 2020:2). This lack of proper administration and management and the slow execution of CPD in Nigeria was a cause of concern as it led to the unsuccessful implementation of CPD which was often attributed to the lack of professional training, poor managerial skills, and appropriate qualifications to cope with administration and crises at school (Ayoola, 2017:36). Although Al-ajmi (2020:2) is of the opinion that principals displayed satisfaction with the supervisory practices of the Ministry of Education, and to some extent to limited guidance from education specialists, principals still asked for more supervisory visits to benefit from guidance and support as part of the CPD programme.

2.4.1.4 CPD in Namibia

In Namibia, CPD is recognised as the trajectory to improve education via self, group, and institutional development. The reason for introducing CPD in Namibia arose from the fact that teaching-learning was lacking in quality due to teacher-centred practices in the classrooms. It was evident that the supply of professional and qualified teachers in African communities of Namibia was lacking as a result of the underperforming economy (Nkambale, 2018:2). To reach the stipulated national goals, Mononde (2007:9) indicates that the education system must transition to accommodate modern trends and changes that the country so desperately needed. The urgency was the need for educators to undergo transformative and continuous professional development relevant to the current international technological advances (4IR). The inability of the teaching staff to use the latest technological teaching tools implies the lack of supervision, training, knowledge, and skills. Accordingly, Looi, Zhang, Gao, and Wu (2020:181) state that “it is crucial for principals to continue to develop and refresh their ICT knowledge and skills through CPD”.

2.4.1.5 CPD in Pakistan

In Pakistan, principals are expected to be dynamic and active managers who must also keep themselves up-to-date with current innovative educational developments. Nasreen and Odhiambo (2018:247) advise that principals must perceive CPD as learning that is meant for life. Learning-for-life on an ongoing basis enhances professionals to not only grasp understandings of concepts, but also to imbibe new knowledge, practical skills, and critical-thinking skills. Steyn (2011:47) agrees that CPD for principals is “vital, crucial, extremely important and necessary.” The implication is that through CPD principals could develop professionally to not be left behind in work situations. Hence, principals become renewed as they network with colleagues to achieve international benchmarks from expert sources.

Nasreen and Odhiambo (2018:44) who explored current practices of CPD and the navigation of obstacles in its path, revealed that principals were not satisfied with the

current CPD opportunities and content of the training programmes. The major points of departure centred on time-allocation, financial administration, and a burdensome workload.

2.4.1.6 CPD in Solomon Islands

In the Solomon Islands, CPD is different from other countries. Lingam (2011:142) sees CPD the Solomon Islands in a different light in that it is engineered to expand limited knowledge, promote skills on leadership and management, and improves soft skills in communication, critical-thinking, and the attitudes and behaviours of principals. In congruence, Sanubi and Akpotu (2015:30) purport that education is a sector that determines the future of a country including its human capital quality, contribution to critical knowledge and skills necessary for development, and its socioeconomic progress. Therefore, limited educational management expertise to promote the above components stifles the progress and all-round development of a country. In this regard, Nakpodia (2009:1) contends that principals should possess the expertise, power, authority, commitment, and responsibility to shape young minds. The *in-loco-parentis* principle should therefore be evident in all educators to enhance the quality of education at all schools in the country. This confirms that principals must be well-prepared to implement CPD guidelines, supervise, and develop the mind, body, and spirit of learners.

2.4.2 National Perspective on CPD for Principals

The educational system in South Africa is managed by the Ministry of Education (DoE). At Provincial level, educational institutions and systems are managed by the Member of the Executive Council (MEC) and the Head of Department (HOD) in the provincial Departments of Education (South African Schools Act, No. 84 of 1996). The educational institutions (schools) in the provinces are then managed by school principals, who are appointed by the HOD. The principal becomes the main provider

of professional leadership and management within the school (Maja, 2016:5). The management and leadership for South African schools could be linked to the National Development Plan 2030 (NDP 2030) relating to the vision for education, training, and innovation. The NDP 2030 can be summarised as follows:

- Laying a solid foundation for a long and healthy life and higher educational and scientific achievement;
- Building a properly qualified, professional, competent, and committed teaching, academic, research and public service;
- Building a strong and coherent set of institutions for delivering quality education, science and technology innovation, training, and skills development.
- Expand the production of highly skilled professionals and enhance the innovative capacity of the nation; and
- Create an educational and national science system that serves the needs of society (National Planning Commission: National Development Plan-Vision 2030).

The National Development Plan 2030 (RSA, 2012) is briefly discussed below:

Regarding the NDP 2030, competence and capacity of school principals became top priority. The common features of all well-run schools are good management and sound leadership. Characteristics of competent leaders include being charismatic, making organisational changes for the betterment of their institutions, being creative in their fields, and achieving success in an environment full of uncertainty (Basuki, Perdinanto & Hamid, 2020:354). For principals to achieve these competencies, they need to be involved on an ongoing basis to modify behaviour, attitudes, and values (Asiyai & Okoro, 2019:167). These processes will lead to the enhancement of education with the assurance of high quality standards including vibrant staff development for whole-school excellence.

Accordingly, Nationality Peoples Regional State Education Bureau in Ethiopia (Tulu, 2018:35) is determined to execute the National CPD Programme by supporting principals and stakeholders to avoid obstacles, gaps, and cracks in the implementation of CPD. This approach can be benchmarked by circuit managers and used in South Africa's CPD implementation.

The next section provides a glance of CPD in South Africa.

2.4.2.1 CPD System in South Africa

The DoE (2007:17) provides the necessary guidelines for teachers, managers, and principals to achieve benefits from effective CPD undertaken and designed by the South African Council for Educators (SACE). The aim and objectives of the CPD project for teachers and principals are outlined below:

- To ensure that current initiatives for the professional development of teachers, managers and principals contribute more effectively and directly to the improvement of the quality of teaching;
- To emphasise and reinforce the professional status of teaching;
- To provide teachers and principals with clear guidance about which professional development (PD) activities will contribute to their professional growth; and
- To protect teachers and principals from fraudulent providers and expand the range of activities that contribute to the professional development of teachers, managers, and principals.

To achieve the above goals, SACE as the statutory body for CPD implementation has the overall responsibility for its management, and quality assurance. The Professional Development points (PD points) method is an internationally recognised system used by professional bodies in various fields to acknowledge and respect members' continuing professional development efforts. It must be noted that the transformation of the South African Education system in 1994 resulted in a mismatch of teachers and principals' needs. Although training attempted to mitigate challenges experienced, it was ineffective because it was not related directly to practice (Nakadien, Sayed & Sadeck, 2022:49). Hence, South Africa should regulate its CPD programmes closely (Raanhuis, 2022:40).

A study by Maphoto (2016:56) indicates that many principals in African countries are ill-prepared to meet the requirements of the changing educational demands pertaining to their jobs. This situation calls for the urgent need for organised and systematic

training in educational leadership for principals in South Africa; hence, CPD for principals was initiated by the DoE to ensure the professional development of principals (Kiggundu & Moorosi, 2016:32).

The introduction of CPD was earmarked to enhance the quality of education. Steyn (2011:43) maintains that CPD skills and knowledge are critical aspects of principals' continuous learning for professional development. Ndlovu (2017:85) who supports the professional development of principals, especially in Highveld Ridge East, H/Ridge West, Bethal, and Lekwa West circuits, found that school principals as managers are not clear on how they must execute their professional duties - an uncertainty that created a gap in schools' operational processes. The 'misunderstanding' about professional development led principals to be unsure of the boundaries between their daily management tasks and professional development. This implies that principals as educational leaders who are entrusted to instill constructive change in teachers, learners, and the schools are failing in their duties (Mestry & Singh, 2007:479). Hence, principals need new skills, innovative capacity-building, and exposure through CPD programmes; if CPD is not provided, principals will be unable to do their work effectively.

In ensuring that principals develop competence through CPD programmes, the Minister of Basic Education and the Minister of Higher Education launched the Integrated Strategic Planning Framework for Teacher Education and Development (ISPFTED) in 2011 for the purpose of improving the quality of education and training (DoE, 2015:3). This strategic initiative led to the establishment of Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) as a component of CPD. Although PLCs are regarded as part of the CPD approach, Parker, Patton, Gonçalves, Luguetti and Lee (2022:500) are against the implementation of PLCs because there is little evidence regarding their sustainability.

The key players in the establishment of PLCs are the Provincial Education Departments, Districts, teacher organisations, subject-based professional teacher associations, teachers, and the principals themselves (figure 2.1 below).



Figure 2.1: Professional Learning Communities (DoE, 2015)

Figure 1 above indicates that the role of the principal and the School Management Team (SMT) is to motivate and support staff to engage in PLCs. Thessin (2021:7) identifies three specific types of support provided by principals for PLCs; namely, the communication of clear expectations for PLC work, the provision of school-based professional learning, and promoting a school culture that focuses on learning and collaboration. Hence, one of the main functions of District officials is to support principals with resources for PLCs to gain expertise. This support for PLCs is required mainly because principals, with the assistance of PLCs, should directly enhance learner-achievement through promoting the school's organisational culture, teachers' working conditions, and instructional quality (Hallam, Smith, Hite, Hite & Wilcox, 2015:196). Specifically, principals should provide practical support to PLCs such as adapting teachers' timetables, providing a space for the PLCs, and availing resources such as paper and flipcharts (DoE, 2015:10). Steyn (2022: xxxiii) adds that principals need context-relevant information at professional development sessions, resources and guidance by circuit managers, and innovative strategies that promote the management of educational change.

The upcoming sub section looks at the Policies regulating continuous professional development (CPD).

2.4.2.2 Policies regulating continuous professional development (CPD)

The implementation of CPD is one of the main objectives of the South African Government's educational policy (Nasreen, 2019:162). The Department of Education (DoE) highlights the critical conceptualisation and contextualisation of regulations and policies and provides clear operational and strategic plans for the day-to-day activities of the school. Therefore, education is labelled as the most significant tool in the development of a nation as it creates innovative solutions for economic, political, social, and cultural problems (Tulu, 2018:35).

According to the National Education Policy Act (RSA, 1996a), and the National Policy Framework for Teacher Education and Development in South Africa [NPFTED] (RSA 1996b), both National and Provincial education departments are expected to provide an enabling environment for CPD to upskill principals (RSA, 2007). The National Policy Framework for Teacher Education and Development policy also identifies Continuing Professional Development for Teachers (CPDT) to become productive in teaching-learning in classrooms (Ndlovu, 2017:3).

Davis, Rogers and Harrigan (2020:14) indicate that without a research-based policy for CPD involving principals, provinces will be unable to ensure that principals receive the appropriate knowledge and skills that address the academic and emotional needs of learners and staff members' needs in teaching and dealing with the schools' operational needs. Insufficient financing can impede the establishment of a comprehensive Principal Professional Development (PPD) policy at the state level, which includes mechanisms for ensuring accountability. While a practice headquartered in a specific district may be able to address local problems, it does not guarantee that this will occur in other districts. Additionally, it does not ensure that PPD opportunities will offer research-based solutions. Hence, the failure to structure and implement effective PPD in schools could be a constraint in successfully effecting CPD holistically.

The PPD is closely related to the PAM (2016) document that outlines core functions and responsibilities of office-based educators. In some incidences, principals are regarded as office-based educators; hence, they enjoy a special relationship with circuit managers who are also office-based educators. This relationship compels both

principals and circuit managers to devise measures that enhance effective CPD implementation.

- *Personnel Administrative Measures (PAM)*

The PAM (2016) document outlines the core responsibilities of office-based educators including the circuit managers (Ndou, 2022:2). It also states that circuit managers are office-based personnel who are expected to assess professional development needs by utilising questionnaires, informal methods, and developmental appraisal to support and plan staff development activities based on needs in congruence with the principles and values of applicable frameworks and plans. The researcher is of the view that principals are members of staff directly under the supervision of the circuit managers, thus circuit managers are obliged to professionally develop principals (Ndlovu, 2017:7). In this regard, a formal needs assessment should be undertaken to provide data in various areas of leadership to give an accurate picture of the principal's shortcomings, current philosophy, practice, and impact on learners and staff (Davis, Rogers & Harrigan, 2020:03). It is for these reasons that the concept of Integrated Quality Management System (IQMS), now referred to as Quality Management System (QMS), is introduced as an assessment instrument that principals can effectively use to evaluate staff on an ongoing basis. The QMS is thus linked to CPD of both principals and teachers, and its application is the sole responsibility of principals and circuit managers.

Quality Management System is briefly discussed in the next paragraph.

- *Quality Management System*

The quality management system (QMS) was introduced in 2003 but implemented only in 2005 (Ndlovu, 2017:1). It is a strategy that is used to appraise educators and principals which emphasises professional development in the South African education system (Joubert, 2016:2). It plays a significant role in the needs assessment for South African schools; hence, its implementation is mandatory. Professional development which is stipulated in the Employment of Educators' Act (EEA) 76 of 1998 (RSA, 1998a) is a requirement for teachers and principals to be implemented in relation to QMS outcomes. In this regard, Mpungose and Ngwenya (2017:5) and Ngema and

Lekhetho (2019:760) highlight that QMS in South Africa consists of three parts: developmental appraisal, performance measurement, and whole-school evaluation. Developmental appraisal is prioritised as it deals with aspects that identify weaknesses and strengths that inform the planning of developmental programmes for teachers and principals (Joubert, 2016:2). Loeung and Saifuddin (2021:1) believe that when QMS is implemented effectively in a school, this school will end up as a sound functional school.

Mestry (2017:5) contends that the principal is the one who must ensure the effective implementation of QMS in the school, but some principals experience challenges that emanate from poor comprehension of the QMS document. Contrary to expectations, Ngema and Lekhetho (2019:758) also assert that QMS is not implemented optimally due to the lack of comprehensive knowledge on how it should be executed. It is recommended that principals undergo thorough training on the implementation of QMS, and that the training needs-analysis should inform workshops which should be held on a quarterly basis rather than annually. In regulating principals' CPD in South Africa, the South African Standard of School Principalship was introduced by the DoE (2004: 34) to bolster effective CPD implementation.

The South African Standard for Principalship (DoE, Discussion Draft, 2016:23) was designed to enhance the image of school principals through ongoing capacitation and practice linked to CPD. DoE in association with the nine provincial departments of education identified the following as key areas of school principalship for the ongoing CPD:

- The enhancement of skills, knowledge, and competency through CPD;
- The improvement and capacitation of recruitment and selection procedures disseminated at CPD sessions;
- Induction, coaching, and mentoring of new principals' through CPD; and
- Professional preparation of principals for change, and the enhancement of skills, attitudes, and competencies.

The QMS also stipulates a work-plan where principals reflect clear annual targets and performance indicators, including how the performance must be managed by circuit managers in a consultative, supportive, and non-discriminatory manner to enhance

school efficiency and accountability (Suid Afrikaanse Onderwysers Unie, Webinar, 2021:7) which implies that circuit managers must be considered as the knowledgeable supervisors, guardians, and monitors of CPD in schools.

2.4.2.3 Content of CPD in South Africa

Content-focused CPD refers to the knowledge and skills necessary for principals to conduct their day-to-day work (Main & Pendergast, 2015:5). Mestry and Singh (2007:483) indicate that aspects of the content should provide greater confidence, a stronger sense of assurance, and expert knowledge to execute important tasks. Steyn (2011:45) adds that the major focus for CPD training should include quality teaching and learning, mentoring of novices, effective and innovative leadership, identifying volatility in the context of the school, and feedback on CPD. Faizuddin, Azizan, Othman and Ismail (2022:3) state that little is known about the usefulness of the content of principals' leadership training programmes, hence the researcher felt the need to peruse literature outlining how principals perceived CPD. Furthermore, Nasreen and Odhiambo (2018:247) engaged in a study focusing on CPD school programmes and content practices which revealed that principals were not satisfied with the current content of the training programmes. Since CPD content is vital to CPD needs as it is connected to practice in a visible and pragmatic manner (Mann & Webb, 2022:19), the content should be relevant and effective to include work ethos, acquisition and allocation of human and material resources, promotion of teachers' professional development, improvement of learners' all-round performance, building effective community partnerships, fostering creativity and innovation, and engendering reform (Lingam, 2011:2).

Talis (2018:26) identifies characteristics of CPD for principals as being content-focused as they are based on curriculum matters to help principals master their understanding of their professional knowledge to promote better school performance:

- A course focusing on curriculum and in educational research;
- Theory, research, and practice on contemporary leadership practices;
- Organising the school, managing change, and encouraging community partnership in education;

- Principles of management and personnel management;
- Managing the curriculum and resources;
- Financial management, and monitoring school effectiveness;
- The school and the community, and education law; and
- Managing human resources, fostering accountability, and managing change (Lingam, 2011:3).

2.4.2.4 Principals' Perceptions of CPD

The DoE (2015:6) maintains that CPD is about mutual trust and respect for a shared vision focusing on learning, systematic enquiry into practice, collaboration, reflective enquiry, inclusive membership, and constructive critique. In collaboration with the DoE, scholars assert that principals regard CPD as being critical, necessary, important, lifelong learning, and a shift in inspirational, motivational, and instructional leadership that inculcates a positive attitude towards teaching-learning practices (Steyn, 2011:48). These allow CPD to play a key role in affording principals both managerial and leadership opportunities to enhance their skills and knowledge to uplift educational standards at their schools.

Research findings reveal that in South Africa there is no formal preparation for aspiring principals to assume leadership and management positions, which is compounded by there being very few in-service professional development programmes (Steyn (2011:46); hence, these facilities should be considered by the DoE (Mestry, 2017:1).

Having dealt with the South Africa Educational system and CPD perspective of principals the next section focuses on the conceptual framework of the study in the next paragraph the researcher introduces the conceptual framework that focuses on sections of literature related to the topic. The basis for designing the conceptual framework was to structure the operational planning of the study.

The next section identifies with the conceptual framework of the study.

2.5 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY

The conceptual framework of the study refers to essential concepts of research design encapsulating concepts related to existing knowledge on the topic, the provision for proper direction for conducting the study, as well as the inclusion of critical issues that need explanation (Creswell, 2018:36). Adam, Kamil and Agyem, (2018:438) add that the conceptual framework consists of ideas and strategies that are employed to describe research and evaluate data. In this study, the process of improving and increasing teacher-competencies through access to CPD frames the study. Nasreen and Odhiambo (2018:245) are of the opinion that conceptual frameworks are often structured to begin the project by following research methods. The following considerations define the researcher's conceptual framework:

- What does a researcher want to do in his or her research? And why?
- How does he or she plan to do it?
- What meaning will one derive from the collected data?
- Are you following a positivist, interpretivist, or constructivist paradigm?

Myers (2008:4) emphasises that data generated in a qualitative interpretivist paradigm is socially constructed, specific, unique, and relative to time, context, culture, and value. However, the weakness of this paradigm lies in its subjectivity and room for biasness of the researcher. Kivunja (2018:47) reiterates that a conceptual framework is the total, logical orientation and associations of anything and everything that forms the underlying thinking, structures, plans, practices, and implementation of the researcher's topic of study. Key elements that confine conceptual framework to the researcher's ideas center on the following:

- The problem to be investigated;
- The questions to be asked;
- The literature to be reviewed;
- The theories to be applied;
- The methodology the researcher plans to apply; and
- The conclusions drawn by the researcher.

The logical and sequential setting that the researcher selects could be the ideal description or conceptualisation of the whole research project in terms relating to a metacognitive, reflective, and operational element of the research processes (Pervin & Mokhtar, 2022:421).

Figure 2.2 below represents the conceptual framework of this study depicting aspects related to the need for CPD, types, policies, components, and role of circuit managers. This framework was constructed by the researcher to depict the thinking of the entire research process, the variables of the research topic, and the relationships as shown in arrows in the diagram below:



Figure 2.2: Conceptual framework of the study

Additionally, the conceptual framework is the structure that defines the multifaceted interactions that influence the process of thinking, learning, and socialisation of the population being studied; in this case, principals (Guardino & Cannon, 2015:350; Kivunja, 2018:46). Moreover, the conceptual framework drives the process of perusing relevant literature, informs the discussion of the findings, and reveals the subjectivities of the researcher (Luft et al., 2022:3). Adam, Kamil and Agyem (2018:438) clarify that research without a conceptual framework lacks accurate direction to search for appropriate literature and scholarly discussions (Ridge & Lavigne, 2020:4). It is for this reason that the researcher employed a conceptual framework to further guide this study to extract in-depth information to provide a clearly articulated research process

to produce new knowledge (Collins & Stockton, 2018:2). The following components of a conceptual framework are mentioned by Collins and Stockton (2018):

- Existing knowledge and previously formed ideas about complex phenomena that relate to scholastic reviews of both primary and secondary data;
- The researcher's epistemological dispositions, the methodology of acquiring knowledge, how such knowledge is collected, and from which sources; and
- A methodically analytic lens as a basis for reading literature consistently, logically, and sequentially.

2.5.1 Need for Continuous Professional Development

Generally, gains from CPD include the development of reflective and critical practice, an enquiry-based approach to pedagogy, development of practitioner dialogue, sharpening of problem-solving skills with reference to teaching practice, increased links, collaboration, cooperation with other teachers, modelling and sharing of best practice, and opportunities for promotion and personal satisfaction (Zepeda & Ponticell, 2018:06). The opportunity to continue learning and rediscover an interest in the profession and in education in general, is valued because teachers appreciate the time to develop diverse ways of thinking to push intellectual boundaries to critically question approaches to practice (Wong, Wing & Martin, 2016:1).

Also, a clear focus on outcomes when embarking on a CPD programme might result in a positive change in principals' daily practices (Habtam, 2019:27). The benefits of CPD encourage a positive learning culture that improves skills, knowledge, and critical-thinking which encourage a feeling of being valued, motivated, and confident (Hourani & Stringer, 2015:305). Moreover, CPD improves the quality-of-service delivery, supports recruitment, and creates a flexible workforce that possesses a mix of skills (Brough & Harris, 2019:7).

In the next section, the researcher focuses on the areas that compelled the need for CPD in schools.

2.5.2 Areas of Necessity for CPD

Changes in the education system of a nation and global requirements demand staff development, especially for principals (Habtam, 2019:23). This demand leads to the discrepancy between what an organisation expects and what occurs on the ground (Yaqub, Owusu-Cole & Ofusua, 2020:113). This implies that such discrepancies lead to the lack of organisational productivity. Since principals need tools, protocols, and strategies to enhance their work as leaders, a variety of resources including coaching or mentoring by District level leaders with knowledge and skills to promote best practice, is necessary (Davis, Rogers & Harrigan, 2020:05). At the secondary level of education, it is the duty of the principal as the chief executive officer of the school to avail human and non-human resources to ensure quality output (Egboka, 2018:582). Lamentably, Jordan (2018:10) reports that schools within South Africa failed to implement CPD successfully because of poor management and leadership that result in dysfunctional and unproductive institutions. In other words, senior school managers are not appropriately skilled, knowledgeable, and trained to effectively implement CPD in schools (Ndamani, 2016:18). In support, Pak et al. (2019:163) emphasise the need for and importance of professional development for school principals. Globally, circuit managers are mandated to design, plan and conduct various training and professional development workshops for in- and pre-service teachers, including principals of schools.

According to Yaqub et al. (2020:119), CPD is conducted by adults; hence, all principles that applied to adult learning must be given critical attention as well. Whitaker, cited in Sharon (2017:112), mentions that CPD as a career development tool must be owned and managed by District managers and principals. However, learning must be relevant to daily work or some other aspect of improving educators' quality of lives (Mampane, 2017:112). Efforts must also be made in noting principals' concerns during the training sessions (Yaqub, Owusu-Cole & Ofosua, 2020:119). These concerns may also be better researched by individuals, Government, and NGOs within specialised areas (Kelkay, 2018:415). Mestry (2017:09) also encourages education District officials to play a more constructive role in promoting professional development for principals, SMTs, and teachers. In this regard, Mampane (2020:16) highlights the following key

issues that necessitate continuing professional development for both teachers, and management, including principals:

- There is a need for training via CPD for those aspiring to be principals.
- There must be more rigour in ensuring that the criteria for appointment to principalship be based on academic and professional qualifications, together with extensive classroom teaching-learning experience.
- Interviews for the principalship post must be conducted at a convenient place by neutral Departmental officials and union representatives.
- The DoE must use data from preparation programmes involving principals to recommend quality candidates for principalship.
- The criteria for appointments to principalship must be annually revised to consider a higher academic and professional qualification.

The subsections below provided more clarity on what reasons could be compelling principals to have the need for CPD. These areas are broken down into subsections.

2.5.3 Implementation of Policies

A policy is defined as a goal-driven collective strategy that addresses social problems which may take the form of important executive orders (Van Wormer & Link, 2015:8). Delaney (2017:03) perceives the policy for CDP as an instrument of governance which is an authoritative determination of a society's intents, priorities, and allocation of resources to such intents and priorities. Khan (2016:4) adds that the implementation of a particular policy is context-specific as it depends on political, social, economic, organisational, and attitudinal factors that influence how well (or poorly) a policy is being implemented. Education policy implementation **is** described as a purposeful and multidirectional change process aimed to effect a specific policy into practice which could influence an education system on several levels (Viennet & Pont, 2018:26). This elaborates on the purpose of CPD implementation which was supposed to change education according to set policy objectives. The following are key policies that concern CPD in South Africa as provided by Chabalala (2016:4):

- The CPD policy is established under the auspices of The Institute of Risk Management South Africa. The policy enhances systematic maintenance, communication, improvement and knowledge and skills, and the development of personal qualities necessary for both professional and technical tasks executed by employees (RAMSA, 2022: 3).
- The second policy concerning CPD is The South African Council for the Project and Construction Management Professions (SACPCMP). This policy provides details of the CPD activities and structure for in-service training (cpd@sacpcmp.org.za).
- The third CPD policy is the Employee Assistance Professionals document (EAP) which focuses on the maintenance of professional standards to promote excellence in practice.

Further, The CPD policy in South Africa is founded on a strong educational system that can be traced from as early as 1994. This policy builds on Vision 2030 and proposes the following:

- Laying a solid foundation for a long and healthy life via higher educational and scientific achievement.
- Building a properly qualified, professional, competent, and committed teacher as part of the academic, research, and public service core.
- Building a set of institutions for delivering quality education, science and technology innovation, training, and skills development.
- Expanding the production of highly skilled professionals to enhance the innovative capacity of the nation.
- Creating an educational and national science system that serves the needs of society.

Policy implementation occurs because a wide range of stakeholders interact between different labels – thus central policymakers and local actors on the ground are important for successful CPD implementation (Information Resource Management Association, 2016:139). The policy environment that increasingly held principals' accountable for enhancing learner-achievement also contributed to principalship

positions being less appealing to potential candidates. This led to the role of principalship becoming more complex and uncertain (Russel & Sabina, 2014:602). Angelle and Lomascolo (2020:236) state that “no matter how good a policy seems to be in theory, if it did not get implemented accurately, it could not work.” The sad reality in South Africa was that little attention was paid to supporting principals when they were negotiating inevitable hurdles that they encountered during their tenure (Legotlo, 2014:12). Furthermore, Bayeni and Bengu (2018:1) state that the South African Government, through the DoE, sometimes expected outcomes that were beyond the principal’s abilities and mandates.

Accordingly, challenges to implementing education policy included co-ordination issues, inadequacy of organisational resources, actors’ capacity, and reactions against reforms (Viennet & Pont, 2017:8). Moreover, education stakeholders grew more vocal and ambitious regarding what schools should look like (Viennet & Pont, 2017:8). This increased the need for supporting principals to assist in determining how effective policy would be once signed into legislation (Angelle & Lomascolo, 2020:236). Additionally, Arlestig, Day and Johansson (2015:49) point out that regulations concerning the role and authority of principals in schools were not explicit or clear enough, causing uncertainties for both principals and school boards.

Moreover, the impact that principals’ perceptions might have on policy should “encourage policy analysts to look at the larger policy ecology lest they missed important influences” (Angelle & Lomascolo, 2020:241). A study by Smith and Tutwiler (2014:18) indicates that principals had no part of decisions that had emanated from top-down levels which had a direct impact on school performance. This meant that policymakers were not in tune with what most principals wanted, which was support, resources, and innovative strategies to overcome barriers at schools.

2.5.4 Recruitment, Selection and Appointment Procedures for Principals

Hamza, Gardi, Othman, and Ahmed (2021:2) define recruitment as a process of discovering and attracting qualified and/or appropriate applicants for a vacant position. The recruitment process is said to be a positive process because its objective is to

create a pool of candidates from which a choice can be made (Singh & Gupta, 2021:211). The next step after recruitment is selection (Gowan, 2021:242) which is a process that guides selecting the right person for principalship, and is realised by the identification of skills and knowledge pertaining to effective leadership and management (Sepuru & Mohlakwana, 2020:2). Babu (2020:68) explains that after the candidate has successfully passed the interview process, a letter confirming appointment for the position is sent.

In South Africa, the appointment of school principals is based on the Required Equivalent Qualification Value (REQV) 14, which was the lowest criterion for teachers aspiring to become principals (Mampane, 2020:3). The Education Labour Relations Council Limpopo Chamber (2008:12) asserts that in South Africa, some teachers might be appointed through level-hopping which refers to a process where an educator skipped some post levels to reach principalship. For example, a post level 1 teacher is expected to progress to post level 2 (head of department), then post level 3 (deputy principal) before appointment to post level 4 (principalship). The DoE (2014:25) admits that the lack of a standardised professional and academic pathways to principalship in South Africa became a problem because qualification and experience were factors contributing to some principals' being unable to meet their responsibilities effectively (Mampane, 2020:4). Regrettably, the programme designed to train prospective principals was discontinued, leading to the appointment of teachers with only basic teaching qualifications as principals. (Sepuru & Mohlakwana, 2020:1).

School managers in many countries are appointed according to inappropriate or insufficient criteria. Principals were appointed because of long service rather than sound leadership skills, high-level academic qualifications, and through critical-thinking skills. (Bulimo, Maiyo & Ndiku, 2016:125). Khumalo (2021:1) alludes that the state of South African education worsened through allegations of bribery, political connections, nepotism, and interference by unions. These grave concerns, exacerbated by shortages of suitable principal candidates, soon compelled the DoE to opt for alternative techniques that would increase the quality and quantity of school principal candidates who were willing and able to accept the increasing number of challenges (Lemoine, McCormack & Richardson, 2018:19).

Grissom, Loeb and Mitani (2015:234) opine that the situation is more critical for those principals' working in rural, urban, and peri-urban (suburban) settings who encounter context-relevant challenges and respond in various ways to meet the instructional leadership needs of their schools and communities. To deal with these challenges, literature reveals that prospective principals need to be exposed to CPD programmes before being appointed to the position of principal (Mestry, 2017:3). Wieczorek and Manard (2018:1) assert that new principals' experiences in leadership were overwhelming, full of pressure, and confusing, and viewed principalship as trial-and-error journey. Hence, there was an urgent need for a well-planned and coordinated principals' CPD programme before their appointment.

2.5.5 Induction and Mentoring

Induction is described as a period when principals have the first experience in their positions such that they are exposed to strategies that will assist them to adjust to their roles and responsibilities (Dlomo, 2021:10). Although Bridge (2016:3) emphasises the need to induct skilled personnel who had the appropriate training and competencies to manage and lead schools in Nigeria, he criticised the present practice of using teaching experience as a major yardstick for the appointment of principals. It was also advocated that professional development programmes for prospective and practising school principals should be arranged to enhance the effectiveness of secondary school administration (Nasreen, 2019:3).

Another avenue is mentoring which is defined as an intense relationship between the experienced and the less experienced to promote professional and psychosocial support (Coady, 2016:33). It is a process that is based on a relationship between two people but is different for every pairing (Hopkins, Brooks & Yeung, 2019:3). Mentoring is also seen as a strategy for building leadership skills among school principals as it provides support and guidance needed to develop leadership skills (Kilag, Heyrosa-Malbas, Ibañez, Samson & Sasan, 2023:915). However, Induction, mentoring and other tangible support were usually limited, thus principals had to adopt a pragmatic approach to managing the day-to-day operations of schools (Mestry, 2017:259). The problem with induction was that it was seen as a practice best suited to newly

appointed principals' and novice teachers (Ndlovu, 2017:19). Mentoring was considered as a better option because of its ongoing intervention process (Stead, 2005:172).

Mentorship was also favoured for providing experience as a critical element for fostering expert advice in an on-going mentor-mentee partnership, while coaching which does not have a hierarchical element, unlocks one's potential to maximise one's learning rather than being taught – both mentoring and coaching are strategies that benefit all educators (Makhurane, 2017:04). Unqualified and qualified teachers learn from one another in a particular way through mentoring (Mukeredzi, 2016:85). Additionally, mentorship assists new teachers to learn how to circumvent the daily challenges by teaching innovatively and effectively. The overarching objective of mentoring is to advance teaching-learning proficiency and expertise levels of educators' careers (Muranya & Wairimu, 2020:475). Mentoring was valued as a part of the culture of many organisations such that formal programmes were developed to leverage job-satisfaction and productivity (Gee & Popper, 2017:27). Consequently, Bulimo, Maiyo and Ndiku (2016:127) in their research conducted in South African schools on principal's professional development programmes, found that mentoring was a powerful tool for improving the leadership, management, and competency skills of principals which led to whole-school effectiveness.

2.5.6 Professional Preparation

There is a growing realisation that headship is a specialist position requiring specific preparation to be successful. Simply being effective or qualified for the role of a teacher or principal is no longer viewed as the only requirement for headship (Howling, 2017:29). Principals' in many countries were appointed controversially on the basis of irrelevant qualifications and/or insufficient criteria, their teaching prowess, length of service, and years of experience, rather than on astute leadership and problem-solving skills (Ndlovu, 2017:17).

In South Africa the additional requirement for principalship was the possession of an Advanced Certificate in Education (ACE), a qualification developed by the DoE in

collaboration with fourteen universities, the unions, the South African Principals' Association (SAPA), and several NGOs (Mampane, 2020:4). The Advanced Certificate in Education (ACE) was a leadership and management programme over a two-year period implemented to train and mentor educators (including principals for upskilling) and aspiring school principals. The ACE was a vocational, professional management qualification that aimed at enhancing principals' theoretical and practical ability to apply skills and knowledge acquired during training through evidence-based assessments (Mampane, 2020:4). The first cohort was enrolled in 2009 when the DoE aimed to ensure that by 2011 the ACE qualification would be a prerequisite for appointment to the post of principal (Makoelle, Mestry & Du Plessis, 2023:143). To improve their own qualifications, principals should be integrated into the society they work in to acquire the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviors necessary for professional development to successfully manage an institution or organization (Bozak et al., 2018:234). One should be able to apply one's knowledge, qualifications, and experience within one's job-description to adapt to changing circumstances to meet the vision and mission of the institution, in addition to blending with 4IR trends (Bozak et al., 2018:234).

However, the preparation programmes for principals cannot adequately ground them for school or classroom realities; hence, the need for continuous development seminars on school leadership and management matters (Mampane, 2020:4). Mayger et al. (2020:4) add that principal preparation has changed since the 2000s. Presently, colleges and universities are offering educational leadership degrees which do not demonstrate the realities of being a school principal on the ground, considering the many barriers practising principals have to navigate.

Sepuru and Mohlakwana (2020:4) state that during the recruitment of principals in South Africa, applications were welcomed from all educational levels. This approach led to the appointment of teachers as principals from various schools and phases, regardless of their training specialisation. Conversely, in Singapore, an educational leadership qualification is mandatory before or soon after becoming a school leader. In Indonesia principals are teachers who were given additional duties as leaders in an education implementation unit if they did not have school leadership competency through formal education, but through CPD programmes (Sukarno & Sumarwati, 2020:479).

2.5.7 High-Stakes Performance Evaluation

Schools need high quality, astute, and proficient leaders rather than managers to improve learner-performance. Many countries invested heavily in the preparation, induction, and continuing support of school principals (Alhouti & Male, 2017:90). Arhipova, Kokina and Rauckiene-Michaelsson (2018:64) reveal that a good principal is competent, ready to introduce new and creative ideas, and capable of building an effective team to improve the school's output. Based on the assumption that many principals lacked the relevant knowledge and skills to lead their schools effectively and efficiently, ongoing, and rigorous CPD programmes are urgently required.

The high-stakes concept represented an attempt to take often-fragmented policies and incorporate them into a more coherent, systematic framework of accountability and reform (Zepeda & Ponticell, 2018:6). About a third of principals who were planning to leave their schools reported that accountability measures influenced their decision, compared to a fifth of principals who planned to stay because they were trained through CPD programmes.

Stringent principal evaluations might also increase principal turnover rates. More than half the number of principals planning to leave reported having undergone unconstructive evaluations, while the percentage was lower among those planning to stay (Levin, 2020:4). Furthermore, Ridge and Lavigne (2020:4) state that principals were overworked and suffered from burnout, which was aggravated by them being responsible for implementing school reforms. In Paufler's (2018:2) study, principals expressed their concerns regarding the negative impact of the teacher evaluation system which affected their morale which led them to believe that they lacked value as professionals. Additionally, the critical challenge was that the lack of expertise on subject-related matters by circuit managers led to principals' dilemma to improve instructional performance in their schools (Mthembu, 2014:33).

2.5.8 Continuous Professional Development in relation to People Skills

Principals need people skills that enhance time-management, decision-making, policy development, communication, human resources management, curriculum development, discipline control, and administrative processes (Wiehahn & Du Plessis, 2018:8). People skills refer to special qualities to control and manage oneself and others (Ibay & Pa-alisbo, 2020:150). Principals should develop human- relations skills to promote teamwork, collaboration, joint decision-making, and community cooperation to promote best practice in their schools (Mestry, 2017:1).

Young (2017:25) states that South African learners performed poorly in international tests such as the Trends in Mathematics and Science Study, Progress in International Reading Literacy Study, and Southern and East Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality. The implication is that SA is deficit in meeting international standards in education, especially in literacy and numeracy; this situation points fingers at principals of schools who are charged with the responsibility of producing quality academic outputs through effective and harmonious relationships and communication as school management prerequisites to engender best practice. In order to alleviate the dire situation of underperformance at schools, effective CPD programmes should be continually rolled-out for principals and staff to grasp innovative strategies to achieve results comparable to international standards (Arhipova et al., 2018:68). Given that principals should have various basic skills to be functional in their workplace, the authorities (CMs) concerned should not be complacent but institute constructive steps such as CPD to upskill principals to cope with challenges on a daily basis (Du Plessis, 2016:1).

2.5.9 Principals' Engagement with the School Governing Body and CPD

Principals work collaboratively with the school governing body (SGB), the school management team (SMT) and parents within the school community to create and implement a shared vision, mission, and a strategic plan to inspire all who are in the school environment such that direction for on-going CPD is provided (DoE, 2015:19).

Therefore, principals who encountered managerial and leadership challenges must be supported through CPD programmes (Pak et al., 2020:3). Since the SASA Act (RSA, 1996) stipulates that the Head of Department (HOD) is the person responsible for ensuring that principals, officers of the education department, and SGBs are provided with all the necessary assistance to perform their functions as outlined in the PAM document (RSA, DoE, 2005).

Table 2.1 below reflects the professional roles of the principal and those of the School Governing Body. These roles ought to be executed with the utmost commitment.

Table 2.1: Professional management and governance of a public school
(DoE, 2018:8)

Management (The principal)	Governance (The SGB)
Responsible for the day-to-day professional management of the school • Management of staff affairs; learner affairs; school finance (keeping accounts and records of school funds), administrative affairs; physical facilities, school community relations. • Implementation of departmental policy. • Professional leadership regarding educator staff. • Being a member of the SGB (support and assistance). • Liaising with the Department of Education. • Utilisation and development of staff and other resources that	Responsible for the drafting of: • Admission policy (section 5 and 5A) • Language policy (section 6) • Religion policy (section 7) • Code of conduct for learners • Disciplinary proceedings (section 8)
	Responsible For: • Recommending to HOD the appointment of educators and non-educators. • School funds and assets. • Annual budget. • Enforcement of payment of school fees. • Financial records. • Auditing or examination of financial records and statements. • Safety of learner (buildings and school grounds). • Works with management. • Works through management (part-time).

focus on effective teaching and learning. • Work directly with staff and learners. • Direct decision-making regarding all professional matters in the school (within the broad guidelines of education policy and law). • Direct responsibility (employer and SGB). • Directly accountable to the SGB in terms of assigned tasks (school finance). • Directly accountable to the employer for the professional management of the school.	• Direct decision-making in terms of its functions as determined in the schools' Act (1996). • Overarching responsibility. • Directly accountable in terms of the legal functions as determined in the Schools Act (parent community and the Department of Education).
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Table 2.1 above outlines the distinct functions of the principal and the SGB regarding the governance of the school. Principals are now expected to implement democratic management models and leadership styles in schools (Kruger, Beckman & Du Plessis, 2022:312). These models are the reasons for the present-day governance of the school system being complex regarding inter-relationships between inter-dependent groups and individuals. These indicate the different scopes of involvement and responsibilities that complicate school leadership and management. Significant lessons must be learnt from the challenges that principals experience as it may contribute to establishing action plans or strategies for much needed changes that would require support from the Districts and CMs within the Education Department (Steyn & Fuller, 2023:297).

2.5.10 Technology in the CPD Process

Technology has emerged as a major tool regarding leadership goals, competencies, and responsibilities (Wei, Piaw & Kannan, 2016:4). Training programmes for employees include both computer-related content and regular modules which aim at improving self-efficacy in today's job market (Ibay & Pa-alisbo, 2020:160). A technology plan for training was seen as imperative for principals to be effective in technology leadership (Wallis, 2020:27). Principals should be able to apply their knowledge to be involved in firsthand practice regarding internet skills such as email, web-browsing, and searching for information which requires an interest in enrolling for computer literacy classes (Ibay & Pa-alisbo, 2020:155). One of the barriers to leadership and management in schools is the lack of computer competence of the principal (Wallis, 2020:28). Also, principals expressed hesitation towards technology integration. Despite this hesitation, organisations continue to recruit leaders with a variety of skills (Garrick, 2020:5). Principals' who are active in technology implementation in their schools should assume the role of technology leaders (Ugur & Koc, 2019:4). Therefore, leaders in schools should be familiar with both leadership skills and technology skills to create change (Garrick, 2020:7).

Hence, professional development for preparing principals in technology skills should be planned and implemented flexibly to create visionary technological leaders for the 4IR era (Ugur & Koc, 2019:2). Therefore, the duty of the circuit manager is to provide leadership in developing plans for instructional research, piloting studies for curriculum, and technology education (Mthembu, 2014:23). The technical high school principal is usually recognised as a role-model as he/she provides support and care to upgrade teachers and learners' ICT skills (Cheng, Tseng & Wu, 2019:727) so that they respond to the new realities of the modern education system (Vyas, 2020:4).

2.5.11 Components of CPD as Enrichment for Principals

The CPD indicators for principals can be divided into two types of activities: formal and informal (Peng et al., 2022:42). Formal activities refer to conferences, workshops, institutional qualification programmes, and participation in projects. Informal organised activities refer to networking in-school via peer collaboration and reading professional literature. Mestry (2017:2) adds that CPD is also self-directed, while Singh and Fish (2019:125) affirm that workshops are most common for professional development especially in South African Education. Furthermore, Bulimo, Maiyo and Ndiku (2016:128) confirm that even in Nigeria workshops are the most common form of CPD as an intervention. Srinivasacharlu (2019:29) highlights the benefits of workshops for principals as they provide reliable and practical platforms to advance CPD programmes on the various aspects of a particular topic, including tackling problems encountered by attendees.

In addition, Ndlovu (2017:19) indicates that generally, successful CPD workshops adhere to the following principles: the aim should be the general improvement of education, must be formal and systematic planning, state and clarify the aim of the workshop as a platform to cultivate critical thinking, reflection, and self-direction, foster excellence through skill development, instill confidence and enjoyment in activities, and address the contextual needs of principals (Habtam, 2019:23). Another major challenge facing the circuit managers cited in the study by Mthembu (2014:33) reveals that although circuit managers organised workshops for SGBs and SMTs (including the principal), it was found that circuit managers did not visit the schools on a regular basis which deprived them (principals) of feedback, remediation, and supervisory monitoring for the effective implementation of instructional activities. This lack of monitoring by CMs compromised the effectiveness of principals' implementation of modern CPD trends; however, CMs stated that they cannot be held responsible if schools are not functional (Bantwini & Moorosi, 2018:3).

2.5.12 Role of Circuit Managers (CMs) in Implementing CPD

This section explains how the circuit manager's role correlates with the CPD of principals. It outlines managerial and administrative support, facilitation of training for CPD of principals, communication with principals, and monitoring of school operations.

District and circuit officers in South Africa have the responsibility of collaborating with schools to enhance educational access and retention, provide managerial and professional assistance, and assisting schools in attaining teaching and learning excellence (Van der Voort & Wood, 2016:1). Circuit managers are District officials responsible for circuit management and are accountable to their district directors (DBE:2013). Bantwini and Moorosi (2018:3) add that CMs are expected to provide management support and administrative advice to schools, including the training of principals, SMTs and SGBs. Their mandate in the circuits should align with District objectives and plans. This implies that CMs play a critical role in school development and support, school culture, change management, instructional leadership, general school development, support activities for principals, monitoring, evaluating, and providing feedback (Ndou, 2022:1). In line with these critical functions of CMs, Ndlovu (2017:30) contends that schools and District goals should be aligned with professional development programmes that demonstrate District priorities for schools such as enhancing the quality of academic performance of learners. Therefore, circuit managers and their office should ensure that information is disseminated to relevant individuals on training courses, in addition to organising quality CPD workshops for upskill educators (Ibay & Pa-alisbo, 2020:149).

Van der Voort and Wood's (2016:1) study in the Eastern Cape Province (RSA) found that CPD for principals and general support to schools were seriously lacking. In this province, circuit managers did not have any formal assessment tools, checklist or intervention plan that informed their visits to schools. District officials were often unavailable to assist schools, thus many officials were perceived as being incompetent and uncommitted.

The lack of effective District support to schools is not only limited to South Africa but also internationally - the lack of support, coordination, and monitoring regarding CPD for teachers, managers, and principals (compounded by transport difficulties) is

widespread (Du Plessis & Mestry, 2019:52). At an international level, numerous countries are unresponsive to the needs of schools regarding CPD programmes, due to District officials' inability to understand the deluge of educational reforms that they must explain to school managers (Van der Voort & Wood, 2016:2).

School and District goals should be aligned with professional development programmes to strengthen District priorities to enhance schools' progress such as learners' performance (Ndlovu, 2017:30). Hence, it is imperative for circuit managers to take initiative in the implementation of CPD in schools, especially for principals.

Circuit managers are critically important as they have the power and capacity to strengthen connections and accelerate system-wide changes within the school District (Bantwini & Moorosi, 2018:2). It is possible for circuit managers to create an environment that is suitable for principals to work collaboratively and effectively. However, Myende, Ncwane and Bhengu (2022:100) maintain that there are multiple deprivations that render teaching and learning processes challenging, and thus a demanding task for leadership. In ensuring that there is cohesion and open communication between the circuit managers and principals, the researcher investigated the role of circuit managers in guiding and monitoring principals' activities towards the development of the school (Gyamfi & Pobbi, 2016:33). Circuit managers are there to coordinate CPD activities in conjunction with SACE imperatives. The success of a school system is dependent on the extent to which the stakeholders can effectively use their 'hearts, heads, and hands' to contribute to socio-economic, technological, scientific, and the political development of a school community (Asiyai & Okoro, 2019:108). Unfortunately, visits to schools and interactions with principals by circuit managers were reported as being inconsistent even though the function of the district and circuit offices is "to assist and support schools in delivering their core functions; namely, to improve the educational achievements of all learners" by ensuring that teachers, managers and leaders grow the CPD system (Ndlovu, 2017:13). This will lead to principals continuously enhancing their skills, attributes, and competencies through structured CPD programmes (Mestry, 2017:2).

2.5.13 CPD Training: Knowledge and Skills

Since CPD is a crucial aspect of developmental appraisal (DA), it is identified as one of the key performance areas of circuit managers (Ndlovu, 2017:8). Development appraisal (DA) aims to evaluate principals in a transparent manner with a view to determining areas of strength and weakness, and to structure programmes for individual professional development. The DA is designed to provide support for continued growth, and to promote accountability. As part of the process, a principal should nominate the immediate line manager (circuit manager) and a peer (principal of another school) to serve in a Development Support Group (DSG) to enhance principals' professional development (Mestry, 2017:5). Since CPD is mostly facilitated through the training approach which is acknowledged as an effective means of introducing new knowledge, the facilitator becomes crucial to the success of the programme (Ramanaidu, Joseph & Arujunan, 2016:19; Mwila et al., 2022:116). Moreover, the role of the facilitator in many respects resembles that of the community coordinator in the development of communities of practice where a method is developed to create and leverage knowledge (Morrin, 2020:33). Through facilitating CPD and training, the DoE is instrumental in keeping principals' abreast of current education developments by offering platforms for principals to develop and support each other (Mestry, 2017:6). Also, the CPD facilitators should be adequately supported to enable them to maintain their knowledge base, level of enthusiasm, and facilitation skills to be effective in their roles as the success of facilitation depends on ingenious delivery and implementation (Dea & Lerra, 2022:4050). It is also suggested that in a team-based approach clearly articulated protocols would help to create a community of principals who work collaboratively and efficiently (Wondem, 2015:42). Nasreen and Odiambo (2018:245) who identified areas for CPD improvement such as designing of content and processes noted a general dissatisfaction with the current CPD opportunities as well as the content of training programmes. This motivated the researcher to venture into the mentoring and coaching aspect of CPD.

2.5.14 Mentoring and Coaching of Principals in CPD

Khumalo (2018:259) defines mentoring as an act of professional development towards enhancing communication skills, leadership roles, and pedagogical knowledge. This study described coaching as a form of professional development for school principals. Coaching is seen by Jordan (2018:13) as a form of training which advocates a one-to-one relationship between two educators such that there is a shared collegial dialogue. Coaching is the process where a person with expertise in the field assists colleagues through structured discussions and activities on how to overcome obstacles in the profession (Tulu, 2018:39). In this way, coaching could be seen as focusing on the personal development and growth of the person being coached through inquiry and reflection. This coaching approach is collaborative, personalised, purposeful, intensive, continuous, and non-evaluative (Cross, 2019:2). Coaching and mentoring were often interchangeable as part of CPD, but mentoring involves an expert to guide the inexperienced on an ongoing basis to gain knowledge and skills, while coaching is short-term non-hierarchical collegial assistance. Wieczorek and Manard (2018:1) affirm that principals work as professional coaches and/or mentors especially in rural areas where there were challenges in rolling-out enrichment training courses. Therefore, circuit managers ought to function as coaches and advisors to help principals solve challenges encountered in the application of CPD skills (Saputra, 2020:14). However, circuit managers need patience and passion to provide effective coaching or mentoring to principals. Therefore, mentoring, and coaching ought to be understood within the context of CPD. Prenger, Poortman and Handelzalts (2020:18) point out that the quality and extent of external support are critical to implement changes in the school system. Hence, Mahama, Mohammed and Gunu (2022:7) state that professionals all over the world need to update their knowledge and skills often through diverse CPD programmes that circuit managers ought to provide to enhance accountability and quality performance at schools.

Bantwini and Moorosi (2018:1) explain that in South Africa there were educational opportunities such as access and support, but they were unequally distributed; so, circuit managers ought to close this gap between the previously disadvantaged and the previously advantaged. In this regard, CPD was the key instrument to leverage the

desire to level the playing fields in addressing education disparities. Therefore, in aspiring to attain this, circuit managers' key role would be to ensure that schools and principals were professionally exposed to current educational trends, and to be supported, capacitated, and effectively developed through mentoring or coaching programmes.

2.5.15 CPD in Schools: The Role of the Principal

School principals are deemed to be the most important agents in schools as they are central in satisfying the basic needs of staff and learners (Maas, Schoch, Scholtz, Rackow, Schüller, Wegner & Keller, 2022:1546). As the role of the principal continues to evolve through new educational policies, governmental reform, increased accountability, current events, technology innovations, and the globalisation of society (Lemoin, McCormack & Richardson, 2018:18). The new policies brought change to the nature of tasks that were performed by principals which enforced modern trends to be enacted by school principals who had to be critical-thinkers, creative, innovative, responsive, and flexible. Thus, the role of the principal transformed to include being a leader and a manager (Mpungose & Ngwenya, 2017:11).

Further, Nasreen (2019:163) describes the role of the principal as that of an active and energetic school leader possessing a clear and strategic vision of fundamental achievable goals. Therefore, to fulfil this role, the principal needs to engage in CPD training processes as part of ongoing professional development for empowerment for improving school quality (Alhouti & Male, 2017:90; Davis, Rodgers & Harrigan (2020:2). Moreover, the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP, 2018) states that the National Policy on CPD training provides principals with the evaluation and support mechanisms (skills and standards) to enhance their professionalism in day-to-day school activities. This implies that CPD entails meaningful assessments of leadership capacity that include knowledge, skills, problem-solving and values which can be attained through continuous professional development programmes.

The changes in policy and guidelines from the DoE concerning leadership roles have exponentially increased considering the added administrative responsibilities burdening principals. These responsibilities are extremely demanding and brought principals into conflict with their staff, organisation, and the community (Ndlovu 2017:15). The principal's role now equates to that of a chief executive officer (CEO) of a corporation who is responsible for strategic planning, budgets, managing industrial relations, procuring resources, and facilitating marketing and public relations (Mestry, 2017:1). The success of the principal is determined by a leadership spirit of resilience and industriousness supported by a comprehensive and sustained CPD training programme. Alhouti and Male (2017:90) emphasise that principals are influenced positively and comprehensively by their engagement in continuing professional development. It becomes evident that the principal can function as a school quality developer; however, the principal can also be an obstacle in the school itself if not provided with support such as CPD courses and enrichment initiatives through attending workshops, seminars, and conferences.

Habtam (2019:37) opines that school leaders play a significant role in the planning and implementation of CPD to provide ongoing support to teachers and learners for improved outcomes. Thembekwayo (2016:18) criticises research which is based on how principals influence school effectiveness, but less about how to help principals develop capacity to have influence on the schools. Sepuru and Mohlakwana (2020:1) state that it is essential to provide school principals with the necessary skills to ensure they become effective leaders. However, most of the practising principals in South Africa often lack fundamental training in leadership and management specific to their roles. Although many teachers believe that completing their bachelor's degrees prepared them for the responsibility of a principal, they are often unaware of the challenges and realities that come with their role. (Mpungose & Ngwenya, 2017:5). Thus, CPD remains the key instrument to enhance the professionalism of principals to drive schools towards positive outcomes.

Additionally, the principal's role has been altered by the advent of school or site-based management which has led to the decentralisation of control which transferred considerable decision-making from the district office to individual schools to afford principals, teachers, and other school community members more authority over school matters (Tobin, 2014:3). To master these added responsibilities, circuit managers must

organise workshops to develop principals professionally, especially in decision-making processes (Pechota & Scott, 2020:3). Mann and Webb (2022:19-20) advocate the following best practices that principals should attain through CPD training:

- Avoidance of transmissive and top-down approaches to CPD;
- Focus on content is vital as it anchors everything contained in CPD;
- Allocation of time for collaborative, peer-talk, and connecting theory and input to experiences; and
- Opportunities to create a positive environment to practice skills.

2.5.16 Management Functions of Principals

The success of a principal's management style relies on ongoing learning and flexibility while remaining focused on both instructional and managerial tasks (Nasreen & Odhiambo, 2018:248). Principals' managing of school operations fall into four categories: planning, organising, guiding, and controlling (Karataş, 2019:590; Lloyd & Aho, 2020:8). These functions are imperative in any management position. A manager should organise these functions astutely to achieve the organisation's goals to maintain a competitive edge. Principals must understand how school leadership, school management, and school administration integrate. For the three elements to work cohesively, CPD is necessary especially for newly appointed principals. This implies that it is through CPD training that the above three key aspects of principalship become reinforced by tapping into and expanding on principals' previous knowledge and skills (OECD, 2018:18). Bulimo, Maiyo and Ndiku (2016:124), Francis and Oluwatoyin (2019:77) and Maja (2016:22) confirm that managers need to be updated on the modern trends in planning, organising, controlling, leading, and financial managing financial resources. In this regard, CPD enables principals to engage in enhancing their management functions on a regular basis, while providing them with a platform to negotiate emerging issues to deal with the challenges experienced in day-to-day managerial activities (Khan & Khan, 2014: 942).

Having briefly discussed the relationship between CPD of principals and the ability of principals to plan, organise, lead and control school activities. The next section of this

study embark on the important aspects of planning and controlling in school necessitated by exposure to CPD training.

- *Planning and Controlling*

Principals usually perform three integrated functions at school level: they focus on managing and controlling human, physical, and financial resources (Naidoo, 2019:1). There is a close relationship between planning and controlling (Oswaal Editorial Board, 2021:102). Planning is a decision-making process where a course of action is determined to successfully achieve future goals (Konin & Ray, 2019:346). Also, planning is defined as an activity which identifies who, *how*, and *what* of performing a specific task (Pramanik, 2024:69). The focus of managerial behaviour is control, which is the essence of the monitoring process (Maja, 2016:23). Control involves dynamic functions interrelated with the other management functions which play a critical role in determining organisational success (Cambalikova & Musin, 2017:218). This situation points to the utmost necessity for CPD training for principals.

McLaughlin (2015:49) emphasises the importance of planning while also acknowledging that at times it is difficult to predict all outcomes due to principals' having to ponder the solution to a challenging decision long after the school day has ended. It is imperative that the school principal get exposed to competencies necessary to plan and implement improvement activities to upskill employees at the school (Norton, 2014:13). These competencies are gained by engaging in CPD practices to overcome difficulties in manipulating the balance between higher order tasks designed to improve staff and learner performance, and lower order duties (OECD, 2018:18). Trorrey and Cullingford (2017:68) elaborate that the perceptions of principals on the value of CPD training are positive as CPD fosters improvement of supervision, guidance, and learners' academic outcomes.

However, planning cannot be done by the principal in isolation (Maja, 2016:22); hence, it is advisable that principals overcome constraints that they encountered in their engagement with CPD matters such as those relating to time, finances, and workload. It is agreed that CPD training guarantees quality in leadership so that principals perform optimally in the four functions of management - planning, organising, leading, and controlling (Nasreen & Odhiambo, 2018:245).

- *Organising*

Organising is one of the most important aspects of a principal's duty. Anastasiou and Papagianni (2020:1) state that organising is the strengthening of human and material resources needed for the successful attainment of the goals of a planned enterprise. In this regard, the internal organisation and control of schools depend on principals' ability to implement the principles of CPD. Mestry and Singh (2007:477) explain that in South Africa, principals' management and leadership responsibilities have transitioned to include reflection on personal growth and development, which include aspects relating to continuing professional development. It is for these reasons that principals effectively utilised their inherent and learnt organisational skills to appoint the right person, in the right place, to do the right thing, at the right time to promote the administrative effectiveness of the school.

Mestry and Singh (2007) elaborate that there are four (4) fundamental steps involved in organising. Firstly, tasks are divided into units to be executed by individuals with appropriate skills and competencies. Secondly, tasks are combined in a related manner, often referred to as departmentalisation. Thirdly, these departments are linked to one another specifying who reports to whom and who gives orders. The linking of such departments results in a hierarchy of roles. Fourthly, mechanisms are devised to integrate the various tasks for proper co-ordination (Muraina, 2014:53). Further, Maja (2016:22) states that organising involves teamwork which improves interpersonal relationships – a skill gleaned from CPD training. It is a skill that needs to be improved over time due to principals having to continuously organise, coordinate, and allocate duties to different individuals. Hence, the professional development of principals is an ever-evolving and ongoing process that leads to the enhancement of the quality of daily school activities. Hence, provincial departments and officials ought to rally to assist principals and educators to improve school dynamics through access to well-planned CPD programmes (DoE, 2013:11). The implication is that all stakeholders must collaboratively strive to enhance the professional development of school leaders (principals) on an ongoing basis.

The next paragraph deals with the function of leadership as advocated by the school principal.

- *Leading*

Leading is the third management function for school leaders, especially the principal. Acquiring leadership skills and knowledge is critical for principals' role functions. Thus, principals' ability to lead with competence can be achieved through CPD (Sahlin, 2023:2).

It is important that principals distinguish between leading and leadership. Leadership is defined as a process where an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal (Pattison & Corser, 2022:943). Astute school principals focus on their ability to apply continuing professional development principles for whole-school upliftment (NASSP, 2018:1). For leading to occur, the principal must be clear about the goals, vision, and mission of the school to realise positive outcomes by being guided by the school community, among others (Maja, 2016:22). This requires leaders to be confident in enacting their roles, especially in decision-making. Accordingly, principals need to be supported in this role by their circuit managers. In support, Tyobeka (2019:1) states that "Circuit Managers were at the coalface of basic education delivery, and it is through them that principals can truly lead the process of both pedagogic and curricula transformation in their schools". This means that circuit managers also need to capacitate principals by encouraging them to enroll at tertiary institutions for short courses that enhance and supplement CPD, in addition to planning and rolling-out District or circuit CPD programmes.

2.5.17 Principals' Academic Role Regarding CPD

Sibanda and Zindi (2023:88) indicate that schools in South Africa currently face serious problems in effecting quality education due to the lack of CPD skills and knowledge to upgrade standards of teaching and learning. The following are crucial roles to be enacted by principals who have CPD competence (Khan & Khan, 2014:929):

- Shaping a vision of academic success for all learners;
- Creating an atmosphere conducive for teaching and learning, and the growth for education development;
- Inculcating leadership values among subordinates and juniors;

- Improving instruction; and
- Managing people, records/data, resources, and to minimise wasteful expenditure and materials to realise set goals.

Academic leadership is the core function of the school principal; that is, teaching and learning. Su and Wood (2018:20) opine that academic leadership involves the ability to recognise excellence, conduct research, and know where and how to intervene to strengthen academic structures at school. In this respect, the principal should provide direction, resources, and support to both the educators and the learners (Maponya, 2015:1). Therefore, the skills accessed from CPD training sessions are beneficial for academic leadership. Moreover, academic supervision was defined as a series of assistive techniques for teachers to develop the ability to manage the teaching-learning processes to achieve positive learning outcomes. Kartini, Kristiawan and Fitria (2020:158) confirm that the academic supervision of school principals is imperative to influence the pedagogical performance of teachers and to attain quality academic results.

2.5.18 CPD as Part of Principals' Acquiring Problem-solving Skills

Problem-solving is regarded as the most important skill among all leadership roles (Cheng, Tseng & Wu, 2019:726). Principals' must be systems thinkers; they must be able to analyse how parts of a whole interact with each other to effectively make decisions (Daley, 2020:6). The OECD (2018:32) observed that those principals who understood, conceptualised, and contextualised CPD were able to influence, guide, and solve issues for those under their supervision and guidance. According to Nasreen and Odhiambo (2018: 245), in Pakistan, principals agreed that CPD training assisted to equip them with strategies to overcome constraints relating to the management of time and burdensome workloads. Therefore, in South Africa the position of school principal has become multifaceted and thus need CPD programmes to enhance finer skills in solve problems as part of leadership and management in schools.

The principal as a problem-solver could help the school to resolve diverse and complex problems so that the school benefits from knowledge, experience, and problem-solving skills (Wang & Yu, 2020:2). Visone (2018:38) adds that CPD for principals should provide them with models of effective problem-solving to help stimulate metacognition and reflection. The implication here is that after identification

of the problem, a problem-solver critically analyses the situation to emerge with innovative solutions. Additionally, the Association of Teacher Education in Europe (2019:369) contends that when the problem-solver pays less attention to the analysis of the problem, understanding becomes limited, thus resulting in the problem remaining a problem.

A study conducted by Al-Jaradat and Zaid-Alkilani (2015:28) identified successful leadership practices of school principals who were employed to solve school problems pertinent to teachers, learners, local community, parents, the school environment, and resources; and their findings indicated the following:

- The results indicated that the most successful leadership practices for solving teachers' problems were those concerning the astute tackling of teachers' problems by standing at the side of the new teacher, and forming committees that best serve the teaching process. The principal should solve the problems in a manner that satisfies the whole school community such as, among others, creating a harmonious staff environment and promoting job-satisfaction. The results also demonstrated that most leadership practices concerning learners' problems were inside the classrooms, many of which stemmed from repeated learner-absence.
- Problems relating to the local community and parents were solved through forming temporary parent-councils and providing them with guidelines on how to deal with their children's problems. The results further indicated that the most successful leadership practices of the school principal in solving the school problems were in the following areas: learner problems, teacher problems, the school environment, and resource allocation. The CPD of principals coupled with leadership training and development programmes, contributed positively to meeting the various demands of managing and leading schools. While most problem areas were successfully tackled, the problems relating to the local community and parents had minimal success.

This study recommends applying the appropriate procedures as stipulated by DoE policies. Lastly, the needs identified can be referred to the circuit manager to assist in developing corrective measures that include CPD strategies to gain skills in becoming a critical, innovative, and effective problem-solver.

2.5.19 Community Leader

The Norms and Standards for Educators reflect community, citizenship, and pastoral roles as areas of competence that principals must be knowledgeable about (Kimathi & Rusznyak, 2018:8). Principals should not only offer their schools as community public spaces, but they should themselves become community leaders to spend time in the community, develop relationships, trust, and know first-hand about the many challenges confronting the community. (DeMatthews, 2016:24). Many principals had long-term cordial relationships with a few generations of a single family as they spent decades in some local schools. This relationship ought to be enhanced through training related to CPD in order to create effective and efficient leaders and managers with requisite skills to communicate with the local community, form parent-teacher councils, and appreciate teachers and learners who participate in media programmes (Qaralleh, 2021:126). At the core of the community-school strategy is the belief that this inextricable connection must be gainfully developed, supported, and nurtured through meaningful partnerships to systematically address the myriads of challenges that confront schools and communities (Mayger & Provinzano, 2020:2).

Leaders at both the school and District levels influence the strength of programmes that involve families and community members. There was a need to prepare local candidates for principalship and to engage all stakeholders to achieve learner-success. Leading the community, as well as the school, constitutes a key practice of successful principals (Fitzgerald & Militello, 2016:111). This was to maintain, improve, and strengthen knowledge, respect, and confidence amongst the community members so that interest in the school is maximised. This includes parents of learners, the business community, and those who live in the community without any direct ties to the school such as senior citizen groups. Lingam (2018:40) adds that stakeholders in the community such as parents ought to develop a perception that values the CPD of school leaders. Creating strong ties with these groups will be invaluable in times of need (Meador, 2019:1).

The involvement of the circuit managers in the CPD of principals should also focus on transformational leadership that requires principals to attain characteristics to inspire, motivate, make changes, and interact with staff members in a professional manner

(Hussin & Al Abri, 2015:90). Meador (2019:1) cautions that it is impossible to achieve success if the principal and circuit manager are not on the same page. The principal and circuit manager need to have a strong working relationship to drive the school to achieve quality outcomes. Since principals occupy positions of influence in education, their school-community involvement can positively impact others at the individual, school, and District levels (Hauseman, Pollock & Wang, 2017:85).

A good principal may use communication to convey an understandable message to receptors to obtain the expected feedback (Bucata & Rizescu, 2017:50). The next section deals with communication as a skill for the CPD system. Communication is a key component in team-based approaches.

2.6 COMMUNICATION AS A SKILL GAINED FROM CPD

Communication is a key component in team-based approaches. A smart principal may use strategic communication channels to convey clear messages to all stakeholders to obtain the intended outcome (Bucata & Rizescu, 2017:50). The success of managerial actions depends on the astute use of communication strategies (Muraina, 2014:52). Effective communication between principals confronted with ever-expanding responsibilities is crucial for creating productive professional development plans through networking opportunities (Davis, Rogers & Harrigan, 2020:4). The role of being an eloquent communicator is regarded as the number one element of highly effective principals (Tyler, 2016:2). Principals with articulate (yet simple) communication skills maintain an open-door policy with parents, which enables better parent–teacher involvement (Anastasiou & Papagianni, 2020:2). Furthermore, the principal is expected to communicate professionally and cordially with staff members, learners, the community, and the SGB members (Maja, 2016:6) which ensures that members in a team have the information they need and that they maintain proper awareness of relayed messages (Tautenbaum & Salas, 2020:8).

There are four prerequisites for the effective communication approach (Lunenburg, 2023:305):

- Principals need to develop a positive communication attitude due to its importance in their role.
- Principals must continuously work to keep channels open to inform and share information.
- The principal must continuously plan by utilising effective communication channels at the beginning of every programme of activities.
- The principal must develop trust among staff members, and to listen and believe in them.

Accelerated changes in the school environment and its associated rapid internal and external reforms have led to communication processes becoming more complicated and demanding. Regrettably, poor communication often has dire consequences (Capaul, Seitz & Keller, 2023:458). The DoE (2013:12) identified the following CPD essentials for principals:

- Communicating is effective via an enabling environment for staff to support school needs and attain set goals.
- The ability to improve the quality of teaching and learning in schools through CPD is reliant on sound communication strategies.
- The ability to give timeous feedback, consult, arrange cluster meetings, and other functions assist in promoting effective communication.
- Providing an enabling environment and support for the professional development of managers, teachers, and administrative staff members requires strategic communication.
- Managing oversight and accountability in a continuous and professional manner is dependent on unambiguous and clear communication, whether written or verbal.

The importance of principals' communication skills for administrative effectiveness cannot be over-emphasised as it is fundamental in the management process, especially when collaborating with people.

The next section deals with the effective provision of CPD in schools.

2.7 EFFECTIVENESS OF CPD IN SCHOOLS

Circuit managers are solely responsible for evaluating the success of principals through the Developmental Appraisal (DA) directives which are also components of the QMS. Circuit managers undertake to oversee the implementation and coordination of CPD for the professional development and advancement of principals. Effective CPD can positively impact principals as it is viewed as being vital and beneficial by many who see it as the best approach to improve the quality of management (Mann & Webb, 2022:17). Valdmann, Holbrook and Rannikmae (2017:577) opine that the effectiveness of CPD may be related to the acquisition of knowledge, skills, values, positive attitudes, sound behaviours, and innovative changes in the workplace. Mann et al. (2022:19) concur that CPD programmes should be content-oriented and based on relevant curricula to help principals to better master their craft of being knowledge purveyors (Yuan, 2023:38). Therefore, the development of formal and informal practices amongst principals clearly requires a learning-friendly organisational culture, a clear motivational environment for the profession, strong professional determination, and a positive perception of CPD (Rodriguez-Gomez, Mercader & López-Crespo, 2020:240). However, Manley, Martin, Jackson, and Wright (2018:135) contend that evidence about CPD's effectiveness was still limited as practitioners themselves were often unable to articulate the impact of CPD activity. Clearly the effectiveness of the design based on CPD provision needs further probing.

Sukarno and Sumarwati (2020:477) state that to ensure the effectiveness of CPD, the recruitment of participants should be based on the principals' competencies and school self-evaluations, rather than school supervisor competencies. Lastly, to ensure that the programme was relevant to principals' needs, the sequence of disseminating learning materials must be determined by principals, rather than based on District selection.

The next section deals with tailor-made CPD in schools as part of improving CPD effectiveness.

2.8 TAILOR-MADE CPD TRAINING

There is a drive to tailor CPD to the needs of principals towards their personal development within the school, and not just for the benefit of the school itself (Yuan, 2022:44). Present revelations indicate that whatever leadership training occurred was *ad hoc*; thus, it became necessary to restructure training schedules regarding CPD programmes that were previously rolled-out on an informal ongoing basis. The perceptions of principals indicated they were in favour of CPD, but they expressed reservations about the content and implementation of the training programmes. They suggested that identified training needs should form the basis of the design of new CPD programmes (Nasreen & Odhiambo, 2018:261).

The design of these CPD programmes should be informed by an effective need-analysis pertaining to principals' challenges in leadership and management duties (Mwila, Namuchana, Lufungalo, Chinemerem, Mudenda, Mangwatu, Nang'andu & Hikaambo, 2022:105). Holloman and Novey (2015:28) advise that school principals and circuit managers ought to meet and design CPD training schedules according to a needs-assessment. This means that the management of a CPD programme had to be collaboratively planned. Therefore, it became necessary to redefine the notion of training and developing managers who now had added responsibilities, while being responsible for leading and managing the learning organisation (Mgijima, 2014:402).

The responses of most principals revealed that education Districts did not attach much importance to CPD for principals as development programmes dealt with curriculum changes as per the National Curriculum Statement (NCS), the Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS), and Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement [CAPS] (Mestry, 2017:6). However, Nasreen and Odhiambo (2018:248) indicate that successful school principals had undergone continuing professional development programmes that enhanced their leadership and management capabilities.

Challenges that are brought about in the implementation of CPD are revisited in the next section of this study.

2.9 CHALLENGES OF CPD

This section pin-pointed specific areas that were challenging in the implementation of CPD for principals which were ineffectively conducted by circuit managers (Kelkay's, 2018:415). Therefore, it was necessary that CPD training programmes focus on professional development opportunities that assisted and empowered principals to manage their schools effectively. In this regard, Mestry (2017:257) reflected on the critical aspects of CPD training programmes to be earmarked for enrichment and for a "high wire" act to upskill and reskill principals. The challenges are discussed in the sections below:

2.9.1 Time for CPD

Mestry (2017:259) asserts that school principals lacked time to engage in CPD activities. Hence, they were deprived of the understanding of inspirational, motivational, and instructional leadership. Those who did not attend any CPD training session failed to provide intellectual guidance and instructional leadership to their staff members. In support, Pak et al. (2020:1) agree that school principals who did not attend any CPD training faced challenges such as the application of solutions, procedures, tools, and the availability of expert sources because they were not exposed to a wider range of CPD enrichment programmes lack a firm understanding of holistic school leadership (Yaqub et al., 2020:113). Time was incorporated into the principals' work schedules to accommodate professional development training such as planning in a collegial setting, meeting with learners and parents, and honing the skills of SMTs (Jordan, 2018:7). Time-management is one of the main components to lead a fruitful life including job- satisfaction, thus a balance between work and leisure hours directly contributes to feelings of wellbeing (Shao, 2022:1). The researcher believed that time-management was essential for determining principals' participation in CPD activities planned by CMs, and ensuring the efficacy of implementing CPD training school staff.

According to Bozak et al. (2018:242), the duration of professional development activities should be longer to provide for in-depth discussions regarding content, perceptions, and misconceptions. Longer activities were more likely to allow principals to experiment by introducing modern trends into their practice, in addition to obtaining feedback from staff members on the quality of their (principals') management

innovations. However, Du Plessis (2016:01) asserts that school principals were expected to serve as instructional leaders in their schools by devoting time and attention to teacher-evaluations, curriculum, and assessment development, and agitating for better learner-achievement. Scott, Limbert and Sykes (2021:209) revealed that feedback from principals indicated significantly higher levels of work-related stress than professionals in other groups. According to Levin, Scott, Yang, Leung, and Bradley (2020:4), the assumption here could be that many principals' reported obstacles concerning in-service professional development, especially the lack of time and the burden of managing additional duties.

2.9.2 Effectiveness of CPD in Schools

Effective CPD can positively lead to gains for principals as it is viewed as being vital, and seen by many as one of the best ways to improve the quality of leadership and management at schools (Mann & Webb, 2022:17). Valdmann, Holbrook and Rannikmae (2017:577) opine that the effectiveness of CPD may be related to the impact of knowledge-acquisition, skills, values, attitudes, behaviours, and changes in workplace. Manley, Martin, Jackson, and Wright (2018:135) aver that evidence about CPD effectiveness is still limited which makes it a grey area.

Sukarno and Sumarwati (2020:477) state that to ensure the effectiveness of the educative process in CPD, recruitment of participants must be based on their prior CPD training exposure, competencies, and school self-evaluations, rather than school-supervisor competencies. Furthermore, to ensure that the programme is relevant to the principals' needs, the sequence of learning material must be determined individually, rather than based on District selection. Daling-Hammond and Wei (2009:3) state that measuring the effectiveness of CPD depends on increased achievement of objectives, goals, synergy among staff, and parental involvement in school activities.

Having presented the effectiveness of CPD in schools, the next subsection deals with workload management as part of the challenges in CPD.

2.9.3 Linking CPD to Workload Management

Cansoy (2020:179) defines workload as a multifaceted component constraining principal to attend and conceptualise CPD. This is linked to factors that affect the planning of school duties, aspects of school funding, correspondence, time-management, communication, and CPD processes (Turkoglu & Cansoy, 2020:177). The OECD (2018:18) postulates accountability to be one of the principles that increases the necessity for CPD implementation for school principals. It becomes glaring that principals are unable to deal with CPD matters due to work-overload. (Gao & Wu, 2018:207). Hence, principals must be given diverse types of support by circuit managers who must create conditions for effective, smooth, and systemic CPD implementation (Kay & Frederick, 2018:4). The unrealistic expectations imposed on principals with regard CPD training make it imperative to critically examine the role of circuit managers in the way CPD is introduced to address principals' challenges (Wang & Hauseman, 2022:33).

Wang and Hauseman (2022:34) elaborate that the Institute for Educational Leadership regards the job of the principal as a lethal mix of long hours, meagre remuneration, little appreciation, and strict accountability measures that often extended beyond school boundaries. To counter all these challenges, circuit managers must be well-prepared and qualified to support school principals by using mechanisms inherent in CPD principles. Continuous professional development includes "effective professional development that is intensive, ongoing, connected to practice, focuses on the teaching and learning of specific academic content, is linked to other school initiatives, and builds strong working relationships among teachers." (Daling-Hammond & Wei, 2009:2) this implies that effective planning and organising for principals' CPD is a priority that must be instituted by circuit managers when planning to implement CPD programmes (Turkoglu & Cansoy, 2020:177; Steyn & Fuller, 2023:297).

2.9.4 Managing Financial Resources and CPD

Managing financial resources is a critical skill that is part of the CPD training for principals (Cebekhulu, 2016:8). Section 16A of the SASA (Republic of South Africa, 1996a) requires that the principal to assist SGB members in developing financial management skills and take all reasonable measures to prevent any financial maladministration or mismanagement. Therefore, CPD facilitates the improvement of

professional knowledge, capacitation, skills, and effectiveness in school management, including monitoring of school finances (Nasreen & Odhiambo, 2018: 246). Financial management refers to the effective and efficient allocation of finances to achieve the best value for money. In schools, it refers to drafting financial policy and having a sound bookkeeping system for utilisation, control, and accountability of school funds (Khumalo, 2018:20). The management of financial resources is integrated with the managerial duties of principals. Given that principals are expected to be knowledgeable about financial matters like budgeting, this expertise can be acquired through CPD programmes (Sepuru & Mohlakwana, 2020:5).

2.9. 5 Relating CPD to Principals' Managerial Issues

Le Roux (2012:10) affirms that the principal is the chief executive of the school who must understand financial concepts and operations, as well as physical facilities management. The principal must be the chief accountant of the school, and business administrator, among other general tasks. It could be for these reasons that the ever-changing roles of school management compel principals to attend CPD programmes that enlighten them on managerial and administrative skills concerning school finances. Sepuru (2018:82) emphasises that management skills of the principals play an important part in the improvement of the school's academic performance, including school financial management. Hence, it makes sense for principals to attend CPD training sessions to understand and implement skills which they have learnt (Fauzi, Syafrudin & Rokhmat, 2018:77).

Despite being a global concern for many years, there seems to have been little progress in improving the training of principals in school leadership and management (Sepuru & Mohlakwana, 2020:01). In some cases, circuit managers are incompetent to support principals on management issues (Van der Voort & Wood 2016:01). Ibay and Pa-alisbo (2020:150) add that for school management to be effective and efficient, circuit managers must provide support to principals such as managerial skills by using CPD channels. Thus, there are varied views about CMs' skills and knowledge, especially whether their competence and preparation for their responsibilities are adequate enough (Myende, Ncwane & Bhengu, 2022:104). This implies that circuit managers had long known of the challenges associated with leading, motivating, and

guiding principals' through ongoing professional growth workshops but efforts to capacitate principals were ineffective and feeble. These further points out that those in District leadership positions, through their inadequacies affect the thinking, decision-making, planning, and actions of principals. Tingle, Corrales, and Peters (2019:1) indicate that principals consider training activities related to human capital, executive leadership, school culture, and strategic operations as having major influence on the effectiveness of school principals' performance as school leaders. The challenge here is that ineffective CPD organised by CMs may hinder the performance of principals; hence, the necessity for carefully planned, organised, synchronised, and coordinated CPD training for principals.

2.9.6 Teamwork

The study by Moindi, Changeiywo and Sang (2016:14) on the effects of principals' teamworking on the adoption of strategic management in public secondary schools in Baringo County Kenya showed that principals' teamwork capabilities had a significant effect on their strategic management, which implied that principals who encourage teamwork attained high levels of strategic management in their schools whilst those with low teamwork capabilities did not. Moindi, Changeiywo and Sang (2016:14) recommended that a needs assessment on principals' managerial competencies before training should be conducted. Additionally, Kimball, Arrigoni, Clifford, Yoder and Milanowski (2015:2) state that principals' supervisors (circuit managers) in medium and large Districts often supervised large numbers of principals and schools so they lacked training, time, and tools to evaluate principals and provide on-the-job professional development (PD). For principals to benefit from CPD they must be exposed to working closely with circuit managers. This working relationship must be maintained and strengthened through ongoing teamwork.

2.9.7 Enhanced Coordination

Coordinated school visits are vital for quality education. Ndou (2022:1) asserts that circuit managers should ensure that CPD occurs also at schools. Chemutai et al. (2015:120) report that the failure of schools to yield expected results was due to the lack of proper principal selection. The proper selection for the position of principal was aided by providing enrichment courses such as CPD to prospective principals.

Therefore, circuit managers were duty-bound to encourage principals and aspiring ones to attend compulsory CPD programmes. Van der Voort and Wood (2016:1) state in a survey conducted by the public service commission in Limpopo, Northern Cape, and KwaZulu-Natal provinces that, inter alia, circuit managers hardly ever visited schools. Furthermore, principals complained that they could not sit down with circuit managers to discuss problems at their schools as circuit managers' visits were merely to 'tick the box' as they seldom had time to interact on important matters with principals. In support, Mentor (2023:65) alludes that circuit managers visit schools seldom, and use centralised or standardised systems to report weaknesses in schools. Nawab and Sharar (2022:1) add that coordination allows intervention in an informed way by using available resources in an effective way, thus avoiding replication of programmes while reaching out to those teachers who really need a particular type of support. This implies that if circuit managers are serious about improving principals' CPD, they should possess requisite skills, be passionate about quality education, and coordinate CPD in an organised manner to enhance its effectiveness.

2.10 CHAPTER SUMMARY

Continuous professional development has been identified as a critical aspect that needs attention in ensuring that principals can be effective in managing and leading their schools. Literature suggests that there is much needed to be done by circuit managers to ensure that the professional development of principals is implemented effectively to mitigate limitations identified in various areas. This chapter also outlined principals' perceptions and experiences regarding CPD interventions received from circuit managers. The next chapter (3) focuses on the research design and methodology utilised in the study.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter (2) on literature study provided a perspective on the theoretical and conceptual contexts related to the aim of the study, which was to investigate the perceptions and experiences of principals on circuit managers' role in the implementation of CPD. The literature provided context and relevance to the specific objectives stated below:

- To discover what constitutes the CPD role of the circuit manager;
- To examine the extent to which principals perceive CPD provided by circuit managers as being effective;
- To identify areas that necessitate CPD for school principals;
- To identify barriers that are encountered in the implementation of CPD by circuit managers; and
- To suggest recommendations that may enhance the implementation of CPD of principals offered by circuit managers.

This chapter (3) discusses the research methodology that guided the study.

3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

Shufutinsky (2020:50) mentions three types of research approaches: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-methods which provide direction to a study. In this study, the researcher opted for the qualitative research approach as a fundamentally suitable approach (Dissanayake, Mendis, Weerasekera, De Silva, Fernando, Konthsingha & Gajarayake, 2023:395). Rahman (2017:102) explains that a research approach is used to address the purpose that the researcher has in mind when conducting a study. Additionally, Nowell, Norris, White and Moules (2017:1) emphasise that a qualitative approach requires rigorous and appropriate methods to elicit relevant results. Hence,

Mishra and Alok (2020:1) view qualitative research as being naturalistic to promote accessing in-depth non-numerical data of situations that need investigation. Further, Dubey and Kothari (2019:129) confirm that the qualitative approach bridges the gaps in knowledge in a systematic way by collecting evidence and reporting findings that answer questions about a troubling phenomenon. Additionally, Taherdoost (2022:54) states that a suitable research approach can lead to discovering new insights, ideas, and theories. Therefore, qualitative research was adopted in this study as it was deemed beneficial for the researcher to dissect the social problem under investigation (Liamputtong, 2023:5).

The purpose of adopting a qualitative approach for this study was to gain insight into understanding principals' perceptions and experiences on circuit managers' role towards the implementation of CPD to upgrade principals' management and leadership skills (Efron & Ravid, 2020:46). Meyers (2019:5) states that this approach allows the researcher to observe and understand the context within which decisions are enacted. Therefore, a qualitative study facilitates the exploration and justification of why a particular phenomenon is the way it is (Adhabi & Anozie, 2017:02). Qualitative research utilises of a variety of empirical techniques; namely, case studies, personal experiences, introspections, narratives, interviews, observations, histories, interactions, and document analyses of texts (Aspers & Corte, 2019:142). These involve an interpretive and naturalistic approach (Rahman, 2017:103). Aspers and Corte (2019:142) conducted their study within participants' natural settings by attempting to make-sense of the phenomenon in terms of the meanings participants attach to contextual realities.

A qualitative approach verifies data through prescriptive testing, correlation, and description (Catalano, 2019:624). It also works within the context of human experiences and meaning-making emanating from such experiences (Bhattacharya, 2017:6). The qualitative approach helped the researcher uncover new insights and understand complex issues, shedding light on people's beliefs and behaviours related to the social or cultural norms of a group or a society (Hennink, Hutter & Bailey, 2020:11). Moreover, Flick (2018:21) asserts that qualitative research can be independent of quantitative methods, whereas quantitative methods need qualitative methods for explaining relationships among datasets. Myers (2019:06) interprets qualitative research as an in-depth investigation in conceptualising participants' understandings and feelings. This

implied that it was imperative for the researcher to use a qualitative approach in seeking to understand and tackle new problems, in addition to exploiting opportunities for eliciting participants' responses regarding behavioural patterns that involve group dynamics (Dudey & Kothari, 2022:129).

Importantly, Frost (2021:4) highlights that a qualitative research approach has a plural set of research styles due to its openness to diversity and its expansive approach of encompassing a variety of styles. Hence, qualitative research deals with aspects of reality that cannot be quantified but focuses on the understanding and explanation of the dynamics of social relations. Rahman (2016:104) states that the strength of using qualitative research as an approach for a research study is due to its potential to elicit incisive insights into designing, administering, interpreting, and testing, including exploring the participants' behaviour, perceptions, feelings and understandings. Based on the above-mentioned strengths of qualitative approach, Munthe-Kaas, Glenton, Booth, Noyes and Lewin (2019:02) acknowledge the need for varied criteria when assessing the strengths and limitations of different qualitative research methodologies, while acknowledging that a universal set of critical appraisal criteria for qualitative research may not exist. Munthe-Kaas et al. (2019:02) maintain there are some general principles of best practice that guide the conduct of qualitative research. In this study, the qualitative approach was applied by using the interpretive paradigm (Hennink et al., 2020:12).

The research design's overarching strategy for the implementation of specific methodologies is intended to provide an appropriate framework for a study (Abu-Taieh, Al Hadid & Mouatasim, 2020:28). In support, Clark, Foster, Sloan and Bryman (2021:39) affirm that the research design represents a structure that guides the execution of a research method and the analysis of the data that emerges. Further, Sing and Sahu (2021:29) see research design as the choice a researcher makes about the components of the study, and the development of such components.

In this regard, the researcher selected the phenomenological research design that facilitates the understanding of the universal perceptions and experiences of principals in the implementation of CPD by circuit managers (Cardano, 2018:23). The methodology involves eliciting in-depth interviewees' responses at a non-numerical data level. To fully investigate the perceptions of principals relating to the implementation of

continuous professional development by circuit managers, the researcher followed a qualitative approach by applying focus group research procedures for the purpose of eliciting thick and rich meanings by exploring participants' perceptions. The focus group technique was chosen to capture several people's opinions during face-to-face interactions, while at the same time steering the discussion towards several specific issues (Hennink, Hutter & Bailey, 2020:138). The phenomenological research design also allowed the researcher to decide on the sequence of the research processes suitable for the study (Matanda & Mawere, 2022:47).

Selecting a phenomenological research design assisted the researcher to pursue the following processes (Raju & Prabhu, 2019:43):

- To specify the objectives of the study, and the methodology and techniques to be adopted to achieve the objectives;
- To develop a plan to decide on the sources of data,
- To specify the methods of collecting, analysing, and interpreting the data; and
- To decide on the allocation of resources, and planning timeframes.

In consideration of principals' perceptions of the way circuit managers implement continuous professional development, this study also believed that reality exists outside of school principals' experiences. The researcher believes that knowledge and skills can be understood through the active engagement of school principals and circuit managers. Hence, the researcher selected the qualitative design to generate in-depth data to avoid superficiality of information by drawing on authentic facts from first-hand sources. Hence, the interpretivist paradigm was used to obtain in-depth information from participants of this study. Thus, the researcher committed and aligned this research to the selected approach.

3.3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter presents the methodological procedures employed in alignment with the aim, objectives, and research questions of the study. Singh (2022:19) defines research methodology as methods that the researcher uses to conduct research systematically to resolve the research problem. Daniel (2019:118) states that research methodology is an epistemic enterprise, allowing the researcher to interpret meanings from datasets based on what was observed and how it was observed, which includes enrichment through personal reflections and experiences of the social world relative to what is being studied. Sivukamar, Godase and Pradhan (2022:19) define research methodology as a process that describes processes pursued by the researcher to produce credible and valid results that answer the research questions.

Additionally, McMillan and Schumacher (2010:8) state that research methodology is a systematic and purposeful plan that is not haphazard but organised to yield rich data to solve a particular societal problem. In a broader context, the term methodology means designing or planning to give direction to the study. Therefore, in this direction, a researcher must make critical decisions to organise, plan, and guide the study. Van Wyk (2015:14) describes methodology as an explicitly formulated approach to access data via specific methods for later analysis. In sum, Patel, Jena and Gupta (2023:17) refer to methodology as a plan that is utilised to thoroughly manage issues and processes that emerge throughout the course of research, including selecting the research design, research methods, population, sample, instrumentation and preparing questions.

There are various methods to conduct qualitative research which comprise of logic, ethnography, discourse analysis, case study, open-ended interviews, participant observation, and counselling (Muhammad, 2022:168). Also, Merriam and Tisdell (2018: 15) state that methodology involves therapy, grounded theory, biography, comparisons, introspection, justification, focus groups, literacy criticism, and historical research. This was in line with what was adopted by the researcher who conducted focus group interviews as a part of methodology. This study followed the qualitative design with the focus group interview being part of methodology to gather data. To realise the

aim of the study, the researcher employed the qualitative research approach which was most suitable for this type of research.

Having presented the research design and methodology, the next section focuses on the philosophical paradigm that underpinned the investigation.

3.3.1 Research Paradigm

A paradigm represents one's conception of the world, its nature, and one's position in it, including a multitude of relationships with the world and its constituent parts (Coe, Waring, Hedges & Ashley, 2017:17). Additionally, Rahman (2017:104) defines a paradigm as a net that contains the researchers' epistemological, ontological, and methodological foundations. This study was anchored on a framework that promoted observation and understanding of the phenomenon. This determined both what was seen, and how it was seen - which is described as a paradigm (Babbie, 2020:31). For this study, the researcher chose the interpretive paradigm due to its emphasis on interpretation and observation in comprehending the social world, a key aspect of qualitative research (Hennink et al., 2020:15).

The interpretive paradigm is applied in guiding qualitative research such as case study, grounded theory, ethnography, phenomenology, narrative study, systematic review, and discourse analysis (Gunbayi et al., 2018:63). Qualitative research is rooted in methods used to understand knowledge related to human social sciences; it cannot be the same as its usage in physical sciences because human beings interpret their world and act based on such interpretation (Pham, 2018: 03). Darman, Ubud, Siti and Khusniyah (2017:164) believe that social reality is consciously and actively built by individuals who have the potential to make-sense of every deed executed by them.

The study was underpinned by the interpretive paradigm which helped to describe, understand and interpret participants' experiences (Tuohy, Cooney, Dowling, Murphy & Smith, 2013:6). This interpretive paradigm focuses on people's process of acquiring knowledge, how meaning is constructed, and their quality of interactions and relations (Gunbayi & Sorm, 2018:63). This suggests that the interpretive paradigm is the study of human experience, the way in which things are perceived, and how they appear to the conscious mind. Thus, the reason for selecting the interpretive paradigm was

based on its importance of interpretation and observation in understanding the social world, which is an integral component of qualitative research (Hennink et al., 2020:15).

Since this study aimed at describing the world as it appeared to people, there was the need to engage in a variety of processes to achieve this. Furthermore, the study emphasised descriptions of what people perceive, and how they interpreted what they experienced (Gunbayi & Sorm, 2018:64). The participants for this study were drawn from the population relevant to the study; the sample was finalised by determining the years of experience in principalship, exposure to CPD, as well as previous networking with colleagues on the same level.

The next section deals with the size and sample of the population as discussed briefly in Chapter One.

3.4 SAMPLING AND SAMPLING PROCEDURES

This section focused on the sample selected for the study by including comprehensive information on the sampling process.

3.4.1 Sampling

Warwick-Both, Bagnall and Coan (2021:43) describe sampling as a process of selecting research participants from the target population that is being studied. This process was necessary because it would be practically impossible for a researcher to measure characteristics of all units of a population (Zikmund, D'Allesandro, Lowe, Winzar & Babin, 2017:368). The study employed a non-probability sampling technique focusing on purposive sampling. Flick (2021:105) and Bird (2017:332) define purposive sampling as strategically selecting information-rich cases, which in their nature answer the research questions of the study.

Purposive sampling is a method when researchers use their knowledge about the population of interest to hand-pick relevant people to include in the sample to answer the research questions (Bird, 2017:332). Therefore, purposive sampling was used in this study to maximise the representativeness of a population and recognise that this might be achieved through purposeful or snowball procedures (Hunter, McCallum & Howes,

2018:04). The purposive strategy assisted the researcher to conduct a study with a sample containing a satisfactory number of elements sufficient to produce reliable conclusions regarding an entire population (Noll, Cadotti, De Rossa, De Castro & Loss, 2018:02). Also, the reasons for adopting a purposive strategy assumed that given the aims and objectives of the study, specific groups might hold different and important views about the ideas and issues on the topic under study (Campbell, Greenwood, Prior, Shearer, Walken, Young, Bywaters & Walker, 2020:654). This study's sample contained a satisfactory number of participants to produce reliable conclusions regarding an entire population (Noll, Cadotti, De Rossa, De Castro & Loss, 2018:02).

A representative sample was drawn from a defined target population with other characteristics that closely matched those of the population (Warwick-Booth, Bagnall & Coan (2021:43). The sample that was chosen for this study comprised of principals based in the Motheo District in the Free State province that had been exposed to CPD. A sample of principals was requested from the district office which was used to identify the principals. This list was needed to ensure that everyone in the population was identified to have an equal opportunity for selection as participants (Asekaya 2014:37; Patel, Jena, Gupta & Lathar, 2023:128). The strategy for identification focused on principals who had more than five years' of experience as school principals, and had been exposed to CPD.

Having unpacked sampling, the next subsection outlines participant selection.

3.4.1.1 Participant selection

Participant selection is defined as a choice that is made on who could richly answer the research questions to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon prior to the commencement of the research project (Jaison, 2018:126). Participants were informed of their voluntary participation, their right to refuse to answer any 'awkward' questions, and the right to withdraw from the study at any time even after consenting to participate (Ente & Ukpe, 2022:80). The criteria for selection of participants included having five years' experience in principalship, and adequate exposure to CPD. The researcher stipulated the latter criterion after a study was conducted by the Department of Education which indicated that 91% of all principals were involved in CPD since 2011 (Steyn, 2011:4).

The initial sample for each focus group interview was drawn from secondary schools in five selected circuits of the Motheo District. The actual participation per group ranged from two to four participants due to unforeseen circumstances causing the focus groups to shrink to smaller numbers. The initial target of selecting 40 participants was intended to capture the diverse views of different groups. However, after initial interviews and analysis of data, the sample size was adjusted to 26 participants to ensure a manageable focus group size which gave the researcher an opportunity to engage incisively with the data analysis processes. Acocella and Cataldi (2021:124) state that small focus groups are also recommended as they assist in facilitating the establishment of a peaceful atmosphere, which might induce the participants to address deeper issues since they have the time available. While larger groups can lead to logistical challenges like reduced time for each participant to contribute meaningfully to the discussion, they can produce expansive and richer responses.

The initial participation of circuit managers for focus group interviews was critical for the study as the researcher planned to avoid reaching possible data saturation in the focus group interviews with principals (Kawamura, 2020:39). Circuit managers as former principals are direct line managers and officials responsible for the professional development of principals and are deemed as critical inclusions in the study. The purpose of their inclusion was for the researcher to source circuit managers' views and experiences of CPD provision for principals, and to confirm perceptions and experiences of principals which emanated from focus group interviews (with principals). Data saturation can emerge at any time and space during data gathering processes; for this reason, it must be considered and managed as a variable that can directly or indirectly affect the smooth process of the study (Giunti, Aurino, Masset & Prifti, 2022:48). Data saturation is referred to as a state where the researcher does not find any new information following the transcriptions of various focus group interviews (Islam & Al-Deehani, 2022:9). Another reason for interviewing circuit managers was that they were the principals' direct line managers who may have facilitated some of the CPD activities on behalf of the CMs. As such, the study sought to involve them to compare the data from principals to that of the CMs.

The ensuing sub-section discussed site selection.

3.4.1.2 Site Selection

Site selection is defined as a component of research design where fieldwork is conducted to provide data which will be analysed and interpreted with the possibility of answering the research questions (Hachtma, 2023:2026). Prior to site-selection, the researcher had to consider which site or groups will add value in terms of addressing the research questions (Liamputtong, 2022:274). The researcher ought to have a clear thought-out plan as to reasons pertaining to the choice of a selected site. For this study, the researcher purposefully selected circuits in the Motheo District as research sites due to the following reasons:

- *Ease of access*

Gaining access to the appropriate sample in the field (site) was done through negotiation with the DoE, who is the gatekeeper. Gatekeepers are authorities who grant or withhold access to the researcher, dependent on the degree to which people, places or events being studied are part of a formal environment (Denscombe, 2021:123).

- *Travelling between sites*

The selected circuits were in close proximity to each other, allowing the researcher to travel in a sequenced manner to collect data in each research circuit (Giunti, Aurino, Masset & Prifti, 2022:48).

- *Circuit selection*

The rationale for the selection of circuits was purposively sampled due to the principals in the selected circuits having shown an interest to participate in the study, and the willingness of the circuit managers to also participate.

3.5 DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS

Data collection is defined as the process of gathering relevant information to gain insight into a particular phenomenon (Zha, Bhat, Lai, Yang & Hu, 2023:946). Greenland and Dana (2019) list the different types of data collection instruments as observations, semi-structured interviews, elicitation techniques, non-participant observations, focus

group discussions, and document analysis, among others. In this study data collection was conducted through focus group interviews.

3.5.1 The Interview

The interview is regarded as the most common technique of data collection in qualitative research (Leiringer & Dainty, 2023:244). Interviews are defined as a methodological data generation strategy typically selected to provide information on participants' experiences, values, beliefs, perceptions, needs, or recommendations for improving or adapting elements of education or policy (Jack, Orr, Campbell, Whitmore & Cammer, 2022:5). Oflazoglu (2017:13) adds that interviews are also regarded as a technique that the researcher uses to obtain data from the participants by directing their opinions on a subject or case. This study explored relevant issues that were linked to interviews, especially aspects that focus on qualitative data collection (Adhabi & Anozie, 2017:01).

The purpose for selecting the interview technique as an instrument for collecting data was based on its flexibility as it allows the researcher to also use multi-sensory channels such as verbal, non-verbal, heard, and spoken communication to be recorded (Ndlovu, 2017:41). Therefore, an interview can be comprehended as an interactive process where a person asks questions to seek information (Adhabi & Anozie, 2017:03). Queirós, Faria and Almeida (2017:372) advocate interviewing and observation as two main methods to gain an in-depth and extensive understanding of a complex reality. Van de Wiel (2017:118) states that the key to all good interviews is to clearly ask what you want to know, and to ensure that you receive the answers that allow you to know what you want to know.

Also, Stroh (2019:89) emphasises that a good interviewer must prepare questions in advance and later analyse the responses and verify results. This highlights the importance of the research questions, the interview guide, and the role of the interviewer in asking questions and evaluating responses. As such, interviews were used in this study to mainly seek, describe, and reveal the meanings of central themes and issues in the lives of the people being interviewed (Okeke & Van Wyk, 2017:298).

The study conducted interviews as the main source of data collection. Williams (2029:134) states that there are three fundamental types of interviews in data

collection: structured, semi-structured, and unstructured interviews. In this study, data was collected through semi-structured focus group interviews.

The next subsection focused on semi structured focus groups interview as well as proving reasons for its use.

3.5.1.1 Semi-structured Focus Group Interviews

A semi-structured interview offers a blend of structure and the ability to carefully probe and understand participants' experiences and world views (Nyiramana, 2023:64). Semi-structured interviews have elements of both structured and unstructured interviews; thus, the researcher chose this method as it was appropriate for qualitative research. Willig (2021:32) maintains that the semi-structured interview is a method of data collection that is compatible with methods of data analysis such as discourse analysis, grounded theory, and interpretive phenomenology. Also, the researcher selected semi-structured interviews as it allows for a certain set of questions to be posed which was guided by the interview protocol thus allowing conversational, two-way communication amongst the participants (Newton & Knight, 2022:111). Willamore, Ginsborg and Perkins (2021:138) add that semi-structured interviews provide insights into group interactions that assist the researcher to collect detailed qualitative data about the group. Another advantage of semi-structured interviews, according to Broody (2020:45), is that participants are accorded an opportunity to be flexible in asking for clarifications, explanations, and elaborations on aspects of the narrative that are unclear or vague. Additionally, Hair, Page, Brunsveld, Merkle and Cleton (2023:210) allude that the semi-structured interview may be regarded as the best-known approach for focus group discussions.

A focus group is a group of people who engage in a discussion guided by a set of questions and moderated by a facilitator (Eaton, 2017:7). Group interviews could be used to describe participants' descriptions of their lived experiences in the form discussions, debates, and justifications of their opinions and attitudes (Mukherjee, Zabala & Huge, 2017:57). Through focus group interviews the interviewer wanted to reveal what interviewees knew, did, thought, felt, believed, intended to do, wanted, or needed, and assumed that the participant could communicate this during the interview (Van de Wiel, 2017:18).

Additionally, a focus group discussion is defined as a systematic data collection method which includes semi-structured interviews and discussions between the leader and the group. It is also a tool which one can use to gauge the dynamics of a group to elicit thick descriptions of data according to the scope, limits, and specifications of the study (Karataş 2019:591). Focus groups are popular and useful to investigate complex behaviour where the researcher can interact with the participants. The information is typically provided quicker than if individuals were interviewed separately. The two main characteristics that differentiate focus groups from other techniques depend on the quality of interaction that emerges during the discussions (Acocella & Cataldi, 2020:19). Queirós, Faria and Almeida (2017:377) opine that focus groups can provide more rigour through a broader range of information and opportunities to seek clarification and elaboration during questioning. It was for these reasons that the researcher believed questioning in focus group interviews might encourage critical reflection related to the perceptions and experiences of principals on circuit managers' role towards CPD training constraints (Husband, 2020:2). The groups' interactions shed light on what was often unspoken but could be comprehended by participants and researchers alike (Acocella & Cataldi, 2020:211).

Friedman, Wyatt and Ash (2022:367) indicate that another advantage of focus groups interviews is that it assists the researchers and participants to interact in such a way that ideas, opinions, and experiences about the topic flow to foster deeper and more critical discussions thus precipitating a holistic understanding of the phenomenon under investigation (Straker, 2020:1047). However, there are also disadvantages of focus group interviews such as being costly and time-consuming (Adhabi & Anozie, 2017:07). Also, the interviewer in trying to establish rapport with the participants to create a sense of trust to establish a respectful relationship may be hindered by factors such as gender and race, which may affect data collection processes (Dobe, 2022:147).

In this study, to overcome the disadvantages, the researcher commenced the interviews by asking participants simple questions that focused on their biographical information. These questions assisted the participants to settle, feel comfortable, and welcomed, thus promoting rapport with the interviewer. Subsequent questions that were posed by the researcher were focused on providing data to answer the research

questions. The researcher ensured that the design of the questions was structured in a manner that would not coerce participants to give answers desired by the researcher (Young, Rose, Mumby, Benitex-Capistros, Derrick, Finch, Garcia, Home, Marwaha, Morgans, Parkinson, Shah, Wilson & Mukherjee, 2017:11).

The next sub-section discusses the interview process.

3.5.2 The Interview Process

During the interview process, the researcher followed the prescribed seven stages which are listed and discussed by Williams (2019:134):

- Stage 1: Thematising
- Stage 2: Designing
- Stage 3: Interviewing
- State 4: Transcribing
- Stage 5: Analysing
- Stage 6 Verifying
- Stage 7: Reporting

Stage 1: Thematising

The researcher contacted the participants by sending them an e-mail which included the researcher's particulars, the purpose of the e-mail, the approval letters from the DoE, permission letter from the University to commence research, and the information and consent forms. This process was followed by the researcher contacting the principals telephonically to confirm receipt of the e-mail and to schedule a formal meeting to provide information about the intended focus group interview session, including other finer details of the research process. The meeting scheduled by the researcher with the principals was for the following reasons:

- To explain the purpose of the focus group interview;
- To select a convenient venue for the actual focus group interview;
- To negotiate appropriate timeframes to conduct focus group interviews;
- To share the information via the consent form, read it, and ask for clarity seeking questions;

- To inform participants on the protection of confidentiality;
- To request for their signed consent to participate in the focus group interview;
- To share the interview guide; and
- To ask for permission to audio-record the actual focus group interview proceedings.

The stage 1 process also allowed for consensus to be reached in selecting the date and time to hold focus group interviews, in addition to identifying a central and convenient venue that may be conducive for conducting interviews with principals.

Stage 2: Designing

After the researcher explained the purpose of the interview to the participants, the sharing of the interview guide followed. The interview guide is defined as the primary data-collection tool that will help determine how the discussion should be directed to cover the topic and to ensure that the research aim is kept in mind (Friedman, Wyatt, & Ash, 2022:367). The purpose of sharing the interview guide was to minimise misunderstandings and errors in collecting data. This interview process was piloted so that the researcher could check whether the questions on the interview-questionnaire guide were understood, and to allow for clarity (George & Rogers, 2019:78). The researcher provided the participants with the interview guide, allowed them to peruse, and then ask clarifying questions. The feedback after piloting confirmed that the interview guide could be used as the final guide in the actual focus group interviews. After confirmation of the interview guide, timeframes and venues were finalised by the researcher who proceeded to plan for catering to eliminate financial implications that may affect the participants.

Stage 3: Interviewing

The researcher prepared the selected venue, tested the recording device, checked memory cards, and arranged extra batteries for the audio-recording instruments. The name tags, table-setting, and preparation of refreshments were done an hour in advance prior to each focus group interview. On arrival of the participants, the researcher opened the focus group interview by introducing the focus group interviewees, and then provided them with background information pertaining to the research; namely,

the title of the research, the aim, and evidence of approval to conduct interviews by the UFS Research Committee and the Department of Education. The researcher also outlined issues of anonymity, confidentiality, the right to participate in the study, the exit option, consent to be recorded, and the right not to respond to questions if uncomfortable.

After the formalities, the researcher read through the interview schedule and indicated to the focus group how the process of questioning would unfold, and what was expected from them. The participants were provided with name tags; for example, Participant A, to ensure anonymity. Participants were requested to switch off their cell phones prior to the interview, and were again informed that the interviews would be audio-recorded. The researcher, as the interviewer, posed questions and encouraged participants to elaborate on certain points. The participants responded to the questions posed by the researcher, and this was audio-recorded by using a high-quality digital voice-recorder. A cellular phone was used as a backup system while field notes were penned as a secondary source of data collection (Silverman & Patterson, 2014:69).

The interviewer not only has to deal with group dynamics, individual personalities, possible disruptive behaviour, and potential runaway dialogue, but also should possess the ability to ignite conversations when needed, including exuding a firm but gentle authority over the group with a relaxed style, minimising potential bias, limiting the actions of domineering participants, and supervising the use of audio-visual equipment during face-to-face discussions (Roller & Lavrakas, 2015:112).

Stage 4: Transcribing

Transcribing is the first step in the (verbatim) recording of narratives into written word. Transcripts are defined as typed records of audio-recordings, video-recording, and field-notes (Grove & Gray, 2022:92). Transcription is said to be a notoriously time-consuming, tedious task (McMullin, 2023:11); however, due to the researcher's experience in speed-typing the task was manageable. Depending on the topic, it would not be unusual for a single individual to transcribe multiple interviews, and this might entail listening (often with multiple repetitions to ensure accuracy) to participants' narratives of experiences, or histories of trauma, abuse, pain, loss, and poor physical or mental health (Jack et al., 2023:15). The researcher transcribed each of the focus group

interview recordings which took a minimum of three hours. As part of ensuring the accuracy of information, the recordings were member-checked. Participants were requested to authenticate their responses against written records to validate the accuracy of the captured information, after which the possible correcting of errors would ensue (DePoy & Gitlin, 2019:277).

Stage 5: Analysing

The analysis of focus group data can be done at three (3) different levels: Individual, group, and interaction. For this study the researcher used the group level of analysis which provided the researcher with data pertaining to whether there is consensus on a particular topic, what the topic means for the group, and how the topic is discussed (Cyr, 2019:14). The researcher used focus group data to answer questions posed during the focus group interviews. During this stage of data analysis, the researcher repetitively read the verbatim interview transcripts to identify common themes which emerged from participants' responses; a process referred to as thematic analysis (Maguire, 2017:3351).

Stage 6: Verifying

Verification is a process of authenticating conclusions drawn from the data gathered during the focus group interview sessions (Bathazar & Vendrely, 2022:172). In verifying the data of this study, the researcher corroborated the data gathered from the principals' focus group interview against the data collected from the circuit managers' focus group interviews. Furthermore, member-checking was conducted for participant validation - a practice to verify if the research data captured was accurate (Bussetto et al. (2020). Member-checking allows for participants to correct errors and present new facts or perceptions which might have been omitted during the first round of focus group interviews (George, 2017:130). It should also be noted that member-checking can be used either formally during the focus group interview or informally during a follow-up interview meeting or conversation. For this study, member-checking was done informally during the interview process where the researcher would verify the response provided by the participant in situations where the participant was not clear or audible enough (Sauer, Willcocks & Lacity, 2016:88). Member- checking is a

technique that could help the researcher to reduce errors. This approach offers an additional source of data, particularly when it is at odds with the researcher's own interpretation, which could lead to reworking of the analysis process (McKim, 2023:43).

Stage 7: Reporting

The reporting of the focus group interviews was presented in accordance with the research aim of the study. The report prepared by the researcher reflected the data drawn from the focus group interviews which included the findings which emanated from the data analysis processes (Subudhi & Mishra, 2020:83).

This section provided an explanation on how data was gathered. The next section dealt with data analysis.

3.6 DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis is an ongoing process during research which allows the researcher to gain deep familiarity with data which is likely to generate more meaningful insights (Aurini, Heath & Howells, 2021:245). It involves analysing participant information by employing general analysis steps, as well as those steps found within a specific design (Creswell 2014:261). Eaton (2017:22) asserts that data analysis is one of the most important, yet least understood stages of the qualitative research process. Through rigorous analysis, data can illuminate the complexity of human behaviour, inform interventions, and give voice to people's lived-experiences (Raskind, Shelton, Comeau, Cooper, Griffith, & Kegler 2019:32). If data analysis is conducted systematically, it can be efficiently communicated to others (Nowell, Norris, White & Moules, 2017:01). Daniel (2019:120) states that to achieve trustworthiness in qualitative research, it's essential to use systematic methods for organising and analysing data, including coding, identifying common themes, categorising themes, and providing a clear theoretical or logical rationale for removing overlapping themes.

In this study, data analysis was implemented after the completion of all focus group interviews. Qualitative data analysis consists of various methods: narrative, case

study, discourse analysis, and thematic analysis (Dunwoodie, Macaulay & Newman, 2023:880). For this study, the researcher was motivated to utilise the thematic analysis approach which was deemed appropriate because of its adaptable framework, while allowing space to engage methodically with data to produce themes and patterns through dissecting focus group transcripts (Naeem, Ozuem, Howel & Ranfagni, 2023).

This systematic process commenced with the researcher collating all data and then preparing a strategy for transcribing the collected data. After the verbatim transcription process, data analysis ensued, followed by the interpretation of the analysis. Researchers must be careful not to assume that what was said in a focus group represented the opinions, beliefs, or perceptions of an entire population (Eaton, 2017:22). Considering this caution, the results of this study gleaned from the data extracted from focus group interviews may not be generalised.

3.6.1 Thematic Analysis

Castleberry and Nolen (2018:47) refer to thematic analysis as a form of qualitative data analysis applied to a wide range of research interests and topics. It can be used from a few theoretical perspectives, and is applied to usefully answer a wide range of research questions (Cassell, Cunliffe & Grandy, 2017). The researcher selected this TA method due to its appropriateness to working with focus group interviews as it allows the researcher to identify themes and patterns in the datasets that are useful in explaining certain behaviour to address the research questions.

Nowell et al. (2017:02) explain the appropriateness of thematic analysis:

- Identifies, analyses, and reports patterns within data;
- Discovers patterns and insights hidden within the data;
- It is accessible, flexible, and provides deep contextual and conceptual understandings of data;
- Makes connections to the topic in terms relating to skills and idea formulation;
- Gets researchers focused; and
- Engages researchers to access data and samples.

Thematic analysis has become a popular tool for analysing qualitative data in psychology and beyond (Willig & Rogers, 2017:01). It has also been used interchangeably

with content analysis to refer to both qualitative and quantitative content, and appears in methods textbooks, empirical articles across the breadth of the discipline, and is taught to education, pharmacy modules, business management, and organisational studies learners at all levels (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018:807). Thematic analysis was conducted as a qualitative data analysis methodology which involved systematically identifying, organising, and offering insights into patterns of meaning (themes) in an extensive dataset, which allows us to see and make-sense of collective meanings and experiences (Marques & Queiros, 2021:148).

Thematic analysis is described as a theoretically flexible tool for analysing qualitative data; it is a six-phase, practical analysis that acknowledges the analytical process guided by decision and revision rather than simply emerging from the data (Lou, Frumer & Schlutter, 2017:1323).

The researcher first read through the transcription of data for the purpose of detecting major subjects, themes, or trends. Themes were then written down and each given a specific code as seen in table 4.1 in the next chapter.

The researcher first perused the verbatim transcriptions of data for the purpose of detecting major subjects, themes, patterns or trends. Themes were then written down and each given a specific code (table 4.1). In order to ensure transparency and rigour in a TA study, a structured and systematic approach to data collection, coding, theme development and interpretation was followed. The data related to CPD implementation by CMs which pertained to their roles, challenges and effectiveness. All gathered information was read repetitively to immerse the researcher into the datasets to emerge with an overview of distinct patterns or key issues. This process was followed by initial coding which involved identifying and tagging relevant snippets of information. In this phase, the researcher generated a set of preliminary codes that captured important aspects of the data in line with the research questions. These included the role of the CM in CPD, inconsistent CPD, and barriers to CPD implementation.

Example of codes used:

- a) *Role of Circuit Managers*: Responsible for organising, monitoring, and ensuring effectiveness of CPD programmes.

- b) *Inconsistent discharge of CPD responsibilities*: Circuit managers showing irregular engagement with CPD due to systematic challenges.
- c) *Barriers to CPD implementation*: Time management issues, lack of resources, communication problems.

Use of participants exact words was employed in some instances to maintain authenticity of their perspectives, especially when discussing barriers like “lack of resources” or overloaded schedules”. After the coding process, the researcher ventured into the development of themes from being broader to more focused. This process was used to structure findings and identify patterns in data. Similarly, issues like time management, communication challenges and lack of resources were clustered under one theme “Barriers encountered in the implementation of CPD”. An example of theme development in this instance would be as follows:

Theme 1: Role of CM in CPD implementation

- a) Category 1: Role of CMs as mentors and coaches

Theme 2: CMs’ discharge of CPD responsibilities

- b) Category 1: Inconsistent discharge of CPD responsibilities

After the development of initial themes, the researcher relooked at the data to ensure the themes were accurately presented, checked consistency of coding across the data, and ensured that the themes represented meaningful aspects of data. An example for this follows:

Themes like, Barriers encountered in the implementation of CPD had many categories and sub-categories like communication issues, lack of resources, time-constraints and sub-categories on inadequate planning and insufficient time for CPD. The sub-categories were refined and positioned under categories to indicate the relationship between the issues. After the refining process, the researcher presented the themes, categories, and subcategories in a logical manner to ensure the readers could easily trace the connections between the data and the researcher’s interpretation. Further, the researcher ensured that the themes aligned to the research objectives. To ensure

rigour, the researcher employed member-checking so that findings were shared with participants to ensure themes accurately reflected participants' perspectives.

Like all other data analysis methods, thematic analysis has its advantages and disadvantages, which are outlined below (Nowell et al., 2017:2):

3.6.1.1 Advantages of Thematic Analysis

- Thematic analysis does not require detailed theoretical and technological knowledge of other qualitative approaches;
- It is easily grasped by researchers who are unfamiliar with qualitative methods;
- It is a useful method to examine perspectives of research participants, similarities and differences, and generates unanticipated insights;
- It helps produce a clear and organised final report; and
- It can be used to summarise key features of large datasets.

The researcher deemed it necessary to be aware of the disadvantages of thematic analysis as outlined by Bellaert (2022:178) who confirms that the researcher ought to consider the disadvantages and move cautiously forward in the process.

3.6.1.2 Disadvantages of Thematic Analysis

- Thematic analysis lacks substantial literature for the researcher as compared to other qualitative research methods;
- It does not allow the researchers to make claims about language use; and
- Its flexibility can lead to inconsistencies and lack of coherence (Javadi & Zarea, 2016: 39).

To proceed, the researcher followed Islam and Aldalhani's (2022:7) thematic analysis model which was founded on Braun and Clarke's six steps:

Step 1: Data familiarisation

Step 2: Initial coding generation

Step 3: Search for themes based on initial coding

Step 4: Review of themes

Step 5: Theme definition and labelling

Step 6: Report writing

Step 1: Data familiarisation

The researcher utilised the data collected through focus group interviews in the form of recordings and field notes. The first step involved familiarisation with the data by the researcher listening to audio-recordings, repetitive readings of verbatim transcriptions, and reviewing field-notes. Data reading and re-reading were performed to gain a deeper insight into the phenomenon which enabled the researcher to easily identify patterns and themes. In this study, confirmation on the accuracy of captured data from the recordings to the verbatim transcriptions was attained through member-checks and peer refereeing. Furthermore, the researcher identified and highlighted key words relative to the research questions to obtain a clear understanding of the contents of the datasets (Kua, Teo & Lim, 2022:1348).

Step 2: Initial coding generation

In the initial step of thematic analysis, the researcher familiarised herself with the data, followed by the development of additional codes. Kankaew (2022:173) states that this is a critical process that allows the researcher to access the bottom of the issue being examined. In this study, the participants were assigned pseudonyms for the purpose of confidentiality (e.g. P1, PA, etc.). Thereafter, allocating pseudonyms to groups of participant-responses as per the research questions was done because the study involved focus group interviews (e.g. FG1 for Focus Group 1 etc.). Transcripts were labelled and stored securely in password-protected files in the researcher's computer and USB of the researcher. Printed copies of transcripts were available for the researcher to peruse whilst another set was securely stored as back-up to the original data.

Step 3: Coding data

In this study, the researcher applied the Microsoft Word app to develop tables that facilitated the categorisation of information into themes and sub-themes. The researcher then proceeded to thoroughly read each focus group interview transcript, to draw raw data for later analysis (Jnanathapaswi, 2021:3). In ensuring that codes were identified, the researcher inserted descriptive codes next to the relevant extracts (Kua,

Teo & Lim, 2022:1348). This process assisted the researcher to detect themes required for analysis, and to confirm whether these codes relate to the generated themes.

Step 4: Review of themes

After coding and developing themes and sub-themes, the researcher reviewed them to ascertain if there was a need for further refinement. This process allowed the researcher to reflect on the themes, their relevancy, and to identify significant sub-themes emerging from the themes. This process could also assist the researcher in detecting 'new information' that may enhance the richness of the results (Kankaew, 2022:173).

Step 5: Theme identification and labelling

The researcher's review of themes or patterns in the datasets led to theme identification. This process provided the researcher with an opportunity to categorise the themes that emerged from stage 4 to cluster them in relation to pre-defined objectives and then to label them appropriately. Meticulous labelling allowed for theme-focusing and the analytic scope or context of it (Seth, Chadha & Bhatia, 2022:64). The researcher ensured that the definition of each theme was recorded to provide analytic clarity, and to identify if the themes made-sense within the research scope

Step 6: Report writing

The researcher considered the research objectives to guide the structure for writing the report by allocating a section for each objective. These objectives guided the main headings, outlined the themes and sub-themes which encompassed data drawn from the coded analysed transcriptions, and then presented them in a report format. The first sub-section included the type of data, the method of analysis, the findings emanating from the analysis, elaboration of the findings, and the relevance of the findings to this study.

Having investigated the data analysis, the researcher focused on trustworthiness of the research as it is an issue that underpins the integrity and validation of this study.

3.7 TRUSTWORTHINESS

To ensure that the research was trustworthy or believable, the researcher adhered to the four principles or criteria for trustworthiness; namely, credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Faintuch & Faintuch, 2022:57).

3.7.1 Credibility

Akyildiz (2020:325) states that credibility is one of the significant components to ensure trustworthiness. It is the equivalent of internal validity in qualitative research, and is concerned with the aspect of truth-value (Korstjens & Moser 2018:121). For credibility to be achieved, the researcher provided a thorough description of the data analysis and verification of the sources of data. In addition, the final report or the descriptions or themes were submitted to participants for verification purposes (Daniel, 2019:121). Prolonged engagements of verifying information, including member-checks, were all necessary to ensure the credibility of the study. Also, Nowell et al. (2017:03) advocate peer-briefing or review for external checking on the research process (including verification of collected data) which increases the credibility of preliminary findings and interpretations. Shufutinsky (2020:51) elaborates that the researcher should ensure credible interpretations of data while convincing the readers that the conclusions were plausible, unbiased, defensible, trustworthy, and reflected the truth. Credibility corresponds with the notion of internal validity, which means that the participants recognise the meaning that they themselves give to a situation or condition; that is, they contribute to the truth of the findings in their own social context (Holloway & Galvin, 2023:305).

For maintain credibility the researcher explicitly described the data collection processes, data analysis procedures, and verification of sources of data. In addition, the final report was checked for verification purposes (Daniel, 2019:121). In this study, the results displayed honesty, rigour, transparency, open communication, truthfulness, respect for participants, and accountability.

3.7.2 Transferability

Transferability refers to the degree to which the results of a qualitative research study can be generalised or transferred to other contexts or settings (Conway, 2020:133; Akyldiz, 2020:325; Kearney et al., 2015:9). Transferability in research provides sufficient context and evidence to determine whether the results could be applied externally (Williams, Olausson, Bowles & Lord, 2022:71). However, the findings of a small sample cannot be generalised to other populations and situations (Nowell et al., 2017:3).

3.7.3 Dependability

Dependability refers to the stability of data over time and under different conditions; that is, whether the findings are consistent and can be repeated (Megheirkouni & Moir, 2023:859). To achieve dependability, the researcher ensured that the research process was logical, traceable, and clearly documented (Nowell et al, 2017:3). Conway (2020:133) concurs and adds that the audit process may be conducted to demonstrate dependability even though it may be difficult to establish unless an extensive and detailed record of the process for others to replicate is observed. For this reason, dependability was maintained by allowing someone outside of the research to referee or review, audit and critique the research's processes (Moon, Brewer, Januchowski-Hartley, Adams & Blackman, 2016:2). In this study, dependability was guaranteed by ensuring transparency in data collection techniques, detailed data analysis processes, theoretical generalisation, academic reviewing, and flexibility to change as the study progressed. The focus on group interviews and an inquiry audit, both internal and external, ensured that data collection, data analysis, and data interpretation were aligned to the objectives of the study.

3.7.4 Confirmability

Confirmability means the results of the research can be confirmed by other researchers (Akyldiz 2020:326). In support, Elo, Kääriäinen, Kanste, Pölkki, Utriainen and Kyngäs (2014:2) state that confirmability is the degree of objectivity determined by independent people about data accuracy, relevance, and meaning. Confirmability refers to the researcher's ability to demonstrate that the data represents the participants' responses and not the researcher's biases or viewpoints. Moreover, it can be

demonstrated by describing how conclusions and interpretations were established and that the findings were derived directly from the collected data (Faintuch & Faintuch, 2022:57). Confirmability is established when credibility, transferability, and dependability are achieved (Ngulube, 2021:365). Confirmability was employed by the researcher of this study to ensure that the interpretations and findings were clearly recognised from the raw data by demonstrating how the conclusions and interpretations were drawn (Nowell et al., 2017:3). This was done by availing full details of the data on which the researcher based her interpretations (Liu, 2020:66). Furthermore, confirmability for this study was ensured through the researcher protecting and preserving participants' viewpoints by avoiding any inherent assumptions, biases, and subjective interpretations.

In sum, the trustworthiness of this study was underpinned by credibility processes, member-checking techniques, transferability of the results, confirmability, and dependability.

3.8 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethical considerations are crucial at every stage of the social research lifecycle, from research design and sampling to recruiting and data collection, analysing data, and reporting results (Sloan & Quan-Haase, 2017:58). In this regard, Leavy (2017:24) states that due to researchers being humans engaged in understanding other human beings' social realities, ethical procedures are of the utmost importance to guard against any possible harm to participants. In ensuring that the study adheres to ethics, the researcher obtained permission to conduct research from relevant authorities including adhering to principles of voluntary participation, informed consent, anonymity, and confidentiality, which are discussed in the next section.

3.8.1 Voluntary Participation

Kılınç and Fırat (2017:1461) affirm that voluntary participation enhances research validity and reliability. Volunteering which is frequently voiced but rarely understood or practised correctly in research ethics, is defined as a choice or action performed without others' influence or being coerced by external forces (Kılınç & Fırat, 2017:1462). The researcher first enquired about the willingness of the participants to participate

voluntarily (without tangible rewards) in the study prior to commencing with the interviews (Saravanos, Zervoudakis, Zheng, Stott, Hawryluk & Delfino, 2021:05).

3.8.2 Informed Consent

All participants were provided with detailed information on the nature and purpose of the study, including their right to decline participation. Those who volunteered to participate would be provided with the results of the investigation on request. Additionally, Leavy (2017:36) and Tauri (2018:07) state that written signed consent from participants ensures an important measure of protection, not only for the participant but also for the researcher. The guidelines for informed consent ensured that the researcher informed the participants of the nature of the research to be conducted, the methods to be employed, the intended outcomes, why the outcomes were necessary, and what was expected from their involvement, among others (Husband, 2020:2). Okeke and Van Wyk (2017:117) and Sloan and Quan-Haase (2017:58) reiterate that informed consent is a principle which ensures that participants in a research project have the right to know that they are being researched and that risks are possible. Leavy (2018:35) states that participants must be afforded an opportunity to exercise their rights and choose whether to participate in the research project or not; and their willingness should be on record. Informed consent is documented by means of a written, detailed, signed, and dated consent form (Manti & Licari, 2018:145).

Therefore, in line with the above stipulations regarding ethical considerations, this study only recruited willing participants for full-scale participation after they accepted (and signed) the study's conditions and were aware of the finer details of the study as explained by the researcher verbally and in writing (consent form details, Appendix B).

3.8.3 Anonymity

In research ethics, protecting the anonymity and privacy of research participants (and the information they provided) is the norm, especially for vulnerable children and young people (Creswell 2014:138). Anonymity is defined by Moser and Bohme (2017:127) as the state of being “not identifiable within a set of subjects, the anonymity set”. The privacy of the participants was protected by allocating codes/pseudonyms (Saravanos et. al., 2021:05).

3.8.4 Confidentiality

Confidentiality refers to separating or modifying any personal, identifying information provided by participants from the data (Allen, 2017:1). In a research context, confidentiality means that identifiable information about individuals collected during the process of research were not used at all or kept private. Confidentiality is closely connected with anonymity; however, anonymity is related to the protection of identity and data-cleaning which this research adhered to (Strunk & Mwavita, 2020:19). Data was protected by being stored in password-protected e-files in the researcher's laptop only to be accessed by herself and the supervisor. The researcher further ensured confidentiality by engaging with editing staff and transcribers who were sworn to secrecy of all information in this study (Kazdin, 2023:611).

The next section captured the research bias which ought to be managed with care. Research bias is briefly discussed in the section below. The researcher's honesty impartiality and credibility in dealing with research bias are necessary.

3.9 RESEARCH BIAS

The researcher's honesty, impartiality, dignity, integrity, and credibility in dealing with research bias are imperatives. To minimise research bias, the researcher abided by key ethical issues that included building trust, harmony, and developing rapport. To ensure adherence to these principles, the researcher exhibited appropriate body language and facial expressions to demonstrate the urgency of the project and to genuinely consider participants' experiences. The researcher worked tirelessly to develop rapport by demonstrating empathy, active listening, and affording participants the necessary attention. Leavy (2017:39) cautions researchers to truthfully represent themselves and the project by being non-judgemental and by using scholarly, clear, sensitive, and neutral language. Furthermore, the researcher minimised the likelihood of influencing participants' responses, either intentionally or unintentionally. The use of neutral and intellectual language allowed participants to share their views without being coerced into providing responses that aligned with the researcher's expectations. Additionally, reflective journaling was used throughout the research process as a strategy that assisted the researcher to identify researcher bias, among other possible

inconsistencies. This strategy allowed the researcher to reflect on the outcomes of the study as well as on the research process itself (Kross & Gust, 2019:26).

In this study, the researcher avoided bias by recording responses of participants and then transcribing them in verbatim form, including selecting a sample of principals with the same experiences about the CPD process (Hayre & Zheng 2022:162). The similarities could stem from the principalship position and other related expectations outlined by the Department of Basic Education's requirements for principalship (Beatty, 2021:182). If, for example, some principals were more likely to participate in the study than others, such a sample would not be representative of the population in which this study was situated. This implies that the sample must represent the same characteristics, aspirations, perceptions, and experiences for the CPD processes in comparison to the general population.

3.10 CHAPTER SUMMARY

The chapter described the research design and methodology adopted for the study. It dealt with the methodological procedures followed by the description of the selected paradigm. An explanation of the population, sampling, data collection procedures, and data analysis was provided. Furthermore, ethical considerations were discussed to ensure the trustworthiness of the research. The next chapter (4) presents the analysis of data, interpretation, and findings from the focus group interviews involving principals and circuit managers.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION, INTERPRETATION, AND DISCUSSIONS OF FINDINGS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter (3) focused on the research methodology and research design employed in the study. This chapter (4) presents the data analysis on principals' perceptions and experiences on CMs' role regarding continuous professional development (CPD) as well as the views of CMs (who manage and implement CPD) on how CPD is implemented in schools. The presentation and discussion of key findings are part of linking the research questions to the responses provided by participants. The researcher employed the semi-structured focus group interview technique to collect data (Nyumba, Wilson, Derrick & Mukherjee, 2018:20). The reason for employing a semi-structured focus group interview technique was because of its ability to provide a dialogic platform between the researcher and the participant. This interview was guided by a flexible protocol supplemented by follow-up questions, probes, and comments (De Jonckheere & Vaughn, 2019:1). Responses to interview questions were direct, easily recorded, and transcribed verbatim into meaningful texts that provided an understanding of the phenomenon under study.

This study employed a qualitative research approach suitable to measure knowledge, skills, and experiences of principals regarding CMs' role in CPD (Okeke & Van Wyk, 2017:217). Semi-structured focus group interviews were conducted to elicit the perceptions and experiences of school principals concerning CPD by CMs.

Prior to the focus group interviews, the possible participants were sent e-mails confirming that follow-ups may be conducted by contacting principals to secure appointments for briefings. Of the forty possible participants, only twenty-nine (29) confirmed that they will attend the planned meetings. The participants were also consulted to meet with the researcher to ensure that the voluntary consent form would be read and signed (if in agreement) to proceed with the intended study. The meetings provided the participants with the opportunity to grasp the finer details about the study

which were included in the information sheet, in addition to emphasising participants' right to confidentiality, right to reject/accept participation, and the exit clause. Further, participant-principals were provided with a clear brief on what to expect when they consented to become participants of the semi-structured focus group interviews. Of the twenty-nine principals who consented, twenty-two principals managed to commit to the set dates and times to attend the focus group interviews. Also, CMs were interviewed in line with the aim and objectives of the study to supplement and corroborate responses elicited from principals. The process of targeting CMs was the same as for the principals; out of the five CMs who were selected to participate, four consented and participated in the semi-structured focus group interviews.

A qualitative data analysis process was applied to dissect and interpret the data collected through focus group interviews. The collected data necessitated the researcher to select a specific method to analyse the data - the thematic analysis (TA) method. This TA approach allowed the researcher to observe and make-sense of collective or shared perceptions and experiences of principals and CMs by providing a strategy of identifying variables that could directly or indirectly influence the study. Braun and Clarke (2014:57) list six steps to analyse collected data: familiarisation with the data and identifying items of potential interest, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and writing the report

Thematic analysis was preferred due to its appropriateness of revealing similarities, differences, and patterns in principals' perceptions and experiences of CMs' role in providing CPD for principals under the identified themes (Ormanci & Cepni 2019:417). The TA process provided a systematic step-by-step analysis of data to facilitate a deeper understanding and interpretation of the topic under study (Akinyode & Khan, 2018:162).

The next section discusses the findings of the study.

4.2 SECTION A: PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS - PRINCIPALS AND CIRCUIT MANAGERS

In this section, the findings of the study are presented in a structured and categorised manner.

The focus group interview schedule consisted of Section A and Section B. Section A addressed the profiles of the principals and CMs in relation to qualifications and experience, the position they held prior to being appointed as principals and CMs, and an indication if they had any induction or training regarding their appointment as principals and circuit managers. Section B focused on questions related to the objectives of the study for principals and CMs.

Prior to analysing the data, codes were allocated to participants to guarantee anonymity, and to ensure that their responses could not be pinned to specific individuals (see 3.6.1). In this study, coding refers to the process of labelling and rearranging or organising researcher's qualitative data to identify elements that were appropriate to use in identifying emergent themes and relationships (Ravindran, 2019:42).

The layout of categories in Section A is as follows:

- Qualifications and years of experience
- Position held prior to principalship
- Provision of induction/training on appointment

The next section presents principals' qualifications and years of experience.

4.2.1 Qualifications, and Years of Experience

The question relating to qualifications and years of experience was important since it could be directly linked to the research aim of exploring principals' perceptions and experiences in their quest to conceptualise the role of CMs towards principals' CPD and the role they (CMs) played during CPD implementation. The connection between qualifications and experience served to determine variables that principals used as a tool to establish whether CMs were influenced by such variables (experience and

qualifications) to do their work. Therefore, for the principals to provide insightful data relating to the aim of the study, an indication of their understanding through experience and levels of qualifications had to be explored (Nasreen & Odhiambo, 2018:246).

The following includes sub-sections specific to principals' qualifications and years of experience.

4.2.1.1 Principals' qualifications, and years of experience

The Minimum Requirements for Teacher Education Qualifications (DoE, 2017:16) stipulates that the position of circuit manager (CM) entails conducting CPD efficiently - a position that requires the CM to be in possession of a post-graduate diploma in education and an honours degree. Fortunately, a few principals were in possession of a master's degree. The PAM (2005:6) document recommends that principals must be in possession of a three- or four-year qualification to be considered for appointment. This argument corroborates with Marondo (2013:48) who agrees that principals need to enrol for higher levels of academic qualifications in education to manage CPD effectively. In support, Kokela (2021:103) confirms that academic qualifications could offer reliable management information required for CPD implementation.

Regarding the aspect of experience, participants reflected varying years of relevant experience. Most principals had experience of ten years and above, while some had less. The minority might be regarded as the less-experienced principals who might have had limited exposure to CPD (Li & Devin, 2018:70). The majority could be anticipated as the most experienced principals who might be more competent as they could have acquired developmental knowledge and skills in CPD (Mestry, 2017). This implies that the provision of CPD for principals should focus on the requirements of the *South African Standards for Principalship* which advises that training must be planned according to identified CPD gaps (Faizuddin, 2022:3).

The next section presents a sub-section on CMs' qualifications and years of experience.

4.2.1.2 Circuit managers' qualifications and years of experience

Regarding responses elicited from the CM focus group interviews, the majority of CMs had experience ranging from seven (7) to nine (9) years in circuit management positions, while one CM was newly appointed to the position. With reference to qualifications of CMs, all in possession of at least one of the following: Diploma in Education, Honours Degree, MBA, and Master's Degrees. These findings revealed that the majority of CMs were able to provide guidance to their principals as they had exposure in their previous position of being principals (Gao & Wu, 2018:207). A few principal-participants questioned CMs' competence in terms of their inexperience in management issues, especially when some CMs (when they were in principalship positions) were unsuccessful in managing and enhancing their schools' performance – this ironic situation did not boost confidence in CPD implementation for principals (Van der Voort & Wood, 2016:01).

The next section discusses positions held prior to principalship.

4.2.2 Position Held Prior to Principalship

The researcher embarked on extracting details relating to the employment background of principals and CMs prior to them being appointed to their present posts.

The following sub-section focuses on the principals' position held prior to principalship.

4.2.2.1 Principals' positions prior to principalship

Participants' responses revealed that the majority of principals were deputy principals, while others were heads of department prior to their principalship appointment. Surprisingly, some principals indicated that their appointments initially started from being teachers, but they were inexplicably promoted straight to the position of principal. This also implied that the minority were not even exposed to being heads of department or deputy principals, but were either subject advisors or school safety coordinators. Hence, it was imperative that all prospective and in-service principals should undergo CPD training prior to, and during principalship. This findings are contradicting the findings in Mampane (2020:4) section 2.5.4 stipulating promotion to

move from one level to the next; that is, from a low post level (PL1) to a higher one, such as PL2 then to PL3 and PL4. In other words, there should be a level-by-level progression to reach the principalship position – skipping a level is ill-advised.

However, the data suggests that school principals could be appointed from being a teacher (PL1) to a principal (PL4) if the recommendation of the SGB is in ‘favour’ of a particular candidate (cf. Moorosi & Bush, 2020: 74), which implies that there is a high possibility of being hired without any experience or leadership and management background. This situation makes CPD an area of priority to ensure principals are capacitated to perform their duties as per expectation of the CMs who report to the Department of Education. Hence, the incongruity of ‘skipping levels’ to reach the position of principal and CM positions is a dilemma for CPD efforts as it throws planning into disarray especially concerning areas of management to focus on.

The next sub-section focuses on principals’ position held prior to principalship.

4.2.2.2 Circuit managers’ position held prior to principalship

Majority of CMs’ responses indicated experience ranging between 5 and 10 years in their previous principalship role before being appointed as CMs. Furthermore, some CMs had been exposed to working as evaluation and monitoring officials at the Department of Basic Education (DBE) offices which exposed them to coordinating the District strategy for better learner-performance. According to the *Occupational Specific Dispensation of October* (2008:11), CMs were expected to have experiential competency of 12 years in education, of which a minimum of 3 years management experience was required for their appointment. Data suggested that the majority of CMs satisfied their appointment requirements based on their years of experience (Vogel, 2015:53). However, there were a few who did not possess the requisite experience for the CM position; thus, it was not surprising that Du Plessis and Mestry (2019:52) identified deficiencies in the lack of support, coordination, and monitoring by District officials which compromised the quality of CPD training for principals.

The next section discusses principals’ induction and training on appointment.

4.2.3 Induction and Training on Appointment

The researcher sought to understand if principals and CMs were inducted or trained prior to their appointment. The following sub-sections refer to principals' and CMs' induction and training on appointment.

4.2.3.1 Principals' induction and training on appointment

Principals' responses pertaining to their induction or training on appointment revealed that the majority received induction or training, but a minority stated not to have received any training or induction. This suggested that CPD training was not applied consistently throughout the District when it was supposed to be a universal training initiative for all prospective principals and CMs. The minority of principals revealed that their training was held at secluded venues; namely, Thaba-Nchu Sun, Xhariep Dam, Thaba-Nchu College, Sentral Primary School, Aventura Resort, Protea Hotel, and Black Mountain Inn, while others were held at the District offices. However, the majority indicated that training was either held at the District office or at specific schools which were better in terms of content relevance, sound organisation, proximity to the venue, and thorough planning which motivated all attendees (Nakadien, Sayed & Sadeck, 2022:19). However, findings revealed that the time allocated for training was not sufficient to accommodate the delivery of expansive content, and thus it compromised the quality and purpose of the training. Colak (2017:191) points out that the training environment has an impact on the active learning role of the principal which implies that the training venue should be conducive for meaningful learning, in addition to there being ample time for coverage of areas of need. This finding was congruent to the findings of Nasreen and Odiambo (2018:245) [section 2.5.16] which exposed challenges pertaining to the planning for training, especially in the selection of appropriate venues which was crucial for CMs to enhance CPD programme delivery in a conducive learning environment.

The researcher unearthed additional information that was provided by some principals who suggested that the following topics were pertinent to enhance principals' quality of work, in addition to the initial induction and training sessions:

- Leadership and management

- Financial management
- Policies and legislation
- Responsibilities of principals
- Achieving positive academic outcomes or school performance targets
- HR matters:
 - Labour relations
 - Leave
 - Discipline
- Mentoring and coaching
- Control and monitoring
- National Feeding Scheme

These various issues (above) impact on principals' daily activities. They implied being overburdened because principals multi-tasked instead of delegating to the other members of the SMT. Data also indicated CPD training that was organised through the South African Democratic Teachers' Union (SADTU) and NGOs where attendees were offered working tools in a file which to date proved to be beneficial and user-friendly. Participants' articulations on CPD training appear below.

FGB cited the following:

"We used to have what we call principal conferences back then and it was held on a yearly basis".

FGA indicated that:

"One of the initiatives was facilitated by us as principals under the guidance of CM where we established PLCs; and we interacted. We even indicated what we wanted to be trained on".

Participants had varied experiences with induction and training for principals. Some felt that ongoing training sessions would be beneficial, while others felt that the duration of the training was inadequate. Also, while most participants received some form of induction or training, the remaining few revealed that they did not receive induction or any training at all.

FGD added:

“We had a briefing on leave, disciplinary action, and other things. It was general training only, not addressing specific needs. It was neither induction nor planned induction. If we need capacitation in financial management, the most experienced principal conducts the workshop to us”.

The findings indicate that previous exposure to training which was organised by CMs was implemented in a meticulous manner and focused on challenges identified by the District. This implies that even though training was provided, principals still saw the need for further improvements regarding solving challenges they experienced and issues concerning the development of training programmes that require focus on what can be beneficial to principals.

The next sub-section presents CMs' induction and training on appointment.

4.2.3.2 Circuit managers' induction and training when appointed

Regarding inductions, CMs indicated that all of them were exposed to induction after their appointment. This was held for a duration of five days at secluded venues different to their day-to-day school environments.

FGH expressed:

“The District put together a team to train us, the newly appointed CMs. Then, CMs were not called CMs but SMGDs (School Management Governance and Development). We were inducted for about a week and there was a range of topics we were inducted on”.

The above evidence articulated by CMs indicates proper planning processes being set in motion by the District office for induction/training of CMs. It further reveals the duration of training/induction to be five (5) days as confirmed by most principals. Moreover, CMs revealed that their induction/training was facilitated at an isolated environment which was conducive to learning. It could thus be understood that CMs' training could be expected to have a positive impact on their learning as they were conducted in an environment that was convenient, conducive, and isolated; unlike if

training was held at their schools where they would still be expected to render managerial support to subordinates.

It was also indicated that CPD training/induction for CMs are being facilitated by the Chief Director for District management and HR officials. The induction involved human resource issues pertaining to labour matters, job descriptions on the role and responsibilities of CMs, and school governance linked to management and institutional planning. The CMs' views regarding their exposure to content coverage indicated their satisfaction with the facilitation during their induction/training. This contrasted with the training for principals who were not provided with the same quality of facilitation as the CMs.

The next section B provides findings that emerged from the interview sessions with principals and circuit managers.

4.3 SECTION B: PRESENTATION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS: INTERVIEW WITH PRINCIPALS

The themes, categories, and sub-categories that were drawn from the data guided the findings as outlined below in Table 4.1 below which outlines 5 themes, 22 categories and 15 sub-categories.

Table 4.1: Themes, categories, and sub-categories

Theme 1	4.3.1 Role of Circuit Manager in CPD Implementation
Category 1	4.3.1.1 Core responsibilities of circuit manager in CPD
Category 2	4.3.1.2 Role of circuit manager as mentors and coaches
Theme 2	4.4 Circuit managers discharge of CPD Responsibilities
Category 1	4.4.1 Inconsistent discharge of CPD responsibility
Category 2	4.4.2 Overemphasis on Secondary Schools
Category 3	4.4.3 Lack of resources and training for CMs
Category 4	4.4.4 Limited interaction and feedback mechanisms
Category 5	4.4.5 Disconnect between roles and expectations
Theme 3	4.5 CPD needs and support for school principals
Category 1	4.5.1 Need for Continuous Professional Development
Category 2	4.5.2 Curriculum management and coverage
Category 3	4.5.3 Financial Management
Category 4	4.5.4 Human Resource Management and labour relations
Category 5	4.5.5 Wellness and socioeconomic challenges

Category 6	4.5.6 Leadership and Professional development
Theme 4	4.6 Barriers encountered in the implementation of CPD
Category 1	4.6.1 Time management
Sub-category 1	4.6.1.1 Overloaded CMs
Sub-category 2	4.6.1.2 Inadequate planning
Sub-category 3	4.6.1.3 Insufficient time for CPD
Category 2	4.6.2 Communication Issues
Sub-category 1	4.6.2.1 Top-down communication
Sub-category 2	4.6.2.2 Lack of engagement
Category 3	4.6.3 Focus on results
Sub-category 1	4.6.3.1 Shift in CPD goals
Category 4	4.6.4 Professional Development
Sub-category 1	4.6.4.1 Generic training
Category 5	4.6.5 Administrative challenges
Sub-category 1	4.6.5.1 Short Notice
Category 6	4.6.6 Lack of resources
Sub-category 1	4.6.6.1 Inadequate ICT support
Theme 5	4.7 Circuit Managers effectiveness of CPD provision
Category 1	4.7.1 Perception of effectiveness
Sub-category 1	4.7.1.1 Effectiveness hindered by systematic challenges
Category 2	4.7.2 Training effectiveness
Sub-category 1	4.7.2.1 Irrelevant and reactive training
Category 3	4.7.3 Support from circuit managers
Sub-category 1	4.7.3.1 Lack of developmental and crisis support

The data summary in Table 4.1 above assisted in engendering discussions that emerged from the research findings. This section provides findings drawn from data that emerged from the interviews. This data was delineated into themes, categories and sub-categories.

The following sub-sections present the theme: role of CMs in CPD implementation.

4.3.1 ROLE OF CIRCUIT MANAGERS IN CPD IMPLEMENTATION

This theme focuses on the responsibilities and expectations of CMs in facilitating CPD for school principals. It addresses the core responsibilities of CM in CPD, and the role of CMs as mentors and coaches.

4.3.1.1 Core responsibilities of circuit managers in CPD

Participants were asked for their perceptions and experiences with regard to the core responsibilities of a CM in CPD. The majority of the participants indicated that the CM's role is that of a coordinator, serving as a link between the DoE and the school principals.

Participants' responses are captured below.

FGA stated:

"The role of the CM is to encourage principals to participate in CPD because now as an educator you are a lifelong learner - you need to equip yourself".

Responses of participants identified CMs' incompetence and lack of support for principals. This reflection did not inspire confidence in CMs to enact their core duties of assisting and supporting principals. This implied that the CMs were seen as individuals who were incapable of consulting and supporting principals (Suid Afrikaanse Onderwysers Unie, Webinar, 2021:7). While the general expectation is for CMs to act as facilitators, as well as connecting and supporting school principals in CPD efforts, there is criticism regarding the gaps in their ability to offer meaningful CPD support to principals.

FGG articulated the following:

"Instead of prioritising guidance for principals, they prioritised the implementation of the district programmes... but this needs to change".

A minority of the respondents were divided when it came to understanding the role of CMs; they were undecided on CMs prioritisation of guiding principals, as compared to implementing District priorities. However, the majority of respondents were positive that CMs prioritised guiding principals than implementing District programmes. This implies that CMs did not consider District work over the importance of CPD for principals as perceived by other principals. Some believed that District Office duties took precedence over the core purpose of professionally developing school principals.

The findings indicated that the majority of participants agreed that CMs play a critical role in lifelong-learning and development to assist principals in leadership and management challenges (DoE, 2015:19; Bosak, Karadag & Bolat, 2018). Consequently, CMs are seen as central figures in promoting principals' academic and professional growth, which reflects the core responsibility of CMs. While the responses from the minority expressed concerns about CMs' focus shifting away from CPD towards general District programmes, this trajectory often leads to neglecting principals' individual and professional development which limits CPD support from the Circuit Office (Steyn & Fuller, 2023: 297). Participant FGG identified the need for a shift. In other words, prioritising support for principals rather than implementation of District programmes. This stance was echoed by some participants, but a minority asserted that they saw CMs' District duties taking precedence over the core responsibility of professionally developing principals.

The perceptions of a minority of participants indicated CMs as being incompetent. This reflected a disjuncture of the perception that principals had regarding CMs' role in section A. The majority of participants perceived CMs as officials who should provide guidance to principals who were their immediate subordinates (see 4.2.1). Despite these concerns, the majority viewed CMs as essential figures who should offer guidance and support to principals by helping them develop as leaders. This implies that there were worrying factors that the shift in focus towards District programmes may undermine efforts for the effective support of principals.

The next section focuses on CMs' role as mentors and coaches.

4.3.1.2 Role of circuit managers as mentors or coaches

The responses of the majority of participants in this category indicated that CMs should act as mentors or coaches to assist principals in overcoming challenges at schools. Also, mentorship is crucial for principals to improve their leadership and management skills (Davis et al., 2020:5).

FGA cited the following:

"We want to believe that the CM's role is to support and develop us as principals as we are lifelong learners".

Some principals felt that CMs are not fulfilling their mentoring roles effectively, and act more as disciplinarians or "witch-hunters."

FGB stated:

"[They] are somewhat witch-hunters... they deal with faltering first rather than assisting or developing us not to fall into traps".

The minority reflected dissatisfaction with CMs' approach, suggesting that instead of providing developmental support, CMs focus on compliance and discipline. This criticism suggests a gap between the intended mentoring role of CMs and how it is perceived by some principals.

While the responses of the majority indicate that CMs do not plan timeously for CPD for principals or there are no fixed schedules for such training (subsection A, 4.2.3). The point of contention was that CMs' approach to providing professional development was not consistent with the plan of the DoE to link CPD training to standardised procedures for all prospective principals. Although there is broad agreement that mentorship initiated by CMs is essential for principals' development, this role is often obscured by the pressure CMs face to deliver Grade 12 outcomes, which limits their capacity to focus on leadership challenges (Prenger, Poortman & Handelsalts, 2020:18).

What follows next is the sub-category relating to inconsistent support across circuits.

(i) Inconsistent Support Across Circuits

This sub-category addresses responses regarding the inconsistencies experienced with regard to the support provided by CMs in different Districts. Participants responses are articulated below:

FGA remarked:

"In Xhariep District, CM acted as a coordinator dealing with CPD matters, as opposed to Motheo District, where the issue of CPD has never been mentioned".

Participants' responses indicated that CPD delivery is inconsistent, because it lacked focus on CPD which impeded the development of principals.

The findings in the above categories suggested the glaring differences in CPD implementation among Districts lacking, thus revealing the lack of consistency in the role of CMs. While some Districts offered structured CPD opportunities, others lacked focus which had a negative impact on the development of school principals. The provision of training for CPD training differed proportionally across various Districts (subsection A, 4.2.3). Moreover, within the same District participants indicated that there was no coherent planning in CPD training and implementation. This situation resulted in the delivery of poor quality CPD training.

This deficit (above) points to an urgent need for standardised, District-wide policies to ensure that all principals receive support through CPD opportunities. These views imply that training conducted by SADTU, NGOs, and the national Department of Education (DoE) are more effective than that provided by District CMs (sub-sections 4.2.3; 4.2.4).

What follows is the sub-category on time and expertise constraints.

(ii) Time and Expertise Constraints

This sub-category refers to responses regarding time and expertise constraints. Participants' responses are outlined below.

FGA remarked:

"CMs must make sure that principals attend relevant training and follow up... unfortunately, they don't have time for that"

The majority of participants indicated an understanding of the constraints CMs faced. They expressed their views towards CMs' burdensome workloads that limit their ability to provide relevant support for CPD. Their time is often consumed by administrative tasks and District reporting, thus leaving little time for mentoring or organising CPD workshops. This is in line with the statement made by principals stating that CMs seldom have time to interact on important matters with principals (cf. Van der Voort and Wood, 2016:1). Furthermore, time and expertise were debilitating factors that hindered CMs' efforts to professionalise school principals. Many acknowledged CMs' heavy workload that made it difficult for them to provide the necessary support in the implementation of CPD. In some cases, CMs found themselves overwhelmed with administrative tasks and District reporting, leaving little room for mentoring, coaching, and organising workshops.

FGB lamented:

"The biggest problem with CMs is that they themselves are not experienced".

The minority-participant view exposes a deeper problem concerning the expertise of some CMs. This suggests that CMs have insufficient experience necessary to lead principals effectively, which undermines their ability to provide meaningful CPD support. If CMs lack the necessary skills to mentor principals, their CPD efforts will be inadequate if there are shortages of coordination, resources, and capacity (OECD, 2011:11). This points to a potential need for training CMs themselves to enhance their leadership and mentorship capacities (cf. subsection 4.2.1). However, it is noted that the role of CMs in facilitating CPD is widely acknowledged as a necessity (cf. Loeb & Mitani, 2015: 234) but there are significant discrepancies in how this role is fulfilled especially asserting experiences, overload, pressure and confusion (cf. Wieczorek & Manard, 2018: 1). Participants agree that CMs should act as coordinators and mentors, facilitating the professional growth of principals to enhance quality teaching and learning (cf. Steyn, 2011: 45). However, their ability to do so is constrained by competing priorities, such as focusing on Grade 12 results and the commitment to other district programme implementation that contain and restricts in-service professional development and growth (cf. Mestry, 2017:1). According to a minority of participants, CMs may not have the requisite expertise to mentor and coach principals. This lack of expertise would limit their ability to support meaningful CPD. However, this factor is a

major worry since it restricts the ability and capacity of CMs to guide principals. This implies that they require urgent training to upgrade their mentoring and leadership abilities. Resolving this obstacle will enable CMs to conduct their responsibilities better in raising CPD training standards.

The minority of participants who critiqued the current practices of CMs, provided valuable insights into the inconsistencies and shortcomings of the system. Principals in some Districts felt that their professional development was sidelined in favour of District performance especially regarding Grade 12 results, instead of enhancing CPD quality across Districts (Angelle & Lomascolo, 2020:236). This dichotomy between the majority and minority participant-views suggests that while theoretically the role of CMs is well understood, but in practice systemic issues such as time constraints, lack of experience, inconsistent policies, and the lack of sound leadership and management skills hinder effective implementation (Bulimo et al., 2016:125). The findings suggest that for CPD to be effective, CMs should be provided with time, resources, coaching, and training to fulfil their developmental roles (Egboka, 2018:582).

The following are some distinct views extracted from participants' verbatim responses, which described experiences that differed from the more common themes:

FGG commented:

"The CM should be there each minute, hour, each day even if it's not physically there".

This remark is 'unwarranted' because it reflects an unrealistic expectation of the CMs' availability and constant presence, which differs from the practical limitations expressed by the majority. Although most principals were aware of the time-constraints CMs face, this participant desired a far higher level of interaction and support than others alluded to.

FGB expressed:

"Some CMs are confused; there are people who are good to produce results in schools".

This view presented a strong criticism of some CMs' competence by labelling them as being "confused", while other principals understood the frustrations of CMs' stressful role. This could suggest a particularly negative experience with a specific CM who had been appointed to this position (e.g. 'jumping' from PL 1 to PL 4) and thus was associated with causing confusion and underperformance (subsection 4.2.2).

FGA revealed:

"In my district, CPD never materialised, whereas in another district, they have a coordinator specifically for CPD".

While many participants pointed out differences across Districts, this participant's view of there being a complete lack of CPD stands out as particularly disturbing. While most participants noted inconsistencies in CPD, not all agreed with it being totally absent in their Districts, thus this comment did not reflect the true situation.

FGB asserted that:

"The biggest problem with CMs is that they themselves are not experienced"

This participant's response not only criticised the performance of CMs, but directly questioned their qualifications and expertise. While other participants expressed frustration with CMs' priorities or time-management skills, this opinion suggested that CMs lack the fundamental experience required to fulfil their roles successfully.

The verbatim responses emphasised the complexity and authenticity of the gathered information. While most principals shared common concerns regarding CPD support and the role of CMs, the outliers revealed extreme dissatisfaction or had different expectations of what CMs should provide in terms of CPD. The comment about the CM should be present "each minute, hour" suggests a disconnect between what some principals expect and what is practically possible. This may imply the presence of high-pressure environments where principals feel unsupported and overburdened, thus CPD planning is derailed (section 4.2.2). The questioning of CMs' competence and experience go beyond workload and District priorities; they point to deeper concerns regarding the professional readiness of CMs (subsection 4.2.4). If more principals share this view, it could suggest an urgent need for further training and/or assessment

of CM qualifications (Mthembu, 2014:33). The complete absence of CPD in one District exposed the disparities in CPD implementation (Ndlovu, 2017:19). This situation implied that certain Districts may not be given opportunities to engage in CPD activities.

The results suggest that for CPD to be effective, changes are necessary. This includes providing CMs with time, resources, and training to focus on their developmental roles, standardising CPD policies across Districts, and delegating CMs' administrative tasks to allow them to focus more on CPD for principals. Contrasting views evident in the findings exposed unrealistic expectations of CMs' availability, competence, and experience which implied the complete neglect of CPD. These distressing views warrant the need for clearer role definitions of CMs, as well as addressing disparities in CPD implementation.

Regrettably, the findings exposed contradictions regarding the roles of Circuit Managers (CMs) and the expectations of principals, thus shedding light on the tension between theory and practice in the professional development process. For principals, this contradiction lies in the importance of CMs of guiding learning and facilitating professional growth. Principals acknowledged that CMs should be mentors and leaders who support them in their development; however, this responsibility is often undermined by confusion and frustration as principals frequently feel unsupported. Despite knowing that CMs are responsible to identify principals' needs and organise CPD workshops, the execution is often wanting. These sessions are poorly planned, lack follow-up, and are not responsive to the specific challenges principals face, thus leaving them feeling disconnected from the support they expect. This disconnect is exacerbated by a top-down approach to CPD, where District mandates take precedence over the individualised needs of principals. Principals are left with a limited sense of agency regarding their professional development, thus they are unable to shape their learning experiences to match their unique needs. Moreover, the expectation for personalised support is overshadowed by the rigid, externally imposed frameworks that restrict principals' ability to take ownership of their agency.

Regarding the perspective of Circuit Managers, a different set of issues emerges. The CMs are expected to be leaders who not only support principals, but also serve as mentors who guide their learning. However, this is confusing to CMs themselves who

are unclear about their responsibilities, thus leading to ineffective interactions with principals. The lack of role clarity hinders CMs' ability to provide consistent and meaningful support, thus creating a disconnect between what is expected of them and what they are able to deliver. Moreover, while CMs are supposed to create an environment that empowers principals to lead their own learning, the emphasis on externally mandated CPD programmes contradicts this goal. The reliance on these standardised programmes limits the flexibility CMs can offer in tailoring professional development to the specific needs of individual principals. As a result, CMs struggle to strike a balance between empowering principals and adhering to the District's mandates, thus leaving them unable to provide responsive, personalised CPD that could fully support principals' development.

Both sets of contradictions suggest a broader issue within the CPD framework. For principals, there is a gap between the idealised vision of how CMs should support their learning, and the reality of inconsistent and ineffective support from CMs. For CMs, there is a tension between their role as facilitators of professional growth and the constraints placed on them by the system. Hence, both principals and CMs need to reconsider and redefine their relationship within the CPD framework by moving towards a more flexible, communicative, and responsive model that can bridge the gap between expectations and reality.

The following section focuses on the second theme of the study; namely, CMs' discharge of CPD responsibilities. In this theme, categories and sub-categories are discussed.

4.4 THEME 2: CIRCUIT MANAGERS' DISCHARGE OF CPD RESPONSIBILITIES

This theme discusses participants' perceptions and experiences regarding the discharge of responsibilities by the CMs. The responses are clustered in the following categories: inconsistent discharge of CPD responsibilities, overemphasis on

secondary schools, lack of resources and training for CMs, limited interaction and feedback mechanisms, and the disconnect between roles and expectations:

4.4.1 Inconsistent Discharge of CPD Responsibilities

This category addresses responses regarding time and expertise constraints. Participants' responses are expressed below.

FGA articulated:

“There is no standardisation on how they should execute their tasks. Some CMs just submit documents and leave, while others actively support schools and principals”.

Responses from the majority of participants indicated inconsistency on how CMs discharge their CPD responsibilities. The participants indicated differences in the performance of CMs depending on the District or the individual CM. This finding was corroborated in a statement that revealed CMs to be inconsistent in supporting schools which was in opposition to their core duty to assist principals to develop and support their schools (Ndlovu, 2017:13). The absence of uniformity in the way CMs conduct their duties reflects a weakness in implementing CPD for principals. This unfortunate situation compromises CMs' ability to execute their primary responsibility of supporting principals through CPD training.

FGB noted:

Different Districts function differently; in some areas, CMs are actively involved, while in others, they are non-existent”.

This lack of coherence and consistency indicates the necessity for a carefully planned, organised, synchronised, and coordinated CPD for principals.

FGA stated:

“In my experience, CMs work in silos; they don’t collaborate with the principal and SGB”.

FGA, PA experienced a contrast with the CM in current practice:

“My current CM is doing the most, giving me all the support I need to navigate school dynamics”.

Findings indicate that a minority of participants acknowledged that some CMs provide sufficient support, particularly when they work collaboratively with principals, but this was not a widespread sentiment. Findings also indicated the absence of standardised practices in CPD delivery across Districts which implied the need for a more uniform and structured approach to CMs’ responsibilities. These inconsistencies negatively impact school management, hinder professional development and procedures, and lead to an uneven distribution of resources and support.

The next section indicates an overemphasis on secondary schools.

4.4.2 Overemphasis on Secondary Schools

FGB contended:

“CMs focus more on secondary schools due to results. Primary schools get less attention, and CPD responsibilities are neglected”.

Participants’ responses regarding this theme noted that CMs focus more on secondary schools, primarily due to the emphasis on matric results. This focus neglects primary schools and other developmental areas of principal support and development. Hence, if CPD is not well supported, cracks and gaps will emerge leading poor management in schools. This finding contradicts school principals as the main influencers of the pedagogical performance of teachers to attain quality academic results as they are not well supported through CPD (Kartini, Kristiawan & Fitria, 2020:158).

FGD shared the following:

“The CMs are overloaded, focusing on matric results and neglecting other aspects of principal support and development”.

A few participants suggested that the neglect of primary schools is more of a systemic issue and not directly the fault of CMs who are often overworked and understaffed.

FGE stated:

“They are overloaded with responsibilities, which is why secondary schools take priority. It’s not their fault; the structure needs to change”.

The results indicate that the pressure to achieve better matric results disturbs the role of CMs. This focus by CMs on secondary schools leads to the neglect of primary schools, thus increasing developmental gaps between school phases (primary and secondary). Clearly, there is a critical need for equal focus to ensure that both primary and secondary schools receive adequate support. If not, this lack of adequate support may become one of the contributing impediments leading to failure in raising school performance.

The next section deals with the lack of resources and training for CMs.

4.4.3 Lack of Resources and Training for CMs

FGD came to CMs defence:

“How can they develop us when they don’t even have the resources? They sometimes rely on schools to provide basics like photocopying paper”.

Principals expressed concern that CMs lacked sufficient resources and proper training to effectively execute their CPD responsibilities. Principals believed that this hinders the CMs’ ability to provide meaningful support. In addition to the CMs’ ability to execute their responsibilities, the lack of materials for CPD purposes also lowers the standard of the support CMs may offer to principals.

FGB added:

"There is no indication that CMs are trained to support principals in the areas of need, as they are overwhelmed with administrative duties".

A few participants noted that CMs themselves may not always be at fault, as they too are victims of the system's inefficiencies.

FGF agreed:

"CMs are overloaded and not properly trained or supported. It's the system, not necessarily the CMs themselves".

Findings suggests that there is a need for better resource allocation and comprehensive training programmes for CMs in order to enhance their capacity to support principals effectively through CPD programmes. Importantly, measures in resource control should be developed and implemented effectively and efficiently. These findings are consistent with CPD challenges experienced by CMs who stated the short supply of supervisors and insufficient strategic planning and training programmes stifled their efforts to enhance CPD delivery (Al-ajmi, 2020:2). This confirms that the existence of systematic issues directly and negatively impact on how CMs deliver CPD programmes to enhance principals' knowledge and skills to manage their schools successfully.

The next section exposes the aspects of limited interaction and feedback mechanisms.

4.4.4 Limited Interaction and Feedback Mechanisms

FGF revealed that:

"There is no follow-up after training sessions. CMs don't check if what they trained us on is being implemented or if we need further assistance".

Several principals were critical that CMs did not spend enough time engaging with them or providing ongoing and timeous feedback, thus leading to a disjuncture between training and implementation. There is a gap between the initial CPD training session and the implementation period which frustrates principals due to CMs' lack of

follow-up and continuous support. The success of CPD programmes is hampered by this feedback gap since it leaves principals without the direction they need to apply and maintain what they have learned.

FGD cited:

“Training is general and not tailored to the actual needs of principals. CMs don't gather enough information on the challenges we face”.

A few respondents felt that CMs tried to engage with them but were hindered by their heavy workloads and competing responsibilities. This view was supported by FGD:

“They try to engage, but they are spread too thin with multiple schools and other duties”.

This lack of interaction and follow-up enactments indicates that even though training is provided, it often fails to lead to positive outcomes. Findings indicate CMs need to spend more time working closely with principals to ensure that CPD training is effectively provided and leads to positive developmental changes within schools. This requirement needs continual engagement between school principals and CMs to ensure that principals get regular feedback, remediation measures, and supervisory monitoring (Bantwini & Moorosi, 2018:3). This ongoing engagement will ensure the successful CPD implementation of its policy directives including follow-ups and feedback to enhance principals' management knowledge and skills.

The next section outlines the disconnect between roles and expectations.

4.4.5 Disconnect Between Roles and Expectations

FGE remarked:

“We are not even clear on what CMs are supposed to do. They seem to be pulled in many directions, often dealing with compliance and administrative tasks”.

Principals feel that there is a mismatch between the roles that CMs are expected to fulfil and what they should actually do. This results in confusion and inefficiency in

CPD implementation. This eventually reduces the efficiency of CMs' roles which are plagued by difficulties encountered in coordination and administrative responsibilities which stifle the promotion of CPD for principals.

FGG supported FGE:

"Their roles are not well defined, and they end up focusing on secondary schools' results, neglecting their CPD responsibilities".

The lack of clarity in CMs' roles creates confusion not only for the CMs themselves but also for the principals they are supposed to support. A more focused job-description with clear guidelines on CPD responsibilities is necessary to understand their functions, and to improve the effectiveness of supervision and guidance to school principals.

Some principals experience a high level of support from CMs and feel that they are receiving the guidance they need.

FGC, PC stated:

"The current CM is doing the most; personally, he is giving me all the support I need".

Participant PC stated that in some cases CMs are providing effective support, suggesting that it is possible for CMs to successfully discharge their CPD responsibilities under the right conditions. Some participants pointed to the lack of clarity in the roles of CMs, which adds to the confusion regarding whether they are fulfilling their CPD duties or not. This implies that there may be confusion regarding the role of CMs which must be corrected. This suggests that clearer guidelines relating to CMs' responsibilities are necessary to ensure that effective and continuous support is provided for all principals.

FGE mentioned:

"This is a difficult question because if we knew what their job description was, we would be able to, but they are all over the place and confused".

This finding suggests that part of the fault lies in the blurriness of CMs' roles, thus leading to confusion among principals about what they should expect in terms of CPD support. This reflects significant challenges regarding how CMs discharge their CPD responsibilities. The key issues centre on inconsistency in CPD delivery, an overemphasis on secondary schools, a lack of resources and training, minimal engagement and follow-ups with principals, and confusion about the roles CMs are supposed to enact.

Some principals reported positive experiences with their CMs, indicating that under the right conditions, CMs can discharge their CPD responsibilities effectively. However, the majority of participants (principals) expressed widespread dissatisfaction regarding the CMs' discharge of CPD responsibilities. Even though clarity on CMs' role is provided (see section, 2.5.2), that is, CMs are mandated to design, plan, and conduct various training and professional development workshops for in- and pre-service teachers inclusive of school principals, CPD was unsuccessfully, in the main, rolled out in most Districts (Pak et al., 2019:163).

Contradictions relating to the roles of Circuit Managers (CMs) and the expectations of principals reveal a clear divide between what is intended and what is actually happening within the CPD system.

For principals, the recognition that CMs can offer in supporting their professional development has diminished. Although principals acknowledge that CMs should act as mentors by guiding them through their learning journeys and providing critical support, this notion is often challenged by CMs' inconsistent support and unclear understanding of their roles. As a result, they are left with a sense of confusion and frustration. While CMs are supposed to gather data to identify the specific CPD needs of principals and then arrange workshops, the actual experience is often very different. Workshops are poorly planned, lack follow-up, and do not address the nuanced needs of individual principals, thus leaving them feeling unsupported. This reflects a larger gap between the ideal role of CMs as supportive mentors and the reality of inconsistent, ineffective interactions. Additionally, principals face being subjected to top-down CPD mandates imposed by the District which often take precedence over their unique needs. This approach limits the personalised support that principals prefer, thus leaving them to shape their own professional growth. Furthermore, the reliance on externally

mandated CPD programmes stifles their ability to take charge of their own development, thus undermining the empowerment they were promised.

Hence, the role of Circuit Managers is rooted in the expectations placed upon them even in the face of constraints that stifle them in fulfilling these expectations. The CMs are supposed to be leaders who actively support and mentor principals, yet they often struggle with a lack of clarity about what their role entails. This confusion leads to inconsistent support and a failure to effectively facilitate CPD. The CMs are also tasked with gathering data to assess principals' CPD needs, but without a clear understanding of their responsibilities, their efforts are fruitless. The workshops they organise are not only poorly planned, but lack the necessary follow-up which undermines the goal of promoting continuous, lifelong learning. Additionally, although CMs are expected to empower principals to lead their own learning, the externally mandated CPD programmes they are required to implement do not allow for the necessary flexibility. The focus on these standardised programmes limits CMs' ability to offer the kind of tailored, responsive support that principals need; instead a rigid structure that stifles innovation and autonomy is imposed.

Principals are caught in a system that promises quality continuous professional development, but the execution is disappointing. The CMs are constrained by unclear roles, rigid mandates, and a lack of effective planning, thus preventing them from fulfilling their intended purpose. To address these challenges, the relationship between CMs and principals must be redefined. A more flexible, communicative, and responsive approach to CPD, free from the constraints of top-down control, is needed to create a system that effectively supports principals' development.

The next section dissects the theme of CPD needs and support for school principals. Its category and sub-categories are outlined.

4.5 CPD NEEDS AND SUPPORT FOR SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

This category includes responses on CPD needs and support for school principals. The analysis is separated (below) into the need for CPD, curriculum management and coverage, financial management, human resources management and labour relations, wellness and socio-economic challenges, and leadership and professional development.

4.5.1 Need for Continuous Professional Development

FGA commented:

“Sometimes a year or two passes without any professional development. Thus, some principals take it upon themselves to be capacitated”.

The participants consensually emphasised that ongoing CPD is an essential requirement for effective school management, particularly for new or inexperienced principals. The acknowledgement that some principals must initiate their own CPD indicates existing gaps with regard to consistent CPD provision and the need for implementing of a more reliable and structured support.

FGD stated:

“Training should be for everything ... Continuous process for everybody”.

The findings indicate a clear notion among principals that CPD is vital for effective school management. This is supported in section 2.5.2 that highlighted the need for CPD training to also cater for those who aspire to become principals (Mampane, 2020:16). Regrettably, the lack of exposure to regular CPD opportunities may contribute to feelings of isolation and inadequacy among principals, particularly those new to their roles.

The next section presents curriculum management and coverage.

4.5.2 Curriculum Management and Coverage

FGA remarked:

“Because most critical is performance, the CM plays a huge role; he is so hands-on regarding this aspect”.

Responses from the majority of participants focused on the significance of curriculum coverage and performance management, confirming that CMs play a pivotal role in facilitating this process. Some participants expressed dissatisfaction with the existing training and support from CMs, particularly regarding specific curriculum challenges. This finding is in line with section 2.5.2 that mentions that principals are not appropriately skilled, knowledgeable, and trained to effectively implement CPD (Ndamani, 2016:18).

The findings reveal a fundamental dependency on CMs for curriculum management and performance improvement. While many participants acknowledge the support received, the dissatisfaction expressed suggests the need for CMs to adopt a more proactive and consistent approach in their engagement with principals.

The next section presents financial management.

4.5.3 Financial Management

This category presents responses on financial management.

FGB commented:

“It is a very crucial area whereby as a school principal, we are not confident in this area... How to manage, how to handle the finances”.

Financial management emerged as a critical area requiring significant attention, with majority participants expressing a lack of confidence. While a few participants acknowledged the benefits of previous training, they noted the necessity for ongoing support to navigate financial systems effectively. Some respondents indicated that

past workshops were more extensive and informative, suggesting a decline in the quality of CPD offerings.

Findings reveal that there is concern about financial management which is deemed to be one of the critical aspects of a principal's responsibility (Mestry, 2017:1). This implies that there is a significant gap in principals' training and levels of financial responsibility. This increases the strong demand for CPD training in financial management which may ideally be led by financial experts rather than CMs. This training is of importance as it will attempt to improve on the financial management skills of principals (Sepuru, 2018:82). Addressing this gap is necessary for building principals' confidence and competence in managing school finances effectively.

The next section presents human resource management and labour relations.

4.5.4 Human Resource Management and Labour Relations

FGC stated:

“Labour Issues is also one aspect that the CM must assist principals to be able to manage learner issues”.

The challenges of managing labour relations were frequently mentioned, with participants emphasising the need for support from CMs. A few participants felt that the advice provided by CMs was often insufficient, thus suggesting the need for principals to be trained by experts on labour relations. Also, the majority suggested that CMs receive specialised training to better understand labour laws, thus enabling them to provide more relevant and incisive advice to principals.

Also, the findings indicate a pressing need for enhanced support and training in human resource management. Given the difficulties of managing staff and legal requirements, CMs should be well-versed in these areas to provide effective guidance to school principals. The call for targeted training for human resource management further emphasises the need for extensive support for principals, especially in the management of staff and learners (see table 2.1) such that the day-to-day responsibility of the principal to manage the school in a professional manner is successfully effected. Furthermore, section 2.5.18 confirms that the successful leadership practices of school principals

are measured by their problem-solving skills - be it learner, teacher, or school environment problems.

The next section presents category on wellness and socio-economic challenges.

4.5.5 Wellness and Socio-economic Challenges

FGA commented:

“Sometimes we deal with ill-behaviour or misconduct in terms of what is expected of educators and learners but when getting deeper into issues, one will find that a person is going through something difficult that one of the principal can’t handle. Thus, we are expected to refer these matters to the department”.

Participants acknowledged the impact of socio-economic issues on learner-behaviour and called for wellness workshops to be regularly facilitated by CMs. While the majority of the participants agreed that CMs did facilitate workshops on socio-economic issues, the minority felt that their concerns about socio-economic challenges were not adequately addressed by CMs. Despite the majority of participants acknowledging the role of CMs in facilitating workshops to circumvent these challenges, others were concerned about the inadequate support which suggests the need for more effective and astute interventions in addressing CPD socio-economic issues.

FGC added:

“CMs do not come to the party on the issue of employee wellness”.

Participants stressed the necessity for external experts to provide guidance on socio-economic issues, implying the lack of sufficient internal support. Also, findings indicate socio-economic issues as significantly affecting school management and learner behaviour, thus suggesting the need for all principals to be afforded the opportunity to be trained via CPD to cope with such matters. The need for wellness support highlights the importance of addressing these challenges ethnically, politically, and

professionally (Vogel, 2015:53). Moreover, inviting external experts to facilitate workshops may also assist in providing the necessary insight and strategies for principals to solve these issues effectively. Lastly, competent leaders who can demonstrate resilience while experiencing various socio-economic challenges stand a better chance to achieve success in any educational environment (Basuki, Perdinanto & Hamid, 2020:354). The lack of internal support from CMs regarding employee wellness points to the need to access external support to prioritise principal CPD training to equip principals with the necessary strategies to manage principals' wellness challenges.

The next section presents evidence on leadership and professional development.

4.5.6 Leadership and Professional Development

FGA remarked:

"It would be appreciated if CM can bring more organised workshops and capacity-building exercises for the principal to better manage the school".

Further findings indicated a strong consensus on the need for leadership training to develop future school leaders by equipping all staff members for leadership via professional development workshops. Participants felt that the current CPD provision was inadequate for preparing staff adequately for leadership roles. Most participants suggested that the focus should extend beyond immediate responsibilities to inculcate long-term leadership competencies (Ibay & Pa-alisbo, 2020:150).

The findings also emphasised the importance of rolling out structured CPD programmes for school principals to continuously enhance their skills, knowledge, attitudes, and competencies (Mestry, 2017:2). By participants repeating the need for organised workshops suggests a strong desire for structured and comprehensive professional development pathways for developing long-term leadership competencies which are vital to ensure educational sustainability.

In this regard, there is an urgent need for CMs to redesign CPD programmes, and focus on specialised workshops facilitated by experts in finance, human resources,

and socio-economic issues. This is further confirmed in section 2.3 that CPD processes will assist in enhancing staff competencies and increase educational opportunities for workplace competence (Nasreen & Odhiambo, 2018:246). The perception that CMs may lack expertise in guiding principals necessitates a review of the quality of training provided. Thus, inviting external experts to deliver some CPD workshops may assist in bridging knowledge gaps and offer practical solutions to the challenges faced by principals in specific areas of management. Further, results expose the lack of continuous support from CMs, which implies the absence of ongoing communication and regular feedback which are necessary to ensure that CPD aligns with the evolving needs of school principals.

The findings regarding Continuing Professional Development (CPD) for principals in South Africa reveal significant contradictions related to both the principals' experiences and the challenges faced by Circuit Managers (CMs) in fulfilling their roles.

From the perspective of principals, there is a glaring difference in the type of support they are receiving as opposed to what they require. Principals complain of the critical gaps in areas such as curriculum management, human resources, school finances, wellness, and leadership development - all of which are essential for effective whole-school management. However, Circuit Managers who are supposed to provide support in these areas are often not equipped with the necessary training or expertise. This creates a mismatch between what principals' need (i.e. expert-level guidance) and the support they are actually receiving. Although principals are aware of CMs' role of mitigating (principals') challenges, but because CMs lack the depth of knowledge in these complex areas, principals are left without the expected assistance they need.

Additionally, the need for expert-led leadership and management training is critical to attain high standards of leadership across all schools which entail proper supervision; yet the CMs are unable to meet these demands due to their limited time, expertise, and resources. This discrepancy reveals a gap between the expectations for expert input and the reality of the support that principals receive, thus the CPD system fails to provide the level of leadership development that principals deem necessary. As a result, the leadership development needs of principals remain sidelined, thus leaving them with insufficient support for their crucial role in leading schools.

From the perspective of Circuit Managers, the non-delivery of Proper CPD stems from their own limitations in providing the support that is expected of them. The CMs themselves acknowledge that they lack the strategy, time, and resources to offer individual support to principals, particularly considering the unique challenges faced by each school community. Despite this, CMs are still tasked with facilitating CPD sessions for principals. This implies that there is a fundamental flaw in the CPD system which is not designed to offer personalised support. The expectation for CMs to provide comprehensive, individualised assistance contrasts with the reality on the ground - they simply do not have the capacity to do so effectively, hence further exacerbating the leadership development gap.

While there is widespread recognition that leadership development is a critical need for principals, it is not given priority within the CPD structure. The CPD initiatives that do exist are often too generic or not specifically tailored to the unique needs of individual principals. This leaves principals at risk of underperforming in their leadership roles, as the training they receive does not adequately address their specific developmental gaps.

In summary, the contradictions in the study highlight a significant disconnect between what principals need and the support they receive. Principals require expert guidance in key areas of school management, but CMs are ill-equipped to provide this level of support due to a lack of training, resources, and time. Additionally, the CPD system fails to prioritize leadership development in a way that addresses the individual challenges faced by principals, suggesting that a more expert-driven, personalized approach is necessary to fill the critical gaps in school management.

The next section presents the theme on barriers encountered in the implementation of CPD.

4.6 BARRIERS ENCOUNTERED IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF CPD

This theme contains data gathered from focus group discussions hindering school principals in the implementation of CPD by CMs. Categories in this theme includes time-management, communication, focus on results, professional development, administrative challenges, and, lack of resources.

The next section below discusses categories and their sub-categories under this theme.

4.6.1 Time-constraints

4.6.1.1 Overwhelming workload of circuit managers (CMs)

This category addresses responses on the burdensome workloads of CMs that hinders their productivity.

FGA stated:

“Time, it’s the biggest area... despite having many schools in our area we only have 2 CM’s”.

Participants expressed frustration about the limited availability of CMs due to their heavy workload, thus emphasising the difficulty in securing timely and adequate support. The overload of responsibilities for CMs was seen as a major obstacle in facilitating effective CPD. A few participants noted that although CMs were overloaded, some do their best to manage their time effectively. One participant suggested that the issue was not just about loaded work schedules of CMs, but a systemic lack of planning.

The findings also indicate a significant concern regarding the shortage of time allocated by CMs to focus on CPD. This finding is supported in section 2.4.1.2 that states inadequate resources as a barrier to CPD implementation (Njui, 2018:2). This suggests the need to re-assess the allocation of resources, especially human resources and time, to ensure principals receive the support they need.

4.6.1.2 Inadequate planning

FGA stated:

“The planning from the district is not appropriate... programmes are cancelled”.

The majority of participants noted frequent programme cancellations which disrupted the flow of CPD activities and caused confusion among school principals. The minority noted that while cancellations were frustrating, they often arise from unforeseen circumstances, rather than poor planning. One participant mentioned that they have seen improvements in planning recently, but this view was not widely shared. In addition, findings reveal the lack of planning at the District level which impacts on the effectiveness of CPD programmes. A more structured and consistent planning of CPD workshops communicated through effective channels could improve the experience for school principals, which would allow them to better manage their own time and responsibilities.

4.6.1.3 Insufficient time regarding CPD

FGC declared:

“Whenever I leave for meetings or trainings I can’t cover curriculum. I then experience discipline issues”.

Responses from the minority of participants indicated that the time-management issue was not solely due to CPD, but also from poor delegation skills within schools. Fortunately, the majority of participants also noted that some principals have managed to create time for CPD by rearranging school schedules and effectively delegating tasks to senior staff. It should be noted that planning cannot be done by the principal in isolation, which implies that the principal needs assistance (Maja, 2016:22). The findings in this theme pointed to a conflict between time spent on CPD and daily school management duties. Hence, astute time-management strategies, as well as visionary redesigning CPD schedules, could help mitigate these challenges.

The next section presents the category on communication issues.

4.6.2 Communication Issues

This category deals with communication issues. The participants' responses regarding this category were divided into sub-categories by utilising the data that emerged; namely, top-down communication and lack of engagement.

4.6.2.1 Top-down communication

This sub-category includes responses in the top-down communication category. Participants' responses are reflected below:

FGA stated:

"CM act as vessels for the department... Our needs, plans and priorities are set aside".

The majority of participants expressed concerns about the CMs top-down approach to communication. Principals felt that their needs and priorities were often sidelined in favour of department-driven instructions. Participants further stated that they believed the existence of a top-down communication model may be efficient if it was properly managed. This statement by FGA (above) emphasises that effective communication between principals confronted with ever-changing and growing responsibilities is crucial to create productive CPD programmes (Davis, Rogers & Harrigan, 2020:4). One participant suggested that CMs should involve principals more in decision-making, but this view was not widely accepted. The findings revealed the prevalence of a top-down communication approach was the major reason for a disconnect between school principals and CMs. This finding is supported in Smith and Tutwiler (2014:18) who agree that principals have no part in decisions that emanate from top-down levels which affects school performance adversely. Hence, CPD programs would benefit by incorporating more two-way dialogues, thus allowing principals to voice their concerns and priorities.

4.6.2.2 Lack of engagement

This sub-category provides responses on the lack of engagement category. These responses are outlined below.

FGA contended:

“They don’t even show concerns when they turn us down when we want to make contributions”.

Participants highlighted the lack of engagement from CMs, particularly when principals desired to contribute ideas or give feedback.

The findings confirm that a few participants acknowledged that while engagement was often limited, some CMs were open to suggestions when approached directly. One participant suggested that the perceived lack of engagement was sometimes due to principals not proactively reaching out to CMs. The lack of engagement from CMs isolates principals and hinders collaborative problem-solving processes. Although the CPD policy encourages systematic communication for both professional and technical tasks (RAMSA, 2022:3), two-way interaction between principals and CMs are sometimes limited. In this regard, the participatory approach encourages interaction, ownership, and innovation in CPD to enhance school management.

The next sub-category focuses on results.

4.6.3 Focus on Results

The participants’ responses regarding this category were clustered into a sub-category from the data that emerged. The sub-theme for this category deals on the shift in CPD goals which is addressed below:

4.6.3.1 Shift in CPD goals

This sub-category provides responses on the shift in CPD goals. The responses are expressed next.

FGB revealed:

“Most workshops organised are around curriculum, around results ... CPD is no longer there in a way”.

Participants noted a shift in the focus of CPD programmes regarding curriculum coverage and results, rather than holistic professional development. The restricted focus on results was seen as limiting. The majority of participants showed their appreciation towards CMs who were result-focused as they believed it improved school performance. One participant suggested that focusing on results is necessary but should be balanced with leadership and management training. The findings suggest that CPD programmes have become too ‘narrow’ as they focus on compliance and results, thus neglecting broader developmental needs such as leadership and personal growth. This might be attributed to the result-oriented approach which emphasises benchmarks to meet international standards (Arhipova et al., 2018:68). Thus, a more balanced approach to CPD would promote well-rounded functional principals.

The next sub-category presents professional development as a category.

4.6.4 Professional Development

This category deals with professional development. The participants’ responses are articulated below.

The next sub-category deals with generic training.

4.6.4.1 Generic training

FGE disclosed:

“Workshops planned by CMs are generic and fail to address individual CPD needs”.

The majority of the participants felt that CPD workshops were often generic and failed to address the specific needs of individual schools. This reduced the effectiveness of CPD as these training sessions were regarded as merely basic training which needed to be improved beyond its current state of delivery (Melesse & Gulie, 2019:82). The minority of participants noted that generic workshops were helpful for novice principals

who needed foundational knowledge. Also, mention was made that generic training should be supplemented with more personalised, school-based support. The findings indicate that CPD programmes need to be more tailored to the individual needs of principals. The implementation of personalised support and targeted workshops could help principals address specific challenges in their schools more effectively.

The next sub-category presents administrative challenges.

4.6.5 Administrative Challenges

The participants' responses regarding this category were clustered into the following sub-categories:

4.6.5.1 Short notice

The FGD participant mentioned:

“Text messages are sent now requesting you to submit something that will take you 3 hours, but you are expected to submit it in an hour”.

A significant number of participants mentioned that they were often asked to submit reports or documents at very short notice, causing stress and hindering their ability to complete tasks effectively. This revealed participants' feelings that a request by a CM at short notice was unacceptable; effective time-management within schools and prior planning by CMs could mitigate the problem. However, one participant stated that short notice requests were sometimes necessary due to the dynamic nature of school environments. The issue of short notice requests by CMs adds unnecessary pressure on principals who are already occupied with managing complex school environments. Better communication and planning from CMs could alleviate these administrative challenges and improve overall school management.

The next section deals with the category on lack of resources.

4.6.6 Lack of Resources

The participants' responses regarding this category were clustered into a sub-category that emerged from the data relating to inadequate ICT Support.

4.6.6.1 Inadequate ICT support

FGF observed:

“There is no provision for ICT resources ... high-quality laptops and smartphones for principals”.

Participants noted a lack of access to high-quality ICT resources, which hampers their ability to manage school operations effectively. A few participants felt that while ICT support was inadequate, the onus was on schools to provide their own resources. One participant suggested that ICT support was not a priority for the district, as other issues like infrastructure and staff shortages took precedence. The findings revealed that the lack of ICT support limits the capacity of principals to engage with digital tools that could streamline school management. This implies that there are challenges concerning the inequality of resources such as the lack of ICT facilities (cf. section 2.4.1) If this gap is addressed, then it may provide adequate ICT resources and skills to improve efficiency, support, and innovation in managing schools.

The findings in this theme reveal critical areas where CPD for school principals fall short, particularly in aspects of time-management, communication, academic results, and resource allocation. The study indicates that CPD must be redesigned to meet the specific, evolving needs of principals to move beyond generic training and compliance-focused workshops. To be effective, CPD should offer personalised support, address practical challenges like resource-constraints, and create opportunities for principals to engage meaningfully with CMs and other stakeholders.

The study reveals a significant tension between the expectations of principals and the reality of how Circuit Managers (CMs) function in supporting principals' development. From the perspective of principals, there is a noticeable difference in how they perceive the support provided by CMs. Although principals recognise the work of CMs as being supportive, there are few tangible improvements in principals' professional development. The support they receive is superficial, which leaves principals feeling that the real, substantive support needed to improve their practice is lacking. In other words, while principals value the involvement of CMs, they do not see the practical

outcomes that would justify this support, which ultimately fails to address the deeper needs that would lead to real, sustained improvement in school operations.

Additionally, principals express concerns about the lack of strategic planning and organisation in CPD. They call for better communication and more robust support; but these needs remain unmet, further widening the disconnect between what is promised and what is delivered. This situation exposes the fact that while principals might feel supported on the surface, the lack of resources, poor planning, and ineffective strategies prevent any significant progress from being made in CPD. The gap between the perceived support and the actual impact of CMs creates a situation where principals feel they are being marginalised by not receiving comprehensive, ongoing support necessary to foster meaningful change in their schools.

Lamentably, the role of CMs is compromised by challenges they face in meeting the expectations demanded of them. While CMs are expected to provide proactive and strategic support to principals, they are constrained by a lack of resources and insufficient planning, which severely limits their effectiveness. The CMs often find themselves overwhelmed and under-resourced; yet despite these limitations, they continue to be viewed by principals as supportive and motivating figures. This creates a paradox for CMs themselves: although they are appreciated for their presence, they are unable to fulfil the more significant role they are supposed to play in driving principals' professional development. The ineffective strategies and poor communication between CMs and principals only exacerbate this situation, implying that CMs are regarded as motivating agents in theory, but in practice they fail to engender the desired changes through CPD.

In sum, the study reveals that while the framework for CPD is in place, the actual implementation falls short, thus creating a gap between expectation and reality for both principals and CMs.

The next section deals with the theme on CMs' effectiveness of CPD provision.

4.7 CIRCUIT MANAGERS' EFFECTIVENESS OF CPD PROVISION

This section presents the theme on CMs' effectiveness of CPD provision for school principals. This analysis is organised under the following topics: perception of CMs' effectiveness in dispensing their duties, systematic challenges, communication, training effectiveness, and support from circuit managers.

The next section discusses the sub-category on perception of CMs' effectiveness in dispensing their duties.

4.7.1 Perception of Principals on Circuit Managers' Effectiveness in Discharging Their Duties

This category deals with perceptions of principals regarding CMs' effectiveness in discharging their duties. The participants' responses regarding this category were clustered into the following sub-category: effectiveness hindered by systematic challenges.

4.7.1.1 Effectiveness hindered by systemic Challenges

FGA responded:

“Effective to a lesser extent; the system hinders CM's effectiveness”.

The consensus across all focus groups was that the effectiveness of CMs is limited primarily by systemic barriers such as time-constraints, lack of planning, and the burden of external demands. The findings indicate that these challenges obstruct CMs in fulfilling their CPD mandates. This also suggests a need for plans and processes that will assist in improving CMs effectiveness.

FGB added:

“CMs are overburdened; this is impacting on their effectiveness”.

FGD expressed a more optimistic view, contending that CMs can be effective, but principals' lack of interactive participation and the irrelevance of training-content undermine this effectiveness. Participant FGG perceived CPD as being non-existent,

emphasising that systemic issues are so stifling that they felt no real CPD was happening. The findings indicate that while some CMs attempt to provide genuine support, their efforts are stifled by systemic challenges that include workload and time- constraints. This disruption was also elevated by transformations which were implemented in the new South African Education system in 1994 resulting in a mismatch of principals' needs (Nakadien, Sayed & Sadeck, 2022:49). This suggests that for CPD to be more effective, systemic reforms addressing these limitations must be prioritised.

The next section discusses the category on training effectiveness.

4.7.2 Training Effectiveness

The participants' responses regarding this category were clustered into a sub-category from data that emerged on irrelevant and reactive training.

4.7.2.1 Irrelevant and reactive training

A participant's response is articulated below.

FGE mentioned:

“Training is reactive and not adequately planned; the CM needs to engage principals about their needs”.

Participants were generally dissatisfied with the content and timing of training sessions; FGE in particular, described training as being reactive, lacking in proper planning, and failing to engage principals about their needs. FGB echoed this by emphasising that training sessions focus primarily on curriculum and results rather than on holistic professional development. FGD stressed that for training to be effective, principals must be willing to participate, and the content needs to be relevant. The majority of participants expressed frustration with irrelevant content delivery and poor planning, which diminished their enthusiasm to engage. This confirmed the dissatisfaction of principals on current content of the training programmes (Nasreen & Odhiambo, 2018:247). This is supported by Mann and Webb (2022:19) who emphasise content relevance and its effective delivery as it being vital to CPD.

Findings also indicate that the success of CPD depends on CPD sessions that are focused on the actual developmental needs of principals. Training should be stimulating, with thorough planning and post-training support to ensure practical implementation in schools.

The next section discusses the category on support from CMs.

4.7.3 Support from Circuit Managers

Participants responses regarding this category were clustered into a sub-category; namely, lack of developmental and crisis support.

4. 7.3.1 Lack of Developmental and crisis support

The response is articulated below.

FGA stated:

“Limited support during crises; lack of presence when needed”.

The majority of participants pointed to a widespread view that CMs often fail to provide the necessary developmental and crisis support for school principals. Participants' responses revealed limited support during crises, the lack of financial resource discussions, and CM's inability to assist with pressing needs. Further emphasis was on the need for CMs to be proactive to address common issues before they escalate, pointing out that CMs' reactive nature should rather be preventive. Principals need innovative strategies that promote management for educational change (Steyn, 2022) which requires not only developmental support, but also immediate assistance during crises, which CMs currently fail to provide effectively.

Furthermore, principals feel that there is little meaningful interaction with CMs which limits the collaboration necessary for effective professional development which contradicts the requirements of the National Education and National Policy Framework. Principals' complained that the duration and structure of the sessions were too short and not tailored to their particular needs. What they received was often generic and ineffective in addressing the daily challenges they face.

For Circuit Managers, their perception of CPD effectiveness differs significantly from that of the principals. The CMs view CPD as being effective, particularly when principals apply what they have learned through CPD sessions into their schools' operations. However, this viewpoint is debatable as it assumes that the content is always relevant and applicable. The CMs fail to recognise that the content might not meet the needs of all principals, especially those who already excel in certain areas or who face unique limitations in their learning environments. Their focus on whether principals successfully implement the content overlooks the broader issue that the CPD being offered may not be responsive to the diverse and dynamic needs of individual principals. Additionally, CMs note that principals often struggle to grasp the content, thus leading to repetitive training on the same topics.

This is compounded by logistical challenges such as CMs' overloaded work schedules which lead to cancellations and poor planning, thus disrupting principals' daily routines and adds to their stress. Moreover, the issue of inadequate ICT training for principals exacerbates the problem. Principals are struggling to manage school operations effectively due to the lack of proper training in technology - an essential tool in modern education. While CPD opportunities are meant to address these gaps, the training provided does not equip principals with the necessary skills to enhance their management capabilities by using technology.

In sum, the contradictions regarding CPD between principals and CMs are clear. Principals are dissatisfied with CPD because it fails to address their unique needs and is often poorly delivered, while CMs perceive CPD as effective but overlook the diversity of challenges principals face. The generic, one-size-fits-all approach to CPD, logistical issues, poor communication, and a lack of responsiveness to principals' needs, undermines the purpose of professional development. What is needed is a more personalised, well-planned approach that considers the individual challenges of school leaders, which will ensure that CPD becomes truly effective in fostering professional growth.

The next section deals with findings from the interviews with CMs.

4.8 PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS: INTERVIEWS WITH CIRCUIT MANAGERS

The CMs, who are key stakeholders in the provision of CPD to school principals, must ensure that principals get both formal and informal (on-the-job) training as part of their CPD role-function (Abakah, 2019:40).

The themes, categories, and sub-categories that were drawn from the data which guided the findings are outlined below in table 4.2. The table focuses on 5 themes, 24 categories and 23 sub-categories which emerged from data drawn from participants' responses.

Table 4.2: Theme, category, and sub-categories

Theme 1	4.8.1 Role of Circuit Manager in CPD Implementation
Category 1	4.8.1.1 Ensuring Principal success through CPD
Category 2	4.8.2 Encouraging CPD
Sub-category 1	4.8.2.1 Promoting lifelong learning for principals
Category 3	4.8.3 Communication between CMs and principals
Sub-category 1	4.8.3.1 Creating opportunities for dialogue
Category 4	4.8.4 CMs' role in facilitating external CPD
Sub-category 1	4.8.4.1 Providing External CPD opportunities
Theme 2	4.9 Circuit managers discharge of CPD Responsibilities for principals
Category 1	4.9.1 Circuit Managers' engagement in CPD facilitation
Sub-category 1	4.9.1.1 Proactive engagement with principals
Category 2	4.9.2 Frequency and consistency of CPD interaction
Sub-category 1	4.9.2.1 Regular vs sporadic interaction
Category 3	4.9.3 Sharing of best practices
Sub-category 1	4.9.3.1 Principal-led CPD initiatives
Category 4	4.9.4 Circuit Managers as facilitators of external CPD
Sub-category 1	4.9.4.1 Cascading information from higher authorities
Theme 3	4.10 Principal's' CPD needs and CMs' role in providing CPD
Category 1	4.10.1 Dynamic nature of the principals' role
Sub-category 1	4.10.1.1 Evolving responsibilities of principals
Category 2	4.10.2 Key areas of CPD
Sub-category 1	4.10.2.1 Conflict Management and School Discipline
Category 3	4.10.3 Involving the community in school management
Sub-category 1	4.10.3.1 Political and community dynamics in schools

Category 4	4.10.4 Monitoring and consistency in CPD implementation
Sub-category 1	4.10.4.1 Consistent support for principals
Theme 4	4.11 Barriers encountered in CPD implementation for principals
Category 1	4.11.1 Time constraints and competing priorities
Sub-category 1	4.11.1.1 Time as the primary barrier
Category 2	4.11.2 Financial Constraints
Sub-category 1	4.11.2.1 Lack of a budget for CPD
Category 3	4.11.3 Geographic and logistical challenges
Sub-category 1	4.11.3.1 Vast geographic coverage
Category 4	4.11.4 Inconsistent support and monitoring
Sub-category 1	4.11.4.1 Lack of continuous monitoring
Category 5	4.11.5 Overburdened multiple responsibilities
Sub-category 1	4.11.5.1 High number of schools and demands
Category 6	4.11.6 Conflict within school management and governance
Sub-category 1	4.11.6.1 SGB and school leadership tensions
Category 7	4.11.7 Lack of principals' capacity
Sub-category 1	4.11.7.1 Need for governance and leadership-training
Category 8	4.11.8 Political and community involvement
Sub-category 1	4.11.8.1 External political pressures
Theme 5	4.12 Circuit Managers' provision of CPD
Category 1	4.12.1 Variability in CPD Effectiveness
Sub-category 1	4.12.1.1 Effectiveness linked to principals' engagement and implementation
Category 2	4.12.2 Barriers to effective CPD
Sub-category 1	4.12.2.1 Inconsistent Implementation by principals
Category 3	4.12.3 Principals' motivation and leadership
Sub-category 1	4.12.3.1 Impact of principals' commitment on CPD success
Category 4	4.12.4 Structural and logistical barriers to CPD
Sub-category 1	4.12.4.1 Time-constraints and competing priorities

4.8.1 THEME 1: ROLE OF CIRCUIT MANAGERS IN CPD IMPLEMENTATION

This theme relates to the data collected through interviews with CMs to understand their role in facilitating CPD for school principals. The participants' responses regarding this theme are clustered into categories and sub-categories from the data that emerged; namely, ensuring principals' success through CPD, encouraging continuous professional development, communication between CMs and principals, and CMs' role in facilitating external CPD.

The sub-category on ensuring principals' success through CPD is explained in the following section:

4.8.1.1 Ensuring principals' success through CPD

Participant FGH stated:

"It is very important for the CM to ensure the development of the school principals so that they are able to run their institutions in a very successful way".

Participants largely agreed that one of the critical roles of CMs is to ensure the professional development of school principals so they can effectively manage their institutions. FGH emphasised that CMs play a vital role in supporting the success of schools by developing their principals. In addition to CMs perspectives on how CPD should occur, some participants emphasised that the CM's role is to appraise principals and identify their weaknesses, while honing their skills for further development (Mestry, 2017: 2).

There was consensus that CMs are crucial in fostering principals' success through compulsory CPD training programmes (Akulga & Kwkye, 2023: 42). The responsibility of CMs transcends administrative duties to actively shape the capabilities of principals. This indicates a dire need for targeted CPD programmes that align with principals' specific development areas for better school management.

The next category discusses promoting CPD.

4.8.2 Encouraging Continuous Professional Development (CPD)

Participants' responses regarding this category were clustered into the following sub-category that emerged from the data; namely, promoting lifelong learning for principals.

4.8.2.1 Promoting lifelong learning for principals

The sub-category explains how to promote lifelong learning for principals. The participants' responses are outlined below.

FGH stated:

“The role of the CM is to encourage principals to participate in CPD because as an educator you are a lifelong learner, you need to equip yourself”.

There was a consensus amongst all participants that CMs are responsible for encouraging principals to engage in CPD as lifelong learners. They pointed out that being a principal requires ongoing development, thus the importance of CPD for principals to be equipped for their roles. However, some participants noted the difference between CPD initiated by principals and external CPD facilitated by CMs. For example, participants clarified that CMs primarily handle external development in the context of the school to maintain, develop, and increase knowledge, while principals can initiate their own internal CPD activities (Nakambale, 2018:2). An explanation of CPD categories was highlighted as important to clarify the role of CMs. According to FGH, CMs are responsible for conveying external CPD programmes, providing external guidance from District or circuit offices, and leaving internal development initiatives to the principals (Chemutai et al., 2015:119).

FGH revealed:

“Where we come in as CMs is the external CPD. We are the people who get the latest information to be cascaded down to the principals”.

This revelation highlights a potential gap in CPD practices where principals might not be adequately supported in self-initiated CPD. The findings suggest that CMs focus primarily on delivering externally driven CPD programmes which may limit the personal development of principals (Lingam, 211:3). Therefore, CMs may need to strike a better balance between facilitating external initiatives and supporting principals in self-initiated CPD activities.

The next category discusses communication between CMs and principals.

4.8.3 Communication between Circuit Managers and Principals

The participants' responses were clustered into a sub-category that emerged from the data; namely, creating opportunities for dialogue.

4.8.3.1 Creating opportunities for dialogue

Participants' responses are enunciated below:

FGH, PC clarified:

“As CMs, firstly we create an opportunity for principals to raise issues on which they want to be developed, and then we organise developmental sessions for those particular needs”.

Participant PC stated that CMs are responsible for creating opportunities and spaces where principals can raise their development needs. Even though no lack of agreement was expressed, some participants pointed out that appraisals are key tools CMs use to identify weaknesses and help principals develop. This shifts the focus slightly from open dialogue to a more formal assessment process. This shift suggests that while open dialogue is important, so are structured appraisals that may be used for CMs to identify and address CPD areas of improvement for principals.

FGH stated:

“Our responsibility is to ensure that after the appraisal, we are able to identify the weaknesses from principals and assist them with programs that ensure their CPD is catered for”.

It was evident that most participants supported the idea of communication. Findings reflect the need for a more collaborative approach in rolling out systematic professional development programmes between CMs and principals (Nasreen, 2019:3). While some CMs emphasise the importance of appraisals, others suggest a more conversational and needs-based approach. The study suggests that CMs must use both formal and informal strategies to effectively cater to principals' developmental needs.

The next category discusses CMs' role in facilitating external CPD.

4.8.4 Circuit Managers' Role in Facilitating External CPD

The participants' responses regarding this category were clustered into a sub-category that emerged from the data; namely, providing external CPD opportunities.

4.8.4.1 Providing external CPD opportunities

The next sub-category discusses provision of external CPD. Participants' responses follow:

FGH stated:

"We are the people who get the latest information that needs to be cascaded down to the principals. We arrange workshops and meetings to give the information to the principals".

There was broad agreement that CMs play a pivotal role in providing external CPD opportunities for principals. Participants explained that CMs serve as a link between District-level initiatives and school-level implementation, thus focusing on cascading the latest CPD information from the District to principals.

Responses from a minority of participants emphasised that CMs should also support principals' internal CPD initiatives rather than merely focusing on external programmes. The mentoring aspect was limited in relation to internal means of training for principals (Mestry, 2017:259); however, this perspective was not widely discussed. The data indicates that while CMs are effective in organising external CPD sessions, they may not always prioritise principals' internal development needs, when in fact changes in education require principals' development (Habtam, 2019:23). This implies that a more integrated approach is required, where CMs actively support both external and self-initiated CPD initiatives to enhance the overall professional development of principals.

The data analysis revealed several key insights. First, CMs are perceived as critical facilitators of principals' development, especially how well they communicate with and support principals. However, the findings suggests a gap between external CPD initiatives and the internal development needs of principals, thus pointing to the need for

a more balanced approach that include a variety of resources in orientation and mentoring (Davis et al., 2020:5).

It is clear from the interviews that while CMs focus on disseminating external CPD programmes, there is a growing need for personalised and proactive support that addresses the specific challenges faced by school principals. The CMs must adopt a dual role - offering structured external programmes while supporting self-initiated, individualised development pathways for principals (Nakambale, 2018: 81). Overall, the study highlights the importance of CPD as a continuous and collaborative process where CMs serve as both mentors and facilitators (increasing staff capacity and competencies), bridging the gap between external mandates and the internal growth of school leaders (Nasreen & Odhiambo, 2018:246).

The next section presents theme 2, which deals with CMs' discharge of CPD for principals.

4.9 THEME 2: CIRCUIT MANAGERS' (CMS') DISCHARGE OF CONTINUOUS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT (CPD) FOR PRINCIPALS

This section focuses on how CMs perceive their role in discharging CPD responsibilities for school principals. Based on participants' responses, data generated is clustered under the following categories: CMs' engagement in CPD facilitation, frequency and consistency of CPD interaction, sharing of best practices, and CMs as facilitators of external CPD.

The category below discusses CM engagement in CPD facilitation.

4.9.1 Circuit Managers' Engagement in CPD Facilitation

The participants' responses regarding this category were clustered into a sub-category; namely, proactive engagement with principals.

4.9.1.1 Proactive engagement with principals

Participants' responses appear below.

FGH, PB stated:

"With my minimal experience, I have not interacted with principals much, but I think it is important to encourage them for development... you need to acquire new methods of teaching and empower yourself".

The majority of CMs expressed that they actively engage with principals regarding CPD. The CMs recognised that although they have limited experience, they still see the importance of encouraging principals to develop professionally on an ongoing basis. Participant-CMs also confirmed that their strategic plan ensures the development of principals, stating that they discharge their duties effectively by holding annual meetings and forums where principals share best practices. This demonstrates the commitment of CMs to support principals' growth through applying strategic plans and convening annual meetings to facilitate the sharing of best practices, thus demonstrating their ongoing efforts to drive professional development.

FGH emphasised:

"Yes, it is true that we are discharging our responsibilities well because it's part of our strategic plan for the development of principals. We have meetings and forums where principals and CMs meet under one roof and share good practices".

While FGH acknowledged the importance of CPD, the admission of limited interaction with principals (by novice CMs) stands in contrast to more seasoned CMs who consistently engage principals in CPD. This exposes some disparity about how experience influences CM-principal engagement levels.

The majority of CMs believe they are fulfilling their CPD responsibilities by fostering proactive engagement with principals, while developing their expertise and increasing their commitment (Nakpodia, 2009:1). However, experience plays a key role in how effectively CMs discharge these responsibilities. The researcher notes that while novice CMs understand the value of CPD, their ability to actively engage in it may be limited due to time-restrictions, administration duties, a burdensome workload, and

inexperience which could affect the overall impact of CPD delivery across Districts (Nasreen & Odhiambo, 2018:44).

The next category discusses frequency and consistency of CPD interaction.

4.9.2 Frequency and Consistency of CPD Interaction

The participants' responses regarding this category were clustered into a sub-category from the data that emerged; namely, regular vs sporadic interaction.

4.9.2.1 Regular vs Sporadic Interaction

Participants' responses are articulated as follows:

FGH stated:

"I normally meet with my principals once a month, and we talk about issues that affect their work in schools. We address those issues and take them as development opportunities".

The majority of CM participants agreed that they meet with principals regularly, though the frequency varies. Some participants highlighted that they meet with their principals at least once a month to ensure the inclusion of both District-provided information and school-specific development needs. This consistency in interaction reflects CMs' commitment to addressing challenges emanating from feedback sessions to provide opportunities for the professional development of principals.

FGH added:

"Apart from monthly meetings, we have quarterly SMT Forums where we invite principals from high-performing schools to share best practices with others".

Participant FGH explained that their schools visits are conducted at least twice a month, but do not have a specific schedule for meeting principals, suggesting that engagement is more on an ad hoc basis. Furthermore, an indication of a less

structured interaction reflects a more reactive approach, contrasting with other CMs who follow scheduled monthly or quarterly engagements. This ad hoc approach might indicate that novice CMs struggle to maintain the consistency required for effective CPD delivery.

Additionally, the findings revealed that the majority of CMs were guided by structured and regular engagements between themselves and the principals. However, the inconsistency in some CMs' adhering to planned schedules, particularly among those with minimal experience, suggests a potential gap in CPD implementation (DoE, 2007:17). The solution is to formalise interaction schedules for less experienced CMs to ensure consistent CPD support for principals.

The next category discusses sharing of best practices.

4.9.3 Sharing of Best Practices

The participants' responses regarding this category were clustered into a sub-category; namely, principal-led CPD initiatives.

4.9.3.1 Principal-led CPD initiatives

Participants' responses are voiced below.

FGH claimed:

"We have quarterly SMT forums where we invite principals from performing schools to share their best practices. We have also introduced PLCs for principals, where they identify topics for themselves and invite experts to address them".

Participants emphasised the importance of creating platforms where principals can learn from their peers. Forums, workshops, and Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) were frequently mentioned as methods for sharing best practices. Participants explained that quarterly SMT forums invite high-performing principals to share their strategies with others, thus fostering peer-led development programmes that are closely regulated (Nakadien et al., 2022:49; Raanhuis, 2022:40).

Although all participants recognised the importance of sharing best practices, not all CMs mentioned structured forums or PLCs. This could indicate a variation in the implementation of peer-led initiatives across Districts. Interactions with principals were reported to range between limited to informal; an ad-hoc engagement without structured forums or PLCs. This suggests that the introduction of structured sharing opportunities may depend on the CM's level of experience and initiative.

The findings revealed the value of peer learning via CPD, particularly through platforms such as PLCs and SMT forums (see section 2.4.2.1). However, these initiatives were more prevalent in certain Districts or instituted by more experienced CMs who must ensure the effective professional development of principals (Kiggundu & Moorosi, 2016:32). The researcher suggests the need for a more standardised approach to peer-led CPD workshops to ensure equitable development opportunities across Districts and to enhance mastery of management aspects of education (Maphoto, 2016:56).

The next category discusses CMs as facilitators of external CPD.

4.9.4 Circuit Managers as Facilitators of External CPD

The participants' responses regarding this category are explained below in the sub-category, cascading information from higher authorities:

4.9.4.1 Cascading information from higher authorities

This sub-category discusses the cascading of information from higher authorities. Participants' responses are articulated in the excerpts below:

FGH stated:

"Besides information from the district and provincial offices, we also talk about issues that affect their work in schools and address those as part of development".

Several CMs acknowledged that they serve as a conduit for external CPD programmes initiated by District and Provincial authorities. In this regard, FGH (PD)

pointed out that their role includes delivering District and Provincial mandates to support principals while also addressing school-specific development needs.

While most CMs recognised the importance of conveying external CPD, some focused more on reactive type of engagement with principals. The focus on appraisal-based interactions indicates that CPD efforts may rely more on identifying areas of weakness rather than delivering proactive development programmes.

Further, the findings indicate that CMs play a dual role in delivering District-level CPD and in addressing the specific needs of individual schools via CPD initiatives to expand skills and knowledge for principals to attain best practice (Steyn, 2011:43). However, novice CMs may not fully utilise their role in facilitating proactive CPD which can easily affect constructive change in the activities of principals (Mestry & Singh, 2007:479).

Additionally, the evidence garnered through collected data regarding the role of Circuit Managers in discharging CPD duties, revealed several shortcomings. First, while most CMs actively engage with principals, the level of interaction often depends on the CM's experience and knowledge of the Integrated Strategic Planning Framework for Teacher Education and Development (DoE, 2015:3). While more experienced CMs tend to have structured and regular meetings, novice CMs may use a more random approach. Moreover, peer-led development initiatives such as SMT forums and PLCs (Thessin, 2021:7) are recognised as valuable strategies for CPD, but their implementation may vary across Districts. The researcher suggests that establishing more uniform CPD strategies, including regular peer-sharing platforms, could enhance the effectiveness of principals' development - but care must be taken to avoid negative impacts (Parker et al., 2022: 500).

Lastly, the role of CMs in cascading external CPD programmes from higher authorities to those on the ground is well-understood, but could be improved through better alignment with principals' specific needs such as the communication of clear expectations through collaborative processes (Thessin, 2021:7). This study suggests that a more proactive engagement approach, especially by less experienced CMs, would contribute significantly to the continuous professional development of school principals, improved organisational culture, and better school performance outcomes across Districts (Hallam et al., 2015:196).

The next section presents the theme on CMs' views' in providing CPD needs for principals.

4.10 THEME 3: CPD NEEDS AND SUPPORT BY CIRCUIT MANAGERS

This theme presents Circuit Managers' (CMs') perspectives on the CPD needs of school principals, and the extent to which CMs address these needs. Based on focus group interviews, the categories that emerged comprised of the following topics: dynamic nature of the principal's role, key areas for CPD, involving the community in school management, monitoring, and consistency in CPD implementation.

The next section presents the category on the dynamic nature of the principal's role.

4.10.1 Dynamic Nature of the Principal's Role

The participants' responses regarding this category were clustered into a sub-category; namely, the evolving responsibilities of principals.

4.10.1.1 Evolving responsibilities of principals

Participants' responses appear in the excerpts below:

FGH reflected:

"The scope of the principal is very broad and dynamic... For example, they need to be updated with new methods of handling discipline and inclusive basket criteria when evaluating performance".

Most CMs indicated that the responsibilities of school principals are constantly changing and expanding, thus creating the urgent need for CPD. Participant PD noted that principals are required to overcome emerging challenges such as school discipline, analysing curriculum matters, and involving the community in school management. This emphasises the dire need for CPD facilitators to become proactive by keeping abreast of emerging challenges by adopting flexible modern trends to capacitate principals to adapt to new methods and strategies.

FGH added:

"Principals need to properly profile learners and teachers and make an in-depth analysis of results to improve performance".

While most CMs emphasised the evolving nature of the principal's role, PB focused specifically on conflict management by pointing out that principals often lack capacity in mitigating conflicts within schools. This needs urgent attention, but has attracted little attention from CMs through CPD. This implies that while there is a clear understanding that while CMs recognise the evolving and widening scope of principals' roles, there is a specific gap in specifically addressing principals' capacity to eliminate conflicts in schools. For example, despite the importance of conflict management, this area has not received sufficient inclusion in CPD programmes, indicating that it has been somewhat overlooked.

FGH, PB mentioned:

"Most principals lack capacity with conflict management, especially between learners, teachers, and the community. This is an area that needs speedy attention".

The majority of CMs recognise the expanding role of principals, which now includes complex responsibilities such as data analysis, discipline, and community engagement, all of which must lead to conceptualisation and contextualisation of school regulations and policies (Nasreen, 2019:162). However, despite these evolving demands, CPD in some areas like conflict management, remains generally untouched. This indicates a gap between identified needs and actual CPD implementation, thus potentially affecting principals' ability to manage current challenges effectively. Therefore, without adequate exposure and mastery of skills through CPD sessions, CMs cannot ensure that principals receive relevant and contextualised CPD training (Davis et al., 2020:14). However, findings in section A (4.2.3.2) confirm that training received by CMs is adequate and of a good standard as opposed to that of principals.

The next section presents the category on key areas for CPD.

4.10.2 Key Areas for CPD

The participants' responses regarding this category were clustered into a sub-theme; namely, conflict management and school discipline.

4.10.2.1 Conflict Management and school discipline

This category discusses conflict management and school discipline. Participants responses are depicted below:

FGH, PB stated:

"Most principals lack capacity with conflict management... Presently nothing has been done as yet".

The majority of the participants emphasised the need for CPD in areas of conflict management and learner-discipline. They observed that principals struggle with coping with discipline problems. There is the urgency of addressing conflicts involving learners, teachers, and the community. The comment that little has been done to support principals to curb conflicts at school through CPD is worrying.

Some participants' perspectives centred on identifying performance management as an aspect that needed attention. They focused on the technical aspects of performance management rather than on conflict management. Much focus was on the principals to analyse general school performance to enhance learners' and teachers' productivity. This viewpoint deviates from the majority's emphasis on conflict management and discipline, suggesting a shift in CPD priorities.

FGH (PC) added:

"Principals need to analyse and profile the learners properly as well as the teachers teaching those learners. Teachers lacking content must be assisted by the principal".

While the majority of participants expressed the urgent need for CPD in managing conflicts and discipline, PC shifted the conversation to performance-related technical skills, indicating a different path to what CPD should prioritise.

The different views of participants concerning CPD priorities highlighted a broader challenge: the absence of a unified approach to roll-out CPD programmes for school principals. While conflict management and discipline remain significant areas of concern, the lack of a comprehensive CPD framework may compromise CPD training. This research suggests that targeted CPD interventions are essential, especially in conflict management and school discipline, in order to enhance principals' leadership qualities and to foster better school management. The Department of Education's Discussion Draft (2016) aligns with these findings on the importance of tailored CPD programmes to address leadership challenges. The gap in CPD delivery across Circuits may undermine school leadership, particularly in managing discipline, staff relations, and community engagement.

The next section is categorised as involving the community in school management.

4.10.3 Involving the Community in School Management

The participants' responses regarding this category were clustered into a sub-theme; namely, political and community dynamics in schools.

4.10.3.1 Political and community dynamics in schools

Participants' responses are indicated in the extracts below.

FGH mentioned:

"Our schools are in political situations, and principals need to be developed on how to involve the community in schools. It's unlike before when they could manage schools their own way".

Another key aspect CPD requires was identified by CMs; it concerned how principals should navigate the complex dynamics of involving the community in the area of school management. Also, the increasing political influence in school governance was noted as a challenge and principals are often unprepared to manage this aspect.

While FGH focused on political involvement, a different view was added by FGH,PA which shifted the discussion toward practical CPD solutions, such as organising

cluster-training for principals. Participant FGH, PA suggested that time-constraints make individual training difficult, but group-based training could be more feasible and effective. The analysed data revealed increased political dynamics in school governance which necessitates principals to be trained on how to engage the community in school management, especially the aspect of political interference. Additionally, the suggestion for group-based training should mitigate the challenge of time-constraints.

FGH, PA suggested:

"Organising training for principals in a cluster can be one of the approaches CMs use... Maybe it will be better if we have a programme for each circuit".

Participant FGH did not mention political or community involvement as a significant concern, but focused on performance improvement strategies by indicating that some CMs may prioritise technical over socio-political aspects of school management. Further, the increasing politicisation of school governance (Delaney, 2017:3) presents a significant challenge for principals regarding governance and decision-making on resource allocation which many principals are ill-equipped to manage. However, the lack of concrete CPD guidance such as attitudinal factors and policy direction (Khan, 2016:4) aimed at addressing political and community engagement reflects a critical gap in principals' professional development. The researcher suggests that CPD programmes should incorporate strategies for navigating political and community dynamics as well as reviewing policy to bring it in line with relevant day-to-day practice to enhance principals' leadership capabilities (Viennet & Pont, 2018:26).

The next section presents the category on monitoring and consistency in CPD implementation.

4.10.4 Monitoring and Consistency in CPD Implementation

The participants' responses regarding this category were clustered into a sub-theme; namely, consistent support for principals.

4.10.4.1 Consistent support for principals

Participants' responses are indicated in the extracts below:

FGH:

"Lack of consistent monitoring and control is still a challenge. I have provided action plan templates, but if I shift focus, the principals also stop implementing them".

Participant FGH, PC raised concerns about the lack of consistency in monitoring and controlling CPD activities. It was noted that while action plans and templates are provided to principals, these often fall by the wayside when the CM shifts focus to other areas. There is also a significant challenge in CPD implementation concerning the lack of consistent monitoring and feedback from CMs which leads to the absence of sustained progress. Despite following action plans, the shift in focus by CMs often results in principals neglecting to implement these plans, thus emphasising the need for regular continuous support and monitoring.

FGH stated:

"Organising training for principals in a cluster can be one of the approaches CMs use. It will be a challenge to manage them individually due to time constraints".

Participants further suggested that organising principals into clusters for training might help alleviate some of the challenges posed by time-constraints and competing commitments. This offers a potential solution to the issue of consistency in CPD delivery. None of the other participants directly addressed the issue of monitoring and consistency in CPD, thus leaving PC's concerns as somewhat isolated in the discussion.

The issue of inconsistent CPD monitoring exposes regulations that are not explicit or lack clarity in maintaining the continuity of development initiatives (Arlestig et al., 2015:49). Without sustained oversight and the ability to look at a larger ecological perspective (Angelle & Lomascolo, 2020:241) the effectiveness of CPD programmes diminishes, thus leading to potential stagnation in principals' growth (Van der Wood). By utilising follow-up mechanisms to maintain consistency ensures that CPD programmes are not beyond the principals' abilities and mandates (Bayeni & Bengu, 2018:1).

The findings indicate that while CMs were aware of the broad and dynamic scope of principals' responsibilities, CPD programmes often fall short in addressing emerging demands, especially when principals were not part of the initial planning stage of their training (Smith & Tutwiler 2014:18). The findings further revealed several critical areas of need for principals, including conflict management, community engagement, and adapting to the evolving demands of school leadership. To improve CPD effectiveness, the introduction of consistent and context-specific CPD programmes was of utmost importance; this would mitigate corruption, political interference, nepotism, and union intrusion (Khumalo, 2021:1).

The next section presents the theme on barriers to the implementation of continuous professional development for principals.

4.11 THEME 4: BARRIERS TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF CONTINUOUS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT (CPD) FOR PRINCIPALS

This theme discusses the barriers encountered by CMs in implementing CPD programmes for school principals. The following categories will be dealt with: time constraints and competing priorities, financial constraints, geographic and logistical challenges, inconsistent support and monitoring, overburdened multiple responsibilities, conflicts within school management and governance, lack of principal capacity, and political community involvement.

The next section presents the sub-category on time-constraints and competing priorities.

4.11.1 Time-constraints and Competing Priorities

The participants' responses regarding this category were clustered into a sub-theme; namely, time as the primary barrier.

4.11.1.1 Time-constraints as the primary barrier

Participants' responses are articulated below.

FGH stated:

"The most disturbing element is the availability of time to implement CPD programs. Due to competing activities, my programme from last year(2022) was only implemented in 2023".

The CMs were unanimous when they cited time-constraints as the most significant barrier to successfully implementing CPD for principals. Participants agreed that despite having CPD programmes per-planned, competing priorities such as managing school results and governance structures, severely limit the time available for CPD provision. Findings revealed that time-management was a critical barrier hindering the effective implementation of CPD programmes for principals which emanated from CMs' struggle to balance competing priorities. This delay in programme implementation, as seen with the postponed 2022 CPD programme, exposes the challenges in consistently delivering quality CPD due to the overwhelming demands on CMs' time.

FGH added:

"Time is the main factor that prohibits us from implementing programs for principals. If we had more time, we could assist principals better".

FGH elaborated:

"We regulate the number of times we take principals out of schools for CPD because it disrupts school operations. So, time is the issue due to competing priorities".

Participant FGH provided an outlier view stating that while most CMs focused on time as the primary barrier, financial constraints were also obstacles. Participant PD emphasised that there were financial limitations which also contributed to difficulties in organising CPD activities. Time-constraints are the main limitations to CPD implementation, though financial constraints also affect the ability to effectively organise CPD activities. This dual challenge doubly affects the provision of consistent and impactful CPD for principals.

FGH, PD indicated:

"Our plates are full, we are overloaded ... time is an issue, but financial constraints also pose a significant challenge".

Time-constraints emerged as the most pervasive barrier to CPD implementation, as it affected the ability of CMs to organise and deliver on development programmes for principals. Circuit managers did not visit the schools regularly because of a lack of time (Mthembu, 2014:33). The findings identified issues linked to balancing CMs' responsibilities with their capacity to provide effective CPD. Without sufficient time, CMs were forced to prioritise other tasks, leaving CPD under-resourced and inadequately implemented. This research emphasises the need for CMs' roles to be reviewed, especially in the allocation of time dedicated for CPD activities and monitoring because inadequate time compromises effective CPD implementation (Bantwini & Moorosi, 2018: 3).

The next section presents the category on financial constraints.

4.11.2 Financial Constraints

The participants' responses regarding this category were clustered into a sub-theme; namely, the lack of a budget for CPD.

4.11.2.1 Lack of a budget for CPD

Participants' responses are indicated below:

FGH commented:

"Financial issues are barriers. CPD activities need money, and we don't have a budget. Facilitators, in some cases, are not free, and we need to reserve them".

The majority identified financial barriers as hindrances to effective CPD implementation. Participants noted that CPD activities require funds, especially when external

facilitators are recruited. While schools sometimes assist with catering, there is no specific budget for CPD at the Circuit level, thus derailing plans to execute development programmes effectively. The financial constraints significantly obstruct the successful implementation of CPD, which is exacerbated by there being no dedicated budget for CPD at the District to support training activities. The need for external facilitators is sidelined due to the lack of funding which derails the planning and execution of CPD programmes.

FGH added:

"We don't have a specific budget for the development of principals. The circuit does not have funds, and schools assist us with catering and other logistics".

Although the majority focused on financial constraints, FGH, PC did not mention finances as a significant barrier but harped on time-constraints as the primary challenge. He did not express concerns about booking venues, use of projectors, or recruiting facilitators. This suggests that while financial limitations are widespread in the District, some CMs may prioritise time management over other logistical considerations in the implementation of CPD programmes.

FGH, PC revealed:

"I don't have challenges with venues, projectors, or facilitators, some even come for free. The main issue is time due to competing priorities".

The lack of a specific budget for CPD programmes at the Circuit level (in terms of resource availability) severely limits the scope and frequency of CPD roll-outs for principals (Ndlovu, 2017:15). Financial constraints imply that even when time is available, CPD activities cannot be fully enacted due to the inability to pay for essential resources like facilitators and materials. This indicates that the issue of financial support and acquisition of resources need to be solved so that principals can perform optimally through CPD support (Naidoo, 2019).

The next section presents the category on geographic and logistical challenges.

4.11.3 Geographic and Logistical Challenges

The participants' responses regarding this category were clustered into a sub-theme; namely, geographic and logistical challenges.

4.11.3.1 Vast Geographic Coverage

Participants' responses are depicted below:

FGH mentioned:

"We have newly appointed principals with different needs, and it's difficult to develop them individually due to the vast number of schools and their location. You can't commit to one-on-one programmes".

Some participants raised the issue of the geographic spread of schools, particularly when dealing with newly appointed principals who require individualised CPD. Due to the vast distances between schools and the large number of schools under each Circuit Manager's jurisdiction, organising one-on-one CPD sessions is logistically challenging. As a result, CMs are often unable to provide the necessary support to all principals in their Circuit.

The majority of participants did not emphasise the geographic challenges. For most CMs, time and financial constraints were seen as more pressing issues. Only a few participants discussed the issue of geographic coverage in detail. Geographic and logistical challenges as barriers mainly affected rural or remote schools (Maja, 2016:22). This suggests that the current structure of CPD delivery does not accommodate the diverse needs of principals with regard to promoting technology as a management tool because the remote locations of schools hamper progressive efforts (Wallis, 202:28). Addressing this barrier requires a more flexible, decentralised, approach to CPD to enhance technological skills, hence a cluster-based training schedule could reduce logistical challenges (Garrick, 2020: 7).

The next section presents the category: inconsistent support and monitoring.

4.11.4 Inconsistent Support and Monitoring

The participants' responses regarding this category were clustered into a sub-theme; namely, lack of continuous monitoring.

4.11.4.1 Lack of continuous monitoring

Participants' responses are depicted below.

FGH, PC stated:

"Lack of consistent monitoring is still a challenge. I have provided action plan templates, but when I shift focus, the principals also stop implementing them").

The lack of consistent follow-up and ongoing monitoring of CPD activities were raised by PC, who pointed out that although action plans and templates are provided, principals do not continue implementing CPD suggestions unless there is continuous oversight. The competing priorities of CMs result in a lack of consistency in monitoring CPD, which in turn affects its long-term effectiveness and principals' quality of leadership.

Other participants did not explicitly address the issue of inconsistent monitoring; they focused more on time and financial constraints. This indicates that while PC's concern is valid, it may not be seriously acknowledged by the group.

Inconsistent monitoring of CPD activities can diminish their overall positive impact because CMs did not visit school on a regular basis (Mthembu, 2014:33). Without sustained oversight, principals may not fully integrate new skills and practices into their daily routines, which results in their non-alignment with professional development programmes (Ndou, 2022:1). This finding points to the need for a more structured approach to CPD monitoring, possibly through regular reviews or reporting mechanisms that ensure principals continue to benefit from professional development programmes derived from CMs' management support and administrative advice (Bantwini & Moorosi, 2018:3).

The findings also reveal several barriers to the implementation of CPD for school principals, with time constraints and financial limitations being the most significant. CMs are frequently overwhelmed by competing priorities, which reduces their capacity to focus on CPD. Financial constraints further exacerbate the problem, as there is no dedicated budget for CPD at the circuit level, making it difficult to plan and execute programs effectively. Geographic and logistical challenges, especially in rural areas, also hinder the delivery of individualised support for principals. To overcome these barriers, there needs to be a systemic review of CMs' roles to allocate more time for CPD (Van der Voort & Wood, 2016:1). Additionally, securing funding for CPD and utilising technology to address geographic challenges could improve the implementation of professional development, especially training principals in technological aspects of school leadership (Ugur & Koc, 2019:2). Regular monitoring and follow-up strategies are also necessary to ensure that CPD initiatives are sustained and effective over time.

The next section presents the category on the overburdening of multiple responsibilities.

4.11.5 Overburdening of Multiple Responsibilities

The participants' responses regarding this category were clustered into a sub-theme; namely, the high number of schools to service and their demands.

4.11.5.1 High number of schools and demands

FGH, PC articulated:

"The number of schools and the number of challenges, political formations, SGB, school management conflicts... you find you are overstretched. It's not easy to attend to all schools, and your focus should be on teaching and learning challenges, but the others come thereafter".

A key issue identified by most participants is the overwhelming number of schools and responsibilities that CMs are required to manage. CMs are responsible for a wide

range of tasks, from school governance and management to teaching and learning support, and political or community conflicts. These competing priorities make it difficult to focus solely on the CPD of principals, which is supposed to be one of their core functions. Findings indicate that the CMs are overwhelmed with an overload of responsibilities, including school governance, teaching support, and addressing political and community conflicts. This makes it challenging for CMs to prioritise CPD for principals, despite it being the core aspect of their duty.

FGH observed:

"Sometimes CMs end up solving problems and not dealing with supporting principals in their CPD".

The high number of schools for CMs to service and varied responsibilities overwhelms most CMs, thus limiting their ability to adequately support principals' CPD which compromised the effectiveness of CPD implementation (Bantwini & Moorosi, 2018: 3). In addition, the burden of managing issues beyond teaching and learning, such as political involvement and governance conflicts prevent CMs from concentrating on the more pedagogical aspects of their role. The findings revealed the need for more organised support systems, possibly through the delegation of CPD responsibilities such as skills-acquisition, values, attitudes, behavioural changes, and workplace management (Rannikmae, 2017:577).

The next section presents the category on conflicts within school management teams and governance.

4.11.6 Conflict within School Management Teams and Governance

The participants' responses regarding this category were clustered into sub-theme; namely, SGB and school leadership tensions.

4.11.6.1 SGB and school leadership tensions

Participants' responses are enunciated below.

FGH stated:

"SGB Trainings are done on financial matters, but sometimes they want to deviate from the principles set. They challenge the principal on certain matters, sometimes with personal agendas hindering their implementation".

A second major challenge was the ongoing conflicts between School Governing Bodies (SGBs) and school leadership members, particularly principals. These conflicts often involved governance matters, financial issues, and the personal agendas of SGB members, which impede effective school management. The CMs frequently found themselves mediating school disputes instead of focusing on supporting and developing the principal. Data suggests that conflicts between SGB and principals are disruptive for schools and CMs. These disputes divert CMs' attention away from their core responsibility of supporting principals' development, thus displaying a gap in effective school leadership due to ongoing tensions.

FGH added:

"In most cases, you are not dealing with the problems of the principal but more on the problems of the school, such as problems affecting SGB and issues outside the school".

It should be emphasised that participant FGF, PB had contrasting views from the other participants as he did not report experiencing any significant challenges related to conflicts within school management or governance structures; this stood out as an exception against the broader experiences of other CMs. Furthermore, participants noted that conflicts tend to arise more frequently in schools where principals are not adequately capacitated or where the SGB is influenced by political motives, thus suggesting that stronger leadership and governance-training could mitigate such situations. In other words, schools with stronger leadership and effective governance are less likely to experience such conflicts which begs the need for better capacity- building for principals and SGBs.

FGH noted:

"In schools where principals are capacitated, there are no issues. You see these problems where principals are not capacitated or SGB has a political motive".

Conflicts between SGBs and principals are common occurrences that divert CMs' attention away from their primary role of supporting principals' professional growth. In this regard, schools were rarely visited by CMs (Van der Voort & Wood 2016:1). The data suggests that stronger governance training for both principals and SGB members could help reduce these conflicts and allow CMs to focus more on educational and professional development concerns, especially when there are negative perceptions about competence, experience, and knowledge (Myende et al., 2022:104). The presence of political influences in some schools exacerbates the ability to maintain effective school governance and management.

The next section presents the category on the lack of principal capacity.

4.11.7 Lack of Principal Capacity

The participants' responses regarding this category were clustered into a sub-theme; namely, need for governance and leadership training.

4.11.7.1 Need for governance and leadership training

Participants' responses are indicated below.

FGH stated:

"The principal is the link on how the SGB operates under his leadership in the school. The principal needs to be capacitated in taking charge of the operations of the school".

The majority of participants agreed that a significant number of the problems they experienced were due to principals not being adequately capacitated in governance and leadership matters. Principals struggled with managing their schools effectively, particularly in overseeing SGB operations and dealing with community or political interference. Since the challenges faced by CMs stem from principals' lack of adequate

training in governance and leadership which hindered daily school operations, targeted capacity-building programmes to equip principals with the necessary skills, will alleviate school governance issues and political interference.

FGH added:

"You see these issues more in schools where principals are not capacitated or where SGB has a political motive".

FGH, PB did not mention issues related to the principal's leadership capacity as a major problem, suggesting that challenges vary based on the specific circumstances of each Circuit or school.

The lack of adequate training for principals in leadership and governance is a critical factor affecting school management; this is the result of CMs irregular visits to schools (Mentor, 2023:65). This not only affects the performance of schools but also creates additional workload for CMs who must step in to mediate, coordinate, intervene, and resolve conflicts (Sharar, 2022:1). Developing relevant and practical CPD programmes that focus on leadership, governance, human capital, school culture, strategic planning, and conflict management could address reduce the frequency of conflictual issues in the future (Tingle et al., 2019:1).

The next section presents the category on political and community involvement.

4.11.8 Political and Community Involvement

The participants' responses regarding this category were clustered into a sub-theme; namely, external political and community pressures.

4.11.8.1 External political and community pressures

Participants' responses are indicated below.

FGH commented:

"Political formations, SGB, and management conflicts overstretch us. It's not easy to attend to all schools, and your main focus should be on teaching and learning challenges".

A significant challenge faced by CMs was the advent of political formations and friction with community stakeholders. These external pressures complicate the role of CMs as they must navigate not only educational and management concerns, but also political and community dynamics that can affect decision-making in schools. Findings reveal considerable challenges emanating from political formations and community factions which divert attention away from the primary focus of teaching and learning. Further, these challenges complicate the role of CMs by making it difficult to prioritise educational development while managing political and community dynamics that influence decision-making in schools.

FGH stated:

"Some schools have a political motive, which makes it difficult for both the CM and the principal to implement proper procedures".

The involvement of political and community stakeholders in school management adds a layer of complexity to the role of CMs who fail to understand the holistic view of school leadership (Yaqub et al., 2020:113). These external pressures can obstruct the implementation of educational policies and programmes, thus creating tensions between governance and educational priorities. This finding suggests the need for clearer boundaries, achievement of goals and objectives, synergy among staff, and guidelines to limit the influence of political groups in controlling school management, thereby allowing principals and CMs to focus on their core responsibilities (Daling-Hammond & Wei, 2009:3).

The problems encountered by CMs are varied and complex, with time-constraints, conflicts within school governance, inadequate principal capacity, and political interference being the most worrying issues. These challenges severely impact the ability of CMs to fulfil their role of supporting and developing school principals through CPD.

The overwhelming workload, combined with the need to mediate conflicts and handle non-pedagogical issues, leave little room for CMs to focus on professional development.

The evidence indicates the need for systemic changes to reduce the burden on CMs; these include delegating non-educational responsibilities, providing stronger governance training for both principals and SGB members, and establishing clearer guidelines to minimise political interference which can be curbed through CPD training and policies (Holloman & Novey, 2015:28). Addressing these challenges is crucial for improving the effectiveness of CMs in delivering CPD, and ultimately enhancing the quality of leadership in schools.

The next theme focuses on CMs' provision of CPD.

4.12 THEME 5: CIRCUIT MANAGERS' PROVISION OF CPD

This theme explores the perspectives of CMs on the successes/failures of CPD provided to school principals. They fall under the following categories: variability in CPD effectiveness, barriers to effective CPD, principals' motivation and leadership, and structural and logistical barriers to CPD. The category of variability in CPD's effectiveness is outlined below:

4.12.1 Variability in CPD Effectiveness

Participants' responses regarding this category were clustered into a sub-theme; namely, effectiveness linked to principals' engagement and implementation of CPD content.

4.12.1.1 Principals' effectiveness in the engagement and implementation of CPD

Participants' responses are indicated below.

FGH stated:

"It's effective sometimes, and sometimes not. We meet with our principals, bring new information to them, and in most cases, they implement it. In that way, it is effective".

Responses from the majority of CMs indicated that the effectiveness of CPD is variable, depending largely on the engagement and leadership abilities of the school principal. When principals actively implement what they learn, the CPD programmes are perceived as being effective. Principals who follow-through on the training received during CPD sessions tend to create positive changes in their schools, thereby validating the effectiveness of CPD.

Some CMs suggested that the general approach to CPD is positive, especially when principals engage in collaborative learning through formations like SMTs (School Management Teams). The sharing of best practices between schools and within forums is cited as a key strength of the CPD model.

FGH mentioned:

"CPD is a good approach, especially with SMT forums where principals share good practices. It helps with the capacity-building process".

None of the participants raised significant objections to the value of CPD as a concept, suggesting consensus on the value of CPD even where there are challenges.

Moreover, the findings revealed that the success of CPD is dependent on the principal's willingness to engage with and apply skills and knowledge learnt at the CPD training sessions (Nasreen & Odhiambo, 2018:248). When CMs observe tangible improvements, they consider CPD as being successful. However, the impact of CPD as a professional training strategy varies across schools due to differences in principals' motivation and leadership capacity. This highlights the need for more targeted CPD programmes that address school leaders as individuals, principal's weaknesses, and consistent support in the implementation of learned CPD skills

The next section presents the category on barriers to effective CPD.

4.12.2 Barriers to Effective CPD

The participants' responses regarding this category were clustered into a sub-theme; namely, inconsistent implementation of CPD by principals.

4.12.2.1 Inconsistent implementation of CPD by principals

Participants' responses are depicted below:

FGH, PC explained:

"The challenge will be on implementation. Even if this aspect worked, after its success, they become complacent, and it takes serious talks with the principal to get them back on track".

One of the recurring challenges mentioned is the inconsistent implementation of CPD guidelines by principals. After initial training, some principals may successfully apply what they have learned but they eventually become complacent or fail to maintain consistent practices. This inconsistency affects the long-term success of CPD initiatives and requires CMs to intervene repeatedly. Another key challenge in CPD implementation was principals' tendency to become complacent after initial success, thus leading to inconsistent application of training. This lack of sustained commitment undermines long-term effectiveness, demanding CMs to frequently intervene and re-engage principals to maintain progress.

FGH, PA supported FGH, PC:

"I have experienced that some principals need repeated development on the same aspect before I can see changes".

Participants noted that external factors like time-constraints can impede effective CPD implementation, as CMs and principals often face competing priorities that delay or disrupt planned training sessions. None of the participants completely dismissed CPD as being ineffective, though several agreed that consistent application by principals remains a major hurdle.

Findings also disclosed the inconsistency in CPD implementation which suggests that while CMs view CPD as beneficial, they face challenges in ensuring that principals implement and sustain these changes (Kelkay, 2018:415). This reflects the need for ongoing monitoring, motivation, adapting to changes, and better interaction with staff in a professional manner to ensure that CPD practices are embedded in the daily operations of schools (Hussin & Al Abri, 2015:90). It may also indicate that certain principals lack the necessary leadership skills or motivation, especially when the principal and CM are at loggerheads which can also adversely affect other members of staff (Hauseman et al., 2017:85). This implies that CPD programmes need to be revised to successfully address underlying problems in the leadership and management of schools, staff competencies, and technology capabilities.

The next section presents the category on principal motivation and leadership.

4.12.3 Principals' Motivation and Leadership

The participants' responses regarding this category were clustered into a sub-theme; namely, the impact of principals' commitment to the success of CPD.

4.12.3.1 Impact of principal's commitment to CPD success

Participants' responses are articulated below:

FGH stated:

"Some principals are just on a cul-de-sac, waiting for pension. Their implementation is ineffective, and they don't take their roles seriously".

Data reveals that the motivation and leadership style of the principal are critical factors in determining CPD's success. The CMs noted that some principals are highly committed to their CPD training and the success of their schools, while others exhibit less enthusiasm, especially when they near retirement. Principals who are near retirement age may show a lack of motivation to implement new strategies, thus leading to ineffective CPD.

Some participants adopted a neutral stance by emphasising the structural supports that should be in place (e.g. SMT forums) rather than focusing on individual principal motivation. While the majority of participants acknowledged that certain leadership problems within schools can make CPD ineffective, a minority stressed that it's the principal's responsibility to request assistance when they struggle to implement training guidelines.

Additionally, findings revealed the commitment and leadership qualities of principals as being fundamental to the success of CPD initiatives, including communicating effectively to all those involved in the programme (Bucata & Rizescu, 2017:50). This indicates that without principals' buy-in, CPD is unlikely to achieve sustainable impact. Therefore, CMs and principals need to foster a culture of continuous learning and accountability to ensure that CPD is both effective and sustainable (Pollock & Wang, 2017:85). It also suggests that additional support mechanisms may be necessary for principals who are disengaged or nearing the end of their careers.

The next section presents the category on structural and logistical barriers to CPD.

4.12.4 Structural and Logistical Barriers to CPD

The participants' responses regarding this category were clustered into a sub-theme; namely, time-constraints and competing priorities.

4.12.4.1 Time-constraints and competing priorities

Participants' responses appear below.

FGH stated :

"Our plates are full... sometimes we prepare, but implementation on the set date and time does not materialise due to crosscutting issues".

Time-constraints emerged as one of the most prominent barriers to effective CPD. Many CMs reported that their schedules are overloaded with administrative tasks and responsibilities, which leave little room for planning and executing CPD programmes.

Similarly, principals often struggle to balance their daily responsibilities with professional development obligations, thus leading to inconsistent or incomplete implementation of CPD.

FGH added:

"There are too many competing activities, which affect our ability to fully implement CPD".

Evidence that emerged also identified a different perspective. According to FGH, PD and PC, although time was a significant barrier, they tried to prioritise CPD by scheduling regular meetings and development sessions with their principals, although they acknowledged that these meetings did not always achieve the intended outcomes. However, despite these efforts, the competing demands on their time often hindered the effectiveness of CPD efforts.

FGH, PC stated:

"We meet with our principals regularly to provide updates, but time is always an issue due to competing priorities".

FGH, PD added:

"We are overloaded but still try to focus on CPD whenever possible".

None of the participants expressed complete satisfaction with their ability to balance their duties with CPD implementation, thus highlighting the widespread nature of this issue. Time-constraints and competing priorities significantly hindered the provision and effectiveness of CPD. For example, CMs organised workshops for SGBs and SMTs, and scheduled regular visits to capacitate the principal, but these seldom materialised (Mthembu, 2014:33). The implication here is that both CMs and principals are burdened with administrative and operational duties that detract from professional development. This situation demands more streamlined administrative processes or additional support staff to reduce the workload, hence enabling CMs to focus on their core responsibility of professionally developing principals (Bantwini & Moorosi, 2018:3). The provision of successful CPD for principals is a double-edged sword,

which depends on several factors, formal and/or informal (Peng et al., 2022:42). When principals are engaged, motivated, and have the capacity to implement what they learn, CPD becomes highly effective. However, inconsistent implementation, lack of principal motivation, time-constraints, and leadership issues render CPD ineffective in many cases (Van der Voort & Wood, 2016:1).

Furthermore, the findings suggest that more a structured support system, follow-up mechanisms, and motivational strategies (strategic planning, financial support, procuring resources, and sound marketing) are needed to ensure the sustainability of CPD initiatives (Ndlovu, 2017: 15). Additionally, CMs need to be equipped with the resources and time to prioritise CPD amidst their other responsibilities. By addressing these structural and motivational barriers, CPD can become a more effective and motivating tool to enhance the training programme of principals (Alhouti & Male, 2017:90).

The next section presents the summaries of CMs and principals' views on the various themes that were discussed.

4.13 SUMMARIES OF CMs AND PRINCIPALS RELATED TO VARIOUS THEMES

This section looks at how CMs participate in CPD implementation, how they conduct their CPD duties, and how CPD provisions meet the professional needs of principals. It also outlines the difficulties in implementing CPD, while assessing Circuit Managers' performance in resolving issues to guarantee the success of CPD involving school principals.

The next section provides a discussion on the views based on the themes that pertain to the role of the Circuit Manager in the implementation of CPD.

4.13.1 Supplementing Views on the Role of CMs in CPD Implementation

Through focused CPD programmes, CMs are viewed as being essential to school principals' professional success. In order to customise CPD in certain areas of need, CMs evaluate principals to pinpoint their shortcomings. This is in line with Ndou (2022:2) who claims that CMs are office-based staff members who are supposed to use questionnaires, unofficial techniques, and developmental appraisal systems to determine principals' professional development needs. In accordance with the DBE

(2013) Gazette Number 26324, CMs should support principals in their pursuit for life-long learning by stressing the significance of CPD.

Additionally, Mestry (2017) states that principals are in charge of initiating internal CPD activities, whilst CMs are largely focused on delivering external CPD programmes. This supports the observation of Mestry (2017:259) that there is little assistance available for managing intricate day-to-day school operations. According to the CPD policy (RAMSA, 2022:3) established under the auspices of The Institute of Risk and Management in South Africa, CMs must gather data that identifies the developmental needs of principals in order for the delivery of CPD to be implemented effectively. This implies that effective communication between CMs and principals is necessary.

The lack of balance between external and internal CPD support has important implications for principals' growth and development. This study suggests that by focusing predominantly on external CPD, CMs may inadvertently limit principals' opportunities for personal growth. Also, this narrow focus could hinder principals' ability to overcome specific and unique challenges they face in their respective schools, as their internal development needs will remain unmet. A more balanced approach that combines external CPD with support for self-initiated activities would enable principals to better tailor their learning experiences to their individual contexts.

Furthermore, communication gaps between CMs and principals could undermine the effectiveness of CPD initiatives. Inconsistent or one-sided communication - particularly when relying solely on formal appraisals - may prevent CMs from fully understanding the developmental needs of principals. This misalignment could result in CPD programmes that do not adequately address the critical gaps in school leadership management. Strengthening both formal and informal communication practices could ensure that CPD programmes are better targeted and more relevant to the needs of school leaders.

Lastly, the systemic reliance on externally mandated CPD programmes might stagnate leadership growth over time. By focusing primarily on District-led initiatives, CMs may fail to empower principals to take the initiative to promote their own CPD. This reliance on external programmes could limit opportunities for principals to engage in proactive

development, thus restricting their ability to adapt to evolving educational landscapes. Moreover, encouraging principals to enact a more active role for their own learning could foster more dynamic leadership growth, thus enabling them to respond more effectively to the complex demands of school leadership.

The next section discusses views based on the theme: CMs' discharge of CPD responsibilities.

4.13.2 Supplementing views on Circuit Managers' Discharge of CPD Responsibilities

This section discusses the alignment and divergence between CMs' and Principals' perspectives on the role of CMs in discharging CPD duties for school leaders. The analysis highlights how the interview responses from CMs complement or contrast with those derived from school principals. Several key themes emerged from this comparison: proactive engagement, regularity of CPD interaction, sharing of best practices, and cascading of external CPD initiatives.

Both CMs and principals acknowledged that CMs play a critical role in fostering CPD, although the extent and consistency of this engagement vary. The majority of CMs believed that they actively engage with principals regarding CPD. More experienced CMs regularly meet with principals and emphasise structured engagements, such as annual meetings and forum discussions. Principals similarly acknowledged the value of these engagements. However, some noted gaps in the frequency and quality of these interactions. Participants remarked that while CPD is rolled out, the support is sometimes reactive rather than proactive, particularly from less experienced CMs. This corresponds with the finding that less experienced CMs may not fully utilise their role in encouraging CPD, while CMs with more experience tend to provide more proactive and structured CPD opportunities which align with the principals' desire for more consistent support.

Both CMs and principals stressed the need for regular CPD interaction, but the data revealed a disparity on how frequently interactions occur. Most CMs reported structured and regular meetings with principals, with some holding monthly or quarterly

sessions for CPD activities. While principals generally support the idea of regular CPD sessions, some reported that these engagements are erratic. One principal noted that CPD discussions are more likely to happen during formal appraisals or reactive interventions, rather than in proactive, regular settings. This is particularly evident in Districts where less experienced CMs operate without a fixed schedule, and relying on ad hoc visits to schools.

The comparison reveals that while the majority of CMs believe they maintain regular contact with principals, some principals experience these interactions as superficial and inconsistent. This suggests that there is room for improvement in standardising CPD schedules, particularly in Districts managed by less experienced CMs. The sharing of best practices through peer learning is a theme both CMs and principals view as critical for CPD. Hence, CMs emphasised the importance of creating platforms for principals to learn from one another. Principals noted the value of forums and PLCs where high-performing principals shared their strategies with those who needed assistance, thus implying that peer-led initiatives are integral to CPD, especially in Districts with structured programmes. However, they pointed out that these platforms are irregular and occur on an ad hoc basis. In some Districts, structured platforms like PLCs are common, while in others there is a lack of formalised spaces for such collaboration. One principal expressed frustration, stating that while they are aware of the benefits of PLCs, they have not been given the opportunity to participate in any formal sharing sessions. These insights demonstrate that while CMs recognise the value of peer-led CPD, the extent to which this is implemented varies across Districts. Principals seek more standardised and widespread opportunities to engage in such peer-learning platforms, thus the need for a more uniform implementation of these initiatives across Districts.

Further, CMs play a dual role in facilitating both District-level CPD and school-specific development. The findings from both groups highlight the challenges and successes in this area. While CMs acknowledged their role in delivering CPD mandates from District and Provincial levels, addressing the specific needs of schools should also be prioritised. For instance, PD emphasised balancing these responsibilities so that discussing school-specific issues, in addition to cascading District-level information, could be achieved.

Principals agreed that CMs are essential in delivering District-led CPD programmes, but some expressed concern that these initiatives do not always align with the unique needs of their schools. One principal observed that external CPD programmes often focus on broad mandates, with limited attention to individual school contexts. This could result in a disconnection between the external programmes and the specific challenges principals face in their schools.

This comparison suggests that while CMs are well-positioned to facilitate both external and internal CPD, more attention should be paid to ensuring that District-level initiatives are tailored to meet the specific development needs of individual schools. This highlights the importance of CMs adopting a more nuanced approach that balances external directives with the daily realities experienced by principals.

The findings from both CMs and principals reveal several areas of alignment as well as divergence. Both groups recognise the importance of CPD, but discrepancies in the frequency, consistency, and method of delivery expose challenges in CPD implementation. Experience appears to be a key factor on how effectively CMs engage with principals, with more seasoned CMs demonstrating greater ability to facilitate structured and proactive CPD.

The next section discusses views based on principals' CPD needs and CMs' role in providing CPD.

4.13.3 Supplementing views on Principals' CPD Needs and CMs' Role in Providing CPD

Findings from both CMs and principals align to several key categories regarding the CPD needs of school principals. However, there are some differences in emphasis, as well as the extent to which CMs support principals' views.

In this regard, principals acknowledge the complexity of their roles, particularly in managing curriculum delivery, school discipline, and engaging with the community. In support, CMs emphasise the dynamic nature of principals' responsibilities, thus highlighting the need for CPD in managing new challenges such as discipline and analytic skills. Also, CMs expose the gap in CPD by addressing conflict management and political engagement, which were not strongly emphasised by principals. Hence, CMs

also highlight the additional perspective of conflict management, a critical area that they feel is sidelined in CPD programmes, thus implying that the current support structure for principals may not fully address the emerging complexities that arise in the area of school leadership.

Moreover, principals identified the need for CPD in areas like conflict resolution, performance management, and community engagement. They often face challenges in handling discipline at the school level and managing conflicts among staff, learners, and the community. Moreover, CMs confirm these challenges, specifically emphasising the need for urgent CPD in conflict management and school discipline. While some CMs focus on performance management, others expose the lack of a unified approach across Circuits which may cause compromise the quality of CPD implementation. Also, CMs support the urgency of this need to bridge the existing gap in CPD programmes, and circumvent inconsistencies in CPD delivery.

Additionally, principals recognise the growing influence of the community and political manoeuvres towards school management, but they often lack the skills to navigate these dynamics effectively. This challenge is noted by CMs that principals are not adequately prepared to handle political influences in school governance. Hence, CMs suggest that CPD needs to incorporate strategies for managing community dynamics and political nuances - areas that are becoming more prevalent in school leadership.

Moreover, CMs add depth to this issue by specifically mentioning the political aspects that impact schools. They highlight the gap in CPD aimed at preparing principals for these challenges, which principals understate. Further, monitoring as an aspect of CPD, may not always be prioritised; hence, principals expressed the need for ongoing support and guidance in implementing CPD guidelines. In support, CMs agree on the lack of consistent monitoring and follow-ups concerning implementing CPD programmes. They note that CPD initiatives often lose momentum once the CMs' focus shifts to other priorities, thus causing implementation gaps. Based on this, CMs emphasise the need for consistent monitoring and control of CPD activities to embed principals' learning to promote best practice.

Regarding CPD effectiveness, principals expressed the need for targeted and practical CPD programmes that address the real challenges faced by school leadership.

The CMs largely agree with principals but add that the CPD programmes currently in place are not structured enough to meet the dynamic needs of principals. Hence, CMs call for more context-specific and consistently monitored CPD initiatives. This was further elaborated on by CMs on the shortcomings of CPD programmes such as the lack of a coherent structure, and consistency in delivery. Their findings suggest that while principals are aware of their needs, they may not always be cognisant of the systemic issues that hinder the full realisation of CPD objectives.

The findings on this theme from CMs provided additional perspectives that supported principals' views, particularly by exposing gaps in CPD related to conflict management, political dynamics, and the need for consistent monitoring. The CMs' input reinforces the need for more structured and targeted CPD interventions that address the evolving and complex nature of school leadership.

The next section discusses views based on the theme: Barriers in CPD implementation for principals.

4.13.4 Supplementing views on Barriers encountered in CPD implementation for principals

The responses elicited from CMs and principals indicated several common and distinct barriers in the implementation of CPD for school principals. The findings of both groups revealed overlapping themes, and support for each other by providing different perspectives on the same challenges.

Time-constraints were cited as the most significant barrier by CMs who claimed that competing priorities such as school governance and learner-performance often pushed CPD programmes into the background. The impracticability to take principals out of schools for training without disrupting school operations added to the challenge. Principals also indicated that they experience the same difficulty of time-constraints but somewhat manage school-level responsibilities in addition to participating in CPD. The focus for them was managing day-to-day school operations, leaving little time for self-development.

Financial limitation was another key barrier for CMs, particularly the lack of planned budget for CPD programmes. Without funds for resources like facilitators and

materials, many CPD initiatives remain underdeveloped or poorly executed. It should be evident that while principals acknowledge the financial challenges, they are more concerned with the lack of resources available at the school level to support professional development efforts. This affects their ability to participate fully in CPD opportunities.

Financial limitations also add to geographic challenges and logistics. The CMs, particularly those supervising schools in vast geographic areas, mentioned difficulties in organising individualised CPD sessions for newly appointed principals. Travel time and long distances between schools prevent CMs in meeting the varying needs of principals across different locations. This concern was raised by CMs, while principals were less focused on geographic challenges but recognised that those in rural or remote areas may have fewer opportunities to participate in CPD, especially if resources like transportation or venue availability are limited.

Further, the geographical and logistical challenges also bring an element of inconsistent support and monitoring by CMs. The CMs identified inconsistent monitoring of CPD programmes as a challenge. Once initial plans were in place, they often lacked the time or capacity to follow up, thus leading to incomplete or ineffective implementation of professional development activities. Since principals rely heavily on the monitoring and support from CMs to implement CPD guidelines, when these are absent, they may struggle to maintain the momentum of professional growth which leads to a break in the application of new skills and knowledge.

The CMs further expressed feelings of being overwhelmed by the sheer number of schools and the broad scope of their duties including governance, teaching support, and resolving conflicts. This left little room to focus on principals' CPD, which is supposed to be one of their core responsibilities. This overload is shared by principals who often experience this overload in a similar way, often balancing their school responsibilities with those of grasping ECD opportunities to advance their professional development to enhance the school's overall performance.

Conflict management has also been identified by CMs as a challenge. They indicate the frequency of conflicts between SGBs and school leadership which create tensions within the school environment and divert CMs focus away from CPD. Principals' views

on conflicts were expressed towards governance structures often hinder their ability to lead effectively, leaving them in need of more robust training in governance and conflict management as part of their CPD.

On the aspect of community engagement, CMs noted that political and community influences add another dimension of complexity to their roles, making it difficult to implement CPD while focusing on educational goals. Principals are directly affected by these external pressures, particularly in schools where political agendas may impinge on school management. The CMs' input regarding these challenges experienced by principals, calls for stronger governance and better leadership training for principals, as many of the challenges they face are rooted in principals not being adequately equipped to manage schools effectively. Principals, while aware of their need for ongoing training, often find themselves constrained by the lack of time, resources, and structured CPD opportunities that would capacitate them with critical-thinking skills.

In sum, the findings on this theme on CMs complement those of principals by providing a broader, systemic view of the barriers to CPD. The CMs' perspectives focus more on structural and logistical challenges, while principals highlight the direct impact of these barriers on their ability to engage in professional growth. Together, the findings point to the need for systemic changes, including allocating time and financial resources for CPD, stronger governance training, and improved monitoring and support mechanisms to ensure the sustainability of professional development initiatives.

The next section discusses the views based on the theme: Circuit Managers' effectiveness pertaining to CPD provision.

4.13.5 Supplementing views on Circuit Managers' Effectiveness Regarding CPD Provision

The findings in this theme pertaining to both CMs and principals revealed that CPD's effectiveness is not uniform; it varies significantly based on principal engagement and leadership capabilities. The CMs emphasised that CPD is effective when principals actively engage and implement learned strategies. They report positive outcomes when principals take initiative, particularly in collaborative settings such as SMT forums. The CMs highlighted the necessity of principals' buy-in concerning CPD to yield tangible results.

Both groups identify significant barriers that hinder the implementation and sustainability of CPD initiatives. The CMs pointed out challenges such as inconsistent implementation of CPD and complacency among principals. They observed that some principals initially apply their training but fail to maintain CPD best practices over time, thus necessitating repeated interventions. Principals also identified time-constraints and competing priorities as major obstacles. Many felt overwhelmed by administrative duties, which detract from their focus on CPD. Another aspect raised was that of motivation and principals' leadership style which were recognised as critical elements affecting CPD success. The CMs observed that the commitment level varies, with some principals showing enthusiasm for professional development while others appearing to be disengaged, particularly if they were near retirement. This lack of motivation led to ineffective CPD implementation.

Principals acknowledged the need for personal commitment, but also stressed the importance of external support and structure. They appreciated initiatives like SMTs that foster collaboration, but recognise that individual motivation remains crucial. Another frustration emanating from the findings concerned structural and logistical barriers to CPD. The CMs expressed frustration regarding their overloaded schedules, which limited their ability to plan and execute CPD effectively. They acknowledged the need for more streamlined processes to prioritise CPD. Principals concur with this view, indicating that competing responsibilities often prevented them from fully engaging and committed to CPD opportunities. They preferred more structured sessions that fit better into their busy schedules.

The opinions of both CMs and principals revealed a complex interplay between engagement, motivation, and systemic barriers affecting the provision of CPD. The CMs provided a broader contextual understanding of CPD challenges and successes, while principals offered specific insights into personal experiences and the practical implementation of CPD. Both groups emphasised the need for structured support, ongoing monitoring, and motivational incentives. Addressing time-constraints and creating a culture of continuous learning and accountability can enhance the effectiveness of CPD. There was a consensus on the necessity for CPD programmes to be more tailored to individual principal needs, while emphasising leadership skills alongside technical training.

4.14 CHAPTER SUMMARY

The findings emanating from the interview responses of CMs and principals presented an understanding of the challenges and opportunities within the CPD roll-out. While the views of CMs largely align with those of the principals, they enrich understanding of the systemic constraints faced by principals. Principals primarily identified gaps in CPD, whereas CMs provided valuable contextual factors such as administrative pressures and inconsistencies in District support. The findings revealed both areas of alignment and divergence between the two groups. Both CMs and principals acknowledged the importance of CPD; however, they also exposed discrepancies in the frequency, consistency, and delivery methods. Notably, the experience of CMs played a crucial role in explaining how effectively they engage with principals; more seasoned CMs demonstrated a greater capacity to facilitate structured and proactive CPD. Moreover, the input from CMs emphasised the need for more structured and targeted CPD interventions, particularly in addressing gaps related to conflict management, political dynamics, and the necessity for consistent monitoring. By presenting a broader, systemic view of CPD barriers, CMs' perspectives complemented those of principals who focused more on the direct impact of these barriers on their professional growth. The overall findings warranted the need for systemic changes, including time factors and financial resources, enhanced governance training, and improved monitoring and support mechanisms in ECD. This holistic approach is essential for ensuring the long-term success of professional development initiatives. Ultimately, the interplay between engagement, motivation, and systemic barriers affecting CPD provision suggests that both collaborative and tailored approaches are critical. By recognising the need for structured support, ongoing monitoring, and individualised CPD programmes, stakeholders can develop more effective frameworks that foster better school leadership and improvement in educational outcomes.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATIONS, LIMITATIONS, FUTURE RESEARCH, AND CONCLUSION

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this study was to investigate the perceptions and experiences of principals regarding circuit managers' role in the implementation of CPD. This qualitative study was conducted in line with the following objectives:

- To discover what constitutes the role of the CM in CPD implementation;
- To examine the extent to which principals perceive CPD provided by CMs as being effective;
- To identify areas that urgently need CPD intervention for school principals;
- To explore the experiences of school principals in the implementation of CPD by CMs; and
- To identify barriers encountered in the implementation of CPD by CMs.

In the previous chapter (4), data was presented, analysed, and discussed. This chapter (5) deals with the findings and conclusions emanating from the analysis of collected data, recommendations, future research, and conclusion to the study.

The next section provides a summary of the major findings and conclusions of this study.

5.2 SUMMARY OF MAJOR FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

The findings from the literature review revealed that CPD plays a major role in principals' leading and managing schools effectively. For example, participants in the study contended that circuit managers (CMs) also play a critical support role through the implementation of CPD to enhance principals' performance. The perceptions and experiences of principals, and those of circuit managers are discussed in subsequent sections.

5.2.1 Qualifications and Years of Experience

Literature from Nigeria revealed that the lack of relevant qualifications negatively impacted on principals effectively administering their schools (cf. section 2.4.1.3). Ghanaian principals did not have standardised academic or professional training to enhance the quality of their duties since the country's Ministry of Education focused more on the principal's experience (cf. section 2.4.1.1). Furthermore, in Pakistan, principals were expected to possess basic qualifications but were advised to keep abreast of educational developments that were aligned to educational transformation (cf. section 2.4.1.5). In Vietnam, principals were appointed on their higher qualifications and experience. South Africa's DoE (SASA, 1996) also required principals to possess appropriate teaching qualifications together with teaching experience (cf. section 2.4.1). Additionally, principals in SA are encouraged to pursue higher formal qualifications offered by Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) to acquire higher order management and leadership skills to bridge gaps that would allow for modern trends in education to be implemented at schools. The findings are in line with the PAM (RSA, 2005:6) document which stipulates that the school principal must be in possession of a three- or four-year qualification (and higher) to be considered for appointment (cf. section 4.2.1).

Additionally, findings regarding qualifications of principals indicate that it is a priority that principals must have the ability and capacity derived from CPD training to enhance the quality of their management styles. In relation to experience, literature identified a lack of consistency in the appointment of principals across various countries (cf. section 5.2.1.1). In South Africa teaching experience was a critical priority for the appointment of principals.

Concerning circuit managers' findings (cf. section 4.2.1.2), there was compliance regarding qualification requirements - although experience was crucial, but it was revealed that some circuit managers who were new in the position lacked experience in CPD matters. This led to complaints that CMs who were expected to support principals were not skilled in rolling-out CPD programmes. This meant that CPD for principals lacked support because CMs were perceived as being incompetent in CPD matters. Ironically, CMs' lack of ability to support principals through CPD initiatives led to them

being dependent on experienced principals to provide CPD support for other principals which should have been the circuit manager's duty (cf. section 1.1).

Alarming, evidence concerning principals' appointments exposed teachers being promoted to principalship without following official appointment processes (cf. section 2.5.4). Appointment procedures in SA clearly outline the various positions that a teacher needs to occupy prior to being promoted as principal. Literature reveals most principal appointments followed set procedures such as being a deputy principal prior to being promoted to as a principal. Mampane (2020:16) emphasised that the appointment criteria for principalship must be rigorous and should follow the set prescripts on academic and professional qualifications, including extensive teaching and learning experience. However, literature also revealed some deviations from appointment procedures that impacted negatively on the expected outcomes regarding the quality of principalship. This was evident through the appointments of a few candidates who were promoted based on SGBs' recommendations, but who may have not possessed the necessary skills and experience to lead and manage their schools independently and successfully but were appointed due to the SGB having the authority to make recommendations in favour of a particular candidate (Moorosi & Bush, 2020:74). This may result in the poor management and leadership of schools which may lead to dysfunctional and unproductive institutions (Ndamani, 2016:18).

On a positive note, regarding CMs' appointments, it was revealed that CMs were appointed based on teaching experience and performance in previous positions as educators which were in line with DoE requirements (cf. section 4.2.2). However, this policy was not strictly adhered to as a minority of CMs had little to no exposure in management or leadership roles (cf. section 4.2.2.2). These inconsistencies in appointing principals and CMs affected the smooth running of CPD programmes.

5.2.2 Induction and Training on Appointment

It was evident from literature that all newly appointed principals were expected to undergo induction or training as applications for the principalship position were welcomed from all educational levels (Sepuru & Mohlakwana, 2020:4). These induction or training sessions are conducted through the District office by Circuit Managers or District officials who have the responsibility and capacity to deliver such critical functions – for

example, CPD roll-out for principals (Ndlovu, 2017:2). Induction in South Africa is a compulsory continuous process of capacitating newly appointed principals to manage their schools effectively and efficiently. Since education is ever-evolving (see 2.5.16), all principals (novices and experienced) should continuously be capacitated to keep abreast of modern educational developments.

The findings also revealed that not all novice principals received induction or training although a few did indicate that they were exposed to induction and training on appointment (cf. section 2.5.5). Findings demonstrated that the majority of participants displayed dissatisfaction in the overall planning of the induction or training programme as it did not meet their expectations regarding content delivery. This finding strengthens the need for developmental appraisal to be prioritised (Joubert, 2016:2). Principals further deemed the delivery of content to be inadequate and not structured according to their needs (cf. section 4.2.3.1). Unfortunately, the majority of principals were displeased with the selection of training venues as they were located in unfamiliar multi-locations which were un conducive to promote meaningful learning (Nakadien, Sayed & Sadeck, 2022:19).

Furthermore, there was evidence of redundancy of topics covered during the induction or training sessions. The participants also expressed their discontentment with the time allocated for training on selected topics (cf. section 2.4.1.5). Hence, it can be concluded that CMs' lacked skills to properly plan for induction or training which had a direct adverse impact on the quality of teaching and learning at schools (cf. section 2.1).

Moreover, responses from CMs (cf. section 4.2.3.2) regarding the induction or training programmes indicated that such programmes for principals were conducted according to the processes that were followed during CMs' own inductions or trainings facilitated by their supervisors. Most CMs were satisfied with the facilitation of CPDs as they deemed it adequate as an added managerial support for principals. Lastly, CMs were advantaged in having access to more time during their own induction or training, unlike for principals; the advantage of proper time allocation made it possible for clear, fruitful, and in-depth discussions (Bozak et al., 2028:242).

5.2.3 Role of the Circuit Manager in CPD Implementation

The findings reflected that principals understood the role of the CMs, and were aware of the type of support that they should receive from them (CMs) regarding CPD. The CMs' roles were identified as that of a coordinator, leader, advisor, supporter, enabler, analyst, and mentor. They were also seen as central figures in promoting academic and professional growth of principals. The results also supported the DBE (2013) Gazette Number 26324, that states CMs should support principals in their pursuit of life-long learning, thus stressing the significance of CPD. Data in terms of the support needed should be drawn by circuit managers through the use questionnaires, unofficial techniques, and developmental appraisal systems to determine principals' CPD needs (Ndou, 2022:2). This is corroborated in the CPD policy established under the auspices of The Institute of Risk and Management in South Africa stating that CMs must gather data that identifies the developmental needs of principals for the effective delivery of CPD (RAMSA, 2022:3).

The above paragraph implies that effective communication between CMs and principals is necessary to ensure cohesion and openness (Gyamfi & Pobbi, 2016:33). However, findings revealed that principals were aware that CMs were unclear about their role in effectively facilitating CPD for principals (cf. section 4.4). Also, principals were curious to know how CMs facilitated their CPD programmes in the Motheo District when compared to other Districts. Findings also exposed CMs' lack of expertise in empowering principals' concerning fundraising skills as there was the of a lack budget to roll-out CPDs (cf. section 4.11.2.1). The CMs also organised workshops without clear-cut plans, and in certain instances neglected principals' development by failing to provide the necessary support (Al-ajmi, 2020:2). Moreover, a limited number of meetings, discussions, and interactions between principals and CMs were also reported; CMs' competing activities were the cause of this situation. This finding contradicts the essential principle of CPDs providing timeous feedback, consulting, arrangement of meetings, and assisting in promoting effective systematic communication (Capaul, Seitz & Keller, 2023:458). Hence, CMs' lack of understanding regarding the principal's unique needs negatively affected the management and leadership of the school as a whole. The lack of balance between external and internal CPD support has serious implications for principals' growth and development (cf. section 4.8.2.1). This could impact on principals' ability to address specific and unique challenges they face

in their respective schools as their internal (school) development needs may remain unfulfilled. Thus, it is advocated that a more balanced approach which combines external CPD with support for self-initiated activities, would enable principals to better tailor their learning experiences to their individual contexts (Rodriguez-Gomez, Mercader & López-Crespo, 2020:240).

The CMs' understanding of their roles revealed that they agree with the principals' view in that CMs should support principals' lifelong learning through participation in CPD activities across various categories (RSA, PAM, 2016:36). According to CMs, principals' CPD is implemented through workshop and meeting platforms in accordance with District mandates which include creating awareness of systemic changes, implementation of the appraisal system, and attending to areas of needs by developing plans to bridge gaps (Joubert, 2016:2).

Additionally, the findings revealed that principals and CMs were aware of the components of CMs' role in CPD. In this regard, principals' understanding of the CMs' role is broader than how CMs have identified their role-functions. This implies that principals have more expectations as to what CMs should be offering. It may be assumed that CMs are not 'accepting' of the holistic support they should provide to principals (Suid Afrikaanse Onderwysers Unie, Webinar, 2021:7).

Furthermore, findings indicated the flaws of CMs' implementation of a top-down approach where District mandates took precedence over principals' daily need which required CMs' support. Support towards CPD programmes in line with principals' needs emanated after the appraising of CPD facilitations by CMs, whereas support expected by principals from CMs should be on a continuous basis. These findings are further supported through the identification of existing communication gaps between CMs and principals that could undermine the effectiveness of CPD initiatives. Inconsistent or one-sided communication may prevent CMs from fully understanding the developmental needs of principals. This misalignment could result in CPD programmes that do not adequately address the critical gaps in leadership skills necessary for effective school management. Strengthening both formal and informal communication practices could ensure that CPD programmes are better targeted and more relevant to the needs of school leaders.

The CMs' support to principals should not only focus on content, but on other aspects that have an impact on the effective delivery of teaching and learning. Further, the systemic reliance on externally mandated CPD programmes might stagnate leadership growth over time. By focusing primarily on District-led initiatives, CMs may fail to empower principals to take the initiative in their own professional development. This reliance on external programmes could limit opportunities for principals to engage in proactive development, thus restricting their ability to adapt to evolving educational landscapes. In other words, encouraging principals to take a more active role in their own learning could foster more dynamic leadership growth, enabling them to respond more effectively to the complex demands of school leadership.

5.2.4 The Effectiveness of CPD Provided by Circuit Managers

In South Africa principals expect CMs to provide support for CPD activities (cf. section 2.5.12). These activities are monitored through SACE to check quality and effectiveness. Pandor (DoE, 2007:17) alludes to SACE guidelines for teachers, managers, and principals to achieve effective CPD (cf. section 5.2.2.6). Effective CPD can positively impact on principals as it is viewed as being critical to improve the quality of school management (Mann & Webb, 2022:17). Manley, Martin, Jackson and Wright (2018:135) assert that evidence about CPD's effectiveness was still limited as both CMs and principals did not express themselves strongly on this aspect.

Moreover, principals complained that CPD provided by CMs was ineffective as it was facilitated in an uncondusive environment. This contradicted the National Education and the National Policy Framework for Teacher Education and Development that expressed education departments should provide CPD in enabling environments (cf. section 2.4.2.2). Furthermore, the lack of one-on-one interaction was absent. This lack of engagement reduces prospects for collaborative problem-solving and innovation in school management (RAMSA, 2022:3). This gap increases principals' frustrations as they feel alienated and unsupported in CPD matters.

Principals stated that the training sessions were of short duration and compressed with sometimes irrelevant content being delivered which did not cater to principals' needs (Bozak et al., 2018:242). The identification of principals' needs in line with the type of school, especially concerning their available resources, was a consideration

that should have been noted by CMs. The findings proved that principals were not satisfied with the CPD provision by CMs as there were few positive remarks in this regard.

In contrast, CMs stated that CPD was effective especially for principals who applied the knowledge gained at training sessions because it enhanced daily operations at their schools. This implied that the effectiveness of CPD may be related to the impact of knowledge acquisition (Valdmann, Holbrook & Rannikmae, 2017: 577). Time was another constraint that impacted on the effectiveness of CPD as CMs had overloaded schedules to deal with, coupled with inadequate District planning exacerbated by frequent cancellations of CPD training sessions. Thus, time-management should be considered as a component leading to job-satisfaction (Shao, 2022:1) In addition to these gaps, the selection of topics for all principals posed challenges to those who were already excelling in aspects facilitated at CPD training sessions (Mann & Webb, 2022:19). However, CMs claimed that principals also did not grasp the content of CPD sessions, thus CPD training had to be provided multiple times on one or two aspects for principals to be competent in areas covered during CPD sessions. This resulted in a generic approach which failed to focus on specific needs of individual school principals, which impacted negatively on their confidence as principals.

Also, the lack of ICT skills also impeded principals' ability to administer school operations efficiently, and this hindered principals' enhancement of their management skills by using technology as a tool. Thus, it is crucial for principals to continue developing their ICT knowledge and skills through CPD opportunities (Looi, Zhang, Gao & Wu, 2020:181). Lamentably, administrative issues such as short notices pertaining to requests from CMs, exposed principals to unnecessary stress. This finding reflects poor planning and communication by CMs which may result in the disruption of principals' daily duties.

5.2.5 Aspects that Need CPD Intervention to Upgrade Principals

The findings identify several crucial areas where more assistance and instruction are necessary for principals' who are key figures in the functioning of schools (cf. section 1.11). The areas that CPD was deemed to be critical were mentioned frequently by principals, especially gaps in curriculum management, human resources, management of school finances, wellness, and leadership development. The identified gaps

hampered the execution of responsibilities which precipitated challenges that could have been circumvented (Ndou, 2020:2). In addition, insufficient assistance in handling problems arising from socioeconomic issues that affect learner-conduct was identified. Moreover, principals felt that there was a dire need for CMs and principals to be trained in leadership and management by experts. Also, in order to promote quality school environments, high standards of leadership across all principals in the district required supervision of the highest standard. These experts who may be recruited to deliver training of the expected quality may be accessed through CPD authorities in the educational sector. The existing reliance on CMs for professional growth and support is insufficient, especially in complicated fields such as finance, human resources, discipline, political interference, and socioeconomic challenges.

The lack of addressing these needs leads to the stifling of progress as indicated in the section 2.4.1.6 (Nakpodia, 2009:1). In addition to the identified issues, wellness and socioeconomic aspects were raised as principals' major concerns. These concerns mainly focused on learner-conduct which emanated from broader socioeconomic issues that principals were not prepared to deal with due to a lack of knowledge, training, and experience. Also, CMs admitted that there was a lack of strategy to support principals in dealing with school communities which rendered CMs' ineffective because each community was unique and there was no one-size-fits-all solution. Therefore, the success of a school is dependent on the extent to which stakeholders can effectively collaborate and contribute towards the development of a school community (cf. Asiyai & Okoro, 2019:108). The CMs' lack of time to provide one-on-one support to principals was also an obstacle that CMs themselves identified as stifling CPD progress (cf. section 2.9.6). This implied that CMs must communicate scheduled training details timeously and consistently to ensure that CPD is prioritised. This statement is emphasised in the findings (cf. section 4.3.1.2.3) where participants indicated that CMs have limited time for organising CPD workshops. If these areas that need expeditious intervention are not prioritised, it compromises principals' productive performance in the management of the school. This statement is in alignment with the findings indicating leadership development as another significant gap that needed to be attended through CPD by CMs (cf. section 4.3.1.2). There was unanimity on the importance of building long-term leadership skills that will support sustainability regarding school management. This implies that there is a need for more structured and comprehensive leadership

training that covers specific areas of concerns which should focus on specific needs identified by principals. Lastly, principals who do not receive extensive leadership training via CPD are at risk of mediocre school performance and management.

5.2.6 Circuit Managers' Discharge of CPD Responsibilities

The study investigated how principals perceived and experienced Circuit Managers' (CMs') performance of their CPD duties. A number of problems surfaced, such as the uneven provision of CPD assistance, an over focus on secondary schools, a deficiency of tools and training for CMs, a lack of engagement and feedback channels, and a misalignment between CM responsibilities and expectations (cf. section 4.4). These findings have an impact on the effectiveness of CMs in discharging CPD as a critical aspect towards principals' development. Lamentably, some principals see resignation as the only alternative to work-stress and burnout (cf. section 1.2). Furthermore, findings depicted a challenging scenario amongst the Districts concerning the proper facilitation of CPD for principals by CMs, as CMs must ensure that principals understand and master the knowledge and skills gained in CPD facilitation. The lack of discharging effective CPD duties has a debilitating cascading effect on all role-players in the school community. Thus, Districts are 'paralysed' to implement CPD programmes effectively as they are hampered by CMs who are sometimes incompetent. In this regard, CMs are encouraged to attain best practice like Finland such that they are fully capacitated to implement CPD in South Africa to benefit all principals.

Further, findings revealed that principals perceived CMs as not discharging their responsibilities effectively. These inadequacies include lack of coherence and consistency, lack of resources, absence of time-management skills, poor communication, failure to plan and collaborate, and limited content knowledge regarding areas of need. These findings have a negative impact on principals' CPD. This suggests that CMs do not have the skills needed to systematically plan for principals' CPD. It should be noted that without adequate resources and training, CMs cannot provide principals with the guidance they require to enhance their leadership.

Findings also uncovered CPD for principals as a strategic plan mandated by the District office to be implemented according to the District's Annual Plan. This provides direction that CPD must be discharged effectively by CMs, and that there is a period

as to when it should be done. However, CMs revealed that principals' CPD was only partially discharged. Furthermore, the awareness of the channels of disseminating information regarding meetings and forums was clarified. In the same context, the provision of support to school principals encouraged discussions leading to the identification of principals' needs through a needs-assessment strategy regarding principals' managerial competencies before training or induction (Moindi, Changeiywo & Sang, 2016:14). Another revelation was the lack of experience of some CMs to enact their managerial roles effectively. This finding implies that CMs' support of principals on managerial aspects may be lacking. Accordingly, CMs should provide holistic support for principals in all aspects of school management, especially through CPD guidelines. Moreover, the lack of CMs' experience as supervisors of principals may negatively affect the potential to develop principals. This finding concluded that CMs depend on guidelines that enabled them to work in a systematic way when facilitating CPD for principals, although data revealed the inconsistencies concerning the implementation CPD by various CMs.

Lastly, CMs' lack of determining areas of need for principals was identified as the primary concern contributing to principals' stress (cf. section 2.5.12). This suggests that CPD is facilitated without proper engagement with the set procedural guidelines (e.g. conducting a needs analysis), thus leading to gaps in understanding principals' areas for improvement.

5.2.7 Barriers in CPD Implementation

South Africa has made strides in implementing CPD for principals which was strengthened by the formation of formal structures through which CPD is regulated. However, CPD challenges included CMs not addressing the needs of principals to enhance the quality of daily school operations.

Barriers encountered in the implementation of CPD by CMs yielded the following: lack of support and guidance, lack of strategies to identify principals' needs or challenges, ineffective communication, absence of collaboration, CMs' burdensome workloads, and limited participation of CMs as facilitators (cf. section 4.6). Further, there was the need for improvement in the planning, organisation, and implementation of continuous professional development for principals, as well as better communication and support from CMs (cf. section 2.5.16). Also, principals' perceived CMs' engagement as

facilitators in their training as a form of encouragement, support, and motivation that might ensure rapport and increased levels of trust between them. Thus, CMs as DoE officials should be instrumental in updating principals on current educational developments by offering to develop and support principals via CPD (Mestry, 2017:6). These responsibilities of CMs indicate their proactive engagement and level of interest in uplifting principals' professional lives which are viewed as CMs' positive contribution towards ensuring collaboration to resolving pressing problems.

5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

This study offers recommendations that may be important to relevant stakeholders that are interested in the study's topic which includes principals, CMs, teachers, policymakers, scholars in the field of education, and the Department of Education officials at District level, among others. The recommendations are aligned to the aim, objectives, and research questions of the study. These recommendations emanate from the findings of the study:

5.3.1 Recommendation 1: The role of the CM in CPD implementation

The CMs should create a balance in supporting principals' external and internal CPD programmes by creating platforms of engagement with principals to discuss and identify aspects of CPD that need to be understood and implemented. This recommendation is in line with the role of CMs in the implementation of CPD (cf. section 4.13.1). Furthermore, this support should be done by enhancing communication channels through open discussions, provision of feedback, and collaboration. This will pin-point school needs to roll-out a plan of action for circumventing barriers that affect the smooth daily operations of schools. Furthermore, the inclusion of principals in the District's strategic plans and professional development meetings pertaining to training schedules, timeframes, content, and CPD goals will yield constructive results as there would be a sense of belonging created by involving all relevant stakeholders. Through these collaborations and communication channels, there will be an assurance that the training will be crafted according to the principals' identified needs to ensure effective implementation by CMs. After the implementation of these targeted training sessions, CMs should ensure that they monitor and offer principals ongoing support and guidance post-training. Lastly, it is recommended that consistent monitoring and evaluation

should be conducted, including the sourcing of feedback from principals in order for CMs to critique their own training, and where necessary make adjustments.

Specific Actions and Training: Recommendations for CMs in implementing CPD

Concerning the creation of collaborative platforms for engagement, Circuit Managers (CMs) should grasp the opportunity to assume a proactive role in capacitating principals through open discussions about the CPD process. This can be achieved by organising regular meetings or forums specifically aimed at principals, where they can discuss CPD needs, share experiences, and identify key areas where further understandings and support are required. These platforms should be designed to facilitate mutual exchange, rather than a top-down dissemination of information from CMs to principals.

Importantly, CMs should undergo professional development training focusing on facilitation skills and collaborative leadership. This training should include how to create safe spaces for open discussions, how to encourage active participation, and how to facilitate constructive feedback. Workshops or seminars on active listening and conflict resolution will also be beneficial as these skills are crucial in managing diverse viewpoints and ensuring productive conversations that focus on the needs of the school.

Regarding the enhancing of communication and feedback channels, effective CPD implementation requires refined speaking-listening skills and timeous follow-ups between CMs and principals. Also, CMs should ensure that communication channels are accessible, open, transparent, and interactive. This includes regular check-ins with principals to provide feedback, address challenges, and ensure that the CPD initiatives are progressing as planned. In addition, feedback from principals should be consistently gathered, reviewed, and used to adjust and improve the CPD process.

It is imperative that CMs undergo training in effective communication, particularly in giving and receiving feedback. This should cover both verbal and written communication skills, with an emphasis on constructive feedback techniques and how to create an atmosphere of trust to encourage honest dialogue. Moreover, CMs should be trained in using digital communication tools to enhance efficiency and ensure continuous support, especially in remote or large districts.

The necessity to involve principals in strategic planning is one of the key recommendations. The CMs should involve principals in the District's strategic planning, particularly when it comes to CPD. By involving principals in decision-making regarding training schedules, content, and goals, CMs can ensure that the CPD programmes align closely with the actual needs of the schools. This collaborative planning also promotes a sense of ownership and accountability among principals.

The aspect of training should also focus on Circuit Managers who should be proficient in strategic planning and stakeholder engagement. The training should focus on how to involve key stakeholders (in this case, principals) in decision-making processes and how to align CPD goals with District-wide educational objectives. Also, CMs will benefit from training in project management to help them coordinate the implementation of CPD programmes, track progress, and make adjustments when necessary.

Of significance is the aspect of post-training support and continuous monitoring. It is not enough for CMs to provide training and then step away. The long-term success of CPD initiatives requires sustained ongoing support and post-training guidance. After a CPD session is delivered, CMs should provide regular and timeous follow-up support to ensure that principals effectively implement new knowledge and skills gained during the training. This could include mentoring, regular site visits, or virtual check-ins to discuss any challenges faced during the application of new strategies.

The CMs, who should be trained in mentoring and coaching, must provide tailored support to principals in the post-training phase to ensure that newly acquired knowledge is successfully applied in the school setting. Additionally, CMs should participate in training on evaluation to understand how to assess the effectiveness of the CPD training sessions, and the impact of such sessions on the daily operations of schools.

Hence, monitoring, evaluation, and feedback are processes to ensure the ongoing improvement of CPD programmes which CMs should entrench in a system for continuous monitoring and evaluation. This includes sourcing feedback from principals and other relevant stakeholders, evaluating the effectiveness of the CPD programmes, and using this information to institute necessary adjustments. Monitoring could involve

regular check-ins, surveys, and focus groups to gather feedback about the relevance, impact, and overall quality of the CPD training sessions.

Training for CMs should include techniques in data collection and analysis, as well as feedback collection methods. This training will equip CMs with the skills needed to design surveys, conduct focus group discussions, and interpret data to make informed decisions about future CPD interventions.

The study identified and addressed barriers in CPD Implementation which included insufficient time, lack of resources, and inconsistent feedback. The CMs should take proactive steps to identify these barriers early in the planning process to develop strategies to alleviate them. For example, creating flexible training schedules that accommodate principals' busy diaries and ensuring that CPD resources (such as materials and facilitators) are readily available so as to alleviate some challenges.

Lastly, CMs should also receive training in problem-solving and resource management skills. This would allow them to identify potential barriers in CPD implementation to find creative ways to overcome them. Additionally, they should be trained in time management strategies to advise principals on how to balance the demands of CPD training with their other responsibilities.

5.3.2 Recommendation 2: The effectiveness of CPD provided by CMs

There is a need for uniformity in delivering CPD in all Districts. The CMs should ensure that CPD policy is implemented according to set standards and as per the professional needs of the principals. The DoE should monitor the implementation of CPD to ensure that CMs abide by their responsibilities and adhere to uniformity in implementation across various Districts to eliminate inconsistencies in implementation. It is recommended that greater emphasis should be placed on CPD to sustain long-term leadership development. This implies that there is a need to establish uniform guidelines and practices across Districts to ensure that all principals receive consistent and effective CPD support. Principals complained about CMs' priority of servicing mainly secondary schools to improve learner-results, hence less attention was given to primary schools. This focus is seen as a system failure that needs to be addressed

because both primary and secondary schools should receive equal attention from CMs in terms of resources and support. It is recommended that CMs develop strategies that are aligned to individual school needs to improve the quality of education. Furthermore, the CMs must ensure that through this equal distribution of support, principals are aware of what to expect from CMs regarding their CPD engagement, including clarity as to how CPD will be implemented across schools to eliminate any confusion that may exist. For CMs to achieve this, they should ensure that they also prioritise their own development, enhance their administrative support, and engage with principals more effectively to enable the provision of much-needed support.

Specific Actions and Training Recommendations for Effectiveness of CPD provided by CMs

Ensuring uniformity in CPD delivery across Districts ensures that CPD is delivered uniformly across all Districts; hence, CMs must adhere strictly to the CPD policy to promote its implementation according to established standards while being aligned to the professional needs of principals. This requires that CMs develop consistent strategies and frameworks for delivering CPD, thus ensuring that no District is left behind or given preferential treatment.

In this regard, CMs should undergo policy-implementation training, with a focus on the Department of Education's (DoE's) CPD guidelines and how to adapt these policies to local contexts while maintaining uniformity. The training should include understanding how to align the CPD delivery with the professional needs of principals, including how to assess these needs at the school level. Additionally, CMs should be trained in quality assurance processes to enable them to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of CPD programmes while ensuring that standards are consistent across all Districts.

The monitoring of CPD implementation for consistency should involve the DoE to actively monitor the implementation of CPD across Districts to ensure that CMs are fulfilling their responsibilities and adhering to guidelines for uniformity. This monitoring will help identify any discrepancies or inconsistencies on how CPD is delivered across Districts, thus enabling corrective action, where necessary.

Hence, CMs should be trained in monitoring and evaluation techniques specific to CPD. This training will empower CMs to evaluate whether CPD programmes are being delivered consistently and effectively across schools within their District. It should include training in data collection and analysis to enable CMs to track the progress of CPD implementation, identify areas of concern, and use feedback to improve the programme. In addition, training on reporting and accountability mechanisms will ensure that CMs can effectively communicate the progress of CPD programmes to the DoE.

Developing Strategies Aligned with School-Specific Needs: The focus on secondary schools and the resulting neglect of primary schools creates a system imbalance that needs to be addressed. CMs should develop strategies tailored to the specific needs of both primary and secondary schools, ensuring that CPD support is equally distributed and that both school types are adequately supported to improve educational outcomes.

Also, CMs should be trained in needs assessment and differentiated support strategies. This training would involve learning how to assess the unique challenges and professional development needs of both primary and secondary school principals. The CMs should also be trained in resource allocation and planning to ensure that resources and support are distributed equitably across all schools. In particular, CMs should learn how to balance support between different school types to ensure that primary schools are not overlooked in favour of secondary schools.

The aspect of clarifying expectations within CPD implementation guidelines will eliminate confusion about CPD implementation. The CMs should ensure that all principals are clear about the expectations and processes of CPD. This includes outlining specific steps for engagement, defining the support that will be provided, and ensuring that principals understand the content and goals of the CPD programmes. Clarity about what principals can expect from CMs in terms of CPD support will help eliminate inconsistencies to ensure smooth implementation.

In this regard, CMs need training on how to communicate clearly and effecting successful stakeholder engagement, particularly on how to communicate information pertaining to CPD guidelines, expectations, and support structures to principals. This training should cover strategies for presenting complex information in a simple way to

ensure that all stakeholders are on the same page. Additionally, CMs should be trained in change management techniques to help guide principals through any transition in CPD processes and to ensure they understand the broader goals of the professional development programme.

In order to provide effective support to principals, CMs must prioritise their own professional growth. This means that CMs should not only engage in CPD programmes themselves, but also actively seek opportunities for improving their leadership, administrative, and support skills. A CM who is well-equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge will be more effective in supporting and addressing principals' professional development needs.

This entails participating in leadership development programmes on educational leadership, management skills, and administrative support. These programmes should be designed to strengthen CMs' strategic thinking, problem-solving abilities, and leadership competencies, thus helping them to better support their principals. Furthermore, CMs should receive training in time management and organisational skills to balance their administrative duties with their role in supporting CPD implementation.

The effective engagement with principals is a necessity for CMs to provide much-needed support. This engagement should go beyond administrative tasks to focus on building strong, supportive relationships that foster mutual respect and cohesive collaboration. Through these engagements, CMs can better understand the challenges principals face to tailor CPD support accordingly.

Hence, CMs should undergo coaching and mentoring training which will help them engage more effectively with principals. This training should include strategies for providing constructive feedback, emotional and professional support, and promoting a culture of trust and collaboration. The CMs should also be trained in conflict resolution and active listening to ensure that they successfully address concerns and challenges in a way that fosters positive outcomes for principals, the community, and the school.

Sustaining long-term leadership development for CPD is possible if it is not a one-time event, but part of a continuous sustainable drive to enhance leadership development. The CMs should prioritise the continuous development of principals by ensuring that CPD opportunities are ongoing and adapted to the evolving needs of school leadership.

Therefore CMs should receive training in long-term leadership development strategies, which include the design and implementation of sustainable CPD programmes. This training should focus on creating development plans that extend beyond the immediate needs of principals to foster their growth as leaders over time. Also, CMs should be trained in mentoring to provide ongoing support to principals; this ensures that the CPD process becomes a lifelong learning journey, rather than a series of isolated events.

5.3.3 Recommendation 3: Aspects that need CPD intervention

The findings indicated that both CMs and principals' are deemed in CPD programmes to be important. Thus, it is recommended that CMs ensure that principals receive quality ongoing support and training. Areas identified as critical included wellness, socioeconomic issues, labour relations, financial management, and human resource management. This implies that CPD training should be developed to dissect, prioritise, and submit the identified needs for interrogation to find strategic resolutions. This is key in addressing principals' skills and knowledge gaps that may lead to enhancement of their leadership. In areas where CMs are not adequately resourced to deliver training on areas of need, it is recommended that recruitment of experts with specialised knowledge should be conducted, internally or externally. This will ensure that high quality training is delivered to principals, thus increasing the effective carry-over of what has been learned into principals' daily operations. Through this implementation principals may be in a position where they are considered to be well-equipped leaders who can manage schools effectively.

Specific Actions and Training Recommendations on Aspects needing CPD Intervention

Ongoing Support and Development of Principals: It is critical that Circuit Managers provide continuous support to principals, particularly in the areas where they face challenges. The training should be designed to equip CMs with the necessary skills to offer sustained, high-quality support that helps principals build on their strengths to address any weaknesses identified through ongoing assessments.

Coaching and mentoring programmes for CMs involve coaching techniques and how to mentor principals which help guide principals through the ongoing application of CPD materials while offering personalised feedback. Training programmes should include role-playing scenarios, mentorship workshops, and peer-coaching opportunities where CMs can practise guiding and supporting principals in real-time situations.

The creation of peer-learning networks allows principals to share experiences, discuss challenges, and provide mutual support. The CMs should be trained on how to facilitate these networks to ensure principals have access to ongoing peer-based support, advice, and encouragement.

The prioritising of critical areas for CPD training included wellness, socioeconomic issues, labour relations, financial management, and human resource management. Principals need to be trained to improve their leadership skills to enhance their management of schools. Therefore, CMs must ensure that CPD training is designed to effectively address these areas while focusing on practical solutions.

The CMs should be trained to conduct needs assessment workshops with principals. These workshops will help identify the specific gaps in principals' knowledge and skills across the five identified areas. In this regard, CMs can conduct surveys, focus group discussions, and individual interviews with principals to gather insights into their perceived challenges and areas of development. This data can then be used to design more targeted CPD programmes.

As far as wellness is concerned, a CPD module that focuses on principal's wellness, how to manage stress, maintain work-life balance, and emotional well-being will also

benefit school staff members and learners. Also, CMs should ensure that principals are trained in self-care strategies, and how to foster a wellness culture within schools.

Furthermore, CMs should facilitate training sessions on how socioeconomic factors affect learners' learning, and how principals can provide support for learners facing such challenges. This could include training on poverty alleviation strategies, community engagement, and supporting learners with limited resources.

Additionally, CMs should organise workshops that focus on labour relations within the school system, including how to manage staff conflicts, understanding union dynamics, and dealing with grievances effectively. This training should include simulations of potential labour disputes to build skills in conflict resolution.

Concerning financial management training, principals should be educated in budget management, resource allocation, and financial accountability. This training could involve the use of real-life case studies and scenarios to teach principals how to manage school finances effectively within tight budgets.

Regarding human resource management, principals should be trained to be equipped with skills in staff recruitment, professional development, and performance management. The training could include role-playing activities to address issues like underperformance, staff development, and absenteeism.

Where CMs do not have the expertise to adequately provide in-depth training in certain areas, recruiting external experts or internal specialists is advised. This ensures that principals receive high-quality, specialised knowledge that can be immediately applied to their daily school operations.

The CMs should organise training sessions that are led by experts in fields such as financial management, labour relations, and wellness. These experts can facilitate workshops, seminars, and webinars tailored to the specific needs of principals. Further, CMs should be trained on how to identify, recruit, and collaborate with these experts to ensure that the training provided is relevant and of high quality.

Additionally, establishing partnerships with universities and professional bodies to recruit subject-matter experts for ongoing CPD delivery, could lead to certificate programmes or accredited courses for principals that focus on leadership in key areas like human resources, financial management, and labour relations.

To ensure high-quality CPD delivery and application for the CPD to have a lasting impact, it is essential that the knowledge and skills gained are applied in the principals' day-to-day activities. Hence, CMs should monitor the implementation of new learning in schools and offer targeted support to ensure effective carry-over into practice. This requires follow-up support and evaluation, areas that CMs should be trained in. This should include gaining skills in follow-up support strategies where CMs visit principals after CPD training sessions to assess how well the principles learned have been implemented in school operations. This can be done through regular feedback sessions, observational visits, and one-on-one meetings to discuss challenges and successes in applying learnt CPD knowledge and skills.

Also, CMs should guide principals in developing action plans to implement in schools what was taught at CPD workshops. These action plans should set clear, measurable goals for applying the acquired skills and knowledge. Moreover, CMs should be trained on how to support principals in setting realistic targets, tracking progress, and adjusting the plans, if necessary.

Another technique is to build a supportive network for principals as part of their ongoing and integrated regular schedule. Creating a network for continual professional development where principals can receive ongoing support, feedback, and peer-based learning opportunities, is essential for ensuring long-term leadership development.

The CMs should be trained on how to facilitate Communities of Practice (CoP) for principals. These CoPs can provide principals with opportunities for ongoing learning, sharing of best practices, and peer support. Hence, CMs should organise regular CoP meetings where principals discuss challenges and successes related to their CPD implementation. These CoP sessions can also focus on collaborative problem-solving.

Lastly, online learning platforms and forums should be supported by CMs. These assist principals to access resources, ask questions, and network with other school leaders. In addition, they offer discussion forums, webinars, and resources on key CPD topics such as financial management, wellness, and labour relations to promote the quality of principals' engagement for continuous professional development.

5.3.4 Recommendation 4: CMs' discharge of CPD responsibilities

The CMs agreed that CPD planning was mediocre and thus implementation as per District requirements was unsuccessful. The recommendation that CPD be placed as a fixed item in the Annual Plans of Districts did not materialise. In this study time management and planning were identified as areas that needed to be improved by CMs. The CMs are expected to develop a strategy to plan and relay information to principals in order to reduce urgent requests and to ensure that principals do have enough time to complete the requests without experiencing unnecessary stress. Thus, it is recommended that more time allocation and planning should be afforded to CMs in an effort to reduce workload and reduce on CMs being reactive and become proactive. If Districts can assist CMs in this, it will ensure that there are fewer disruptions, but consistency and effectiveness in CPD planning will lead to timeous implementation. Proper use of ICT resources and support may assist in communication and delivery methods of training through virtual means. Thus, the need for the education system to invest in ICT resources will ensure that principals have access to manage and integrate modern technology in managing their schools.

Specific Actions and Training Recommendations on CMs' discharge of CPD responsibilities

Training on Effective CPD Planning and Strategic Time Management:

The findings indicated that CPD planning was mediocre, and CMs were struggling to plan and effectively implement CPD according to District requirements. Training in strategic planning, prioritisation, and time management is essential to reduce stress, avoid reactive behaviour, and enable more proactive planning.

Training Activity - Strategic Planning and Prioritisation Workshops: CMs should attend workshops on strategic planning that focus on developing long-term CPD plans aligned with District goals and educational priorities. These workshops would guide CMs in simplifying the desired goals into actionable steps and realistic timelines. Key areas to cover include:

- How to set clear, measurable objectives for CPD that align with both District goals and the specific needs of principals;
- Task prioritisation techniques, such as the Eisenhower Matrix which can help CMs distinguish between urgent and important tasks, thus ensuring they focus on long-term objectives instead of reacting to last-minute demands; and
- Action planning tools that break down larger goals into smaller, achievable tasks, and how to allocate sufficient time for each task.

Time Management Training: CMs need targeted training on time management strategies to reduce stress and increase productivity. This training should include:

- Time-blocking techniques to allocate specific periods for CPD activities, hence ensuring they are not overwhelmed by unexpected tasks;
- Effective delegation skills to distribute tasks across the team, thus reducing individual workload.
- Using project management tools like Trello, Asana, or Monday.com to track CPD activities, adherence to deadlines, and team contributions;
- Concerning proactive versus reactive workload management, CMs need to be trained to shift from a reactive approach to a proactive one. This training should focus on anticipating challenges in CPD delivery and planning ahead to mitigate them; and
- Identifying common CPD bottlenecks and creating solutions before they become unwieldy, thus reducing the need for last-minute adjustments and stress.

Implementing CPD as a Fixed Item in Annual District Plans: One of the key recommendations is to ensure that CPD is included as a fixed, regular component of District Annual Plans. The CMs must learn how to advocate for this shift and integrate CPD into the District's broader planning scheme.

As part of the training regarding advocacy and stakeholder engagement, CMs should undergo training to effectively communicate the importance of CPD and integrate it into District-wide planning. This training should focus on:

- Communicating the value of CPD to District leadership and other stakeholders to gain their support;

- Creating a compelling business case for prioritising CPD in Annual Plans, including evidence-based approaches to demonstrate its impact on school leadership and educational outcomes; and
- Negotiation skills to work with District leadership to secure necessary time and resources for CPD.

Strategic Alignment with District Priorities: CMs should be trained on how to align CPD goals with District-wide educational priorities. This training should include:

Reviewing District plans and identifying gaps or areas where CPD could support existing priorities (e.g. improving leadership skills, addressing learner outcomes, or implementing new curricula). In addition, CMs should become well-versed in how to incorporate CPD activities into the Annual Plans in a way that ensures regular review and progress-tracking to help embed CPD as a permanent feature.

Using ICT Resources to Enhance CPD Delivery and Communication: The need to leverage ICT resources to support CPD planning and delivery was highlighted. The CMs should be trained to use technology for better communication, streamlined delivery of training, and improved coordination with principals. The CMs should receive training in using modern ICT tools for CPD delivery, particularly in virtual formats. This would include:

- Learning Management Systems (LMS) - Training on platforms like Google Classroom and Moodle which can be used to share CPD resources, track participants' progress, and offer interactive learning experiences.
- Virtual Meeting Tools - Training on effective use of platforms like Zoom, Microsoft Teams, and Google Meet for conducting webinars, virtual workshops, and one-on-one coaching sessions with principals.
- Creating Digital Training Materials - CMs should learn how to develop and share digital content such as instructional videos, online modules, or infographics which can be used for remote CPD delivery.
- ICT Communication Tools for Effective Collaboration - CMs must be trained on how to use ICT tools to improve communication and collaboration with principals. This training should focus on collaboration tools such as Microsoft Teams, or Google Drive to share resources, receive feedback, and streamline communication.

- How to organise and manage digital feedback loops, where principals can provide insights on CPD content, training effectiveness, and areas for improvement.

Reducing Workload and Stress through Effective Delegation and Support: The recommendations highlight the importance of reducing CMs' workload to avoid stress and improve the overall effectiveness of CPD. The CMs need to be trained in delegation and how to create an environment that encourages support and teamwork. In this regard, CMs need specific training on delegation techniques to ensure that they do not shoulder all responsibilities alone. This training should focus on:

- Identifying tasks that can be delegated by selecting appropriate team members to assume specific responsibilities;
- How to monitor progress while allowing team members to have autonomy, which foster a sense of responsibility and trust;
- Building a supportive team culture where all members feel empowered to contribute to the CPD process, thus reducing the burden on CMs; and
- Building Collaborative Networks with External Experts - In areas where CMs lack the expertise to train principals, they should learn how to build partnerships with external experts who can deliver specialised training. This could include:
 - Identifying local or national experts in areas like financial management, labour relations, or wellness;
 - Forming partnerships with universities, professional bodies, or consultancies to recruit specialists who can provide high-quality, targeted CPD to principals; and
 - Collaborating with local education networks to share resources and expertise that can support CPD efforts.

5.3.5 Recommendation 5: Barriers in CPD implementation

The necessity for an audit of support strategies should be instituted to serve as an identifier for common areas of concern that need to be attended to during cluster-training and peer-to-peer support of principals. This may be done through the use of a monitoring and evaluation system. Thus, it is recommended that Districts capacitate

CMs appropriately to deliver quality CPD facilitation to elicit better outcomes. Further, principals complained about the lack of proper planning for CPD; for example, budget constraints, lack of consultation, selection of facilitators, and the absence of monitoring and evaluation. District offices and CMs are encouraged to create an interactive platform that will allow for principals to participate in strategic planning towards their own CPD. These platforms must be engaging, and align with CPD policy, SACE regulations, QMS, and other competing District plans to ensure that planning will yield positive results for uninterrupted CPD implementation. Furthermore, the training should also be extended to deputy-principals in an effort to promote succession planning which will also eliminate the increased need of CPD at the initial appointment phase, as deputy-principals will be exposed to basic training that may position them as future principals. These collaborations may engender valuable contributions that will assist CMs to provide targeted training that will be impactful towards principals' CPD.

Specific Actions and Training Recommendations on Barriers in CPD Implementation

Training on Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) for CPD Implementation:

To address the need for better monitoring and evaluation systems, CMs should be trained to implement effective M&E tools that can track CPD implementation, identify barriers, and provide feedback for continuous improvement.

Training Activity - Monitoring and Evaluation Workshop: CMs should attend a comprehensive workshop on M&E to strengthen CPD programmes. The focus should be on:

- Developing M&E frameworks specific to CPD, such as creating indicators to track the success of training sessions and identify areas for improvement;
- Data collection and analysis techniques to assess the effectiveness of CPD programmes by focusing on feedback from principals and other stakeholders; and
- Using feedback loops to make real-time adjustments to CPD delivery, while allowing CMs to respond proactively to identified challenges.

Audit of Support Strategies: CMs should be trained to conduct audits of existing CPD strategies to identify common problems experienced by principals. This process includes:

- Gathering qualitative and quantitative data from CPD participants (principals and deputy-principals) through surveys or interviews;
- Analysing data to pinpoint recurring challenges such as budget constraints, inadequate facilitator selection, and lack of consultation; and
- Creating actionable reports that outline specific areas for improvement and suggest remedies for future CPD activities.

Capacity Building on Facilitator Selection and Budget Planning:

The lack of proper planning for CPD including challenges of budget constraints and poor facilitator selection was exposed as a barrier. Therefore, training in budget management and selecting appropriate facilitators is crucial for CMs to ensure quality CPD delivery.

This should include:

- How to allocate resources effectively for CPD activities to ensure that the most critical areas (e.g. wellness, leadership, and financial management) receive priority;
- Cost-effective strategies for conducting CPD programmes, including leveraging internal resources or partnering with local educational institutions to reduce costs; and
- Long-term financial planning to ensure sustainable CPD delivery, including anticipating funding requirements for subsequent years.

Selecting Qualified Facilitators: CMs need to be trained on how to select and evaluate facilitators for CPD programmes. This training should cover:

- Evaluating qualifications and experience of potential facilitators to ensure they meet the needs of the principals;

- Designing a facilitator selection rubric to standardise the evaluation process and ensure that facilitators align with the District's CPD goals; and
- Feedback mechanisms to assess facilitator performance after each CPD session, thus ensuring high-quality delivery while identifying areas for improvement.

Creating Interactive Planning Platforms for Principal Participation:

The recommendation to create an interactive platform for principals to participate in strategic planning for CPD requires the development of a collaborative environment where principals can engage in decision-making to contribute to CPD improvements. Hence, CMs should be trained in the design and management of digital platforms that facilitate collaboration between principals and CMs. The training should cover:

- Using platforms like Google Workspace, Microsoft Teams, or Slack to create spaces where principals can contribute ideas, discuss CPD needs, and share resources;
- How to structure online meetings or forums that encourage active participation and allow for real-time feedback; and
- Best practices for virtual collaboration, including setting clear agendas, encouraging engagement, and managing digital platforms effectively.

Engagement Strategies for Interactive Planning: In addition to technical skills, CMs should learn how to effectively engage principals during planning sessions. This should include:

- Facilitating strategic discussions where principals help prioritise CPD needs based on the challenges they face in their schools;
- Consultation techniques that ensure all stakeholders are heard, and that decisions are made collaboratively by aligning with CPD policy, SACE regulations, and other District plans; and
- Setting clear expectations for principals' participation in the planning process, emphasising the importance of their input for tailoring CPD sessions to their needs.

Extending CPD Training to Deputy Principals:

Training deputy-principals is essential to foster succession planning and ensure that they are adequately prepared for leadership roles in the future. This will help alleviate the demand for intensive CPD facilitation once they are appointed as principals. Thus, CMs should facilitate leadership development training for deputy-principals as part of a broader CPD strategy. This should include:

- Developing a curriculum that exposes deputy-principals to fundamental leadership skills such as financial management, human resource management, and conflict resolution;
- Providing mentorship and coaching sessions, where experienced principals can share insights and best practices; and
- Incorporating hands-on learning experiences that allow deputy-principals to actively participate in decision-making and problem-solving, thus preparing them for future leadership roles.

Succession Planning Training: CMs should also be trained in succession planning strategies by focusing on:

- Identifying and nurturing future leaders within the school system, including deputy-principals who show potential for growth;
- How to create a structured pathway for deputy-principals to smoothly transition into principal positions, through appropriate CPD support at each stage; and
- Encouraging cross-functional collaboration among deputy-principals and principals to foster a culture of shared learning and leadership development.

Developing Tailored CPD Support for Principals:

To ensure that CPD is relevant and impactful, CMs should receive training on how to tailor CPD activities to address the specific needs of principals based on their feedback and performance data. Hence, CMs should be trained on conducting needs assessments to identify gaps in principals' knowledge and skills. This includes:

- Conducting surveys or interviews with principals to gather data on their professional development needs and areas of concern;

- Analysing data to determine the most urgent issues for CPD, such as financial management, labour relations, or curriculum development;
- Developing customised CPD programmes based on the assessment, ensuring that training is relevant, and that it addresses the specific needs of principals;
- CMs should be trained to facilitate reflection and feedback sessions where principals can discuss what they have learned, what needs further exploration, and how they plan to implement new knowledge in their schools;
- Incorporating peer-to-peer feedback so that principals can share their experiences, especially the challenges; and
- Documenting feedback to continuously improve the CPD process, and adjust future training sessions based on participant needs.

From the recommendations and specific training actions set above, the guidelines are provided for CMs that may be used towards supporting principals and implementing CPD.

TABLE 5.1: Guidelines to enhance CMs' role in implementing guidelines for training programmes for school principals in the Motheo District

Purpose of Guidelines

The guidelines presented below are vital for CMs to effectively support principals and implement CPD. These guidelines provide a systematic approach comprising of several key stages that are essential for successful CPD implementation.

Stage 1: Consultations

The consultation process is the initial stage of engagement. The CMs have the responsibility to implement consultation processes through various forms: meetings, peer-to-peer assistance, and mentoring or coaching. Consultations are deemed appropriate as a vehicle for driving CPD into the schooling system. Consultations through meetings should be prioritised as a platform to gather information and receive feedback. These meetings should be guided by an agenda that outlines items for engagement, managing the flow of discussions, and ensuring that inputs and resolutions are forthcoming concerning areas of improvement, especially in relation to CPD

matters. The meetings should also address policies related to CPD training, procedures to follow, and the training objectives that need to be clearly outlined. As confirmed before, principals recommended that CMs avail themselves for one-on-one sessions with principals to form a team for enhancing the quality of education in schools. In terms of budgetary constraints, CMs are encouraged to approach the District office, consult schools, and negotiate with external partners such as PLCs and local sponsors for support.

Lastly, principal representation at planned strategic meetings should be encouraged by CMs to promote collective decision-making, including listening to the voices of principals regarding CPD matters. Also, these meetings may be in the form of mentoring, coaching, and peer-to-peer consultations which lead to needs-based training emanating from the consultations processes.

The findings from consultations feed into the next stage that deals with the identification of training needs, which is outlined below.

Stage 2: Training Needs - Identification Stage

During this stage data gathered by CMs from the consultation stage is used to categorise the training needs of the principals, analyse the needs, set priorities and develop a training schedule. This stage is a strategy that should be aligned with the QMS system to guide policy towards principals' appraisal and their professional development (Ndlovu, 2017:1). The QMS appraises principals according to set criteria which provide feedback on areas for improvement. Circuit managers are thus encouraged to follow the categorisation of needs process to ensure that principals are provided with targeted CPD interventions or appropriate support.

The categorisation of needs is a crucial function that should be initiated when planning for CPD training to address urgent principals' needs. The DoE (2015:6) referred to the differentiated developmental needs of principals to encourage CMs to identify needs-categories from the analysis of the QMS system. Hence, CMs should realise the urgent needs of principals and thus enact planned interventions to promote better all-round school performance.

The differentiation of developmental needs should be aligned with the District's strategic plans for CPD according to the PAM (DoE, 2005) document. A thorough

categorisation of needs is required to align with the District's plans, objectives, and CPD targets.

The collation of training needs and their analysis by CMs provide a clear picture of what the CMs must focus on when appointing a CPD facilitator, which leads to the next stage of facilitator appointment.

Stage 3: Identification of training approach

When selecting a training approach and strategy for facilitation, the facilitator should be given the opportunity to assess the principals by considering several key factors. First, CMs and facilitator should look at the approach for training delivery and the strategy. Next, it is important to review the previous CPD sessions that the principals attended to gather insights on how they perceived their training. The identified facilitator (appointed in stage 3) should determine the type of training required, and distinguish between basic training and developmental training based on the principals' prior experiences. To determine these, the facilitator should consult with the Circuit Manager to discuss these findings. A pre-workshop questionnaire can be utilised to gather further information that will aid in crafting an effective facilitation strategy or approach. After analysing the questionnaire responses, the facilitator should develop a strategy to share it with the CM to seek approval. Next, the facilitator should proceed to create the necessary materials for CPD training including customising them for training sessions.

Stage 4: Facilitator appointment

Facilitator appointment is critical as it determines the success of training sessions. Therefore, it is important for CMs to be the ones responsible for the selection and appointment of facilitators who are supposed to execute the CPD programme. This stage is important as it gives the CM a platform to appoint skilled facilitators who possess the much-needed expertise to address the identified training needs. Prior to the appointment of a CPD facilitator, the CM should assess the skills, expertise, and experience of the facilitator to satisfy the required mandates that will inform and guide the training process. These pre-requisites include holding a certificate in mentoring, coaching, and facilitation, as well as being registered with a professional organisation

that attests to their suitability to render the necessary services (such as SACE). The CM should also ensure the training materials and delivery methods that will be used by the facilitator meet the identified needs of the principals, while the training approach should be in line with sound delivery methods. This means that the CM should ensure that the facilitator uses appropriate training materials aligned to principals' needs, and the method of delivery is able to effectively meet the needs of principals which involve choosing an appropriate training strategy during CPD delivery sessions.

The next stage focuses on the identification of the training approach that will bridge identified gaps and enhance targeted training needs. Prior to the appointment of a CPD facilitator, the CM should assess the skills, expertise, and experience of the facilitator to satisfy the required mandates that will inform and guide the training process. These pre-requisites include holding a certificate in mentoring, coaching, and facilitation, as well as being registered with a professional organisation that attests to their suitability to render the necessary services (such as SACE). The CM should also ensure the training materials and delivery methods that will be used by the facilitator meet the identified needs of the principals, while the training approach should be in line with sound delivery methods. This means that the CM should ensure that the facilitator uses appropriate training materials aligned to principals' needs, and the method of delivery is able to effectively meet the needs of principals which involve choosing an appropriate training strategy during CPD delivery sessions.

The next stage focuses on the identification of the training approach that will bridge identified gaps and enhance targeted training.

Stage 5: Customising materials and the delivery of training

For school leaders to receive effective and meaningful professional development, it is imperative that training materials and delivery methods be customised. This ensures that findings from stage 4 are addressed to enable principals' uninterrupted CPD interaction. The creation of training materials in line with the unique training and development needs will prompt facilitator and CMs discussions which are essential for achieving desired CPD goals. The curriculum needs to be specifically designed for the work contexts of principals by considering the opportunities and problems of their particular schools. To ensure their validity and applicability within the educational system,

all training materials and content need also be approved by the South African Council for Educators (SACE). This endorsement is essential because it reassures principals that the training will meet national requirements and favourably impact their professional development. Additionally, the materials must be delivered by the appointed facilitator during stage 4. After the implementation of stage 5, CMs may assist the facilitator with logistical arrangements to adhere to training timeframes, dates, and booking of venues. The next stage explains how logistical arrangements can be implemented.

State 6: Logistical arrangements

Circuit Managers (CMs) are primarily responsible for overseeing the logistical arrangements of the training programme by managing several practical key tasks to ensure that CPD training occurs smoothly. Their first task in arranging logistics is to identify and secure a suitable venue that can accommodate all participants. In addition, CMs must ensure that the facilitator is available to work closely with him/her. They are also tasked with collecting the necessary teaching and learning resources to enrich trainees' educational experience. To ensure a structured approach, CMs should finalise the list of trainees to ascertain that all relevant individuals are included. Once executed, CMs will issue invitations to the trainees, thus providing essential information about the training. Lastly, they will create and distribute the training schedule, ensuring that all participants are informed of the programme's timeframes and structure, thereby contributing to a smooth and effective training session. All these key aspects are important to ensure successful the implementation of training, which follows in stage 7.

Stage 7: Implementation of training

The implementation of training should consider stage 4, 5 and 6. As noted by Odhi-ambo (2018:245), training programmes that consider principals' varied histories, educational backgrounds, training duration, and other logistical aspects are crucial for improving performance. The ability for CMs to provide assurance that the training is applicable and easily accessible eventually produces enhanced CPD outcomes. Thus, when planning dates for CPD, care should be taken so that the selected dates do not coincide with principals' availability. Furthermore, to ensure a seamless implementation, the paperwork provided to principals in preparation for the training should reflect the allocation of resources and expectations. It is also advantageous to check with

current policies that facilitate the adoption of CPD to raise the programme's legitimacy and promote its efficacy.

After the programme is successfully implemented, the CM and facilitator should be in a position to measure the success of the training, which is addressed in Stage 8 below.

Stage 8: Assessment

The provision of CPD activities to principals during training ensures that a proper SACE assessment process is implemented - CPD points may be awarded after endorsement. Thus, the training programme's participants (principals) must submit a Portfolio of Evidence (PoE) which serves to measure the knowledge gained and abilities acquired to be applied by principals for school enhancement. In order to guarantee that delegates have the necessary tools to successfully apply their newly acquired knowledge, this portfolio plays a crucial role in providing them with ongoing support, counsel, inspiration, and guidance, both during and after the programme. After training, the facilitator evaluates each portfolio and offers insightful commentary that identifies areas of strength and the potential for growth. The facilitator then provides the CM with the outcomes of the PoE in his report, resulting in a thorough record of the CPD advancement and accomplishments of principals. This procedure encourages school principals to be more accountable for their own development as well as to develop a culture of ongoing professional development.

This report is critical in creating a constructive feedback platform, allowing Circuit Managers to offer insights that can improve future CPD workshops. Important components of the report will encompass the objectives and goals of the CPD training, as well as an evaluation of how relevant the chosen content was to foster the professional advancement of principals. Furthermore, the report includes examples of training evaluation tools like questionnaires and a summary of the results as part of the participants' feedback. To promote transparency and continuous communication, the report may also include mechanisms for regular feedback and updates to both principals and the District office. Lastly, the facilitator will be responsible for designing and distributing certificates of attendance for the principals. The CM's responsibility after receiving the training report from the facilitator is to ensure that monitoring and evaluation of content and knowledge is applied in the respective principals' schools.

Stage 9: Monitoring and Feedback

The monitoring and feedback provision of the training programme are imperative for CMs, who are encouraged to use support mechanisms (such as site visits) to principals' schools and the training venues. This strategy ensures that the training is aligned with the management and leadership requirements of different schools, thereby assisting principals in developing their own teams to promote peer-to-peer relationships where principals can support each other. The success of this initiative largely depends on having qualified and capable CMs. To aid CMs in the monitoring process, a sample monitoring tool is provided as an annexure for CMs to use. This tool may be used to collect data, and after its analysis the findings may be used to improve the implementation of CPD training activities, as well as to guide CMs in areas that should be enhanced by the facilitator when delivering the training programme (See Annexure F: Monitoring Tool.). Furthermore, the feedback from the monitoring and evaluation tool will allow CMs to refine their approaches for better CPD implementation for school principals. This will enhance CMs' understanding of their roles and the ability to deliver on their duties since this process informs the upcoming training sessions, discussions for consultations, needs identification, and a platform to make adjustment to plans, if necessary.

5.4 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The following limitations directly or indirectly influenced the course of study:

5.4.1 Sample Size and Generalisability

The study focused on a limited sample of high school principals with five or more years of experience in CPD, who were from five circuits within the Motheo District. While this targeted approach allowed for an in-depth exploration of the specific context and experiences of the participants, the small sample size restricted the generalisability of the findings. The experiences of principals in the Motheo District may not be representative of those in other Districts, particularly in different regions or with varying demographic profiles. As a result, the findings may not apply universally to all Districts or

principals, thus limiting the study's broader applicability. However, the study's results could serve as a foundation for further research in similar contexts, by offering a basis for comparative studies across different Regions or Districts.

Additionally, by focusing only on high school principals, the study did not consider the experiences of primary school principals or other educational leaders, which potentially overlooked factors that might influence CPD implementation in these schools. This focus on a single group of principals may have narrowed the scope of the study, making it difficult to draw conclusions about the broader educational leadership landscape.

5.4.2 Methodological Limitation: Focus Group Interviews

The study relied exclusively on focus group interviews as the method of data collection. While focus groups are effective in generating rich, qualitative data and promoting in-depth discussions, they also have inherent limitations. One key limitation is the potential for group dynamics to influence the responses of participants. Some individuals may have been reluctant to express their true opinions in the presence of others, especially if they felt their views differed from the majority or if they were concerned about the sensitivity of the issues being discussed. This could have led to skewed responses as participants may have modified their articulations to align with those of the group to avoid conflict.

Moreover, using only focus group interviews as the sole data collection method limited the ability to triangulate the findings with quantitative data or other forms of qualitative data, such as individual interviews or case studies. Integrating quantitative data could have strengthened the findings by providing a more comprehensive understanding of the issues, thus allowing for comparisons with similar studies and broader trends in CPD implementation. The absence of such data compromises the robustness of the study's conclusions, as it restricts the opportunity for cross-validation or further analysis of the findings.

5.4.3 Participation Bias and Non-Response

Another limitation was the potential for participation bias, particularly concerning the availability of Circuit Managers (CMs) to engage in the focus group interviews. Given the demanding nature of their roles and the time constraints they face, many CMs may have been unable to participate in the interviews, either due to conflicting responsibilities or the substantial time commitment required. As a result, the study may have been deprived of valuable insights from those who were unable to participate in the study which led to a less comprehensive understanding of the challenges and experiences of CMs concerning CPD implementation.

This lack of participation may have further influenced the overall significance of the study's findings as the perspectives of certain CMs, particularly those from different circuits or with varying levels of experience, were underrepresented. Consequently, the conclusions drawn may not fully reflect the diversity of experiences and opinions within the population of CMs which limited the depth of analysis and understanding.

5.4.4 Limited Scope of Data Collection

The study's reliance on a single form of data collection technique implied that certain contextual factors and nuances might not have been fully captured. Focus group interviews, while effective in exploring participants' attitudes, beliefs, and experiences, are inherently limited in their ability to gather data on more personal or sensitive aspects of CPD implementation. Some principals or CMs might have been hesitant to candidly share their experiences in a group setting, particularly regarding challenges or shortcomings in their professional development practices. This could have compromised the portrayal of CPD implementation than might have been the case if other data collection methods (individual interviews or surveys) had been employed.

5.4.5 Time Constraints and Study Duration

Another limitation was the duration of the study and the time-constraints faced by both researchers and participants. The time available for conducting the study may have influenced the depth of the collected data, particularly in terms of follow-ups or longitudinal analysis. A longer study duration, including multiple rounds of data collection,

would have allowed for a more thorough exploration of the evolving nature of CPD implementation over time, and would have provided a deeper understanding of the long-term impact of CPD initiatives on principals' professional development.

5.4.6 Focus on Perceptions Rather than Actual Impact

While the study explored the perceptions of principals and CMs regarding CPD implementation, it did not directly measure the actual impact of CPD training on the effectiveness of school leadership or learner outcomes. As such, the findings were based on subjective assessments, which, while valuable, may not provide a holistic picture of the effectiveness of CPD in improving school leadership and management. Future studies that incorporate both qualitative and quantitative measures could offer more robust insights into the actual outcomes of CPD programmes on school performance and leadership effectiveness.

5.5 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The study confirmed that there was a lack of leadership skills among principals, especially in most African countries. There was also a gap that existed in CMs' experience in their role as CPD facilitators (Steyn, 2011:18). Since this implied that there was a possibility that the identified gaps will still be in existence as most CMs lacked experience in leadership and management, it is recommended that further research be conducted on how to capacitate prospective CMs in leadership and management skills before being appointing them to the position of CM such that they are in a proper standing to support and develop principals.

Further, the inconsistencies and nepotism in appointing principals across Africa were identified. This study recommends further research to investigate inconsistencies in promotion processes such that a clear strategic path is structured to appoint principals to Circuit Manager positions. The tendency of skipping levels to be promoted ought to be avoided as it exposed such appointees' inefficient performance. Also, CMs lacked focus and commitment to their work. To address this, Maphoto (2016:11) believed that CMs should be capacitated in supervision and development theories to enhance their professionalism in order to capacitate school principals via CPD sessions. The lack of CMs' professional development led to principals being 'left behind' in excelling as leaders at their schools because CMs were the drivers of CPD; hence, further research is

recommended to explore how CMs can be effectively capacitated to deliver efficient CPD programmes without requiring the services of external personnel.

5.5.1 Recommendations for Practice

The District should encourage CMs to undertake training aimed at effectively coordinating CPD programmes within schools. This training ought to be designed with well-defined objectives, pertinent content delivery, and avenues for continuous reflection on CPD practices. To enhance the effectiveness of these initiatives, a set of guidelines is proposed. Firstly, it is necessary to cultivate working relationships between CMs and principals to promote collaboration and trust. Secondly, strengthening leadership and management skills in schools will aid in the seamless implementation and coordination of CPD activities. Thirdly, prioritising school-based CPD activities for principals ensures that the training aligns closely with their everyday management roles. Additionally, recognising the specific CPD needs of school principals at a fledgling stage will enable the development of customised and impactful training programmes. Furthermore, enhancing the pathways for promotion to CM positions within the District can motivate professional advancement. Moreover, the implementation of a systematic step-by-step approach will create a well-organised framework for the training process, ensuring that all components are comprehensively addressed for optimal effectiveness.

In addition, clarity on CMs' role regarding CPD implementation is critical to understand processes of capacitating school principals. Lastly, the establishment of school-based CPD training programmes for principals is regarded as a priority. Circuit Managers are advised to design and develop schedules that provide for CPD on-site one-on-one interactions with principals to meet the needs of the school.

5.6 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter presented a summary of the study relating to the findings of the research. It drew conclusions, provided recommendations, and suggested pathways for future research. The guidelines were presented, interpreted, and discussed in stages to be followed by CMs as the implementing agents, who are the appointed departmental officials to facilitate CPD provision and to upskill principals. The effective

implementation will capacitate CMs to provide effective CPD to principals as the beneficiaries of the CPD training. Furthermore, the limitations of the study were reflected. Lastly, this thesis might attract other researchers' attention to explore areas suggested for further research.

5.7 CONCLUSION TO THE STUDY

The aim of this study was to investigate the perceptions and experiences of principals pertaining to CMs' role in the implementation of CPD for principals in the Motheo District. In this study, CMs are seen to be significant in influencing principals' capacity in leadership and management through CPD. The findings revealed that even though CMs implement CPD, more often their focus is more aligned to external CPD programmes, and this creates gaps in the internal and individual CPD needs of principals. The study further concludes that implementing CPD is dependent on open communication and collaborative efforts between CMs and principals. This implies that CMs may be undervaluing the importance of interacting and assisting principals with innovative CPD initiatives. For CPD to be properly implemented and fostered, CMs must utilise integrated strategies. Challenges experienced with the way CMs deliver their CPD duties compromises CPD effectiveness. The majority of principals also expressed disappointment concerning the need for more standardised and organised methods of CPD provision which is compromised by the absence of regular CPD planning, follow-ups, and modified CPD programmes. This means that the effectiveness of CMs implementing their CPD duties can be enhanced through sufficient training and concerted support. The CMs and principals indicated that there are certain mechanisms that exist, but these mechanisms are insufficient to fulfil the broad range of tasks that they must oversee. Hence, principals did not receive sufficient training in key areas. Many principals were also dissatisfied with the quality and duration of training, especially in areas requiring specialist knowledge and skills. The reliance of principals on CPD training from CMs was critical for better school management, but future CPD provision should consider areas of principals' needs. Moreover, barriers such as work-overload of CMs, poor time-management, lack of communication, and a narrow focus on results (among others) impeded CPD implementation. To overcome these challenges, collaboration must be prioritised between CM and principals through meaningful interactions.

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APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR PRINCIPALS

Focus Group Interviews with Principals

TITLE: Principals' perceptions and experiences on circuit managers' role towards their continuous professional development."

PROFILES AND INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

The open-ended questions serve as a guide for the focus group interviews with the principals. The researcher will allow for flexibility to obtain any new information. This will be done through probing and follow-up questions where necessary. The focus group interviews will be categorised in two sections, section A focusing on profiles of principals and section B focusing on the research questions.

SECTION A

- Can you briefly outline your qualifications and years of experience in your role as a principal?
- What position did you hold prior to the principalship appointment?
- Where were you provided with an induction or training on appointment? Please elaborate.

SECTION B:

- Which role should circuit managers play in the CPD of school principals?
- From your experience, would you say circuit managers discharge their CPD responsibilities as required of them or not?
- Which areas of responsibility as a school principal make it necessary that you should be provided with CPD? To what extent is CPD provided by circuit managers cover these areas of need?
- What barriers, if any, have you encountered in the implementation of CPD by circuit managers?
- To what extent do you perceive CPD provided by circuit managers as effective / ineffective?

- In your opinion what can be done to improve the quality of CPD provided by circuit manager? / How can the quality of CPD provided to principals be improved?

APPENDIX B: INFORMATION AND CONSENT FORM

RESEARCH STUDY INFORMATION LEAFLET AND CONSENT FORM



DATE

05/07/2022

TITLE OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT

Principals' perceptions and experiences on circuit managers role towards their continuous professional development.

PRINCIPLE INVESTIGATOR / RESEARCHER(S) NAME(S) AND CONTACT NUMBER(S):

Jennifer Bihi

2018697009

0845877940

FACULTY AND DEPARTMENT:

Education

School of Education Studies

STUDY LEADER(S) NAME AND CONTACT NUMBER:

Prof P Mafora (UFS staff member)

051 401 2403

WHAT IS THE AIM / PURPOSE OF THE STUDY?

This study aims to explore how principals perceive and experience the role of circuit managers in their CPD – including strategies used, how the process is conducted, and challenges encountered. Furthermore, it aims to provide recommendations that may be used as reference points for circuit managers to design and implement tailor-made training programmes based on facts that may emanate from the study. Thus, improving practice.

WHO IS DOING THE RESEARCH?

I, Jennifer Bihi, am working at Marematlou Training Institute as Director: Business Development overseeing the department of professional development that deals with teachers, principals, office-based educators and learners. I am currently doing my Doctoral degree in Leadership and Management under the supervision of Prof P Mafora. My study seeks to investigate Principals' perceptions and experiences on circuit managers role towards their continuous professional development.

HAS THE STUDY RECEIVED ETHICAL APPROVAL?

This study has not yet received approval from the Research Ethics Committee of UFS. An application has been submitted and suggested updates have been effected.

Approval number: UFS – HSD2022/0187/22

WHY ARE YOU INVITED TO TAKE PART IN THIS RESEARCH PROJECT?

The sample that was chosen for this study comprised of principals based in Motheo district; in the Free State province who had been exposed to CPD. Motheo District was chosen simply for ease of access for the researcher and due to its strategic

geographical location as it was in the same geographical area as the provincial Department of Education offices. The criteria for selection of participants carries three considerations: a database of principals from the district office having 5 years of experience in principalship, a database of qualifying exposure to continuous professional teacher development and at least over 120 SACE points derived from training methodologies exposure. Additionally, in ensuring that the principals had adequate exposure to CPD the researcher motivated this aspect by using the findings of a study that was conducted by the Department of Education which indicated that 91% of all teachers (Principals) were involved in CPD since 2011 (Steyn 2011: 4).

WHAT IS THE NATURE OF PARTICIPATION IN THIS STUDY?

The researcher will make use of focus group interviews to obtain information from the participants. The researcher will make use of audio taping to record the interviews. The taped recordings will then be transcribed verbatim. This data collection methods will allow the researcher to investigate and probe the responses of the different participants' interviews in order to acquire valuable information. The expected time for the interviews is 90 minutes per session. The questions asked in the interviews will be pertaining to Principals' perceptions and experiences on circuit managers role towards their continuous professional development.

CAN THE PARTICIPANT WITHDRAW FROM THE STUDY?

Participation is fully voluntary and there is no penalty or loss of benefit for non-participation. Being part of this study is voluntary, and you are under no obligation to consent to participation. If you do decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a written consent form. You are free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason. Participants will remain anonymous throughout the study and no participants' names will be disclosed. The researcher will treat all information pertaining to the research as confidential.

WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL BENEFITS OF TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

This study aims to contribute significantly towards improving the CPD of principals through investigating the role of the circuit manager towards CPD of principals. Furthermore, to identifying the challenges raised in literature as reference points for circuit managers to design and implement tailor made training programmes based on the needs and challenges of principals. The literature and findings in this study may also assist in ensuring that the positive relationship between the district officials and the principal is maintained and valued for an improved outcome in continuous professional development. It may also assist the Department of Education to assess whether district officials are providing credible support to principals in improving effectiveness in schools, as it is their responsibility to do. It may also assist universities offering formal programmes to principals to assess their programmes and align them with the outcomes of the research to improve or close off on any gaps identified.

WHAT IS THE ANTICIPATED INCONVENIENCE OF TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

Risks and MITIGATIONS • There is no guarantee that participants in the study will be entirely honest in their reflections and experiences. A neutral place or safe environment will be identified to avoid positive or negative associations with the site. This may enable participants to be more relaxed which may assist in promoting openness and willingness to talk. • Some participants may not feel free to express sensitive or personal information in a group context. Owing to the dynamics of the group, some members may discourage certain individuals from participating, particularly the unconfident, reserved ones who experience communication problems. The researcher will assure the participants of their confidentiality, that the participants' names will not be disclosed outside of the discussion, the name of the fellow participant, or talk about what he or she has said. • The time factor might cause delays in ensuring all participants meet at the selected location for the Focus Group Interview. The participants will be requested to come 30 minutes earlier to the identified venue, this will ensure that the Focus Group Interview takes place at the set time, and this will also allow the researcher to ensure that all necessary arrangements are in place. • Attitude and

uncertainties of other participants toward the researcher's intentions might pose a problem and this might limit the number of participants for the research process. To reduce uncertainties and improve a flexible attitude, the researcher must start by introducing themselves to the participants, give a clear description of the research, and indicate its aims and objectives. Furthermore, the researcher can even remind the participants that their involvement in the Focus Group Interview is voluntary, and they must give consent. The researcher may also share the original letter seeking permission for the study to indicate true intentions/absence of other motives. • Context and culture might influence individual participants in such a way that they express collective views rather than individual views. The researcher will appeal to participants to give their personal views regarding the questions being asked. The researcher will allow participants to talk to one another, ask questions, and express doubts and opinions, while he observes and guides the discussion process ensuring that they do not lose focus on the item being discussed. This will allow the researcher to get rich data emanating from the discussions. That is, shared views emanating from discussions will not be discouraged.

WILL WHAT I SAY BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL?

All information collected will be kept entirely confidential and will not be disclosed at any time. All the participants will receive full anonymity. Necessary measures will be taken by the researcher to ensure that no participant is harmed in any way by the research. The researcher will allow participants to view the letters of informed consent. Participants will also be allowed to have access to the permission letters granted by the respective Departments of Education, which allows me to conduct the research. These letters will serve as proof that permission would not have been granted if any unethical practices were involved. The researcher will also explain to the participants the significance of the forms from the Department of Education and the stipulations of what is allowed or not allowed during a research process. Participants will then also be briefed on the implications of the consent letter. The researcher will not record participants' names anywhere that will be able to connect them to the answers that they provide. Participants' responses will be given fictitious code numbers or pseudonyms

and will be referred to in this way in the data, any publications, or other research reporting methods such as conference proceedings. Participants anonymous data may be used for other purposes, e.g. research report, journal articles, conference presentation, etc. A report of the study may be submitted for publication, but individual participants will not be identifiable in such a report.

HOW WILL THE INFORMATION BE STORED AND ULTIMATELY DESTROYED?

Hard copies of your answers and Audio recording will be stored by the researcher for a period of five years in a locked cupboard/filing cabinet in my home for future research or academic purposes; electronic information will be stored on a password protected computer. The hard copies and recordings will be made available upon request. Future use of the stored data will be subject to further Research Ethics Review and approval if applicable. All copies of interviews will be destroyed after the project has been completed.

WILL I RECEIVE PAYMENT OR ANY INCENTIVES FOR PARTICIPATING IN THIS STUDY?

Participants will not benefit financially from participating in the study No financial gain, cash of any kind will be rewarded to any participant

HOW WILL THE PARTICIPANT BE INFORMED OF THE FINDINGS / RESULTS OF THE STUDY?

If participants would like to be informed on the findings of the study, they can contact me (Ms Jennifer Bihi) at 0845877940 or email jenkeabetswe@gmail.com. The findings are accessible for a year. Should participants require any further information or want to contact the researcher about any aspect of this study

they will be assisted. Should participants have concerns about the way in which the research has been conducted, you may contact Prof P Mafora at 051 401 2403 or via email at MaforaP@ufs.ac.za.

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet and for participating in this study.

PRINCIPAL'S CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY

I, the undersigned, _____
(*participant's full names to be included*), (the "**Participant**") confirm that I voluntarily agree to participate in the research study referred to as the "Principals' perceptions and experiences on circuit manager's role towards their continuous professional development" in relation to completion of a Doctor of Philosophy with specialisation in Education Management and Leadership.

I, the undersigned Participant, further confirm that–

1. the Researcher has explained the nature, procedure, potential benefits, and anticipated inconvenience of my participation in the Study.
2. I have read (or had explained to me) and understood the Study as explained in the attached information sheet.
3. I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and am prepared to participate in the Study.
4. I understand that my participation in the study is entirely voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without penalty (if applicable).
5. I voluntarily provide the UFS and the Researcher with my personal information and consent to the UFS and the Researcher collecting, disclosing, and processing my personal information to conduct the Study and any related activities in relation thereto.
6. I hereby acknowledge and confirm that I understand the purpose for which the UFS and the Researcher may collect, store, use, delete, destroy, outsource, transfer, or otherwise process, as the context and circumstances may require

and as contemplated in terms of POPIA, my personal information as set out herein.

7. I am aware that the findings of the Study will be anonymously processed into a research report, journal publications and/or conference proceedings and that my personal information will be aggregated and deidentified at such stage;
8. I also give the UFS permission to share, without notification, the collected data with other researchers at the UFS or other Higher Education Institutions. This permission is dependent on the same principles of ethical research practices, anonymity/confidentiality, safekeeping of information, and other issues listed above applying.

I, the Participant, agree to the recording of the focus group interview.

Full Name of Participant:

Signature of Participant: _____ Date:

Full Name(s) of Researcher(s):

Signature of Researcher: _____ Date: _____

APPENDIX C: APPROVAL LETTERS (DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION)

Enquiries: M.Z. Thango
Ref: Research Permission: J. Bihi
Tel: 051 404 8808
Email: MZ.Thango@fseducation.gov.za



Unit 36 Grassland
Willows
Bloemfontein
9301

Dear Mrs. J. Bihi

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE FREE STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION: MOTHEO DISTRICT

This letter serves to inform you that you have been granted permission to conduct research in the Free State Department of Education within the Mthetho Education District. The details in relation to your research project with the University of the Free State are as follows:

Topic: Principals' perceptions and experiences on circuit managers' role towards their continuous professional development.

1. **List of schools involved:** Bloemfontein High, Dr Blok, Expelsior Combined, Itokisetseng Bokamoso, Kagiso, Kgauho, Kgorathuto, Khotso Taole, Lenyora La Thuto, Atlehang, Lekhulong, Leratong, Lereko, Navalsig, Ntediseng, Ntumediseng, Popsno, Reuthahetse, Sehunelo, Sentraal, Tsoseletso, Tweespruit Combined and Unicom.
2. **Target Population:** Twenty one Principals at the selected schools.
3. **Period of research:** From the date of signature of this letter until 30 September 2022. Please note that the department does not allow any research to be conducted during the fourth term (quarter) of the academic year. Should you fall behind your schedule by three months to complete your research project in the approved period, you will need to apply for an extension. The researcher is expected to request permission from the school principals to conduct research at schools.
4. The approval is subject to the following conditions:
 - 4.1 The collection of data should not interfere with the normal tuition time or teaching process.
 - 4.2 A bound copy of the research document should be submitted to the Free State Department of Education, Room 101, 1st Floor, Thuto House, St. Andrew Street, Bloemfontein or can be emailed to the above-mentioned email address.
 - 4.3 You will be expected, on completion of your research study to make a presentation to the relevant stakeholders in the Department.
 - 4.4 The ethics documents must be adhered to in the discourse of your study in our department.
5. Please note that costs relating to all the conditions mentioned above are your own responsibility.

Yours Sincerely,

Mr. MZAMO W. JACOBS
DIRECTOR: QUALITY ASSURANCE, M&E AND STRATEGIC PLANNING

DATE: 10/03/2022

Enquiries: M.Z. Thango
Ref: Notification of research: J. Bihi
Tel. 051 404 8808
Email: MZ.Thango@fseducation.gov.za



District Director
Motho District

Dear Mr. Moloi

NOTIFICATION OF RESEARCH: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH PROJECT IN MOTHEO DISTRICT

This letter serves to inform you that Mrs. J. Bihi has been granted permission to conduct research in the Motheo District under the auspices of the University of the Free State. The details in relation to the research project are as follows:

Topic: Principals' perceptions and experiences on circuit managers' role towards their continuous professional development.

1. **List of schools involved:** Bloemfontein High, Dr Blok, Excelsior Combined, Itokisetseng Bokamoso, Kagisho, Kgauho, Kgorathuto, Khotso Taole, Leranya La Thulo, Aliehang, Lekhulong, Leratong, Leroko, Navalsig, Ntediseng, Ntumediseng, Popano, Reutwahetse, Sehunelo, Sentraal, Tsoseletso, Tweespruit Combined and Unicom.
2. **Target Population:** Twenty one Principals at the selected schools.
3. **Period of research:** From the date of signature of this letter until 30 September 2022. Please note the department does not allow any research to be conducted during the fourth term (quarter) of the academic year nor during normal school hours. The researcher is expected to request permission from the school principals to conduct research at schools.
4. **Research benefits:** This study will assist the Department of Education to assess whether circuit managers are providing credible support to principals in improving effectiveness in schools, as it is their responsibility. It may also assist universities offering formal programmes to principals to assess their programmes and align them with the outcomes of the research to improve or close off on any gaps identified.
5. **Strategic Planning, Policy and Research Directorate** will make the necessary arrangements for the researchers to present the findings and recommendations to the relevant officials in the Department.

Yours Sincerely,

Mr. MZAMO W. JACOBS
DIRECTOR, QUALITY ASSURANCE, M&E AND STRATEGIC PLANNING

DATE: 10/03/2022

RESEARCH NOTIFICATION J. BIHI, 08 MARCH 2022, MOTHEO DISTRICT

Strategic Planning, Research & Policy Directorate Private Bag X20468, Bloemfontein, 9300 - Thuto Huis, Room 204, 1st Floor, St. Andrew Street, Bloemfontein

www.fseducation.gov.za

APPENDIX D: APPROVAL LETTER UNIVERSITY OF THE FREE STATE (ETHICAL CLEARANCE)



GENERAL/HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (GHREC)

20-Jul-2022

Dear Ms Jennifer Bihi

Application Approved

Research Project Title:

Principals' perceptions and experiences on circuit managers role towards their continuous professional development.

Ethical Clearance number:

UFS-HSD2022/0187/22

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

Dr Adri
du
Plessis

Digitally signed
by Dr Adri Du
Plessis
Date: 2022.07.21
08:58:47 +02'00'

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APPENDIX E: CERTIFICATE FOR EDITING AND PROOF READING

680 Miami Road
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KZN
4220
Cell: 0842848401
brian.naidoo25@gmail

**PROFESSIONAL
LANGUAGE
EDITING SERVICES**



STRIVING
FOR
EXCELLENCE

Brian Naidoo (BA Hons. in English; BA Hons in TESOL; BEd Hons.
BA- English major; UDE [English]; UCT Cert. in Legal &
Business Writing; UCT Cert. in Copy-Editing; MA Coursework in Research
UFS. Assessor Cert. UFS; Umalusi Evaluator of Schools.

**SPECIALISING IN THE LANGUAGE EDITING OF THESES, DISSERTATIONS,
JOURNAL ARTICLES, PROPOSALS, BOOKS, POLICIES AND PUBLICATIONS**

CERTIFICATE FOR EDITING A DRAFT DOCTORAL THESIS IN EDUCATION
TOPIC: PRINCIPALS' PERCEPTIONS AND EXPERIENCES OF CIRCUIT MANAGERS' ROLE TOWARDS THEIR CONTINUOUS
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

KEABETSWE JENIFER BIHI

UNIVERSITY OF THE FREE STATE

B. Naidoo

03/08/2024

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

This certificate confirms that the above-mentioned student submitted her draft doctoral thesis to me for language-editing, which included correcting in-text citations and the list of references. This was duly edited and returned to the student. I make no claim as to the accuracy of the research content. The text, as edited by me, is grammatically correct. After completion of the language editing, the student has the option to accept or reject suggestions/changes prior to re-submission to the supervisor. The editor is not accountable for any additional content and changes that may have been executed post-editing.

Professional
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Brian Naidoo
Associate Member
Membership number: NA001
Membership year: March 2024 to February 2025
084 284 8401
brian.naidoo25@gmail.com
www.editors.org.za

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT

APPENDIX F: SAMPLE: MONITORING TOOL

SAMPLE: MONITORING TOOL: CONTINUOUS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT TRAINING FOR PRINCIPALS (MOTHEO DISTRICT)

1. Name of District					
2. Name of Venue					
3. Name of Monitor					
4. Name of Facilitator			Name of Circuit Manager		
5. Date of monitoring visit					
6. Total number of principals attending on date of monitoring		Expected Principals:		Actual Principals	
7. Name of school or Number of Schools Presented				Expected	Actual
7.1					
7.2					
7.3					
	Total Number of Schools Represented				

8. List topics or activities offered to principals in the CPD training session			
Name of topic		Expected	Actual
9.1	E.g. ICT Setup	60	30
9.2			
9.3			
9.4			
9.5			
9.6			
9.7			
9.8			
9.9			
9.10			

10	Key Evidence	Yes/No	Comment
10.1	Programme for the Session. Attach copy		
10.2	Daily Attendance Register. Attach copies (All)		
10.3	Do the circuit managers monitor their principals attendance?		
	Is the facilitator, present and facilitating training?		
	Is there evidence of content? If so, attach evidence		
10.5	Is the content SACE endorsed?		
10.6	Is the learning material provided to all principals?		
10.7	Does the facilitator make use of the material provided to principals in the session?		
10.8	Does the material make mention or reference to CPD Policy		
11	Content Coverage (List topics coverage during the monitored sessions)		
11.1		11.4	
11.2.		11.5	
11.3		11.6	
12	EVIDENCE OF WRITTEN WORK (E.g. Activities, assessment, etc)	Yes/No	Comment
12.1			
12.2			
12.3			

13 LOGISTICAL ARRANGEMENTS		
	Yes/No	Comments
13.1	Is the identified venue appropriate for training?	
13.2	Was there provision for catering?	
13.3	Was there provision for transportation?	
13.4	Were participants expected to pay to attend the training session?	

14 MONITORS COMMENTS

Signature of Facilitator: _____ Signature of Monitor: _____