



The role and responsibilities of Circuit Managers to support principals during education change

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Thesis submitted for the degree *Doctor Philosophy in Education Management* at the North-West University

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my wife, Hendrina Magdalena Steyn, and my daughter, Janke-Daniel Steyn, whose love and support have carried me through many hardships throughout this study. The sacrifice you made to allow me to work endless hours on my study is greatly appreciated. I know it would not have been possible without both of you in my life.

The thesis is also dedicated to my mother and my brother whose support and encouragement throughout my life have been immense.

Lastly, I dedicate this study to my father, Stephen Steyn (senior), who passed away two weeks before I could complete this study. Dad, it was my wish that you could have witnessed the completion of this study. I know you would have been very proud. May you finally rest in peace. Love you!

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I, Christoffel Mathyss van As Steyn, hereby declare that the entirety of the work contained in this thesis is my own, that I am the author thereof and that I have not previously, in its entirety or in part, submitted it for obtaining any qualification. The work or works of others have been attributed, cited and referenced accordingly.




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ABBREVIATIONS

CEM	Council of Education Ministers
CM	Circuit Manager
CTL	Circuit Team Leader
DBE	Department of Basic Education
DDD	District Data-Driven
DHET	Department of Higher Education and Training
FET	Further Education and Training
GDE	Gauteng Department of Education
HoD	Head of Department
HRDC	Human Resource Development Council of South Africa
IQMS	Integrated Quality Management System
MEC	Member of Executive Council
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
NSC	National Senior Certificate
PED	Provincial Education Department
PLC	Professional Learning Community
QMS	Quality Management System
RSA	Republic of South Africa
SAQA	South African Qualifications Authority
SGB	School Governing Body
SMT	School Management Team
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics
Umalusi	Council for Quality Assurance in General and Further Education and Training

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ABSTRACT

Title: The role and responsibilities of the circuit manager to support principals during education change.

Key terms: circuit, circuit office, circuit manager, education change, principal, responsibilities, role, secondary school, support

In this study, the role and responsibilities of the circuit manager to support principals during education change (a critical position in education transformation) were investigated. Circuit managers are the closest point of contact between principals and districts. Their role is to manage principals and schools and to ensure school management. Their responsibilities are leading and providing managerial, administrative, technical, resources and curriculum support to principals and schools. Circuit managers are uniquely placed to influence education reform and the quality of education provision in schools. They are an important bridge between the district and the principal, the school management team, the school governing body, teachers, learners, parents and the community. The influence of circuit managers' provision of support can only be realised when they understand what their role is and how to go about executing this role and responsibilities. To have a good understanding of the research topic, an in-depth literature review was done to explore the current nature, content and structure of the role and responsibilities of circuit managers in providing support to principals during education change in the Sedibeng East and Sedibeng West districts of Gauteng, South Africa.

A qualitative, phenomenological approach, underpinned by an interpretative paradigm was followed by the researcher. Purposive sampling was used to select participants according to their proximity to and knowledge and understanding of the phenomenon under research. Semi-structured, open-ended questions were used for data collection. The researcher used Microsoft Teams, a virtual conferencing platform, to conduct interviews because he needed to adhere to COVID-19 health protocols. This method gave him the opportunity to record not only the interviews and sound but also the body language of each participant. The participants in the research were circuit managers and secondary school principals of farm, township, semi-urban and urban quintile 1 to 5 schools. Additional data were collected by making field notes. The video and audio recordings were later transcribed into text and coded. Themes were formed from these texts with similar topics for the researcher to conclude the findings and recommendations of the research.

The researcher found that principals were not effectively supported by circuit managers during education change. Furthermore, he found that principals needed continuous support from circuit

managers to deal with education change. This finding revealed that principals needed context-relevant professional development, resources and guidance through circuit managers' support actions, strategies and plans to enable them to deal with education change. More professional development opportunities must be provided for circuit managers and principals to attend professional development training and programmes. The support from circuit managers during education change must be aligned with the needs of principals within the context in which they lead and manage schools during education change. Circuit managers' provision of support to principals must be continuously reviewed to ensure that the support provision is sustainable and improved during education change.

The researcher developed a support framework for circuit managers to support principals during education change in the Sedibeng East and Sedibeng West districts. The framework will also assist other circuit managers in South Africa to support principals during education change.

OPSOMMING

Titel: Die rol en verantwoordelikhede van die kringbestuurder om skoolhoofde tydens onderwysverandering te ondersteun.

Sleuteltermes: kring, kringkantoor, kringbestuurder, ondersteuning, onderwysverandering, rol, skoolhoof, sekondêre skool, verantwoordelikhede

In hierdie studie is die rol en verantwoordelikhede van die kringbestuurder om skoolhoofde tydens onderwysverandering te ondersteun ('n kritieke posisie in onderwystransformasie) ondersoek. Kringbestuurders is die naaste kontakpunt tussen skoolhoofde en distrikte. Hul rol is om skoolhoofde en skole te bestuur en skoolbestuur te verseker. Hul verantwoordelikhede is om bestuurs-, administratiewe, tegniese, hulpbronne- en kurrikulumondersteuning aan skoolhoofde en skole te lei en te verskaf. Kringbestuurders is uniek geplaas om onderwyservorming en die gehalte van onderwysvoorsiening in skole te beïnvloed. Hulle vorm 'n belangrike brug tussen die distrik en die skoolhoof, die skoolbestuurspan, die skoolbeheerliggaam, onderwysers, leerders, ouers en die gemeenskap. Die invloed van kringbestuurders se voorsiening en implementering van ondersteuning kan slegs beseef word as hulle verstaan wat hul rol is en hoe om te werk te gaan om daardie rol uit te voer en verantwoordelikhede na te kom. Om 'n goeie begrip van die navorsingsonderwerp te verkry, het die navorser 'n diepgaande literatuuroorsig onderneem om die huidige aard, inhoud en struktuur van die rol en verantwoordelikhede van kringbestuurders in die voorsiening van ondersteuning aan skoolhoofde tydens onderwysverandering in die Sedibeng-Oos en Sedibeng Wes-distrikte in Gauteng, Suid-Afrika, te verken.

Die navorser het 'n kwalitatiewe, fenomenologiese benadering gevolg wat deur 'n interpretatiewe paradigma ondersteun is. Doelgerigte steekproefneming is gebruik om die deelnemers te selekteer op grond van hul nabyheid aan en kennis en begrip van die verskynsel wat bestudeer word. Semigestruktureerde, oop vrae is gebruik vir data-insameling. Die navorser het Microsoft Teams, 'n videokonferensieplatform, gebruik om onderhoude te voer omdat hy aan COVID-19-gesondheidsprotokolle moes voldoen. Hierdie metode het aan hom die geleentheid gegee om die onderhoud en klank sowel as die lyftaal van elke deelnemer op te neem. Die deelnemers aan die navorsing was kringbestuurders en hoofde van kwintiel 1- tot 5-hoërskole in plaas-, township-, voorstedelike en stedelike gebiede. Bykomende data is ingesamel deur veldnotas te maak. Die video- en oudio-opnames is later in teks getranskribeer en gekodeer. Temas met soortgelyke onderwerpe is uit hierdie tekste gevorm sodat die navorser die bevindinge en aanbevelings van die navorsing kon opstel.

Die navorser het bevind dat skoolhoofde nie doeltreffend tydens onderwysverandering deur kringbestuurders ondersteun word nie. Verder het hy bevind dat skoolhoofde deurlopende ondersteuning van die kringbestuurder benodig om onderwysverandering te hanteer. Die bevinding het aan die lig gebring dat skoolhoofde konteks-relevante professionele ontwikkeling, hulpbronne en leiding deur kringbestuurders se ondersteuningsaksies, -strategieë en -planne benodig om skoolhoofde in staat te stel om onderwysverandering te hanteer. Meer professionele ontwikkelingsgeleenthede moet aan kringbestuurders en skoolhoofde verskaf word om professionele ontwikkelingsopleiding en -programme by te woon. Die ondersteuning van kringbestuurders tydens onderwysverandering moet beplan en in lyn gebring word met die behoeftes van skoolhoofde binne die kontekste waarin hulle skole lei en bestuur tydens onderwysverandering. Die ondersteuningsvoorsiening van kringbestuurders aan skoolhoofde moet deurlopend hersien word om te verseker dat die voorsiening van ondersteuning volhoubaar is en tydens onderwysverandering verbeter word.

Die navorser het 'n konseptuele ondersteuningsraamwerk ontwikkel vir kringbestuurders om skoolhoofde tydens onderwysverandering in die Sedibeng-Oos- en Sedibeng-Wes-distrikte te ondersteun. Die raamwerk sal ander kringbestuurders in Suid-Afrika ook help om skoolhoofde tydens onderwysverandering te ondersteun.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO AND SCOPE OF THE RESEARCH STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Since the dawn of democracy in South Africa (1994), education has progressed through several changes. Typical to democracy, these changes were informed by social, economic, cultural and political factors, which also had a direct influence on the basic education system, as well as the role and responsibilities of the circuit manager (CM) within the basic education structure. The government was prompted to restructure the basic education system to adapt to and effectively deal with education change. The restructuring of education and the challenges that come with change has placed tremendous pressure on education districts and especially CMs, who are the closest point of contact between districts and schools, as they are the direct supervisors of principals. CMs are the direct link to the education district and provincial and national departments through which principals work. It is the role and responsibility of the CM to support principals and schools during education change. The role of the CM is to provide administrative, technical, curriculum and management support to principals and schools. Their role has become the pillar for effective and sustainable education change. CMs play a fundamental role in the performance of schools, principals and learners, providing governance and curriculum and resource support and ensuring the professional development of principals and teachers during education change.

Continuous change is not a new phenomenon (Mc Lennan et al., 2018; Morrison, 2013; Naicker & Mestry, 2016; October, 2009), and especially not in the context of education change in South Africa. Deming (2018b, p. 117) describes change as “a deliberate effort to alter the status quo by influencing or modifying the functions, structure, technology and purpose of an organisation”. Change represents the battle between what the situation or current state is, and the state that is desired (Fullan, 2006a). It all depends on how change is communicated and implemented in an organisation or system. Considering this, external unplanned factors, such as the COVID-19 health pandemic, have also forced compulsory changes in the basic education system. Health protocols and measures prompted CMs and principals to devise strategies and plans to deal with the added barriers and challenges that COVID-19 caused in education (Gabster et al., 2020; Kaul, Comstock, & Simon, 2021). Moreover, the impact of the pandemic in South Africa highlighted the shortcomings within an already ill-resourced education system (McDonald, 2020; World Health Organisation, 2020). It was especially during the COVID-19 pandemic that principals and schools had to rely heavily on district and CM support. Part of the responsibilities of CMs and principals is that they are held accountable for the academic performance of schools and learners (DBE,

2018b). The role of the CM is critical in education reform. The responsibilities of CMs are wide, which make their job daunting, extensive and demanding. CMs must execute their responsibilities effectively to ensure that implemented changes lead to sustainable school improvement. The expectations of various stakeholders, such as learners, teachers, parents, communities, districts and provincial and national departments, to enhance education provision and learner attainment in challenging contexts lie heavily on the shoulders of CMs and principals. The focus of accountability and responsibility towards learner performance has shifted from a collective effort between provincial education departments, district offices and schools to pinpointing accountability and responsibility for providing quality education specifically to the CM and the principal (DBE, 2013b, 2016a, 2018b; Ncwane, 2019). These expectations have forced CMs and principals to make uninformed and often difficult choices and important judgements, as they are the officials accountable for dealing with various aspects in a constantly changing education system (Ehren et al., 2020). CMs often do not have the required skills, knowledge and expertise to support principals during education change (Bantwini, 2018; Van Der Voort, 2016). Various factors add pressure on CMs to be accountable for schools and effectively act their role and execute their responsibilities. These factors include limited support from national and provincial education departments, resource availability and external influences, such as politics, unions and communities, curriculum change, administrative workload and a lack of district, provincial and national department support and development in dealing with change. Discrepancies between previously disadvantaged schools (township, rural and farm schools) and advantaged or former Model C schools remain evident (Moloi, 2014; Moorosi & Bantwini, 2016; Myende et al., 2020). Many of these schools still lack human, physical, curriculum and financial resources, which adds pressure on the CM to provide context-relevant support to the principals in his circuit area (Donohue & Bornman, 2014; Myende et al., 2020). The South African education landscape has a combination of first- and third-world schools and education institutions (Maringe & Moletsane, 2015). Myende et al. (2020) add that some schools in South Africa are dysfunctional, lacking effective provision of education. Dealing with all these challenges leads to CMs and principals being overworked and continuously having to manage crises in order to meet the expectations of the Department of Basic Education (DBE).

This study explored the role and responsibilities of CMs to support principals during education change in the South Africa context, with specific reference to two districts in the Gauteng Province, namely Sedibeng West and Sedibeng East districts. Both these districts have a combination of schools representing farm, rural, township and urban communities, and the schools are all faced with various challenges. In this chapter, the researcher introduces the study and provides a detailed background of the study. Thereafter, the problem surrounding CMs in executing their role and responsibilities is stated, followed by the rationale for the study. The

purpose of the research is provided, followed by the formulation of the research questions and objectives. The conceptual and theoretical frameworks used in the study are then elucidated. The change theories of Fullan, Deming and Lewin are briefly discussed to give the theoretical underpinning for the study. The researcher then outlines the research design and methodology implemented and encapsulates aspects of importance regarding ethical considerations and the contribution of the study.

In the next section, the researcher provides the background of the study. The role and responsibilities of the CM in the South African basic education context are elucidated.

1.2 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

In South Africa, the advent of democracy prompted significant reforms in the management, governance, report structure and curriculum in the education system (Ngozo & Mtantato, 2018). The role of the CM, previously called *school inspector* during the apartheid system, was influenced by British education systems due to the fact that South Africa was a British colony for many years. According to the *Policy on the Organisation, Roles and Responsibilities of the Education Districts* (DBE, 2013b), the CM is responsible for doing inspection and evaluation on principal and school performance via the quality management system (QMS). The role of the CM is similar to that of the school inspector in the British education system, as even after 26 years of democracy and two formal education reform initiatives by the democratic government, British influence is still visible in the role and responsibilities of the CM (DBE, 2005, 2012; Mafuwane & Pitsoe, 2014; Ncwane, 2019). However, during the education reform process, the government restructured the education system and divided the system into two separate departments, namely the Department of Basic Education (DBE), responsible mainly for primary and secondary schools and adult basic education training centres, and the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) for tertiary institutions, further education and training (FET) institutions and vocational and training institutions.

Continuous transformation in South Africa and perpetual changes in education have had an impact on many facets of organisational structures in education, leadership and education provision to schools (Naicker & Mestry, 2015; Wallace Foundation, 2013). Furthermore, the fact that South Africa suffers from long-standing major school infrastructure backlogs as a result of the apartheid system is still evident, especially in poor and rural communities (Bantwini *et al*, 2011, Moorosi, 2016; Moloji 2014). These backlogs are the result of several factors, such as the apartheid government not spending sufficient funds on township, rural and farm schools as they used to do on former Model C white schools (Jansen, 2004; Moloji, 2014). The inclusion of former black or “Bantu” schools in rural areas across the various provinces in South Africa was not

maintained, but has been integrated into the new democratic basic education system (Donohue & Bornman, 2014; Renihan et al., 2006). The infrastructure of farm, rural and township schools was neglected and not prioritised by the apartheid government (Moloi et al., 2009). To add to this problem was the widening of access to all culture and race groups to former Model C schools, which placed additional strain on old and existing resources (Xaba, 2011). Although the newly elected democratic government has attempted to transform all sectors in the education system since 1994 by allocating additional funding towards deprived institutions, the government did not prioritise funding for the buildings and upkeep of school infrastructure; therefore, the resultant neglect.

Research suggests that a concerning factor is the mismanagement of government funds and corruption by officials as major contributors to the poor state in which the education system finds itself (eNews Channel Africa, 2020b; Kingdon et al., 2014; Ngozo & Mtantato, 2018). Alenda-Demoutiez and Mügge (2020) refer to a study conducted by Steyn, De Waal and Wolhuter that mentions the fact that a large proportion of people living in South Africa are poor and that the situation has not improved from 1996. As a matter of fact, communities and households living in poverty have regressed deeper into poverty, and the gap between rich and poor communities has widened more than 6% (Alenda-Demoutiez & Mügge, 2020). Moreover, the unemployment rate in South Africa has risen above 35% (Alenda-Demoutiez & Mügge, 2020). Additional strain is put on the already restricted resources and is a contributing factor to the radical changes in the education system, thereby broadening the socio-economic gap between the poor and the rest of the citizens (Bantwini & Moorosi, 2018b; Myende et al., 2020; Ncwane, 2019).

Some schools are still struggling with inadequate resources, such as classrooms and teaching and learning material, while also experiencing overcrowded classrooms as a result of shortages in educators and funding (Bhengu et al., 2014; Hochschild, 2021; Moloi, 2014). Farm and rural areas have several features that are challenging to the provision of quality education, such as teachers who do not want to teach in these areas, schools that are far apart and challenges in traveling to district offices, which also affects communication between schools and district offices, especially when urgent attention is needed by the schools (Hochschild, 2021; Myende et al., 2020; Tanveer et al., 2020). Similar studies conclude that unfortunately the challenge of poverty and the lack of resources in many South African schools range from physical, financial and human resources to corruption and the mismanagement of governmental funds (Bhengu et al., 2014; Hussain & Al Abri, 2015; McDonald, 2020; Ncwane, 2019).

Since 1994, the South African education system has progressed through two education reform processes that have led the government to restructure the education system and assign new roles and responsibilities to strategic leadership and management positions. One of these transitions

involved the role and responsibilities of the CM. This realignment resulted in an overlapping in the role and responsibilities of the CM and those of the principal, leading to overlapping tasks and functions for the two positions in the basic education system (Bantwini & Moorosi, 2018a; DBE, 2013b, 2016a). However, the execution and performance of these tasks and functions are greatly influenced by the unique aspects and factors that are found in their respective challenging contexts. The role and responsibilities of the CM as an inspector have transformed to being a manager who supports principals and schools in governance, management and curriculum implementation. The CM has become an extension of the education district offices and is seen as a significant and critical component in managing and supporting principals during education change. The transition has also brought CMs closer to schools in dealing with education management and education change.

The numerous transformations in education since 1994 have placed CMs under tremendous pressure, as they are accountable and responsible for the performance of the schools and learners in their circuit areas (Narsee, 2006; Nkambule & Amsterdam, 2018). The support role of CMs has become an integral driver for transformation in schools. However, many schools still show elements of the apartheid system. After 26 years of democracy, many schools still do not have the necessary resources (human and physical) to effectively provide quality education. These challenges cascade down to CMs, as they are responsible for ensuring that schools receive the necessary resources. In addition, CMs complain that they are responsible for too many schools in challenging contexts. Many principals request support and resources, and their CMs find it difficult to service each school effectively, as support from the provincial and national education departments is sluggish. Meanwhile, principals complain that they do not have sufficient teaching staff, as more learners are entering the schooling system. Principals and teachers threaten to leave the profession because they are not being supported by the education districts and experience overfull classrooms and high administrative workloads (Mavuso, 2014; Myende et al., 2020; Ncwane, 2019). Moreover, the COVID-19 pandemic has placed an even greater constraint on basic educational resources and service provision to schools, thereby having a significant impact on the quality of education provision to learners. Very little is being done in South Africa to prepare CMs and principals for education change and the challenges specific to the country. There is no formal qualification or training for the CM position or principalship; people are merely appointed in these positions based on a teacher qualification and years of experience within the education system. Presently, leadership training and development are focusing mainly on school principals, with the introduction of the Advanced Certificate in Education in School Leadership (Bush et al., 2009). However, the Advanced Certificate in Education in School Leadership has been phased out and replaced by the Advanced Diploma in

Education in School Leadership and Management, which in future will hopefully become a requirement for the appointment of CMs and principals.

In the support role of CMs, they must train, develop and mentor principals to deal with change, especially in a time of crisis, such as the COVID-19 pandemic currently facing the world (Van Der Voort, 2016; Ncwane, 2019). CMs should support principals in managing and leading their schools and provide assistance in administrative, curriculum and resource management (Bantwini, 2018; DBE, 2018; Ndlovu, 2018). As such, they are central to the performance of principals and schools. In addition, CMs have to ensure that schools comply with government policies and legislation (DBE, 2013b). As the direct supervisors of principals, CMs in their role of supporting principals during education change have become central to education change and the provision of quality education. Education quality and provision will decline even further if CMs are not supported by education districts to assist in the provision of support to principals and schools. Therefore, the researcher deemed it essential to determine how CMs could effectively execute their role and responsibilities to support principals during change. In order to assist CMs in challenging times and enable them to provide principals with effective and sustainable support, the researcher designed a framework they could implement (see Chapter 6). In order for the researcher to determine how CMs could effectively execute their role and responsibilities to support principals during change, the research problem was formulated, which is elaborated on in the next section.

1.3 RESEARCH PROBLEM

The continuous transformation in education globally and perpetual changes in the South African education landscape have had an impact on many facets of the organisational structure of education, leadership and education provision to schools (Naiker & Mestry, 2015; Wallace Foundation, 2013). Education change is usually informed by political, socio-economic and cultural factors, as well as the history of a country (Björk et al., 2014; Fullan, 2009a; Gober, 2012; Rorrer et al., 2008). Change is a worldwide phenomenon that has an immense influence on especially the education system and quality education. Burner (2018) mentions that everyone has a relationship to change; everyone has tried to change either others or oneself. According to Burner (2018, p. 123), “change can succeed or fail, it can be good or it can be a disaster, it can make us feel incompetent or it can make us feel mastery, we may want to change or feel resistant to change”. Although education change is difficult, it is a necessity to adapt to worldwide change and needs; hence the desire to make it more effective (Alsharija & Watters, 2020). An increasing number of education policies have been amended with the aim of improving education, with students’ learning and development as the ultimate goals thereof (Cameron & Naidoo, 2018; Elmore, 2004; Miller & Lee, 2014; Rigby et al., 2016). However, not all changes are for the better,

as pointed out by Biesta (2010). According to Biesta (2010, p. 6), “what is fundamental is the normative and political question about the quality of change, rather than merely focusing on change for the sake of change”. Earl and Katz (2006) state that schools are accountable to policymakers, parents, learners and local communities and should act based on informed professional judgement. They add that discussing the significance of various kinds of information and how they can be used to make positive changes is very important for all stakeholders in the education system (Earl & Katz, 2006).

With the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, the world was faced with unanticipated education change and has placed additional pressure on stakeholders to implement the required education changes as effectively as possible. These unprecedented education changes have had an enormous impact on the role and responsibilities of CMs and principals towards ensuring that effective teaching and learning are still the order of the day (DBE, 2020b; Mhlanga, 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic contributed to the already existing challenges in education provision and placed an even greater focus on the role and responsibilities of CMs to support schools and principals during education change. This was most evident at resource-deprived schools (Gabster et al., 2020; McDonald, 2020). McDonald (2020) affirms that the pandemic has exposed the underbelly of the basic education system and shows that many schools are deprived of human and physical resources and that the basic education system is not geared to deal with a crisis. McDonald (2020) adds that COVID-19-related challenges have exposed the poor state in which the South African education system is. Not only has the pandemic placed added stress on CMs and principals but also, as Chingara (2019) and Kaul et al. (2021) point out, the ever-increasing expectations from government for schools to perform. The responsibilities of school leaders for ensuring continuous quality education and school improvement rely mainly on the leadership of the CM and principals in education districts to implement change and deal effectively with education change. Therefore, the significance of the role and responsibilities of CMs to support principals during education change cannot be overemphasised and need to be researched.

Adding to the abovementioned problem is the lack of resources in the districts and schools. Chikoko et al. (2015) and Hatch and Roegman (2012) point out that the South African education landscape has a blend of first- and third-world institutions across the country. The mixture of deprived education institutions in especially provinces such as the Eastern and Northern Cape, Limpopo and Mpumalanga has become evidently more visible in provinces with larger metropolises that are growing in population because of the influx of people in search of job opportunities. Provincial and district education offices, as well as schools, are under continuous strain to make provision for the influx of learners to schools. However, many schools lack the necessary funding

and human and physical resources to accommodate more learners and provide quality education (DBE, 2013a; Morrison, 2013; Mouton, Louw, & Strydom, 2012; Wallace Foundation, 2013).

Ngozo and Mtantato (2018) mention that the basic education system is failing the economy. South Africa is ranked 126th out of 138 countries regarding the quality of its education, although South Africa spends more money on education than countries with a similar state of development (Ngozo & Mtantato, 2018). They add that South Africa has the worst education system of all middle-income countries and that there are far too many schools that are underperforming despite the government's funding allocation to support previously disadvantaged schools. Barriers to internal CM support are more evident during education reform and are often caused by a lack of human and physical resources and the low socio-economic status of communities (Bantwini & Moorosi, 2018b; Van der Voort & Wood, 2016). Although CMs are expected to ensure that principals and schools receive the necessary resources to deal with education change, they are unable to acquire the necessary funds to satisfactorily execute their role and responsibilities. Moreover, they have many challenges to deal with that are beyond their control or mandate (Bantwini & Moorosi, 2018a; Myende et al., 2020; Tanveer et al., 2020; Van der Voort & Wood, 2016).

It is important to mention that the role and responsibilities of the CM are also hindered by external support barriers, such as a unionised school environment and political interference. Bhengu et al. (2014) and Bantwini and Moorosi (2018a) argue that CMs, principals and schools situated in highly unionised contexts experience major leadership problems in districts, which interfere with CMs' provision of support and principals' management of schools. This view is confirmed by studies conducted by Koko (2020), Nkambule and Amsterdam (2018) and Myende et al. (2020), who all mention that unions often have a hidden agenda that has a negative effect on education as they pursue narrow self-interests. The self-interest of unions was especially evident at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic when they called for schools to be closed (eNews Channel Africa, 2020a; Mthethwa, 2020). When the government introduced health protocols and measures in an attempt to ensure that teaching and learning could proceed and to protect the citizens of South Africa, the unions only placed more pressure on the DBE to close schools (Fengu, 2020; Mthethwa, 2020; World Health Organisation, 2020). In fact, the unions seized the pandemic as an opportunity to further disrupt the education system and strengthen their teachers' union position, which made it very difficult for CMs to give the required support to principals.

Another problem that CMs must deal with is the high levels of poverty that have a noticeable effect on the performance of schools and the ability to successfully improve learner achievement (Ncwane, 2019; Ylimaki et al., 2007). As many of the parents in these communities have little or no experience of education, they do not understand how the schooling system works.

Furthermore, the learners in these poor communities are dependent on the feeding scheme provided by the DBE, and CMs are responsible for managing the process at school. However, as communities seem to become only poorer over time, more and more learners are dependent on the scheme, and with limited resources, it has become a daunting task for CMs to deal with (Moloi, 2014).

In addition, there is an outcry from principals to be prepared, mentored, trained and developed to deal with education change (Bantwini & Moorosi, 2018b; Myende et al., 2020; Van der Voort & Wood, 2016). The problem is that education districts and CMs do not provide initiatives or opportunities for principals to be developed to deal with the challenging context in which they find themselves. According to Renihan et al. (2006), principals are seldom sufficiently and effectively supported in their leadership and management role by education districts or people employed in the strategic position to do so, such as education training specialists, superintendents and school inspectors. In the past, principals were expected to do little more than follow orders, oversee staff, keep the school running and contain problems; however, they are now expected to do much more, as expectations from district offices, parents, learners and communities have increased (Kaul et al., 2021; Maile, 2012; Mestry, 2017). Heystek (2016) and Bantwini and Moorosi (2018a) point out that principals and CMs experience difficulty in adapting to the additional workload and expectations and that this situation has a huge impact on their role as educational leaders.

Although various policies (DBE, 2016a, 2016b, 2013b) outline the role and responsibilities of and standards for CM and principalship, these policies do not consider the ever-changing education environment in which they have to fulfil their role and responsibilities. There seems to be a gap between these policy intentions and how CMs enact and execute their role and responsibilities to support principals in challenging education contexts that are wide and need to be clearly formulated. Bottery (2016, p. 98) argue that “principals find themselves working extra hours, not just on weekday evenings but also on weekends and during school holidays, [...] where the job becomes unsustainable if they do not”. Van der Voort and Wood (2016) and Heystek (2016) concur with Bottery (2016) and mention that district officials do not do regular school visits and many officials are incompetent in fulfilling their duties and obligations towards principals. When these officials do visit schools, they often do not even have the necessary assessment tools, checklist or intervention plans in place to inform their support or visits to schools (Van der Voort & Wood, 2016). Districts, parents and communities place more and more pressure on principals to ensure school performance (Bantwini & Moorosi, 2018b). Although the basic education system in South Africa is policy-driven with a one-size-fits-all philosophy, it owes its adjudication to PEDs, district leadership and management, school principals and teachers who are ultimately accountable to the authorities and education stakeholders, such as the parents, communities and

learners (Bantwini & Letseka, 2016; Republic of South Africa, 1996c). Principals, school management teams (SMTs) and school governing bodies (SGBs) make up the leadership and management structures of schools. They are entrusted with the task of taking schools from performing poorly to performing well in the changing education context, while also implementing and adhering to the relevant policies (DBE, 2016a).

With the ambivalence in defining the role and responsibilities of the CM clearly, the concept and the nature of support during education change are ambiguous, which leads to uncertainty in what support to the CM during education change entails (Bantwini & Moorosi, 2018a; DBE, 2018b; Mafuwane & Pitsoe, 2014; Myende et al., 2020; Ndlovu, 2018). Researchers have different views on what the role and responsibilities of the CM in the district leadership chain ought to be. However, they all concur that the role and responsibilities should be aligned with the challenging context schools face in the changing education environment (Bantwini & Moorosi, 2018a; Mafuwane & Pitsoe, 2014; Mthembu, 2014; Ncwane, 2019; Ndlovu, 2018).

The most critical aspect that falls under the role and responsibilities of CMs is the fact that they need to be experts, competent and skilled in education leadership and management to effectively support principals (Bantwini & Moorosi, 2018b; Myende et al., 2020; Ndlovu, 2018). Educational leaders, such as CMs, should have knowledge of governance, insight into the curriculum and the transformative ability to enhance principal, school and learner achievement (Bjork & Kowalski, 2005; Mafuwane & Pitsoe, 2014; Ncwane, 2019). Not all CMs are capacitated to effectively implement the required education changes and deal with school personnel and principals who show resistance to mandatory changes (Du Plessis, 2017; English & Papa, 2012; Mason, 2013; Myende et al., 2020; Van der Voort & Wood, 2016; Zulu, Bhengu, & Mkhize, 2021).

Myende et al. (2020) and Ndlovu (2018) assert that because of the importance of the CM's position in the district structure and within the education system, CMs must undergo proper preparation, training, mentorship and professional development before assuming the position of CM to lead the management of schools in districts. It is economically and professionally unjustifiable to appoint CMs to fill such a complex and demanding leadership and management position in the district structure and education system and then to simply leave them there to fend for themselves as best they can. Scholars emphasise the importance of training by the DBE as a way of preparing CMs. Implementing education change that leads to school improvement requires knowledge, skills and experience that not all CMs must effectively support principals. Hence, they are unable to adequately fulfil their role and responsibilities as education leaders and managers (Mafuwane & Pitsoe, 2014; Mthembu, 2014; Ndlovu, 2018; Van der Voort & Wood, 2016). Principals need experienced and knowledgeable CMs to guide them through and support them during education change processes. Bjork and Kowalski (2005) highlight that CMs cannot

support and develop school leaders to deal with education change if they themselves are not properly prepared.

Unfortunately, findings from studies (Bantwini & Moorosi, 2018b; Langan et al., 2012; Smith & Beckmann, 2016) show that district and CM support to many underperforming schools is often poor or absent. Principals' and teachers' view of support provided by education districts and especially CMs has become alarmingly negative (Bantwini & Moorosi, 2018b). According to Bantwini and Moorosi (2018b), CMs are viewed as the weakest link in the district leadership chain, with principals seeing them as glorified administrators or compliance officers. There is sufficient empirical evidence to suggest that most schools that underperform and have poor learner achievement find themselves in challenging contexts and are, in many instances, not being supported by district officials. Studies by Du Plessis (2017), Kumalo (2009), Myende et al. (2020) and Zulu et al. (2021) have found that poor learner achievement is associated with challenging contexts in deprived communities where effective and sustainable district support is often lacking. The abovementioned problems restrain CMs in fulfilling their role and responsibilities and prevent them from providing adequate support to principals. It is clear that the role and responsibilities of CMs pose a wide and daunting task, as they face numerous contextual challenges (DBE, 2013b, 2018b; Mafuwane & Pitsoe, 2014; Ndlovu, 2018). The problem derived from the discussion above is that CMs have to deal with too many schools that are deprived from resources. Although government funding is minimal, principals also place a lot of pressure on CMs and education districts to provide schools with resources.

The role and responsibilities of CMs are overwhelming, and they face many challenges in supporting principals during education change. Bush (2008) and the Wallace Foundation (2013) state that there is a direct correlation between education leadership, the effectiveness of management and principalship and the success of an education system. Hence, the success of principals and schools in challenging contexts largely depends on the effectiveness of leadership and the ability of the CM to provide them with support and navigate them through the turbulence of change in the context in which they work. Bhengu and Myende (2016), Naicker and Mestry (2016) and Fullan (2007) concur that effective leadership and management are important prerequisites for high-quality education. Effective leadership is known to have a significant impact on student learning and is second only to the quality of teachers' instruction in the classroom (Chikoko et al., 2014; Wallace Foundation, 2013).

The role and responsibilities of the CM have evolved through history and especially through the stage of education reform since the introduction of democracy in South Africa. To deal with these changes, it is imperative that CMs have the necessary skills and knowledge to effectively support principals and schools during education change. Although people will always resist change, the

CM, as the driver of education change in schools, should continuously communicate change to all stakeholders and convince them that the change will be to everyone's benefit. Many schools still lack human and physical resources, and the inadequate provision of these resources creates additional stress for CMs to support principals during education change. It is clear that the problems CMs face in their role and responsibilities are overwhelming. This leads to the rationale for the study.

1.4 RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

The rationale for the study was provided partly by the researcher's experience as a teacher for ten years and being a member of the SMT and the SGB before moving to a higher education institution where he was involved in the professional development of principals. He was captivated by the challenges that principals were facing in the changing education environment. From informal discussions with principals, the researcher sensed that many of their challenges were due to the lack of district support and especially CM support in dealing with education in challenging contexts. It became clear from these discussions that principals found it very difficult to deal with the management and administrative workload and expectations from district, provincial and national offices, especially during education change. The conclusion that the researcher formed from these discussions was that principals' perspective of district guidance and support was, in general, limited or non-existent, with some principals even contemplating resignation. This conclusion was confirmed by various journal articles (Bantwini & Moorosi, 2018a; Kaul et al., 2021; Langan et al., 2012; Myende et al., 2020). This led to the researcher feeling the need to determine how CMs could effectively execute their role and responsibilities to support principals during education change.

In addition, the researcher's recent experience as a manager at the Vaal University of Technology and working with staff in the Department of Education in developing training and education programmes for district officials and principals further kindled his interest in this topic. The CMs providing support to the principals of farm, township, semi-urban and urban schools in Sedibeng West and East faced many challenges in demanding contexts, as revealed in previous studies and articles (e.g. Mafuwane & Pitsoe, 2014; Mthembu, 2014; Ndlovu, 2018; Thakasa, 2011). In recent times, education performance in the Gauteng Education Department (GED) and the Sedibeng West and East districts has experienced a negative trajectory in terms of district, principal and school performance (BusinessTech, 2021). Adding to this, principal and teacher retention is low due to factors such as COVID-19, increased workload, insufficient resources, overcrowded schools and limited support from districts (Bantwini & Moorosi, 2018b; Karsenti & Collin, 2013; Koko, 2020; McDonald, 2020). The negative academic performance in most secondary schools has led to many interventions from national and provincial education

departments. These mostly readymade interventions are brought to schools by provincial and district officials and do not lead to sustainable academic performance, especially during education change.

During the researcher's master's degree studies, he explored literature about school improvement and the challenges schools faced during various education changes. As a result, he found that the strategies that were encapsulated in policies and professional development programmes were not appropriate for the problems that the DBE, PEDs or education districts sought to address (see Steyn, 2017). The literature revealed that the support programmes implemented to train or support district officials, CMs and principals to deal with challenges were generic and limited. There is extensive literature that provides empirically tested evidence about the ineffectiveness of such measures (e.g. Anderson, 2003; Arar & Avidov-Ungar, 2020; Avidov-Ungar & Reingold, 2018; Chisholm, 2005; Christie, 2010; Fullan, 2002; Jansen, 1998). The way school-based leadership and management have to change to deal with challenges is intensively discussed by various researchers (e.g. Burner, 2018; Bush, 2018; Christie, 2010; Connolly et al., 2019; Fullan, 2004; Morrison, 2013), and the conclusion made is that the training and development programmes for CMs and principals must be aligned with their challenging contexts because generic interventions are not sufficient to deal with education change. With reference to generic intervention programmes, Fullan (2004) argues that while many interventions may produce positive results, they tend to quickly reach a stage where they make no significant impact. According to Fullan (2004), this problem is often caused by people who do not take ownership of the intervention. Without local stakeholders' engagement, one does not get the ingenuity and creativity of practitioners that are necessary for developing new, better and context-based solutions (Fullan, 2004). Fullan (2004) proposes that the education system and its sub departments (DBE, PEDs and education districts) need strategies, plans and interventions to acquire solutions that meet two criteria, namely the deployment of ingenuity and the creative resources of the whole system. He calls it the fostering of a "we-we" or collective commitment to and identifying with the system as a whole and how it should be transformed (Fullan, 1993, 2004). Therefore, in the current study, the researcher aimed to develop a framework that would assist CMs in their role and responsibilities to effectively execute intervention programmes and strategies to support principals during education change.

Many of the principals with whom the researcher had informal discussions were from schools in southern Gauteng, including quintile 1 to 5 rural, urban, township and farm schools. They all experienced a plethora of challenges and similarities that were consistent with studies conducted on education challenges in other provinces (see Bantwini & Moorosi, 2018a; Mafuwane & Pitsoe,

2014; Mthembu, 2014; Myende et al., 2020; Ncwane, 2019; Ndlovu, 2018; Van der Voort & Wood, 2016).

The abovementioned informal discussions with principals motivated the researcher to focus his research on the role and responsibilities of CMs to support principals during education change, as the researcher could not find relevant literature on the role and responsibilities of the CM to support principals or schools in South Africa during education change. The role of the CM encapsulates different facets: as CMs, they represent the education district in schools, and as the direct supervisors of principals, their role is mainly to provide administrative, managerial and curriculum support. Ncwane (2019) explores the leadership role of CMs in a district in KwaZulu-Natal from the perspective of the role of the CM as an instructional leader to support teaching and learning in schools. He focused on only one support role of the CM, namely curriculum support in teaching and learning in schools. Ncwane's (2019) study was conducted with only a few participants in one district, and he recommends that research should be done in other districts too. He also suggests further investigation into the different roles CMs play in the organisation, that is, administrative, management and resources support provision and the monitoring of principals and schools in challenging contexts (Ncwane, 2019). In their article on leadership for learning, Myende et al. (2020) reveal the need for research on the role of CMs to enhance school and learner performance in challenging contexts. Bantwini and Moorosi's (2018a) study about the CM as the weakest link in the school district leadership chain in the Eastern Cape and their article (Bantwini & Moorosi, 2018b) on school district support to schools reveal that some CMs do not understand the importance of their role and responsibilities towards principals and schools. In their study, the principals' views of district and CM support were overwhelmingly negative.

An in-depth literature review indicates that research into other areas of the role of CM to support principals in education change is needed (see Bantwini & Moorosi, 2018a; Mafuwane & Pitsoe, 2014; Myende et al., 2020; Ncwane, 2019; Van der Voort & Wood, 2016). The findings of various studies show that CMs do not provide principals and schools with sufficient support (see Alsharija & Watters, 2021; Bantwini & Moorosi, 2018b; Kaul et al., 2021; Mafuwane & Pitsoe, 2014; Mavuso, 2014; Mthembu, 2014; Van der Voort & Wood, 2016). However, there is limited research available on the role and responsibilities of CMs to support principals in the changing education context in South Africa, and no additional research on this phenomenon has become available since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. In cognisance of the above information, the researcher, through the current research study, attempted to bridge the gap identified in the literature and previous research by designing a framework that could be implemented by CMs to ensure the effective and sustainable execution of their role and responsibilities to support principals during education change. The rationale is clearly linked to the purpose of the research.

1.5 PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH

The importance of the education district office and the provision of CM support to school principals are critical and cannot be ignored if principals are to succeed in their leadership role during education change. Principals have to be directly supported, trained and mentored in their daily roles and as leaders in managing and guiding SMTs and SGBs in the changing basic education system (DBE, 2013b). Van der Voort and Wood (2016) confirm that principals need better support and direction from education district offices and specifically from CMs. It is against this backdrop that the researcher sought to investigate the role and responsibilities of CMs to support principals during education change. The significance of the CM in supporting principals, improving schools and enhancing student learning is central to driving educational reforms and achieving greater educational quality in the transformation change in the South African socio-economic environment (DBE, 2013b, 2016a; Slater, 2011). The purpose of this research was formulated in accordance with the primary research question. Therefore, the purpose of the study was to determine how CMs could effectively execute their role and responsibilities to support principals during education change.

1.6 RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND OBJECTIVES

Research questions and objectives were formulated in accordance with the problem and rationale of the study and to enable the researcher to achieve the purpose of the intended study.

1.6.1 Research questions

The primary research question is as follows:

How can CMs effectively execute their role and responsibilities to support principals during education change?

Secondary research questions were formulated to assist the researcher in reaching the all-encompassing purpose and to contribute to the attainment of rich data. The secondary research questions are as follows:

- What is the current education system and structure in which CMs execute their role and responsibilities?
- How do CMs experience and understand their role and responsibilities in supporting principals during education change?
- What are the experiences, expectations and needs of principals pertaining to the support provided by CMs?

- What are the challenges perceived by CMs and principals when dealing with education change?
- What support framework can be implemented by CMs to ensure the effective and sustainable execution of their role and responsibilities to support principals during education change?

1.6.2 Objectives

The following objectives were formulated in accordance with the above secondary research questions. The researcher wanted to:

- explore and describe the basic education system and structure in which CMs execute their role and responsibilities;
- determine how CMs experience and understand their role and responsibilities in supporting principals during education change;
- explore the experiences, expectations and needs of school principals pertaining to the support provided by CMs during education change;
- identify the challenges perceived by CMs and principals when dealing with education change; and
- design a framework that can be implemented by CMs to ensure the effective and sustainable execution of their role and responsibilities to support principals during education change.

1.7 CLARIFICATION OF KEY CONCEPTS

The researcher consulted a wide range of literature that enhanced the conceptual framework relevant to the study. The key concepts that underpinned the research were as follows: basic education system, circuit and circuit office, CM, education change, school principal, (job) responsibilities, role, secondary school and support. Next, these concepts, as used in the study, are defined and clarified to avoid ambiguity and confusion.

1.7.1 Basic education system

The basic education system is the public schooling system that is governed by the Ministry of Education. In South Africa, the Department of Basic Education (DBE) governs basic education and provides education from the pre-primary (Grade R to the foundation phase) through secondary school (Grade 12 to the FET phase) (DBE, 2005, 2012; RSA, 1996c). For the purpose of this study, the term *basic education system* refers to the ministerial department that is accountable for the provision of the basic education service to the nine provincial education

departments (PEDs), education district offices and basic education institutions (schools) and encapsulates everything that encompasses education law and policies, resources, finance support and educating the learners in public schools in South Africa (DBE, 2012, 2013b).

1.7.2 Circuit and circuit office

A circuit is an area of an education district that is demarcated by the member of the Executive Council (MEC) for administrative purposes. It is the second-level administrative subdivision of a PED. Depending on the context, the term *circuit* is used to “describe either the geographic area or the administrative unit” (DBE, 2013b, p. 10).

The circuit office is the management sub-unit of the district office that is responsible for the basic education institutions in its circuit (DBE, 2013b). The education district and the circuit team provide management, administrative and professional support to principals, SMTs, SGBs and schools. Circuit offices also assist schools in achieving excellence in teaching and learning (Van der Voort & Wood, 2016).

1.7.3 Circuit manager

A circuit manager (CM) is the head of a circuit office and executes prescribed functions to support schools, principals, SMTs and SGBs in the management, administration and governance of the school (Education Labour Relations Council, 2008). These functions have been allocated by the district director or the head of the department (HoD) in the PED (DBE, 2013b). In this study, CMs are the officials who work under the authority of the district director and are responsible for providing information to schools and support (management, administrative, technical, resource and curriculum) and guidance to principals.

1.7.4 Education change

Governments implement policies to adapt to national needs that initiate change. Education is the effort to improve the quality of education (Fullan, 2007; October, 2009). *Education(al) change* is an overarching term used to refer to shifting paradigms within education and efforts of change and reform within an education system. The goals of education change are to improve the provision of teaching and learning to learners and to enhance the performance of schools in the education system. The aim of education change is to make improvements in the system by any means deemed necessary (Hargreaves et al., 2014). In general, most strategies for education change and reform employed by education departments worldwide are aimed at improving schools or education institutions. Change is usually initiated through the awareness of new ideas

and needs (Deming, 1993). The efforts taken to adjust to these new ideas or to meet such needs can be categorised as education change.

1.7.5 School principal

A school principal holds the highest authority within the basic education institution or school system in South Africa. The *South African Schools Act* 84 of 1996 defines *principal* as “an educator appointed or acting as the head of a school” (RSA, 1996c, p. 4). The principal is accountable for administrative, strategic planning and curriculum implementation (Day & Sammons, 2013). The principal reports directly to the CM and the district office that are under the jurisdiction of the PED (DBE, 2013b). In working with the SGB and SMT, the principal’s main responsibilities are to ensure that quality teaching and learning in the school are attained and to improve the overall performance of the school. In addition, it is the responsibility of the principal to establish and maintain effective communication channels in the management structures of the school and to ensure that quality assurance systems and procedures are established. For the purpose of this research, *principal* is defined as the person who is responsible and accountable for the strategic planning, curriculum implementation and effective day-to-day functioning of the school and the academic performance of the school and the learners (Alsharija & Watters, 2020; DBE, 2016a).

1.7.6 Secondary school

In the DBE system, a secondary school is often called a *high school*. It is the level of schooling after primary school level and is mostly attended by learners between the ages of 13 and 18 years (Hernandez, 2013). Secondary schooling consists of two phases, the first phase being the senior phase between Grade 7 and 9; however, Grade 7 is completed in primary school and Grades 8 and 9 in secondary school (DBE, 2005). Learners in the senior phase fall under the general education and training (GET) band of the basic education system. The second phase of secondary schooling is the further education and training phase (FET), which is from Grade 10 to Grade 12 (South African Qualifications Authority [SAQA], 2008). In secondary school, learners are taught from Grade 8 to Grade 12 (DBE, 2012).

1.7.7 Responsibilities

Job responsibilities refer to the duties of a particular role or position, often referred to as the “job description” (McNamara, 2019). CMs operate in terms of “allocated functions and administrative instructions from the District Directors” (DBE, 2013b, p. 25) and the provincial head of the education department. They are required to consult with relevant stakeholders, conduct regular school visits and even classroom observation, attend district management meetings, be actively

involved in circuit and cluster meetings and provide timeous and suitable feedback reports to relevant authorities (i.e. PEDs, the education district, principals, teachers and parents). CMs have to establish an enabling working environment, coordinate administrative, physical and human resources and create development opportunities for their subordinates. In addition, they must hold the education institutions in their care accountable for their performance. In the context of this study, the responsibilities of the CM are the duties and functions that the CM has to perform while providing management, administrative and professional support (see Bantwini & Moorosi, 2018b; DBE, 2013b).

1.7.8 Role

Every role has key responsibilities that fit with that position (Kay, 2021). In the context of this study, the role of the CM is an essential component of school district leadership that provides an essential bridge between schools and the government. The CM plays a vital role in continuously guiding and leading, challenging and collaborating with principals and schools to raise their standards (Bantwini & Moorosi, 2018a).

1.7.9 Support

According to Merriam-Webster (2022) *support* means “to keep from weakening or failing, to give confidence or comfort”. The term *academic support* refers to a variety of educational services, school resources provided to schools and learners or even instructional methods in the effort to help schools enhance their learning progress. In the context of this study, the term *support* refers to the CM’s responsibility to provide management, administrative, technical, resource and curriculum support to the principal (Bellamy & Portin, 2011). The support can be in the form of physical or human resources, financial support, curriculum support or the training and development of principals and board members. Furthermore, the support given will be based on the needs of principals and the challenges they face in dealing with education change.

1.8 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Each researcher’s personal perspective or frame of reference determines or guides the research (Imenda, 2014). Having a conceptual and a theoretical framework is essential in order to anchor the research, and to prevent it from rambling aimlessly on an indecisive course (Imenda, 2014). *Theoretical framework* is defined as “a structure that guides research by relying on a formal theory constructed by using an established, coherent explanation of certain phenomena and relationships” (Eisenhart in Osanloo & Grant, 2016, p. 13). In this study, Deming’s organisational change theory and Lewin’s theory of change and action (three-step change model) were used as the theoretical framework that underpinned the study. The theoretical framework established the

theoretical foundation upon which the researcher could determine how CMs could effectively execute their role and responsibilities to support principals during education change.

Deming's organisational change theory and Lewin's theory of change and action were selected as the theoretical framework because they focus on people and how elements within a system need to work together to bring about change and to deal with change (see Chapter 3, Section 3.2). People fear change and are reluctant to change; therefore, they need to be informed by leadership and management about change, why it is necessary and how they will be guided and supported through the change process. These two theories also focus on the processes and practices that need to be implemented to bring about change and ensure that the change is sustainable. Thus, these theories were selected because that is precisely what the expectation of the role and responsibilities of CMs in the context of basic education change in South Africa entails.

1.8.1 Deming's organisational change theory: system of profound knowledge

William Deming is widely known as a change theorist and management thinker in organisation change. He introduced and outlined the system of profound knowledge (Shewhart & Deming, 1986). Deming's theory of knowledge was built on theory, observation of the past and predictions about future outcomes. Deming (in Phelps et al., 2007, p. 3) contends that "rational prediction requires theory and builds knowledge through systematic revision based on the comparison of actual outcome with the predicted one". According to Deming (in Phelps et al., 2007, p. 3), "information, no matter how complete and speedy, is not knowledge". "Knowledge has temporal speed and without theory, there is no way to use the information that comes to us on the instant" (Phelps et al., 2007, p. 3).

Deming (1993) refers to four important parts in organisational change, which are discussed in detail in Chapter 3. Deming's system of profound knowledge is a suitable theory to use when people and organisations want to implement change in order to what the relationship is to bring about sustainable change for improvement. The first part of organisational change – an appreciation of systems – requires everyone in the organisation to know the elements that make up the system and understand their interconnectedness and the different interrelationships that exist among the elements (Deming, 1993). Secondly, Deming refers to knowledge about variation and states that variations will always exist, especially when reference is made to people. The third part – theory of knowledge – requires leadership and management in organisations to fully understand how their subordinates learn and how they improve their competencies (Deming, 1993). Schultz (2013) adds that the theory of knowledge requires that the leadership and management in the education system make informed decisions, develop the processes of work

and advance the goals of the school. The fourth and final part of the system of profound knowledge is the psychology of human behaviour, which helps to understand people. The relevance of Deming's theory in the research was that CMs must understand their role and responsibilities in the basic education structure. They need to know the importance of their role when working with principals and schools and be aware that each principal they work with reacts differently to change. Deming's theory has 14 principles that should be focused on during organisation change (see Section 3.5).

Deming's organisational change theory addresses similar key elements to Lewin's change model that must be focused on when leadership and management in organisations initiate organisation change, implement change and manage the new change for improvement (Chingara, 2019). This is discussed in detail in Section 3.5.

1.8.2 Lewin's organisational change model

Kurt Lewin's work resulted in a model that views change as a three-step procedure that has been used by many governments to guide education change. His planned change model includes four elements, namely field theory, group dynamics, action research and the three-step model of change. Lewin's three-step model has long been viewed as a seminal contribution to the organisational development field (Burnes, 2004). The theory of change provides a framework for learning both within and between programming cycles (Davies, 2018). Lewin's organisational change model provides for remedial and support initiatives to address and correct what was wrong. It is discussed in detail in Section 3.6. Lewin's organisational change model has been used by governments globally to bring about change in business, social and educational organisations.

Lewin's change model provides three steps – unfreeze, move and refreeze – that can be used by organisations to make change permanent. The model is explained in detail in Section 3.6.2. The relevance of Lewin's change model for this research was that CMs must prepare principals for change that is happening and planned within the education system. CMs need to understand the challenging context in which principals function and what barriers they experience in dealing with change. With insight gained from principals, CMs should initiate change through different intervention strategies to improve principal and school performance in challenging contexts. They should encourage the principals of schools in their circuit to bring about sustainable and effective change for the purpose of education improvement.

1.9 DEMARCATION OF THE STUDY

The demarcation of a study refers to the setting of boundaries for the study (Cohen et al., 2018). When conducting a study, an early and careful demarcation of the domain under study is essential (Merriam & Grenier, 2019; Nieuwenhuis, 2020). This study was conducted among four CMs and 13 principals of schools located in the Sedibeng East and West districts of southern Gauteng. The CMs and principals represented schools from different contexts. The research focused on the role and responsibilities of CMs to support principals during education change. The problem statement, rationale for the study and site where the study was conducted informed the research questions formulated, as well as the research design and methodology selected for the study.

1.10 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The research design and methodology are the plans and procedures followed by a researcher in an attempt to answer the research questions and reach the objectives of the study (Thomas, 2017). The research design can be described as a journey that a researcher follows to move from the “here” (now) to the “there” (future), where the “here” is represented by the research questions and the “there” by the responses of the participants (Fouché & Schurink, 2011). The research contains a research design that assists the researcher in exploring the research phenomenon.

1.10.1 Research design

Grossoehme (2014, p. 109) defines *research design* as a “systematic collection, organisation and interpretation of textual material derived from talk or conversation”. The purpose of a research design is to provide the most valid and accurate possible answers to the main research question (Creswell, 2014). Silverman (2020) adds that a research design describes and explains how the researcher devised a strategy to approach and undertake the investigation that is presented in the study.

The researcher used a qualitative approach with a phenomenological research strategy, embedded in an interpretive paradigm (see Leedy & Ormrod, 2014). Phenomenological research looks at participants’ perceptions and experiences of a phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2017; Leedy & Ormrod, 2014). The researcher explored the participants’ lived experience and perceptions of how CMs can effectively execute their role and responsibilities to support principals during education change to form a common understanding thereof. A phenomenological strategy of inquiry was relevant as it is especially suitable for small-scale research (see Cohen et al., 2011) and enabled the researcher to collect data from the participants (CMs and secondary school principals) in their natural setting in the Sedibeng East and West districts in the Vaal Triangle, Gauteng. The research was exploratory and descriptive in nature (see Merriam & Tisdell, 2015;

Thomas, 2017), as it explored, documented and described the role and responsibilities of CMs in the two districts. The phenomenological mode of inquiry aided the researcher in the development of a support framework for CMs to ensure the effective and sustainable execution of their role and responsibilities to support principals during education change.

Understanding people's insights and viewpoints and comprehending a particular phenomenon involve the researcher's ability to approach a phenomenon from a fresh perspective, as if it is for the first time, through the eyes of the participants who have direct, immediate experience with it (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Thomas, 2017). Hence, the phenomenological mode of investigation assisted the researcher in determining the participants' personal experiences, expectations and needs in their specific contexts with regard to the role and responsibilities of CMs in supporting principals during education change. The researcher had to follow a particular research methodology for clear articulation and clarity of how the objectives of the study were to be achieved.

1.10.2 Research methodology

A qualitative research approach was used to address the research problem in which the variables were unknown (see Creswell, 2012). A need to explore the enhanced understanding and lived experience of the participants emerged to determine how CMs could effectively execute their role and responsibilities to support principals during education change. The goal of this research was to generate exploratory data, which is also the goal of qualitative research (Creswell & Poth, 2017). The qualitative methodology was interpretative and constituted an interactive dialogue that happened between the researcher, the CMs and the principals. During the process of collaboration and interaction between the researcher and the participants, the world of the participants was discovered and interpreted by means of qualitative methods (see Alshenqeeti, 2014; Creswell, 2017; Gill & Baillie, 2018; Thomas, 2017).

The data of the qualitative inquiry consisted of the words and actions of the participants and thus required methods that allowed the researcher to capture language and behaviour (see Creswell, 2017) and transformed inferences and the participants' ideas into emerging themes (see Merriam & Grenier, 2019). Interviews provided access to what was inside the participants' heads and made it possible to measure what the participants knew (knowledge and information), liked or disliked (values and preferences) and thought (attitudes and beliefs) (see Merriam & Grenier, 2019).

The researcher was a participant observer. He employed semi-structured interviews that were field-based and flexible cooperative discussions (see Leedy & Ormrod, 2014). In these interviews the participating CMs and principals were probed with general and open-ended questions

contained in a planned interview schedule (see Creswell & Poth, 2017) through a phenomenological approach (De Vos et al., 2011).

A virtual conferencing platform was used to conduct interviews because permission to do the research was granted by the GDE on the basis that no face-to-face interviews were permitted due to the COVID-19 health regulations. The researcher used Microsoft Teams as the preferred virtual conferencing platform for the virtual meetings because it was the most commonly used platform (see Gill & Baillie, 2018). Virtual interviews are similar to face-to-face interviews, with the added advantage that they can simultaneously record video and sound, and the body language of a person can be viewed (Santhosh et al., 2021).

The interviews were conducted with CMs and secondary school principals in the Sedibeng East and West education districts as a means of data generation. The reason for selecting secondary school principals from quintile 1 to 3 (no-fee) schools and quintile 4 and 5 (fee-paying) schools was because the principals represented various types of schools – former Model C, township and rural schools – and the challenges they faced were in many ways different; therefore, they needed diverse and additional support and training from CMs. Conducting interviews allowed the researcher to collect in-depth, context-specific, ethical and case-sensitive qualitative data pertaining to the role and responsibilities of CMs and school principals' experience of CMs' support during education change. Qualitative research involves a deeper exploration from participants' point of view. This method was implemented and utilised by posing questions to CMs and principals of the sampled schools. The qualitative research method studies the "how" of things and not just the "what", "where" and "when" (Creswell & Poth, 2017). This is why the qualitative approach was more appropriate in this exploratory, descriptive research. It focuses more attention on smaller rather than larger samples to enable in-depth analysis (Barrett & Twycross, 2018). Qualitative research allowed the researcher to constantly build a comprehensive, holistic picture, analyse words, report detailed views of the participants and conduct the study in a natural setting (see Maree, 2007). The researcher scrutinised literature in order to be abreast of the research that had been done on the role and responsibilities of CMs to support principals during education change.

1.10.3 Research paradigm

A research paradigm is a lens through which a researcher interprets reality (Creswell, 2017). It is a set of assumptions or beliefs brought to the research project that informs the conduct and writing of the qualitative study (Creswell, 2017). A qualitative research approach was employed to interpret and understand the members of district management (CMs) and secondary school

principals in the Sedibeng East and West education districts. The type of beliefs brought into the study determines the approach to be followed in the research.

1.10.3.1 Interpretivism

Interpretivism as a meta-paradigm guided this research (see Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). The interpretive paradigm in qualitative research makes the assumption that the subjective experiences of participants enable them to understand and construct their own knowledge from the world in which they live, based on their own understanding of reality and the phenomenon (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). In this study, the participants' experiences and perceptions were interpreted. This allowed the researcher to understand and analyse the multiple meanings of what the participants contributed to the study (see Creswell, 2014; Creswell & Poth, 2017; Maxwell, 2012; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). The participants were actively involved in the research process through their subjective experiences as role players (see Creswell, 2014; Maxwell, 2012; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). A qualitative view and perspective are concerned with the understanding of a phenomenon, rather than the explaining thereof, from a subjective exploration of reality from the perspective of the insider (Maxwell, 2012).

Qualitative research is also interpretive and descriptive (Creswell, 2014; Maxwell, 2012). From an interpretive point of view, qualitative research is unbiased and aims to understand the multiple facets and complexities of reality concerning the specific phenomenon that is being explored (Creswell, 2014; Maxwell, 2012). The participants (CMs and principals) in this research gave accounts of their personal worldviews (see Creswell, 2014) and their individual experiences.

1.10.3.2 Philosophical assumptions

Philosophy means the use of abstract ideas and beliefs that inform the research. The identification of philosophical assumptions at the start of a research process is critically important as it determines the choice of the research design (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Two key elements are important, namely interpretivist ontology (nature and reality of human beings) and epistemology (nature of knowledge) (Jones et al., 2013). An *interpretivist ontology* shows that the world is a complex and dynamic environment. The interpretivist ontology approach explains how humans uniquely experience and interpret their experiences in the worldwide social system (Denzin, 2017). Thus, the ontological position guided the researcher towards a greater understanding of the identified research problem. The research problem was that school principals were not empowered (supported, trained and prepared) to deal with change and challenges within the basic education system. They found the changes and challenges in the basic education system difficult and were overwhelmed by them and the expectations from the education district office.

The changes and challenges left school principals in despair. The researcher was able to access, assess and interpret the data gathered from the participants during semi-structured interviews. The participants perceived, interpreted and understood the world in a different view (see Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

Furthermore, the interpretivist epistemology supports the idea that knowledge is constructed by means of how humans attach meaning to specific experiences, subject to their beliefs, values and reasoning (De Vos et al., 2005; Jones et al., 2013). For the purpose of this research, the researcher made use of epistemological (interpretive) assumptions as the mode of inquiry for the study. The interpretivist methodology also guided the researcher to obtain the required in-depth knowledge about the phenomenon through an appropriate mode of inquiry, setting, selection of participants, techniques used for data collection and analysis and ensuring the trustworthiness of the research findings (see Creswell, 2014).

1.10.4 Site, population and sampling

The Sedibeng East and Sedibeng West districts form part of the GDE in Gauteng, South Africa. Both districts have their own district directors to facilitate managing them. The provincial average of primary and secondary schools per district in Gauteng is 174 (GDE, 2013). The Sedibeng East and West districts are both below the average number, with 90 primary and secondary schools (quintile 1-5) in the Sedibeng East district and 144 primary and secondary schools (quintile 1-5) in the Sedibeng West district. Both districts service schools in farm, rural, township and urban areas.

The process where a researcher selects a portion of the population for the purpose of an inquiry is called “sampling”. Sampling means to make a selection from the sampling frame in order to identify the people or issues to be included in the research. A sample is also described as a portion of the elements in a population (Creswell, 2017). Hence, a sample is a representation of a population (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Nieuwenhuis, 2020; Palinkas et al., 2015; Silverman, 2020).

Purposeful sampling was used to sample participants in the research. The researcher used an independent district official in each district to select participants. The independent officials carefully selected participants (CMs and principals) in these districts with specific characteristics that matched the researched phenomenon to develop a sample large enough, yet possessing the necessary rich information for the search (see Thomas, 2017). The officials knew the CMs and the principals and were able to select them based on the following criteria:

- CMs with at least two years in their role in supporting and training principals who are willing to participate in the study.
- Principals appointed in the Sedibeng East and West education districts who have at least five years' experience as the principal of a secondary school who are willing to participate in the study.

The sample consisted of 17 participants: two CMs from each district and 13 secondary school principals of quintile 1 to 5 schools. Six principals were selected from the Sedibeng East district and seven principals from the Sedibeng West district. The independent officials were tasked with explaining the purpose of the research and the participants' contribution to the research to them. They also ensured that the participants signed the research consent forms before the interviews were conducted. All queries or questions of the participants were forwarded to the independent officials and then relayed to the researcher if the official could not address these.

1.10.5 Data collection

The researcher utilised individual semi-structured interviews as the primary method of data collection (see Leedy & Ormrod, 2014) to probe the participants with general, open-ended questions (see Creswell, 2012). This method of data collection allowed for documenting observations during the interviews in the form of field notes, which were also incorporated in the transcribed data files with the intention of enhancing the depth of the collected data (see Creswell, 2012; Gill & Baillie, 2018; Palinkas et al., 2015). The participants were interviewed individually (virtual one-on-one meetings) and were expected to answer questions during the interviews about the support provided to principals by CMs during education change.

The unrestrained questions in the interview schedule (see Appendix G) were particularly suitable, as they enabled the collection of ample, directed data to specifically address the identified research questions and objectives. This method of data collection is an adaptable data collection tool and includes the collection of both verbal data (ideas, beliefs, views and opinions of participants) and non-verbal data (behaviour of participants) (Nieuwenhuis, 2020). As the participants' permission to record the interviews was acquired, the collected data were recorded, transcribed and typed into a data folder with labelled subdata files (see Creswell, 2012). Individual semi-structured interviews procured the validity, richness, depth of response, trustworthiness and sincerity of the participants' understanding, expectation and needs (see Cohen et al., 2018; Creswell, 2012).

1.10.6 Data analysis

Data analysis is a process of observing patterns in the data, asking questions of those patterns, constructing conjectures, deliberately collecting data from specifically-selected individuals on targeted topics, confirming or refuting those conjectures, then continuing analysis, asking additional questions, seeking more data, furthering the analysis by sorting, questioning, thinking, constructing and testing the conjectures, and so forth. (Maree & Van der Westhuizen, 2012, pp. 71-72)

The data analysis of qualitative research is grounded in an interpretive philosophy, with the purpose of meaningfully investigating the “symbolic content” of the qualitative data collected (Nieuwenhuis, 2020, p. 123). Content analysis is dependent on creating labels (codes) that are applied to data in order to develop the data into meaningful categories that are analysed and interpreted (Blair, 2015; Moser & Korstjens, 2018).

The chosen method of data analysis for this study was the inductive process of content analysis (see Nieuwenhuis, 2020). Content analysis is an inductive process (Creswell, 2012; Nieuwenhuis, 2020). Volumes of raw textual data that contained the CMs’ and principals’ honest and personal comments, perceptions and opinions regarding the role and responsibilities of CMs and CMs’ provision of support to principals during education change were collected. The data were systematically examined and compacted into content categories by following coding rules (see Nieuwenhuis, 2020). The raw textual data were developed and derived into themes, concepts, explanations, interpretations, understandings and summaries that expansively explained the phenomenon under investigation (see Cohen et al., 2018).

The researcher used ATLAS.ti (a data analysis software program) to code the transcripts. ATLAS.ti is a data management system that is extremely helpful for large projects or projects that require the cross-analysis of variables, such as demographics, to specific codes (Stuckey, 2015). The program was used to organise the data; however, the data needed to be coded manually (see Friese, 2019). The researcher carefully read through the transcribed data and divided these into meaningful analytical units. He then assigned meaningful segments of text in the transcript to the codes.

Four steps were followed during the content data analysis, namely the preparation, coding, categorisation and interpretation of the transcribed text (see Nieuwenhuis, 2020). Preparation is aimed at ordering and decreasing the volume of data; coding involves dividing data into meaningful analytical units; categorisation means the grouping of various codes into a system; and interpretation involves clasping the core and nature of the lived experiences (Nieuwenhuis, 2020). The analysed data were then checked to see whether the data addressed the research questions and objectives.

1.10.7 Role of the researcher

The researcher acted as a direct observer and an indirect participant in the research process. He was an observer who collected the data through the conduction of semi-structured interviews. Furthermore, he made field notes as an additional method of obtaining data (see Creswell, 2017), as he was interested in the reactions, expressions and emotions of the participants. Thus, he formed a vital part of the research as a data collection instrument (see Hernandez, 2013). He recognised his bias, values and personal interests with regard to the research topic and processes (see Hancock & Algozzine, 2017). Although the interviews were conducted virtually, the researcher asked questions, recorded the participants' responses and created a conducive atmosphere for the participants to act naturally. Because the researcher was immersed in the process of data collection as an observer and an interviewer, he was part of the data generation (see Barrett & Twycross, 2018; Chowdhury, 2015; Friese, 2019; Miles et al., 2014; Moser & Korstjens, 2018).

In order for the findings of a research study to be transferable, the study has to be trustworthy (Creswell, 2017). So, the researcher minimised the threats to the research by constantly checking whether the research conformed to the prescriptions of trustworthiness.

1.10.8 Trustworthiness

The quality of a qualitative study is evaluated in terms of its trustworthiness. The term *trustworthiness* originated from Lincoln and Guba (1985), who view the trustworthiness of qualitative studies as parallel to the rigour in quantitative studies (Patton, 2002). Trustworthiness reveals the truthfulness and reliability of data and the consistency of the findings. Therefore, trustworthiness may be described as the extent to which research is accurate or true.

The threats to the trustworthiness of this research study were minimised. In this qualitative study, the researcher acted as the interviewer (see Maree & Van der Westhuizen, 2012) and thus had the responsibility to declare his own predisposition and to record and transcribe data authentically and without any bias (see Nieuwenhuis, 2020). It is very important to keep trustworthiness credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability in mind when doing research (Merriam & Grenier, 2019). Thomas (2017) proposes that trustworthiness is an alternative to reliability and validity because of the ethics of respect for the truth in an interpretive paradigm. For research to be trustworthy, it needs to be credible.

1.10.8.1 Credibility

Credibility is the believability of a study; hence, it is about the truthfulness of the study (Maree, 2007). It parallels internal validity in quantitative studies (Mertens, 2010). Credibility exhibits the degree to which the collected data are truthful, appropriate and generated in concurrence with accepted procedure, the so-called truth value (Cohen et al., 2018). In order to maintain credibility in this study, the researcher ensured that the information obtained from the participants were recorded and analysed accurately (see Nieuwenhuis, 2020).

1.10.8.2 Transferability

Transferability involves the possibility of the research to be comparable to other, similar contexts or the possibility to apply the research findings to other comparable studies (Nieuwenhuis, 2020), in this case to CMs in other circuits and principals of other secondary schools. In this study, the researcher provides a comprehensive description of the findings and context-specific information in order to increase the transferability of the research (see Nieuwenhuis, 2020). He used specific coding procedures, such as signs, labels and symbols, during the data analysis (see Nieuwenhuis, 2020) to ensure descriptive findings, which he believed would enhance applicability or transferability to comparable scenarios that could add value to future research.

1.10.8.3 Dependability

Dependability is regarded as the qualitative parallel to reliability (Mertens, 2010). It refers to the capability of the research to demonstrate as much detail as possible “through the research design and its implementation, the operational detail of data-gathering and the reflective appraisal of the project” (Nieuwenhuis, 2020, p. 144) – the so-called consistency (Cohen et al., 2018). Lincoln and Guba (in Shenton, 2004) emphasise that a demonstration of credibility ensures dependability and vice versa. Cohen et al. (2018) concur that dependability is determined by credibility. To enhance dependability in this qualitative study, the researcher maintained a detailed recording of the data collected and kept a journal of the choices he made throughout the research processes.

1.10.8.4 Confirmability

Confirmability is the qualitative alternative to the objectivity of the researcher. It refers to the degree of neutrality or the amount to which the findings of a study are formed by the opinions and perceptions of the participants and not through the prejudice, stimulus or attentiveness of the researcher (Nieuwenhuis, 2020). Strategies to increase the confirmability of this qualitative study included minimising the effect of researcher prejudice by declaring the researcher’s own predisposition and performing regular member checking with the participating CMs and principals

(see Nieuwenhuis, 2020). Moreover, the researcher kept an audit trail that allows the reader to track the progress of the research in order to increase understanding and judgement regarding the confirmability and trustworthiness of the findings (see Nieuwenhuis, 2020). This audit trail ensures a continuous track of everything done during the study and enables the reader to determine the level of objectivity and trustworthiness throughout the study.

1.10.9 Conclusion

The researcher used a qualitative approach with a phenomenological research strategy, embedded in an interpretive paradigm (see Creswell, 2012; Leedy & Ormrod, 2014) to analyse and study the themes in detail. The interpretive paradigm was suitable for this research, as human experience in a natural setting was investigated. Purposive sampling was used to select participants who were familiar with the phenomenon under study (see Cohen et al., 2011). Data were generated using individual, semi-structured interviews and were analysed through the inductive process of content analysis (see Nieuwenhuis, 2020), with the intention to determine the role and responsibilities of CMs in supporting principals during education change. The researcher continuously referred back to the research questions to ensure the trustworthiness of the research. Before any interviews were conducted or data collected, the researcher obtained ethical clearance and the independent district officials ensured that all the participants had signed consent forms.

1.11 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethical consideration is concerned with honest morality and appropriate conduct during research (Grosser et al., 2018). It refers to the moral responsibilities of the researcher (Cohen et al., 2018) and involves attributes of fairness, such as admission, permission and safeguarding the participants, as well as kindness, appreciation for people and righteousness (Grosser et al., 2018). Ethics comprises a prevalent awareness applicable from the start to the completion of the research and should be prominent in the researcher's intent (Grosser et al., 2018).

The researcher requested and obtained ethical clearance to conduct the research from the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Education of the North-West University. An ethical clearance number (see Appendix A) for the research was provided by the North-West University. The researcher abided to all regulations with regard to research as set out by the university. He also requested permission from the director of the GDE (see Appendix B) and the district directors of the Sedibeng East and Sedibeng West districts (see Appendix C) to conduct the study in the relevant circuits and schools.

The independent district officials provided the ethical and approval letters from the GDE and the district directors to each participant. It was also their responsibility to ensure that all of the participants understood the rationale of the study. They provided the participants with consent forms (see Appendices D, E and F). Due to the COVID-19 health crisis, the independent district officials explained to the participants that the researcher would use the virtual conferencing platform MS Teams to conduct the interviews and collect data.

The independent district officials collected the written voluntary informed consent forms from all of the participants. The interviews were scheduled, and the recordings of the individual semi-structured interviews were obtained from the purposive sample of CMs and secondary school principals from the Sedibeng East and Sedibeng West districts. The independent district officials and the researcher worked together in ensuring that the participants' anonymity and confidentiality were protected at all times and that they were treated fairly and with respect, consideration and honesty throughout the study (see Cohen et al., 2018). The participants were assured that their privacy would not be invaded and that they had the right to withdraw from the research at any time. The independent district officials and researcher also informed the participants that they could indicate if they did not want to answer a specific question during the interview. Moreover, they assured the participants that they would not be harmed in any way during the study (see Cohen et al., 2018). The COVID-19 protocols were strictly adhered to in order to protect the safety of the interviewees and the interviewer.

Ethical considerations during data analysis involve respect and the consideration of participants' rights and safety (Creswell, 2012). The reporting of the data was done in an honest manner, without altering any findings (see Creswell, 2012). Throughout this qualitative study, upholding the best interests of the participants served as the leading standard to ensure that the study complied with professionalism in research in an ethical manner (see Barrett & Twycross, 2018).

1.12 CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY

This study resides under the research entity Edu-Lead (Education Leadership and Management) and makes a unique contribution to the expansion of knowledge on the role and responsibilities of CMs in supporting principals during education change in the Sedibeng East and West education districts. The role and responsibilities of the CMs are critical in the changing education environment, specifically in the provision of support to principals during education change. Effective CM support will also enhance the performance of principals and schools.

The significance of this study is rooted in the contribution towards support that can be employed by CMs in an attempt to enhance their provision of support to principals and in school

management structures. The study addressed the research problems identified, namely the ambiguous concept, role and responsibilities of CMs in the provision of support to principals during education change. The findings of the study can be used to guide officials in assembling policies regarding the provision of CM support during education change, as current legislation is vague and unclear on the topic (see Bantwini & Moorosi, 2018a; DBE, 2013b). The recommendations of the study can be employed by CMs in an attempt to enhance the school principalship, school management, culture and climate in their districts and circuits. Enhanced CM support may also contribute to effectiveness, capability, management motivation and participation among SMTs and SGBs, as well as overall school performance through the effective provision of support. The knowledge constructed from these findings is transferable, contributes to the current literature and research on the phenomenon and can be applied in similar situations in order to enhance the provision of support by CMs. The body of knowledge arising from this study will assist the DBE, the GDE, education districts and especially CMs in using the support framework to support principals in challenging contexts and during education change.

1.13 LAYOUT OF THE THESIS

Chapter 1: Introduction to and scope of the research study

This chapter starts by orientating the reader to the study by discussing the background to the study, the rationale for the study and the problem statement. Thereafter, the research questions, key concepts, the theoretical framework, the research design and methodology, ethical considerations and the significance and contribution of the study are presented.

Chapter 2: Circuit manager support within the South African education system

In Chapter 2, a detailed outline of the South African education structure is given. A literature review of the role and responsibilities of the CM and the school principal in the education system is presented from an international and national perspective.

Chapter 3: Theoretical underpinning to implement education change

A discussion of the two theories that constitute the theoretical framework that underpins this study is provided in Chapter 3. Deming's organisational change theory and Lewin's organisational change model are discussed in detail.

Chapter 4: Research design and methodology

In this chapter, the research design and methodology used in the study are discussed, and reasons are provided for why they were used. The study is a phenomenological research study

exploring the support provided by CMs to principals during education change through the lived experiences of CMs and the views of principals. In this chapter, various aspects pertaining to the research design and methodology in qualitative research are presented. Insight is given into the trustworthiness, ethical aspects, data collection and analysis of the study.

Chapter 5: Data analysis and discussion of findings

Data are presented on how CMs support principals in schools during education change. The themes identified during the data analysis are conveyed and discussed in this chapter. Furthermore, in-depth analysis and interpretations of the data are presented to establish whether the research questions can be answered and the objectives of the research obtained.

Chapter 6: Conclusion and recommendations

In the last chapter, the findings of the research are presented. A support framework for CMs to ensure the effective and sustainable execution of their role and responsibilities in supporting principals during education change is designed. The chapter is concluded by highlighting various aspects of the study and future research.

1.14 SUMMARY

In Chapter 1, a brief overview of the intended study regarding the role and responsibilities of the CM to support principals during education change is provided. The chapter commenced with an introduction on what the study sought to investigate, followed by a discussion of the background and focus of the study. The research problem was stated and the researcher's connection with the research problem was presented, followed by the rationale of the study. Thereafter, the research questions that guided the study were presented. The concepts used in the study were clarified, followed by a discussion of the theoretical framework and the theories selected. The next chapter presents a literature review of the South African education system, followed by the role and responsibilities of the CM. The final section is on principalship and the role and responsibilities of the principal as the leader and manager of a school.

CHAPTER 2

CIRCUIT MANAGER SUPPORT WITHIN THE SOUTH AFRICAN EDUCATION SYSTEM

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 1 briefly outlined the research study and gave an overview of what the study entailed and how it was executed. The issue of educational transformation and quality basic education in South Africa has been the focus of numerous academic and political debates to ensure improved academic performance. CMs and principals are overwhelmed by work and the expectations of numerous stakeholders to improve leadership in education and learner performance. Improving education and school leadership ranks high on the list of priorities for school reform. CMs as district representatives are viewed as the first line of service delivery support for principals. They are seen as the catalysts for unleashing the potential capacities that already exist in the school organisation. Principals are more dependent on support from CMs than ever before, especially with so many changes being enforced in the education system. The quest to improve the quality of education and implement the required changes has forced CMs to provide a more professional service associated with effective, continuous and sustainable support. It is critical that CMs fulfil their required role and responsibilities to provide support, mentorship and professional development to principals during education change. The role of the CM is an essential component of school district leadership that provides an essential bridge between schools and the government. CMs have numerous responsibilities that they have to fulfil to support principals during education change in order to ensure sustainable academic performance.

However, seeing the decline in school performance raises the question of whether enough is being done to support principals in their quest to enhance education quality and performance during change. According to principals in Bantwini and Moorosi's (2018b) study, district support is lacking and CMs hardly ever visit principals or schools. Consequently, CMs are labelled as the weakest link in the education leadership chain. Factors that contribute to this situation are poor circuit office structures, the high retention rate of CMs and political and external interference. It is evident that research is required to determine how CMs can effectively execute their role and responsibilities to support principals during education change.

Although change in education systems globally has been happening over a long period of time, it is even more evident in the new democratic South African education system. The researcher deemed it essential to start with the bigger picture of the South African education system and

indicate how the different departments, districts and circuits are linked to the education system so as to give an understanding of where the role and responsibilities of the CM fit into the broader South African education system. In the context of this study, it is also imperative to elaborate on the changes that have taken place in the education system before and since 1994 and indicate where CMs are currently positioned within the basic education system (see Diagram 2-1). The challenges within the South Africa education system have a cascading effect on CMs. It is of extreme importance that CMs are knowledgeable regarding developments, changes and policies within the education system to ensure that effective support is given to principals, especially during education change.

In this chapter, the researcher endeavours to achieve three research objectives (see Section 1.6.3). The first research objective, namely to explore and describe the basic education system and structure in which CMs execute their role and responsibilities, is addressed first. Through an intensive literature review, the researcher then addresses the fourth research objective pertaining to the challenges that CMs and principals perceive when dealing with education change. Lastly, the researcher focuses on principalship and addresses the third research objective, namely to explore the needs of principals pertaining to support provided by CMs. The chapter commences with a detailed discussion of the South African education system in which CMs function and execute their role and responsibilities to support principals during education change.

2.2 THE SOUTH AFRICAN EDUCATION SYSTEM

Continuous change is not a new phenomenon (Mc Lennan et al., 2018; Morrison, 2013; Naicker & Mestry, 2016; October, 2009), and especially not in education. Two major education changes have occurred in South Africa. The first was after 1961, when South Africa became an independent republic, and the second in 1994, when South Africa became a democracy. Since the advent of democracy, the education system has gone through numerous reform processes to rectify the injustices of the apartheid regime and to provide an education system that is just and equal and caters for all citizens of the country (Ajam & Fourie, 2016; Hussain & Al Abri, 2015; Jansen, 1998; Leithwood et al., 2002; Rorrer et al., 2008). To fully understand and recognise the extreme challenges that have confronted education in South Africa since the dawn of democracy, it is important to provide an overview of how the basic education and higher education systems came into existence.

In 1994, the apartheid regime under the leadership of the National Party came to an end. The African National Congress, under the leadership of Nelson Rohlhlahla Mandela, was elected as the new democratic party to lead South Africa into democracy. The newly elected president brought inspiration, opportunities and hope to the citizens of South Africa. He provided a vision

of creating a so-called rainbow nation, where all citizens were to be treated equally, without any prejudice regarding race or social standing. Mandela regarded education as one of the most important tools to transform society and promote economic development (Mouton et al., 2012). He expressed his view on education as follows: “education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world” (Loo, 2018, p. 1). The changes that the president envisioned for the country escalated into various transformation initiatives and actions throughout the education system.

The *South African Schools Act 84* of 1996 was promulgated in 1996 to provide a uniform education system for the organisation, governance and funding of schools (RSA, 1996c). Between 1995 and 2009, the education system remained a single national education system managing education from Grade 1 to 2 and Standard 1 to 10 (National Senior Certificate), and higher education in colleges from N1 to N6 (National Vocational Certificate) and degrees and diplomas in universities and technikons (RSA, 1995, 1996b). In 1997, the government launched Curriculum 2005 for schools, which was grounded on an outcomes-based education philosophy (Jansen, 1998; RSA, 2005). By 2005, it was clear that outcomes-based education as a social experiment had failed, and it was quietly shelved (Leithwood & Day, 2008). A revised national curriculum was introduced (DBE, 2005, 2012). At this time, eight education departments existed, and each department followed its own curriculum and offered different standards of learning quality. These departments included nationwide departments for Indian and black people and people of mixed race. There were separate departments for independent and public schools, as well as provincial departments for white people in each of the former four provinces. Some of the Bantustans that were included back into South Africa in 1994 also had their own education departments (Buckland & De Wee, 1996; Chinsamy, 2002; Chrisholm, 2000; Christie, 2006; Mouton et al., 2012).

In 2009, the single national education system was divided into two separate departments, namely the Department Basic Education (DBE) and the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) (see Diagram 2-1). The responsibility for education provision in South Africa is shared by the DBE and the DHET (DBE, 2020b). Both departments are responsible to implement change within the education sectors, and both systems are regarded as the drivers to promote democracy through their respective departments and curricula (DHET, 2013, 2014c; GDE, 2018; RSA, 2013; Unesco, 2011). Their role is to promote the restructuring of the educational system by first removing all inequality, racial disparities and racially offensive and outdated content from their respective curricula.

Tertiary education and vocational training institutions that form part of the DHET sector offer a National Vocation Certificate, which is equal to the National Senior Certificate (NSC) of the DBE,

as discussed in Sections 2.2.1 and 2.2.2. It is a huge challenge for higher education institutions to change their academic foundation and curricula to align with the democratic vision and plans of the government. The challenge is that the foundation and curricula of higher education institutions are based on Western, colonialist education systems, structures and curricula.

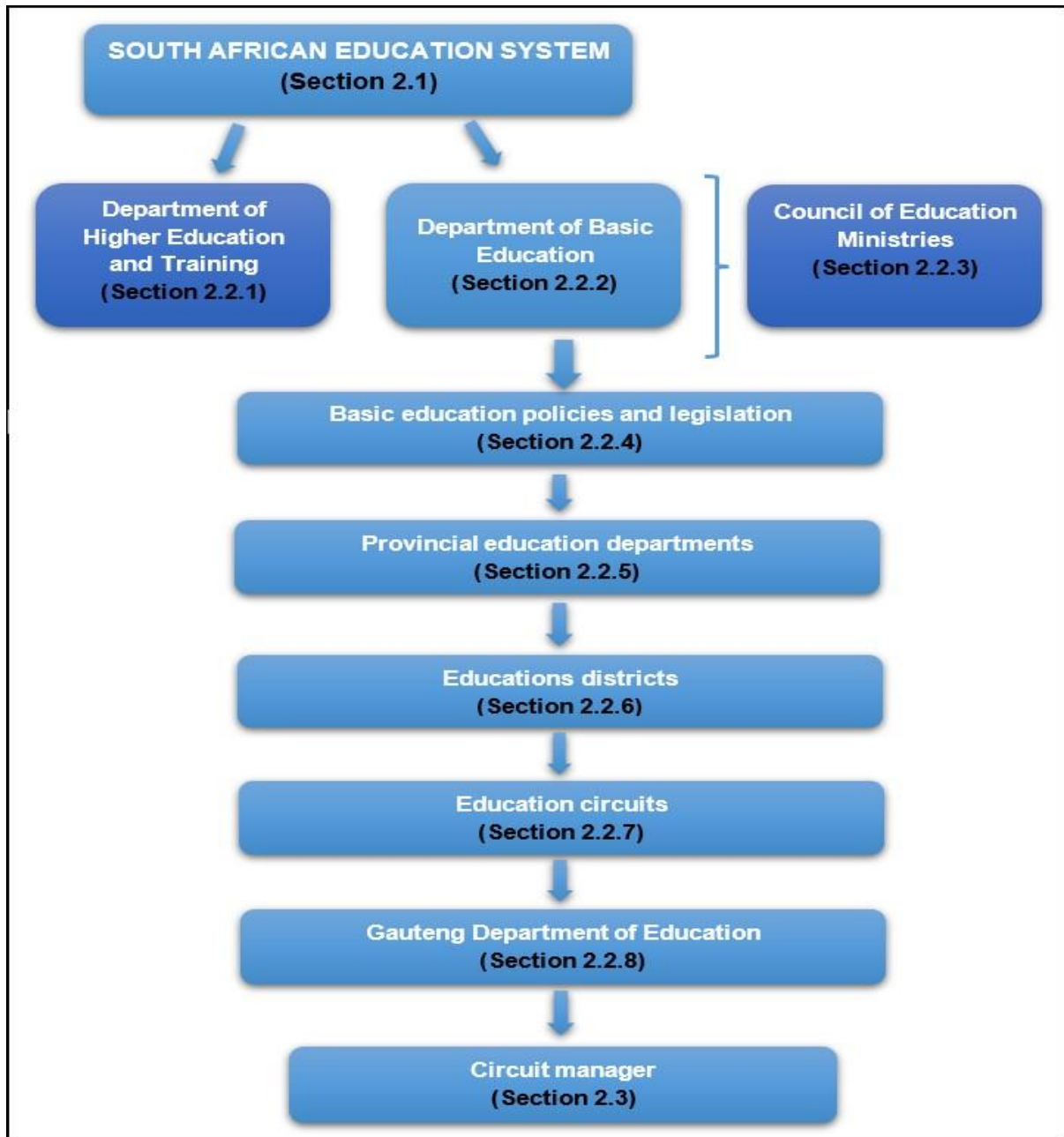


Diagram 2-1: Basic outline of South African education system and sections in Chapter 2

It is important to provide an overview of the DHET, as this department plays a significant role in education change, lifelong learning and ensuring the provision of quality education in the “new” South Africa.

2.2.1 Department of Higher Education and Training

The headquarters of the DHET is situated in Pretoria on the site better known as the Sol Plaatje House, named after the author and political activist Sol Plaatje (DBE, 2020b). Post-school education and tertiary education are governed by policies and legislation (DHET, 2013, 2014a; RSA, 1995, 1996a) (see Section 2.2.4). Together, the DHET and the DBE are the decision-making authority concerning education in South Africa (RSA, 2013) (see Diagram 2-1).

The DHET is responsible for post-school education in higher education and vocational training institutions. The department shares the responsibility with the DBE in adult basic education and training and FET colleges for Grade 10 to 12 on the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) level 2 to 4. Grade 10 is aligned with NQF level 2, Grade 11 to NQF level 3 and Grade 12 to NQF level 4 (DHET, 2014c; SAQA, 2020). The DHET is dependent on the academic quality of the learners received from the basic education system and is responsible for educating, training and preparing school leavers for the South African workforce.

The main objective of the DHET is that all South Africans have equitable access to relevant and quality post-school education and training (DHET, 2013). The DHET continues to focus on creating a transformed higher education sector that is demographically representative and of high quality and provides students and staff with opportunities through the implementation of the university capacity development programmes (DHET, 2014c; RSA, 2020a).

The South African tertiary education sector consists of public, traditional and comprehensive universities. The sector comprises twelve traditional universities that provide theoretically orientated university degree qualifications, eight universities of technology that provide vocationally orientated diploma and degree qualifications and six comprehensive universities that provide a combination of both traditional universities qualifications and university of technology qualifications (South Africa Education, 2020). Other than private universities, higher education institutions in South Africa are mostly funded by the government, and the additional funds required for operations are generated through study fees and third-stream incomes. A dedicated funding model is used by the DHET to fund university education programmes. The funding model is connected to the total number of students enrolled at the university and the success and throughput rate of students in its tertiary programmes (DHET, 2013).

The academic offerings of higher education institutions do not follow a national curriculum. Each institution has its own programme qualification mix aligned with specific standards, requirements, criteria, national and global needs. The quality of education qualifications offered by higher education institutions must be of high quality, meet specific HEQC requirements, as indicated in

the Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework, and compare favourably to international standards to ensure that graduating students are employable and contribute to the socio-economic growth of the country (Council on Higher Education, 2013; SAQA, 2008, 2020). The Council on Higher Education and the Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework as a subcommittee thereof ensure that academic qualifications are accredited and aligned with the standards of international and professional bodies.

2.2.1.1 Council on Higher Education

The Council on Higher Education and its subcommittee, the Higher Education Qualifications Committee, are the quality assurance and programme accreditation council for higher education qualifications and post-school education and training. The HEQC is responsible for the quality assurance of programmes to be offered by higher education institutions. Its role is to manage and accredit programmes according to a set of national and international standards. The Council on Higher Education is responsible for the overall qualifications quality and accreditation of sites of delivery and ensures that qualifications are aligned with the Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework (DHET, 2014a). After the accreditation of programmes and sites is completed by the Council on Higher Education, the council then forwards the programmes and requests for sites of delivery to SAQA.

2.2.1.2 South African Qualifications Authority

The South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) is responsible for the registration of qualifications and endorsing the placement of programmes on the programme and qualifications mix of institutions (SAQA, 2020). It is the responsibility of the DHET, through the advice of the Council on Higher Education and SAQA, to provide quality higher education qualifications to students to enable them to enter the world of work. Furthermore, the academic mandate of institutions differs to address the goals of the National Development Plan 2030, as set out by the government (DHET, 2014; RSA, 2013; SAQA, 2008, 2020). SAQA is also responsible for registering school programmes on primary and secondary school level from NQF level 1 to 4. However, Umalusi, as the Council for Quality Assurance, is responsible for the quality of the programmes being offered.

2.2.1.3 Umalusi: Council for Quality Assurance

Umalusi is an independent education quality department, officially called the Council for Quality Assurance in General and Further Education and Training, that sets and monitors standards for general and further education and training in South Africa in accordance with the *National Qualifications Framework Act 67* of 2008, as amended (DBE, 2009; SAQA, 2008, 2020; Umalusi, 2021). The term *Umalusi* is derived from Nguni and means “shepherd or herder”. Umalusi takes care of one of the most treasured assets of the nation – the standards of general

and further education and training – hence its name. In the Nguni culture, *umalusi* also means the guardian of the family's wealth. Umalusi issues certificates for full qualifications, as well as subject certificates or statements for candidates who have passed subjects but have not yet qualified for the full certificate. Certification continues throughout the year for adult and vocational examinations, such as the N courses and the General Education and Training Certificate for adults (Umalusi, 2021). In the context of this study, CMs, in their role as direct supervisors to principals, have to ensure that principals maintain the quality standards set by Umalusi in their schools.

It is not only the DHET that has an important role in the education system, but also the DBE. The DBE is responsible for the provision of quality basic education and prepares learners for higher education learning.

2.2.2 Department of Basic Education

The basic education system has gone through three full-sized reform exercises since 1994 (DBE, 2005, 2012; RSA, 1995, 1996c, 2019). From the onset, the goal of the government was to provide education to all and eliminate any discrepancies of the past, resulting in the widening of access to public schools (Mouton et al., 2012; RSA, 1996b, 2007).

The DBE is headed by the minister of Basic Education and is responsible for leading basic education in public schools and private schools from Grade R to 9 in the GET phase and Grade 10 to 12 in the FET phase (DBE, 2005, 2012; RSA, 1996c). The DBE is also responsible for early childhood development centres, special needs schools and adult literacy programmes (DBE, 2020b). The DBE develops, maintains and supports the school basic education system of South Africa for the 21st century. All citizens now have access to education and training, which will contribute towards improving the quality of life and building a peaceful, prosperous and democratic South Africa (DBE, 2020b). The role of the DBE is to translate and implement the government's education and training policies and the provisions of the Constitution into a national education policy and legislative framework (DBE, 2001, 2012, 2020b; RSA, 1996a). The basic education system follows a national curriculum that is provided uniformly to all schools in South Africa (DBE, 2012; RSA, 2019).

South Africa has nine provinces, which also reflect the way in which the DBE has divided the PEDs (DBE, 2013a) (see Diagram 2-2). The DBE works closely with the PEDs to ensure that provincial budgets and strategies, as well as national policies, are developed, implemented and cascaded down to districts and schools (DBE, 2020b). The DBE is responsible for close to 26 000 primary and secondary schools in South Africa (DBE, 2020b; GDE, 2019; RSA, 2019). Diagram

2-3 illustrates that each province has its own MEC who reports to the minister of Basic Education. CMs are mandated by districts and PEDs, and their responsibilities include the proper implementation of new and revised policies and ensuring that principals, SMTs and SGBs provide a suitable environment for delivering the curriculum to learners. The DBE also shares a role with the PEDs in providing basic schooling in early childhood development and addressing challenges in terms of education that need urgent attention (DBE, 2001; RSA, 2020a). The DBE, as the national department responsible for basic education, is strategically structured to service and support all the entities within the system.

2.2.2.1 Organisational structure of the Department of Basic Education

The head office of the DBE is located in the administrative capital of South Africa, Pretoria, in Gauteng. The DBE governs basic education in South Africa and is responsible for offering basic education in all public schools in South Africa. It provides basic education from the pre-primary (Grade R) level through secondary school (Grade 12) (DBE, 2005, 2012; RSA, 1996c). Each province has its own PED and reports through the CEM or directly to the DBE. Under the jurisdiction of the DBE, PEDs, education districts and circuit offices are mandated to provide schools with quality support and services (see Sections 2.2.6.2 and 2.2.7). The organisational structures of the DBE and the DHET are developed by the CEM and implemented by the different education departments. Diagram 2-2 below illustrates the division of the DBE into nine PEDs and 86 education districts in South Africa.

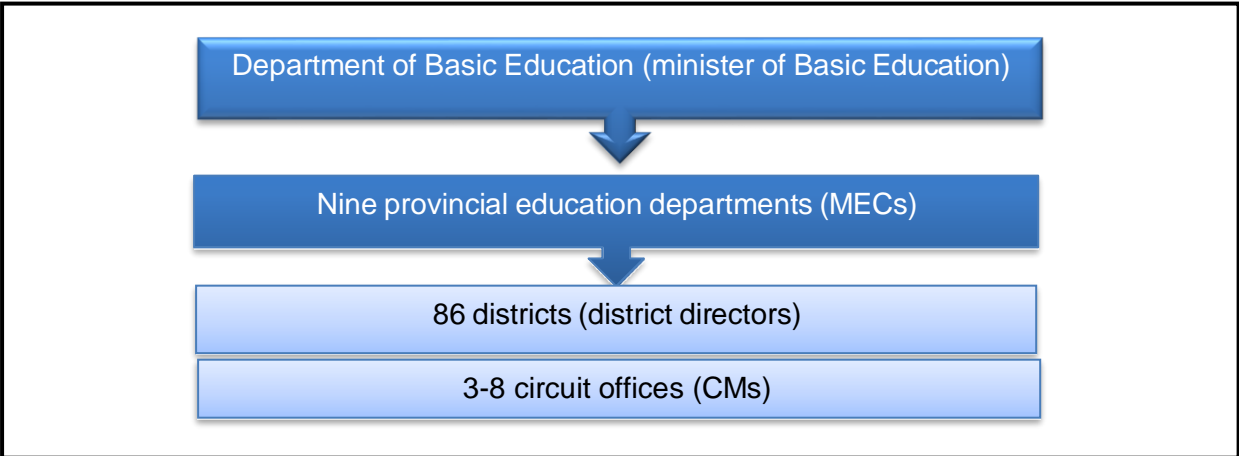


Diagram 2-2: Division of the DBE into PEDs and education districts

The 86 education districts across the nine provinces form the administrative entities of PEDs. These districts are the pillars for implementing policies and legislation in schools (DBE, 2013b). PEDs instruct districts to implement policies and change in schools. They are responsible for providing resources to the districts and collecting reports on learner information, available

teaching and learning resources, curriculum offering, teaching staff, infrastructure and the performance status of the schools within their boundaries from the various districts. Education districts utilise circuit offices and CMs to collect relevant data from principals and schools to compile reports for the MEC in the PED. The CM reports to the district director and to the PED through hierarchical structures and the CEM (see Diagram 2-3). The various MECs report to the DBE on the status of the PEDs, districts and schools they are responsible for (GDE, 2013, 2019). These reports allow the MECs and the CEM to plan for a better education system and, where necessary, to amend policies to accommodate and promote reform (see Section 2.2.3). From the above, it is clear that the DBE has an enormous responsibility and role to play in the transformation of education and the provision of quality education to all citizens of South Africa. The DBE faces many challenges to ensure quality education and provision in all the PEDs, districts and schools.

2.2.2.2 Challenges faced by the Department of Basic Education

Owing to the nature of spatial planning under the apartheid regime, the DBE, PEDs, education districts and circuits face many challenges in providing support and service to all schools. Due to limited funding and resources, it remains a great concern for the government. The DBE is the ministry responsible for maintaining the balance between widening access and academic success and for enhancing the quality of education in basic education. Without sufficient funding and resources, these remain mammoth tasks and are unlikely to change due to the socio-economic challenges South Africa is facing. The DBE needs to find solutions with the available funding and resources to its disposal (Christie, 2006; DBE, 2019, 2020b; Engelbrecht, 2006; Hussain & Al Abri, 2015; McDonald, 2020; Modisaotsile, 2012; Mouton et al., 2012; RSA, 2020b; Tapala et al., 2020).

Furthermore, the DBE face challenges in providing sufficient resources to fulfil the needs of the PEDs and the education districts. The PEDs are responsible for providing resources and funding to manage the districts and schools in their care. Research conducted by McDonald (2020), Ngozo and Mtantato (2018) and Spaul (2013) shows that the quality of basic education has been on a serious decline since 1994 due to more learners entering the basic education system, mismanagement and ineffective expenditure of funds, inadequate maintenance of infrastructure, unqualified and political appointments and the poor distribution and allocation of teaching and learning resources. The appointment of teachers in vacant new positions is insufficient and takes a long time. Many schools have to use their own funding to appoint teachers through SGB appointments where teachers are desperately needed (Bantwini & Moorosi, 2018b; Maja, 2017; Moloji, 2014).

In addition, due to families seeking better jobs and opportunities, the migration of people from farm and informal settlements to cities and metropolises in the past decade has placed tremendous strain on the already ill-resourced PEDs and education districts. More schools and human capital are required to provide education for all. The widening access to basic education has placed additional strain on the current infrastructure, the appointment of teachers and the provision of resources for teaching and learning. In 2001, schooling from Grade R (age five) to Grade 9 became mandatory for all children in South Africa (DBE, 2001; Schoeman, 2004). This legislation further added to the challenges the DBE has to deal with (DBE, 2001; Operti et al., 2009). The lack of resource provision from government education structures has added considerable strain on the already ill-resourced basic education system.

2.2.2.2.1 Insufficient resources

Since 2007, the education district offices have been tasked to be more focused on providing support to schools with the aim of improving the quality of school leadership and teaching and learning. However, the task comes with a variety of challenges that require districts to appoint more staff (district officials and teachers) to service, monitor and support schools, allocate more space for teaching and learning and provide additional resources for feeding schemes (Engelbrecht, 2006; Stofile, 2008; Unesco, 2011). Districts in particular are challenged to provide infrastructure, human resources and learning, as they are not empowered to raise their own revenues and “have no original powers or functions prescribed by law but operate in terms of national and provincial legislation and provincial delegations” (DBE, 2013b, p. 8). The insufficient resources and human capital supplied by the PED and the DBE to teach and provide support have a negative impact on the quality of education. Studies show that the quality of education in the past ten years in South Africa has been on a negative trajectory (Masondo, 2016; Mouton et al., 2012; Spaul, 2013). CMs, as representative of the education districts at school level, are expected to assist schools in acquiring the necessary resources and coordinate district support for the provision of resources to schools.

2.2.2.2.2 Professional development of teachers

Although education districts do not have the funding to outsource professional development training, they are required to appoint only qualified staff to train and develop school leadership (DBE, 2013b). They have to provide the infrastructure to conduct training and support and the necessary transport to regularly visit schools. Principals need dedicated, qualified district officials to adhere to their training needs to manage their schools in the continuously changing education system (Bantwini & Moorosi, 2018b). The DBE (2013b, p. 4) states that the *Policy on the Organisation, Roles and Responsibilities of the Education Districts* “provides a national framework

for the organisation and staffing of education district offices and the delegated authority, roles and responsibilities of district officials for the institutions within their care". Unfortunately, districts still lack a legislative framework that spells out their powers and functions, which leads to insufficient provision of support to schools, principals, SMTs and SGBs to deal with the expectations of the districts and issues of education transformation. The absence of establishing a legislative framework has caused confusion in terms of what is expected from CMs to support schools.

2.2.2.2.3 Raising education standards

The DBE, as the responsible ministry for the provision of basic education, reports to the cabinet on the performance of the NSC candidates annually and has continuously been challenged to raise the standards and quality of the NSC results with the limited resources and funding it receives from the annual budget allocated to basic education (Malope, 2017; Modisaotsile, 2012; Ngozo & Mtantato, 2018; Umalusi, 2021). Masondo (2016), Ngozo and Mtantato (2018) and Robinson (2019) concur that although the government expects the quality of education to improve, recent annual NSC reports show that the education system is in a crisis and is dismally failing the economy. The various structures and divisions of the PEDs and education districts are an attempt by the government to improve the basic education system and education support and provision (see Diagrams 2-2 and 2-3). The purpose of these structures is to provide a better service to schools, districts and PEDs with the aim of improving the quality of education (Mouton et al., 2012). However, all these changes seem to have a minimal impact on the enhancement of the quality of education, as research indicates that matric results are still not up to standard (Malope, 2017; Modisaotsile, 2012; Ngozo & Mtantato, 2018; Umalusi, 2021). CMs are responsible for ensuring that education standards are raised in schools and have to report to the PED on the education performance of each school in their circuit. The restructuring to raise education standards has resulted in CMs having to report to several departments at the PED level, which adds to the administrative overload of CMs.

2.2.2.2.4 Role of the provincial education department

There is a clear indication that the role and responsibility to implement policies and provide the necessary resources, teaching and learning material lie with the leadership structures of the PEDs and education districts (see Diagram 2-3). Leadership structures are responsible for enforcing change and managing schools that will lead to school improvement. Although each PED has its own policies and legislation, aligned with national policies and the Constitution of South Africa, to govern the schools in its province (DBE, 2013b; DHET, 2014c; GDE, 2013, 2019; Human Resource Development Council of South Africa [HRDC], 2014; RSA, 1996b, 1996c), the PEDs still have to provide education according to national education requirements and utilise the

resources and funding received from the DBE. Unfortunately, continuous changes in the education structure and system, as well as the lack of support from the PEDs and the DBE, have led to a decline in the provision of quality education. Consistency in support and the quality of service is neglected in the quest for structural and system changes, resulting in experienced teachers leaving the basic education system. Many of the responsibilities of the PEDs are cascaded down to the districts and CMs to perform their duties at schools, thereby adding more strain on CMs.

2.2.2.2.5 High staff retention

There are many factors that influence the reason for teachers leaving the profession. A major factor seems to be the continuous changes in education without receiving the necessary support and training from the education ministries and departments to assist teachers in dealing with education change (Karsenti & Collin, 2013; Nkambule & Amsterdam, 2018; Will, 2021). Teachers feel they are overworked and underpaid and that their overall well-being is not a priority for the government. They complain that they have to deal with too many learners in a class, while school principals complain they have a shortage of teaching staff for the number of learners they have to accommodate in their schools (Bantwini & Moorosi, 2018b). Principals point out that schools are overcrowded and that the DBE does not provide sufficient funding for additional classrooms or infrastructure (Bantwini & Moorosi, 2018b). Meanwhile, CMs state that it is difficult to support principals and schools due to the lack of resources. Moreover, they complain that they are responsible for too many schools in the district and, therefore, it is difficult to provide them with effective support (Mafuwane & Pitsoe, 2014).

Karsenti and Collin (2013) and McDonald (2020) point out that factors such as those mentioned above contribute to experienced CMs, principals and teaching staff leaving the profession. CMs, principals and teachers find it daunting to deal with major education changes without receiving sufficient support from the district, provincial and national offices (Bantwini & Moorosi, 2018, Myende, 2020, Ncwane, 2019). These factors also add to the existing challenges that the DBE is facing. Recruiting qualified and experienced CMs, principals and teachers in vacant positions or where districts need more staff and schools more teachers is dependent on government funding. If the government does not allocate sufficient funding to this area in its budget, this problem will persist (Myende et al., 2020; Nkambule & Amsterdam, 2018).

According to a survey conducted in Canada, the general reason for teachers leaving the profession is largely because of the insufficient support they receive from the education authorities (Karsenti & Collin, 2013). Teachers feel they are unappreciated, underpaid and overloaded, not only by their teaching workload but also by administrative duties. They often have to deal with

education challenges and change without the necessary training from the education department. In addition to this, the COVID-19 pandemic has caused teachers to leave the profession because of the additional challenges of teaching online and being at risk when they have to teach face to face (Will, 2021). CMs, principals and teachers feel that the DBE provides neither sufficient support (resources and training) to help them to teach nor adequate personal protective equipment for their safety and well-being. Teachers' general well-being has become a major concern for education systems and researchers worldwide.

The problem is escalated by failing to appoint expert teachers in the fields of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM), which are deemed to be subjects with very low learner success. The implication of not appointing qualified and experienced teachers in the STEM areas is that it influences the delivery of learners into higher education institutions. The admission requirements of many higher education institutions for most programmes are STEM subjects with a percentage mark of 50% or higher. The consequence of this for CMs is that they are responsible to support principals in the appointment of teachers. CMs have to liaise with human resources departments on the needs of principals and schools concerning teacher appointments. It is also difficult for human resources departments and schools to find funding for appointments and recruit qualified teachers in the STEM areas, as these teachers prefer not to teach in schools where there are too many challenges.

In conclusion, the ill-resourced DBE system has a negative impact on the education system, and consequently, the districts, circuits and schools find themselves in dire straits to overcome challenges and implement the required changes, resulting in a failing education system. The failure to provide support and resources to districts and circuits has a negative influence on the role and responsibilities of the CM to support principals and schools effectively during education change (Maynard, 2019; Metcalfe, 2011; Modisaotsile, 2012). The CEM is responsible for addressing these challenges with regard to change (see Section 2.2.3). The DBE and the CEM are, therefore, responsible for developing and implementing a sound organisational structure to address the challenges experienced in the education system. The DBE organisational structure is the platform for basic education provision in South Africa and forms the basis of the structuring of PEDs and districts. The members of the CEM (see Section 2.2.7) are the decision makers for education transformation and policy development and are accountable for the allocation of funding and resources to PEDs, districts and schools. Through these structures, the DBE aims to create an equal and safe education environment for all, where people are developed to become responsible citizens of South Africa.

However, without adequate funding and qualified staff (district officials) and teachers in schools there is not much the DBE and CEM can accomplish. The continued overloading of the

infrastructure, pressure and the overstretching of resources have made adapting to change an impossible task, which is of great concern for the future South African workforce. The reformed education structure (PEDs, districts and schools) and the government officials appointed in this structure seem to fail in addressing these challenges (Malope, 2017; Modisaotsile, 2012; Ngozo & Mtantato, 2018; Spaul, 2013). The challenges cascade down to the CM and have a direct impact on the role and responsibilities of CMs as the direct supervisor of principals and the primary line of communication and support between districts and schools (see Section 2.2.7). Districts and PEDs are guided by the policies and legislation developed by the CEM to steer education, deal with change, acquire resources and appoint people.

2.2.3 Council of Education Ministers

The Council of Education Ministers (CEM) consists of the ministers of Basic Education and Higher Education and Training, the DBE deputy minister, the director-general for education, the deputy director-general, the nine provincial members (MECs) and the chairpersons of the Portfolio Committee on Education in the National Assembly. As a collective, they form the executive leadership of the DBE (DBE, 2020b). The functions of the council are as follows:

(a) to promote a national education policy which takes full account of the policies of the government as stated in the principles in section 4 of Act 27 of 1996; the education interests and needs of the provinces, and the respective competence of Parliament; and the provincial legislatures in terms of section 126 of the Constitution. (RSA, 1996a, p. 50)

and

(b) to share information and views on all aspects of education in the Republic; and co-ordinate action on matters of mutual interest to the national and provincial governments. (RSA, 1996b, p. 55)

The MECs are responsible for implementing national and provincial policies and dealing with local issues in the province (DBE, 2013b). They meet on a regular basis to discuss the promotion of national education policies, share relevant information and ideas on different aspects concerning basic education in South Africa and coordinate actions on matters of common interest. The minister, advised by the CEM (see Diagram 2-3), is responsible for providing PEDs with policy tools, plans and other resources to assist in enhancing the quality of education provision and learning in schools (DBE, 2013a; GDE, 2019; RSA, 2007). All plans and decisions made by the CEM are cascaded down to the sub departments (PEDs, districts, circuits, clusters) and schools. The MECs also determine the public service staff establishment of the education districts in terms of the *Public Service Act* of 1994 (Department of Education, 1998; RSA, 1996a, 1996b, 1996c,

1998) and where the education ministries fit into the government structure (DBE, 2013a, 2020b; DHET, 2014b; Maynard, 2019; RSA, 2020b) (see Diagram 2-1).

The government envisages that by 2030, all South Africans should have access to basic education (RSA, 2013). The main responsibility of the CEM is to reach the goal of the National Development Plan 2030, which is to empower learners to fulfil their potential and contribute to sustainability and enhancement through the provision of quality education (DBE, 2019; RSA, 2013, 2019). The CEM is responsible for developing and implementing policies and legislation through a sound organisational structure to fulfil its mandate of providing quality education for all. The policies, legislation and education plans mentioned above need to be communicated to all the PEDs, and it is imperative that correct information is cascaded down to the CMs for them to be successful in their provision of support to principals. It is important that CMs are knowledgeable about these policies, legislation and plans to effectively support principals in school governance and education change.

2.2.4 Basic education structure and framework

Basic education policies and legislation are aligned with the Constitution of South Africa (RSA, 1996a), providing the right for all citizens to basic education without any fear of prejudice in terms of race, religion, social standing or culture (RSA, 2007). It is important to give a brief overview of some of the important basic education policies and legislation, as they form the foundation of primary and secondary education provision in South Africa.

The responsibilities of the CM include ensuring that principals, SGBs and SMTs implement the relevant policies and legislation in schools. The minister of Basic Education, with assistance from the CEM, directs relevant policies towards achieving close relationships between the national and provincial governments on matters relating to education. Close relationships and cooperation among these governments improve the development of capacity in the education departments and the effective management of the national education system. They have to ensure the promotion of the national education policy and take full account of the policies of the government as stated in Section 4 of the *National Education Policy Act 27 of 1996* (RSA, 1996b), as well as the education interests and needs of the nine provinces and the respective competence of parliament and the provincial legislature (DBE, 2013b). Lomofsky and Lazarus (2001) state that the development and implementation of the *National Education Policy Act* led to a cohort of policies and legislation promulgated in 1996 to govern education in democratic South Africa. These policies enabled the government to change the previous apartheid education system into a non-segregated, equal-opportunity and quality education system, eliminating discriminatory practices by transforming the system into one unitary, non-racial department (Lomofsky &

Lazarus, 2001). Although there are many policies and bills of legislation that govern education in South Africa, the researcher identified the most important policies relevant to the study. For example, the *National Education Policy Act 27* of 1996 is one of the cornerstone policies of basic education provision in South Africa and is central to education reform. Next, the eight policies and bills of legislation most pertinent to this study are discussed.

2.2.4.1 National Education Policy Act 27 of 1996

The *National Education Policy Act 27* of 1996 is the foundation and backbone of all other education policies in South Africa. It encapsulates the monitoring responsibilities of the ministers of education, as well as the formal relations between national and provincial authorities. The objectives of the policy are to provide for the following:

(a) the determination of national education policy by the Minister in accordance with certain principles; (b) the consultations to be undertaken, prior to the determination of policy, and the establishment of certain bodies for the purpose of consultation; (c) the publication and implementation of national education policy; and (d) the monitoring and evaluation of education. (RSA, 1996b, pp. 15-20)

The policy also laid the foundation for the establishment of the Heads of Education Departments Committee as an intergovernmental forum that collaborates in the development of a democratic education system. The *National Education Policy Act 27* of 1996 is responsible for the formulation of national education policies, as well as the technical and vocational education and training curriculum, assessment, language and quality assurance policies (RSA, 1996b, 2013) (see Diagram 2-3).

Moreover, the *National Education Policy Act 27* of 1996 provides a national framework for the organisation and staffing of education district offices. The policy guides the delegation of authority in the role and responsibilities of district officials for the schools and learning institutions within their care, such as those of the CM. This policy is determined in terms of the *National Education Policy Act*, which empowers the minister to “determine national policy for the planning, provision, financing, staffing, coordination, management, governance, programmes, monitoring, evaluation and well-being of the education system” (RSA, 1996b, p. 51). Furthermore, the policy states that it is essential to provide basic skills, values and knowledge to principals, SMTs and teachers in ensuring the success of education (RSA, 1996b). The *National Policy Framework for Teacher Education and Development* was introduced to ensure that teachers are qualified to teach and developed within their roles.

2.2.4.2 National Policy Framework for Teacher Education and Development in South Africa

The *National Policy Framework for Teacher Education and Development in South Africa* (DBE, 2006) is aligned with the *National Education Policy Act 27 of 1996* (RSA, 1996b). Both policies state that the DBE and its nine PEDs are obliged to provide an enabling environment for the preparation and development of teachers to take place (RSA, 2007). An important aim of the *National Education Policy Framework for Teacher Education and Development* is to increase the quality of teaching and to provide suitably qualified teachers (DBE, 2006). The policy emphasises continuing professional development for teachers, which attempts to develop teachers' conceptual knowledge and skills through professional development to become productive citizens (DBE, 2006; RSA, 2007). CMs need to understand the policy to be able to assist principals in appointing qualified teachers at schools. The policy also informs the development and training of principals and teachers for the role and responsibilities to provide quality education to learners. Next, the *South African Schools Act 84 of 1996* focuses on access to basic education for learners.

2.2.4.3 South African Schools Act 84 of 1996

The purpose of the *South African Schools Act 84 of 1996* was to provide education to all of the citizens of South Africa. The aim of the act was to give equal access to quality education to all children, without discrimination, and to make schooling compulsory for children aged seven to 15 years (RSA, 1996c). The school-funding model and stipulations for schools in the education system were outlined in the *South African Schools Act 84 of 1996*. These stipulations were focused on prioritising redressing and targeting poverty in terms of the allocation of funds for the public school system (RSA, 1996c). The *South African Schools Act 84 of 1996* was amended by the *Education Laws Amendment Act 24 of 2005* (RSA, 2005), which authorised the declaration of schools in poverty-stricken areas as “no-fee schools”, and by the *Education Laws Amendment Act 31 of 2007* (RSA, 2007), which provided for the functions and responsibilities of school principals (DBE, 2016a; RSA, 2007). Together, these policies provide for two types of schools, namely independent and public schools (DBE, 2010; RSA, 1996a, 1996b). CMs need to have sound knowledge of these policies because independent and public schools have different needs and, therefore, need different types of support. The employment of qualified teachers within these schools is critical to the success of education in South Africa. Independent schools often have more funding available than public schools to appoint qualified teachers in their SGB structures. However, they still have to adhere to the *Employment of Teachers Act 76 of 1998*.

2.2.4.4 Employment of Teachers Act 76 of 1998

The *Employment of Teachers Act 76 of 1998* regulates the professional moral and ethical responsibilities of the competency requirements for teachers (RSA, 1998, 2007). This act and the South African Council for Educators regulate the teaching corps. The act also guided the development of the policy on the *South African Standards for Principals – Enhancing the Professional Image of Competencies of School Principals* (DBE, 2016a). The importance of this act is that it enables the DBE to appoint competent professionals according to a set of standards, requirements and criteria for the specific role as indicated in the policy. As CMs assist principals, SMTs and SGBs in the appointment of qualified teachers in their schools, they need to have significant insight into and knowledge of this policy that prescribes the standards for appointing qualified staff. The standards, requirements and criteria are also aligned with the *Education Laws Amendment Act*.

2.2.4.5 Education Laws Amendment Act 31 of 2007

The *Education Laws Amendment Act 31 of 2007* set the age of admission to Grade 1 as the year in which the child turns seven (RSA, 2007). All previous amendments to the policies were aligned with the South African Constitution and the development of the Human Rights Commission (RSA, 1996a). Thus, the rights of all children (including children with special educational needs) are protected by declaring that seven years of primary education and a further two years of education in a secondary school are compulsory (RSA, 2007). In secondary school, provision is made for a further three years of schooling from Grade 10 to 12.

The NSC is the exit point for Grade 12 learners who wish to progress to tertiary education (DBE, 2012). In accordance with the *National Qualifications Framework Act 67 of 2008* and the *General and Further Education and Training Quality Assurance Amendment Act 58 of 2001*, Umalusi sets and monitors the standards for general and further education and training, as well as tertiary vocational education and training in South Africa. The NSC serves as a benchmark for tertiary education (Mouton et al., 2012), ensuring that the quality of education of learners in the basic education system is regulated and certified for possible post-school education.

Learners who have completed Grade 12, have been endorsed with an NSC and have achieved university exception can progress into tertiary education at a higher education institution, such as a university (DBE, 2005; Education for All, 2007; Operti et al., 2009; RSA, 1996b, 2007; Unesco, 2011). The CM is responsible for ensuring that principals adhere to the criteria and requirements of offering quality education and appoint qualified teachers in their schools as set out in the

Education Laws Amendment Act (RSA, 1998, 2007). The act is also applicable to the appointment of qualified teachers for early childhood development and special needs education.

2.2.4.6 Education White Paper on Early Childhood Development and Inclusive Education and Special Needs Education

The *Education White Paper on Early Childhood Development* (DBE, 2000) provided for the opening and inclusive participation of five-year-olds in pre-school Grade R education by 2010 and the enhancement of the quality of programmes, curricula and teacher development from birth to the age of four and for six- to nine-year-old learners (DBE, 2012). The relevance of mentioning this white paper is that CMs support schools that have pre-schools offering Grade RR and R integrated into the primary school system, as well as schools that accommodate learners with special needs and who are vulnerable.

White Paper 6, Special Needs Education, Building an Inclusive Education and Training System (DBE, 2001) provided a framework for systemic change for the development of inclusive education that had never been present in the apartheid education system. The policy allows for the education system to manage, coordinate and facilitate the integration of vulnerable learners and reduce the challenges to learning through dedicated support structures, mechanisms and procedures that will enhance the retention of learners in the education system, especially those who are at risk of dropping out of the system (Schoeman, 2004).

Engelbrecht (2006) comments on inclusive education as a philosophy and says that the concept of inclusive education in the South African context embraces the democratic values of equality and human rights and the recognition of diversity. However, research indicates that multifaceted societal changes, encompassing educational reforms and contextual changes, including the management of diversity in schools, have had a negative impact on the implementation of inclusive education (Engelbrecht, 2006). An inclusive education system includes learners as young as four years. Many primary schools now have a pre-primary enrolment called Grade RR (for four-year-olds) and Grade R (for five-year-olds) or accommodate learners with special needs and sometimes both. However, providing foundation education for these learners to prepare them for the primary school phase of basic knowledge and skills to progress through the system requires different resources, such as playgrounds, activity equipment, furniture and after-school services. Moreover, special needs learners often need medical, psychological and social support from education districts, with the CM being the contact person for principals and school managements to collaborate with district offices. Early childhood education can mostly be found at primary schools. Many primary schools start enrolling learners from as young as four years old into the Grade RR programme, followed by Grade R before they move on to Grade 1. It is

imperative that CMs understand the needs of these schools and provide the necessary support to principals to eventually integrate Grade R and RR learners into the primary school Foundation Phase.

The new democratic government believes that an inclusive education system will ensure that there is access to quality basic education for learners and those with special needs and that this will contribute towards the achievement of an inclusive economy and inclusive society (Opertti et al., 2009). The *Education White Paper 6 on Inclusive Education* (DBE, 2001) describes the intention of the Ministry of Education to have implemented inclusive education at all levels in the system by 2020. The *Education Laws Amendment Act 31 of 2007* (RSA, 2007) protects the rights and education of learners, and CMs are responsible for ensuring that principals and SMTs closely follow the law as stipulated in this act. Hence, CMs must have sound knowledge of these policies, for they are the officials responsible for guiding school leadership and acting as supervisors for principals in their administrative and management duties (DBE, 2013b). The *Policy on the Organisation, Roles and Responsibilities of the Education Districts* (DBE 2013b) sets a framework for the role and responsibilities of the education districts and officials to provide quality education to learners and outlines the role and responsibilities of the districts, circuits and CMs.

2.2.4.7 Policy on the Organisation, Roles and Responsibilities of the Education Districts

The *Policy on the Organisation, Roles and Responsibilities of the Education Districts* (DBE, 2013b, p. 7) provides “a national framework for the organisation and staffing of education district offices and the delegated authority, roles and responsibilities of district officials for the institutions within their care”. The key purpose of this national policy is, therefore, to provide a framework to enable PEDs to “demarcate, structure and staff their district offices effectively, so that all education institutions receive the services they need to improve education provision and quality” (DBE, 2013b, p. 7). The policy provides a uniform nomenclature that establishes a common basis for district norms and standards across all nine provinces of South Africa. The norms for districts and circuits must be applied in a manner that takes into account local circumstances and that makes educational sense (DBE, 2013). The policy acts as a framework within which PEDs can provide district offices with the necessary roles, delegated authority, functions, resources and skills to enable them to perform their core functions (DBE, 2013b). The framework provides for the furnishing of additional support at either PED, district or CM level, where the educational needs are greatest. Furthermore, the policy enables the DBE to direct education districts and circuit offices to achieve close cooperation between the national and provincial governments on matters relating to education, including the development of capacity in the education departments, and the effective management of the national education system (RSA, 1996b).

2.2.4.8 Policy on the South African Standards for Principalship

The *Policy on the South African Standards for Principalship* (DBE, 2016a) outlines what is expected of principals in their leadership and management role. The aim of this policy is to enhance the capacity and quality of education leadership in the education system. The policy outlines eight key interdependent areas aligned with the strategic priorities informed by the Action Plan to 2019 – Towards the Realisation of Schooling 2030. These priorities constitute the core purpose of the principal in the South African context, which are stated as follows in the *Policy on the South African Standards for Principalship*:

- a) Leading teaching and learning in the school;
- b) Shaping the direction and development of the school;
- c) Managing quality and securing accountability;
- d) Developing and empowering self and others;
- e) Managing the school as an organisation;
- f) Working with and for the community;
- g) Managing human resources (staff) in the school; and
- h) Managing and advocating extra-mural activities. (DBE, 2016a, p. 3)

In addition, this policy responds to the demands for effective support for district and school leaders as an important aspect towards improving the performance of the provision of education in schools and the basic education system in general. It also prepares school principals to deal with education reform and change processes to improve the quality of education in the decentralised education system (DBE, 2016a). The goal of the policy is to provide principals with ample opportunities for training and professional development. The policy also aims to enhance the career progression of the principal in the basic education system. As CMs are the closest point of contact between education districts and PEDs, it is their responsibility to be the first to provide professional support and development opportunities to principals in their roles and responsibilities as leaders and managers.

In conclusion, the above key basic education policies are aligned with the Constitution of South Africa. The Constitution and the abovementioned policies and acts protect learners, teachers and staff within the education system. These policies also ensure that the government grants access to education to all citizens of South Africa. They are designed to enable the DBE and its subdepartments to perform according to expectations. The roles of the district and especially the CM as a representative of the DBE are clear in these policies, as they are the key role players responsible for ensuring that principals implement the policies and that the teachers and learners adhere to the requirements set out in the policies. It is the role of the PEDs to assist the education districts in empowering CMs to support principals, SMTs and SGBs to deal with education change.

2.2.5 Provincial education departments

The nine PEDs act as the administrative and management arms of the DBE. They ensure that policies are implemented and that the national curriculum is provided to the schools within each province. The PEDs are responsible for the districts and schools in each province and for reporting on the administrative and management performance of the districts and schools to the DBE (DBE, 2013b). The approach of the PEDs to implement policies and provide curricula and support to districts is aligned with the vision of the DBE to ensure that all learners in South Africa do well at school and leave school with the necessary values, knowledge, skills and qualifications that will provide them with the best opportunity for success in the world of work (GDE, 2018; RSA, 2019). PEDs manage the districts within their provincial boundaries and provide relevant quality education, coordinate effective support and establish an enabling environment where young people can make the transition from the schooling system to further education or work that provides opportunities for further training (GDE, 2013; RSA, 2013). The role of both the DBE and the PEDs includes the strengthening of partnerships with relevant stakeholders to promote education priority in society and enhance economic development in South Africa (DBE, 2020b; RSA, 2013).

The functions of the various PEDs do not differ, irrespective of their difference in size, geographic location or the specific socio-economic challenges they face. However, the differences that do exist in the execution of their role and responsibilities allow each PED to develop an organisational structure that is best fit for its changing education environment and to provide sufficient service to its districts and schools (DBE, 2013a). The relevance of mentioning this is that the demarcation and size of the PED, district and circuit have an impact on the effectiveness of CMs' provision of support to principals and schools. Many CMs complain that their circuits are demarcated with too many schools they have to support. Moreover, the allocation of resources to these schools is difficult, and in some cases, many schools are located far away from district offices, which causes difficulties for CMs to support these schools.

2.2.5.1 Organisational structure of provincial education departments

Since 2012, the structure of PEDs and education districts has gone through numerous changes to adapt to the educational needs and challenges of the government and society (DBE, 2013a, 2020a). Some of these changes included the demarcation of the PEDs in the provinces of South Africa and the allocation of new districts, circuits and clusters (see Section 2.2.6, Table 2-1 and Figure 2-1). The PEDs across the nine provinces differ in both structure and their organisation reporting lines. Within the PED structure, the Heads of Education Departments Committee assists the MECs in making informed decisions regarding basic education and the needs of the schools

in each province. The Heads of Education Departments Committee comprises the DBE director-general, the deputy director-general and MECs as the heads of the PEDs (DBE, 2020b; GDE, 2019) (see Diagram 2-3).

The Heads of Education Departments Committee is responsible for facilitating the development of the national education system (see Section 2.2.2.1). The committee needs to revise existing policies to enhance education and develop and implement new policies. The purpose of the committee is to share ideas, information and views on national education. Its role is largely to coordinate administrative action on matters of common interest and to advise the DBE on an array of specified matters (DBE, 2013b) related to the optimal functioning of the national education system (DBE, 2020b). Any decision made by the committee has to be approved by the DBE, and only then may the MEC of the relevant PED implement any change in the specific province (RSA, 1996c, 2019). After the DBE has made an informed decision, “the power to demarcate, name and organise education districts (circuits and clusters) vests with the MEC for Education” (DBE, 2013b, p. 8). The MEC is the only executive authority responsible for the organisation of the PED structure, according to the *Public Service Act* of 1994 (DBE, 2013b). The MECs’ division of the PEDs report structure is informed by policies, provincial and societal educational needs, the geographic allocation of schools in the province and the amount and level of educational resources available to the PEDs, districts and circuit offices (DBE, 2013b, 2020b). The MECs also determine the public service staff and teachers of the districts in terms of the *Employment of Teachers Act* 76 of 1998 (RSA, 1998). Therefore, they also determine the teaching positions (available teaching appointments) of the various provinces subject to national post-provisioning norms in South Africa. Teacher positions are created based on learner growth in schools. “Staffing matters such as post provisioning and remuneration are subject to continuous adjustment through collective agreements in the appropriate bargaining chamber, in terms of the relevant labour legislation” (RSA, 2007, p. 50).

Informed by the MECs, the organisation structure of the PEDs is designed to ensure that the education districts in their provincial boundaries deliver on their key strategic goals and objectives (see Section 2.2.5.1). The PEDs have to ensure stability regarding achieving alignment between the new strategic direction and the organisational objectives of the DBE (DBE, 2013a). The structure forms the foundation of diagnosing where and how the DBE needs to focus on reorganising resources and prioritising processes and people in the PEDs, districts and circuit offices to ensure that the PEDs fulfil their obligations with regard to education (see Diagram 2-3).

Diagram 2-3 below outlines the basic structure of PEDs in South Africa. The structure provides an overview of the various departments that play a role in the provision of education to learners in schools. It also indicates where education leaders and departments are involved in policy

development and the development of plans to enhance the provision of education. The policies and education plans developed are then cascaded down to the different districts and circuits. It is then the responsibility of the CM to ensure that these policies and plans are implemented in the schools. The CM's responsibility includes reporting on school infrastructure, resources (human and physical), curriculum, school finances and learner performance to some of the departments in the PED structure.

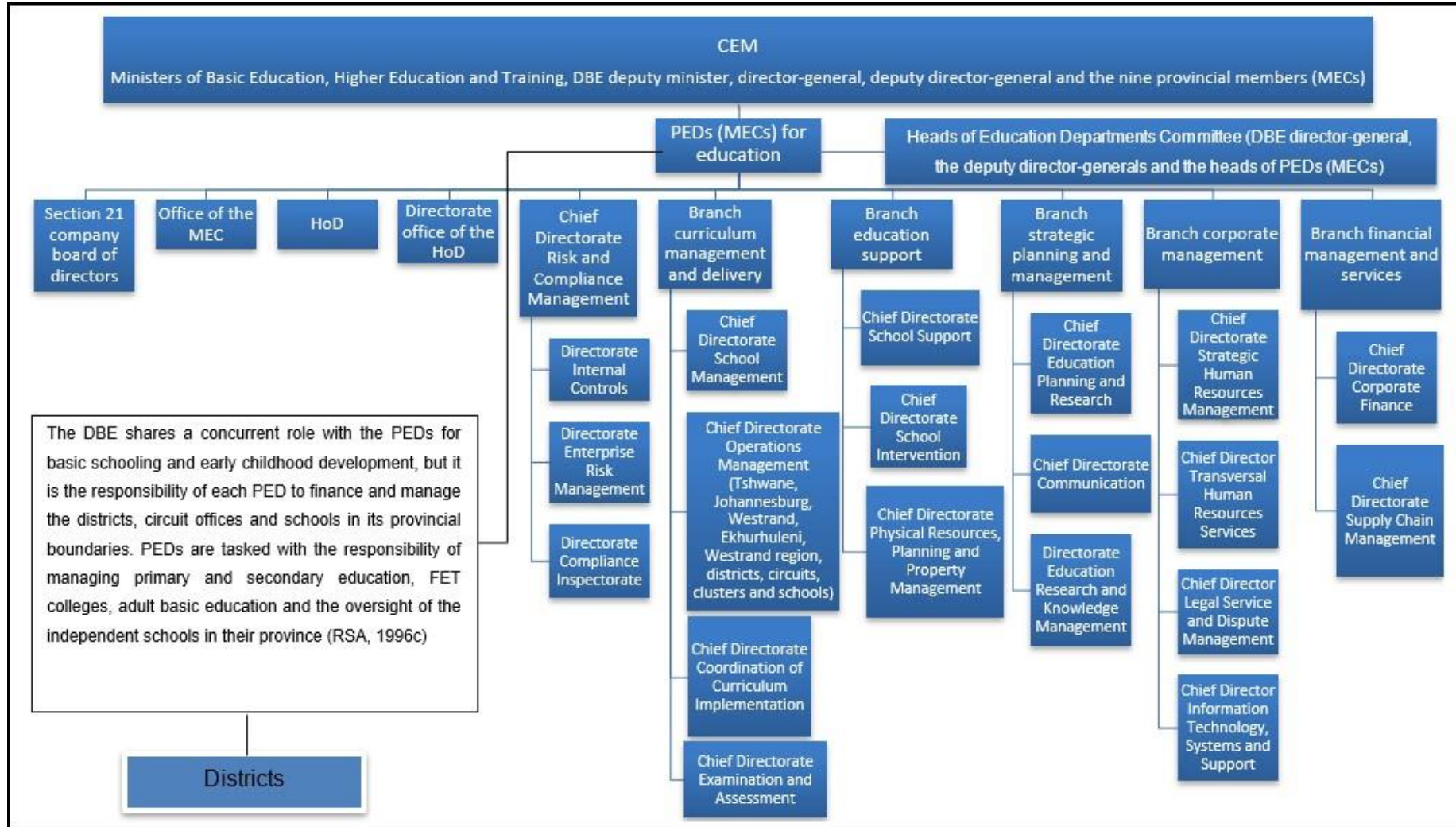


Diagram 2-3: Generic PED reporting structure (DBE, 2013a)

Furthermore, the PEDs are responsible for funding and managing the districts, circuit offices and schools in their provincial boundaries. The responsibilities of PEDs include managing primary and secondary education, FET colleges and adult basic education and the oversight of the independent schools in their respective provinces (RSA, 1996c). Moreover, they have to provide the necessary resources for the implementation of the curriculum and the management of resources (staff, infrastructure, finances, administration and teaching and learning material) (GDE, 2013).



Figure 2-1: Provincial boundaries of South Africa

For PEDs to reach all the schools within their boundaries, they use education districts as their main point of interface with schools because better control and support can be provided to schools from a centralised point and because districts are the closest point of contact between the PED and schools (GDE, 2013). The study focuses on two districts in Gauteng; so, it is important to mention how districts, circuits and clusters are demarcated within the province. The demarcation is done according to the size of the district, the number of schools in the district, the types of schools (quintile 1-5), the geographic location of the district and schools and the structure of the district. One must first understand the purpose of the demarcation to truly understand what challenges education districts and specifically CMs face in managing, supporting and servicing their schools (GDE, 2013, 2019).

In conclusion, PEDs are key role players in the quest of the government to provide quality education to all learners. Their support to districts and schools is vital to the success and performance of basic education in South Africa. The hierarchy of reporting and branches of the PEDs is shown in Diagram 2-3. CMs not only report to their district director and within the district structure, as indicated in Diagram 2-6 (GDE, 2013, 2018), but they also have a reporting obligation to their PEDs. Therefore, PEDs must provide the necessary resources to the districts and ensure that the districts provide the necessary support and service to the principals that will enable them to maintain and improve the quality of education offered at their schools. Furthermore, PEDs need to ensure that districts empower CMs to provide sufficient support to principals and schools. It is critical that CMs are knowledgeable of the relevant policies to effectively support principals. In recent years, PEDs have increasingly prioritised their district administrative and professional responsibilities. The district boundaries have been changed, and the district offices have been restructured to make them more effective (DBE, 2013b). The district director and the education districts report to their PED and MEC through the PED organisation hierarchy structure to maintain the protocol of accountability.

2.2.5.2 Hierarchical relationship between the provincial education department and the education districts

In the organisational structure of the PED, it is the responsibility of the provincial HoDs to ensure that district offices receive timely and effective administrative and professional support from the relevant line and staff functions in the structures. PEDs have the specific task to support underperforming district offices by means of different sub-directorates or units that act as service and support teams. The primary task of the support teams is to improve the overall functionality of the districts, especially in the district leadership and management structures, in order to improve their skills and competencies for robust and responsible management (DBE, 2013a; GDE, 2013). The hierarchical structures in both PEDs and districts must allow for transparent collaboration and to improve the interconnectedness between them, as indicated in Diagrams 2-3 and 2-4. The precise nature of such interconnectedness responds to the specific circumstances of the PED and the district and cannot be uniformly prescribed in national policies or guidelines. According to the guide for district officials of the GDE, a strong planning culture must be exhibited by the PED and district offices alike (GDE, 2013). The GDE document states that “the organisational culture of PEDs and district offices (including their circuit offices) needs to encourage, expect and reward collaboration across functional areas” (GDE, 2013, p. 6).

Colleagues in different line management functions must work cooperatively in order to respond effectively to the requirements of the PED (GDE, 2013). The needs of SGBs, school principals, parents, teachers and learners must be taken into account (GDE, 2013). A culture of inclusion

rather than a culture of differentiation is required. Horizontal, task-orientated working groups are, therefore, more appropriate than static, hierarchical silos in carrying out district functions (GDE, 2013). Skillful, flexible project management skills in particular are necessary and need to be exhibited by CMs. They should have strong planning and collaborative relationships with the principals they supervise to improve the principals' ability to deal with change.

The monitoring of school performance and regular reporting on it will become a regular task of district operations, and the CM's function will be to provide regular feedback on schools to enable the school, circuit, district, PED and DBE to make informed decisions on the way forward to enhance education. However, according to Bantwini and Moorosi (2018a), there is not a strong relationship between CMs and principals, SMTs and SGBs; neither is there between the districts in PEDs. Moreover, the majority of CMs do not understand their supportive, mentorship and development role for principals (Bantwini & Moorosi, 2018a). Van der Voort and Wood (2016) add that many CMs do not have previous experience of being a principal; therefore, they lack the understanding to develop appropriate support initiatives and strategies for principals to deal with education change, which also affects their accuracy (details of support initiative) on reports to districts on the how to best support principals.

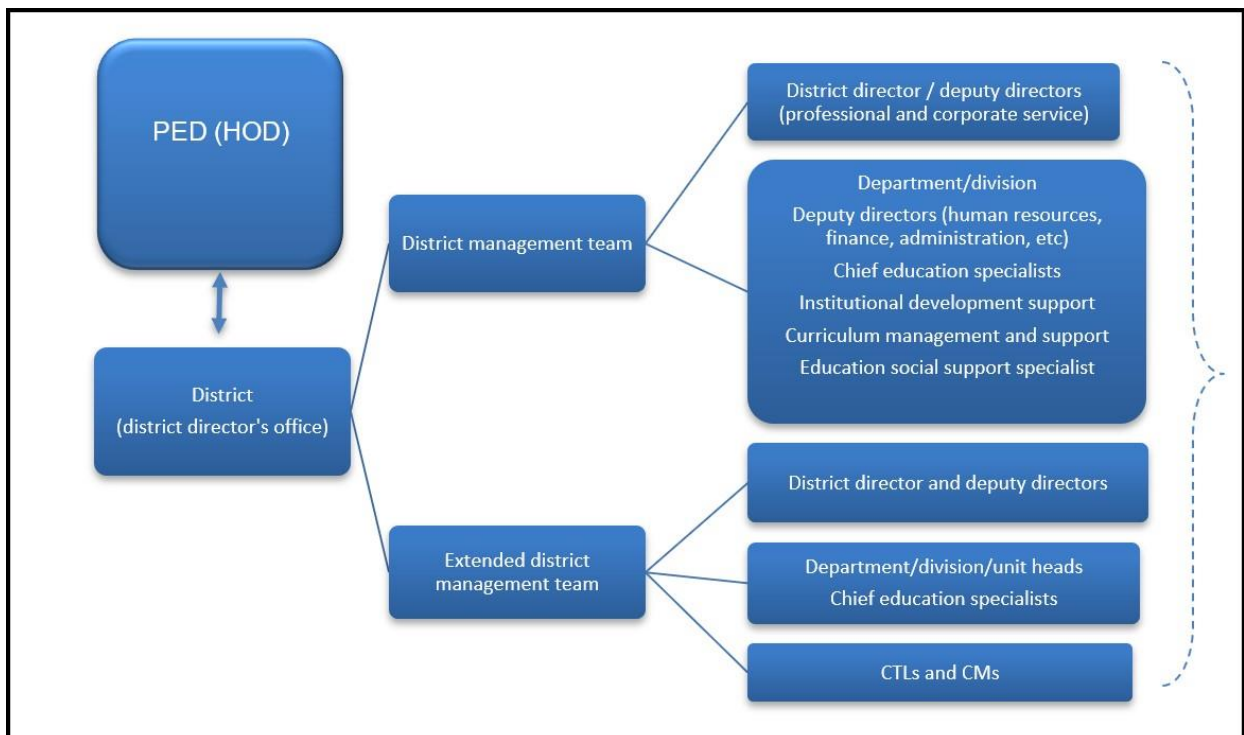


Diagram 2-4: Hierarchical relationship between the PED, districts and circuits

It is the responsibility of the PED to ensure that district directors and CMs are highly competent leaders and managers who are trained for their role and acquire the necessary experience to lead

their districts well (DBE, 2013b). Education district offices are key in the transformation of education in South Africa and for the provision of quality education to the schools within their boundaries.

2.2.6 Education districts

Education districts are the management and administrative subdepartments of a PED that report directly to the PED and the DBE (DBE, 2013b). Education district offices fulfil a pivotal role in ensuring that all learners have access to education of progressively high quality, as district offices are the link between PEDs, schools and the public. It is the MEC's responsibility to demarcate district boundaries aligned with provincial strategic and operational plans. Subject to provincial plans, districts are established for the purpose of not only providing support to schools but also working collaboratively with principals and teachers in schools. Districts are strategically established to ensure that access to education is provided to all learners within their boundaries. Furthermore, the rationale behind the establishment of education district offices throughout the South African education system was to bring education authorities closer to schools (DBE, 2013a, 2013b). District offices are seen as vital institutional actors in education reform (Bantwini & Moorosi, 2018a; DBE, 2020a, 2020b; GDE, 2019; HRDC, 2014; Rorrer et al., 2008). The literature accentuates that districts are key elements and authorised agents in education change and are responsible for appointing qualified staff, implementing policy, providing the curriculum and overseeing and guiding schools (Anderson, 2003; Bantwini & Diko, 2011; GDE, 2013; Langhan et al., 2012; Mavuso, 2014; Moorosi & Bantwini, 2016; Nkambule & Amsterdam, 2018; Smith & Beckmann, 2016).

Districts and CMs receive delegated authority from the PED to carry out its mandate in schools (Bantwini & Moorosi, 2018a; DBE, 2013b). Mohlala (2007) states that the reason for the government establishing the current district structures within the basic education system is based on the need to provide education support to all and to take education closer to schools and communities. Although education districts have no original powers or functions prescribed by law, "they operate in terms of national, provincial legislation and delegation" (DBE, 2013b, p. 8). Their function is to provide vital communication pathways between the PED and the schools and education institutions for which they are responsible (DBE, 2013b, 2020a). Districts are the intermediaries between the national and provincial departments of education and schools (GDE, 2013).

PEDs across the nine provinces of South Africa use different methods of demarcating their district, circuit and cluster boundaries (see Section 2.3.1.2). Depending on the context, the term *district* is used to describe either the geographic area or the administrative unit and is the first-level

administrative subdivision of a PED (DBE, 2013b). District offices are the management sub-units of a PED and can also be seen as the departments that manage schools and oversee the implementation of policies (DBE, 2013b). In some provinces, district offices are also interpreted to be professional support provision departments to schools or resource centres for schools (Mavuso, 2014). Some provinces view district offices as a combination of the beforementioned (Bantwini & Moorosi, 2018a; Bantwinin & Diko, 2011; Bottoms & Schmidt-Davis, 2010; Bush & Glover, 2014).

The demarcation of districts enables the PED to implement policies and to have better control over the schools in the province. Through PED and district report structures, PEDs are able to identify and focus on districts and schools that need additional support. The purpose, role and responsibilities of districts are often determined and adjusted by the PEDs. Changes are often informed by the socio-economic status of the region, the needs of the surrounding communities and the resources available to provide quality basic education to these communities.

2.2.6.1 Purpose of education district offices

Within the context of the study, it is important to discuss the purpose, role and responsibilities of the district office because the role of the CM is in many ways linked to the role and responsibilities of the district (DBE, 2013b) (see Section 2.3.2.2). For the purpose of this study, the head of the circuit is referred to as the circuit team leader (CTL) and the head of the cluster as the circuit manager or CM.

The role and responsibilities of the CM as the district official who is the closest point of contact between principals and the district are discussed in Section 2.3.2.2. The *Policy on the Organisation, Roles and Responsibilities of the Education Districts* (DBE, 2013b) describes districts as support centres for schools and the administrative and management arms of the PEDs (Van der Voort & Wood, 2016).

The primary purpose of the education district offices is to implement national and provincial policies and to provide administrative, curriculum and practical support to schools (see Section 2.4.7). The districts address all aspects concerning academia for institutions to operate effectively. The support provided by districts to schools is usually a direct support function. However, district offices often utilise CMs to provide such support; hence, the role and responsibilities of the CM are linked to those of the district. The role of districts is to act as intermediaries between schools and the PED and the DBE. The district officials play a critical role in overseeing the implementation of all new policies developed by the DBE and the PEDs in schools (DBE, 2013a, 2013b, 2015,

2020a). Knapp et al. (2003) concur that the significance of local school districts in mediating between schools and the government is undeniable.

In addition, districts provide support and service to their circuit offices to enable CMs to carry out a number of the districts' responsibilities towards principals and schools. Districts are tasked to capacitate circuit offices and CMs through professional development initiatives and to provide the necessary resources for them to do their job and to address the needs and challenges of the schools identified as important during their school visits. Furthermore, districts collect data and information from schools and assist principals and teachers in using the data to set goals. CMs are tasked with collecting the data from principals, SMTs and SGBs. Districts monitor the progress on management and school performance and assist in the analysis of the data for the sole purpose of improving the quality of basic education offered to learners. They convert the data to useful information, which is then reported to the PED (DBE, 2013b; GDE, 2019; HRDC, 2014; Ndlovu, 2018). Districts use the information gathered to assist principals, SMTs and SGBs in their planning and in developing school improvement plans for the school. Moreover, districts play a crucial role in providing the necessary guidance towards curriculum implementation and offering, human resources, school management, teacher development, administration, teaching-learning and assessment (DBE, 2013b, 2016b, 2020b; Mohlala, 2007; Ruiz et al., 2007; Smith & Beckmann, 2016).

In conclusion, the primary purpose of a district office is to assist the schools and education institutions in their care to deliver quality education and to ensure that these institutions uphold the quality of education delivery to learners. The HoDs of a PED are accountable for the performance of education districts and they are responsible for the organisation and establishment of district structures. They must ensure that districts are sufficiently staffed and resourced to assume their functions and carry out their mandate as assigned by the PED (DBE, 2013b). The role of education districts is aligned with the strategic objectives of the DBE and the PEDs (RSA, 2019). The CM plays a critical role in the district in adhering to and meeting the objectives in the education reform plans of the DBE and the PED.

2.2.6.2 The role of education districts

It has already been established in the study that districts are key role players in the provision of administrative, technical and management support for circuit offices and schools (DBE, 2013b, 2020a). Diko et al. (2011) argue that the function and role of education district offices are clarified as those of providing adequate resources and ensuring that quality teaching and learning are offered in schools. Also, districts are expected to increase whole-school support and effectiveness by means of the provision of educational resources and professional development for CMs and

principals (Diko et al., 2011). Therefore, the role of education districts is central to the success of principals, SMTs, SGBs and schools (see Section 2.3.2.2).

The role of districts can be summarised under four main focus areas with consideration given to schools that need urgent support. These four main focus areas are planning, support, oversight and accountability, and public engagement. The role of the CM is aligned with these four main focus areas of the district.

2.2.6.2.1 Planning

The first focus area of education districts is planning. The district must establish a culture of reactivity towards planning. Strategic planning is very important for the improvement of the performance of schools and learners. Therefore, planning, which has several dimensions, is regarded as a crucial role of districts and circuit office support to schools (DBE, 2013b). Electronic connectivity between PEDs, district and circuit offices and schools reinforces strategic planning and is crucial when collaboration is done. Effective utilisation of electronic administrative tools and professional resources is essential and cannot be disregarded in this day and age of continuous education change (DBE, 2013b). District offices must focus on the effective collection, verification, analysis and application of educational data from annual school statistical surveys. Annual national assessments, NSC results and other sources are used to identify weak points and where urgent attention, support and assistance are needed. The role of district offices in this focus area is to collect and analyse data from schools, circuits and districts to inform strategic and organisational planning (Diko et al., 2011) (see Section 2.2.6.1).

In addition, district and circuit offices use the gathered data to identify shortcomings and needs to assist principals, SMTs, SGBs and schools in compiling school improvement or development plans to enhance the quality of education. District planning is based on the collection, verification and analysis of up-to-date school and learner data and is a continuous district action that allows for the integration of school improvement or development plans into district strategic and operational plans (DBE, 2013b). District plans have to be aligned with the provincial and national priorities and plans. According to the GDE (2013, p. 7), “while school plans are the essential drivers of district plans, the latter must function within a provincial system of coordination and support”. The CM is responsible for informing principals of the district plans and providing support where necessary so that schools can comply with what is expected from them by the district.

District offices operate according to predictable work programmes and plans developed by PEDs (DBE, 2013a, 2013b, 2016b; GDE, 2013). Regular meetings must be scheduled at the district and circuit levels for consultation with managers, specialists and staff in their respective functions.

School principals, SGB chairpersons and representatives of stakeholder bodies must be included in these discussions and planning. District meetings need to be open and interactive in order to encourage meaningful feedback and exchange views, and, where appropriate, collective decision making is necessary. A culture of teamwork between districts, circuit offices and principals are crucial if districts are to carry out their mandate, which is embedded within a strong supportive function. As part of the leadership team of the schools, the CM represents the district office, and as such, his or her input regarding school management issues and reporting on issues to the district are very important functions in the district and school structure (DBE, 2013a, 2013b, 2016b; GDE, 2013).

2.2.6.2.2 Organisational culture and support

The second focus area is organisational culture and support, which are intertwined with planning. The organisational culture of PEDs and district offices (including their circuit offices) is to motivate, encourage, expect and reward collaboration across all functional areas (GDE, 2013a, 2018). There should be a culture of open and free collaboration that will motivate and encourage the improvement of interconnectedness between people and support units in the district. Working in silos should be avoided at all times to cooperatively respond effectively to the needs of principals, SGBs (parents), teachers and learners. A culture of inclusion instead of a culture of differentiation is required in promoting equality and striving towards democracy. According to Bantwini and Moorosi (2018b), the districts provide support through the process of establishing an enabling environment and targeted support for education institutions within the district to do their work in line with education legislation and policy. Districts are there to assist and support school principals and teachers to improve the quality of teaching and learning in their institutions through district interventions. These interventions include school visits, classroom observation, consultation and cluster meetings, providing suitable feedback reports and any other means deemed necessary to provide sufficient and adequate support (Mohlala, 2007). The CM supports principals in building a strong school culture in which the CM becomes part of that culture.

Districts serve as an information node for institutions (schools, private colleges, etc.) on education legislation, policy and administration. They facilitate information and communication technology connectivity in all institutions within the district. The district culture is reinforced by providing an enabling environment and organising provision and support for the professional development of managers, teachers and administrative staff members (DBE, 2013b). According to the GDE (2013), strong planning and a collaborative culture and support will enable district offices (including circuit offices) to optimise their performance. The monitoring of school and district performance and timely reports will become a routine aspect of district operations, providing relevant and reliable information as feedback to decision makers at all levels from schools to

circuit and district offices, and from districts to PEDs and the DBE. Electronic reporting and communication will increasingly speed up these processes. The CM's ability to use information and communication technology enables him or her to extract data from database systems so that immediate support can be provided to principals and reporting on focus areas can be done. However, each district is responsible and accountable for the schools under its care, and therefore, clear oversight and accountability are key to the performance of schools and districts.

2.2.6.2.3 Oversight and accountability

The third focus area is districts' provision of oversight and accountability to schools within their boundaries. Districts hold CMs and principals accountable for the performance of their schools (Smith & Beckmann, 2016), while the districts are accountable to the PED for the performance of the education institutions in their district in terms of performance agreements that stipulate the role, function and responsibilities of district officials, which are aligned with relevant policies (DBE, 2013b). Districts are also responsible for engaging with the public and surrounding communities within their district boundaries (DBE, 2013a, 2020a; GDE, 2013). It is in this area of oversight and accountability that the CM plays a critical role in the planning of providing support to principals and the reporting of principals' and schools' performance to districts and the public. CMs are accountable for the schools that are allocated to them in their circuits. They have to report on the status of their schools to the District Management Team (DMT) and to the Provincial Education Department's (PED's) Heads of Departments (HODs) They have to ensure that schools are governed according to policies and that the national curriculum is implemented in the different phases of schooling (DBE, 2013a; GDE, 2013). Over and above CMs have to ensure that schools have the necessary resources for day to day function. The CMs work in collaboration with principals and School Management Teams (SMTs) that teaching and learning is conducted within the spectrum of policies and legislation.

2.2.6.2.4 Public engagement

The last focus area is where districts are the center for public engagement. They inform and consult with the public in an open and transparent manner and uphold the principles of Batho Pele (DBE, 2013b). The GDE (2013) mentions that districts are to exhibit the Batho Pele principles when dealing with the public and staff members of district and circuit offices (DBE, 2013b). These principles involve setting and observing service standards, consulting with clients, ensuring courteous behaviour, increasing access to services, acting openly and transparently, redressing substandard performance, providing the required information to the public and ensuring value for money (GDE, 2013). The role of districts in education transformation is critically important if the DBE and PEDs are to reform the basic education system, address the inequalities of the past and

prepare for the future of learners who can positively contribute to the socio-economic demands of the 21st century. The role of CMs to support principals is aligned with the four focus areas of the district, and their tasks are embedded in and linked to each area.

In addition to the four focus areas discussed above, the role and responsibilities of the district, as outlined by the DBE (2013b), are aligned with relevant policies (see Section 2.2.4.1). Although the *Policy on the Organisation, Roles and Responsibilities of the Education Districts* (DBE, 2013b) outlines the role and responsibilities of districts, there are limitations to the policy. Beyond the described role and responsibilities of districts are the additional expectations of the PEDs and the DBE with regard to districts, circuits, school management and teachers.

2.2.6.3 The responsibilities of education districts

The responsibilities of districts are aimed at enhancing the quality of education. They are central to dissecting, diagnosing and solving problems that cannot be solved by the principal, SMT or SGB of a school. Districts perform a vital support, development and intervention function in solving problems and dealing with challenges in education change (Bantwini & Moorosi, 2018b; DBE, 2013b). The literature indicates that the role and responsibilities of the district office are central in dealing with the challenges of education reform (Bush & Glover, 2016; Chingara, 2019; DBE, 2013b; Narsee, 2006; Rorrer et al., 2008; RSA, 2013; Smith & Beckmann, 2016).

The *Policy on the Organisation, Roles and Responsibilities of the Education Districts* (DBE, 2013b) outlines the general organisational responsibilities of the education districts and what is expected of them. The DBE (2013b) policy, Narsee (2006) and Mavuso (2014) all state that districts are responsible for providing essential services to schools, (see Section 2.3.1.1). These services include curriculum support, institutional development and support, human resources management and development, education support services, sport and adherence to culture and values in education, as visually presented in Diagram 2-6. Districts are responsible for implementing policies and the curriculum in schools and ensuring that the principal, the SMT and the SGB manage the school in terms of the basic education policies and legislation. For this task, districts often use the circuit offices and CMs. Districts management is responsible for developing an appropriate district structure to best carry out its responsibilities (DBE, 2013b, GDE, 2013). Furthermore, districts are responsible for ensuring that SMTs and SGBs fulfil their legal obligations towards their respective roles. In addition, districts guide principals, SMTs and SGBs through their human resources structure in the process of appointing qualified teachers.

Districts are also responsible for the allocation of circuit offices, the subdivision of clusters and progressively organising, staffing and providing resources to circuits to undertake the functions

envisaged in the DBE (2013b) policy. They have to empower CMs to capacitate principals, SMTs and SGBs in their administrative and management role (DBE, 2013b) and are also responsible for developing principals in their role as educational leaders. Research has shown that the quality of principalship is directly linked to the performance of learners in schools (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Hotak, 2018; Ndlovu, 2018; Wallace Foundation, 2013). The professional development of principals needs to be a continuous process if districts expect principals to deal with the additional workload caused by continuous education change and to meet the expectations set by districts (DBE, 2013b, 2016a, 2016b; Wallace Foundation, 2013).

In addition to all of the abovementioned responsibilities, the DBE expects districts to increase the effectiveness of schools and provide educational resources and professional support to principals and schools. This task causes many challenges due to a lack of resources and support provided by the DBE (Diko et al., 2011). It is important to note that the responsibilities of a district are directly aligned with the type of schools (quintile 1-5) it services within its district boundaries. The way in which districts conduct their responsibilities is often determined by the needs of the district, school and community, as well as the resources available and the geographic location of the schools (Collingridge, 2013; DBE, 2013b; RSA, 1996c, 2020) (see Section 2.4).

The current status of many education districts is a matter of great concern for the DBE. The DBE, PEDs and districts face many challenges, in addition to districts being ill-resourced. Moreover, district officials are overworked due to positions not being filled, which means that they are expected to do additional work. Consequently, district officials feel they are underpaid, and their well-being is a matter of great concern (Bantwini & Moorosi, 2018b; Blase & Blase, 1999; Dambuza, 2015). The restructuring and demarcation of new districts by the DBE were done to provide better service to schools and enhance productivity with the purpose of improving the quality of education in an already-struggling system. Restructuring, however, is not always the correct option to deal with change but is often the first point of departure that organisations take to deal with change.

2.2.6.4 Demarcation and size of districts

Districts are strategically demarcated for the purpose of being institutional actors in education reform (Bantwini & Diko, 2011). They are major sources for capacity building in schools (Diko et al., 2011; GDE, 2013). The DBE and the PEDs ensure that all service departments, such as districts, should attempt to align their operational and functional boundaries with the constitutionally proclaimed local municipal boundaries as determined by the Municipal Demarcation Board. The board is charged to assist provinces and districts in the demarcation process. Although local government municipalities have no responsibility for education provision,

the alignment of district education boundaries is in line with the government's wish to rationalise and coordinate support and service delivery to the three spheres of government, namely the local, provincial and national departments (DBE, 2013b, 2020a). The size of the districts has an enormous impact on CMs to fulfil their role and responsibilities towards principals during education change. As discussed, districts and CMs face many challenges in providing sufficient resources (human and physical) to principals and schools. For instance, some CMs have to travel vast distances to conduct visits to schools in remote areas; therefore, providing frequent support is difficult.

2.2.6.4.1 Districts and basic education institutions

Within the borders of the nine provinces, 86 districts were demarcated and established in 2007. In 2013, several changes were again made to the district boundaries by the PEDs and the DBE to address challenges with regard to education provision in the various provinces. The demarcation process assigned a collection of institutions to districts for which they are responsible. These institutions comprise quintile 1 to 5 primary and secondary schools, early childhood schools or centres, colleges and adult basic education and training centres. The demarcation, establishment and integration of districts within the broader education system promote a more inclusive basic education system (Mavuso, 2014). The establishment of districts in areas where they were absent now enables the government to provide and manage education to all communities (segregated and previously advantaged communities as well). Moreover, the demarcation of districts gives the government better access to and control and management of previously advantaged Model C schools (for white learners), as well as schools in rural areas and schools that were never exposed to basic education (DBE, 2001; Donohue & Bornman, 2014). While the demarcation has enabled CMs to focus on schools that were neglected by districts in the past, it has not made the work of CMs lighter; however, it has improved the support focus of the CM to support schools in challenging contexts. The district boundaries were established by the PEDs to provide better service to schools under their care and to focus on the provision of quality education to learners.

2.2.6.4.2 District boundaries

The size of a district depends on several factors, including the geographic location of schools, the number of schools in the province, the district population and the resources available to the PEDs and the DBE. For example, districts in Gauteng, like many other provinces, are demarcated according to local municipality boundaries. As this study was focused on two districts in Gauteng, it is important to make reference to the demarcation of the districts in Gauteng and the total number of schools and their geographic location (see Section 2.4.1). The districts in the basic

education system differs greatly in terms of their geographical size, the number of schools served and the poverty profile of the communities they serve. Education districts are usually determined by local municipality boundaries or by the number of schools that need to be serviced and supported (DBE, 2013a). The DBE has important guidelines on how districts are demarcated, organised and staffed (DBE, 2013a, 2013b, 2020a).

The boundaries of education districts must stand the test of efficient education service delivery, which means that districts should be able to service and support their schools with the available resources and the resource grant they receive from the PED and the DBE. Taking into account all relevant factors, including geographical, staffing and financial implications, the national norms set out in the *Policy on the Organisation, Roles and Responsibilities of the Education Districts* (DBE, 2013b) are that an education district must comprise no fewer than five and no more than ten education circuits. A circuit office must be responsible for no fewer than 15 and no more than 30 schools. However, caution is raised by the DBE (2013a) to guard against the maximum limit becoming a de facto norm. In cases when this happens, the average number of schools per district may not exceed 250 and the average number of circuits may not exceed 25. When these norms are correctly applied across all districts, the result will be that district sizes, expressed by the number of schools for which a district office is responsible, are such that they can be sufficiently serviced.

Furthermore, there are districts in larger provinces that do not meet the test of efficient education service (DBE, 2013a). The reason for this is that these provinces are quite large, with large distances between schools and some schools located in areas that are difficult to reach (the geographic allocation of schools). Most of these districts do not have circuit offices in these areas and work directly from the district office (Bantwini, 2018). Therefore, CMs have to travel vast distances to service these schools, which often causes a delay in the provision of support as the CMs do not visit schools regularly because of the long distance from the district office to the schools. In addition, the lack of resources to service the total number of schools the district offices are responsible for remains a huge challenge (DBE, 2013a). To address these challenges, many PEDs align their districts with municipality boundaries. However, the alignment of districts with municipality boundaries is not always feasible. Some municipalities are very large, so that the district boundaries exceed the norm as stated in the DBE (2013b) policy. Therefore, appropriate alignment with municipal boundaries in each province should depend on local conditions, such as settlement patterns, social history (including the impact of apartheid group areas legislation), terrain, distances, rurality and road and rail links.

Table 2-1 gives the number of districts in each of the nine provinces of South Africa, ordered from the province with the least to the province with the most districts and circuit offices (DBE, 2013a).

From the table, it is clear that there are smaller provinces with more districts than larger provinces. This may be due to the geographic location of the schools in the districts, the number of schools that need to be supported, the population size and the needs of the surrounding community. For example, Gauteng is a much smaller province than the Western Cape and Limpopo but has more districts than them. The possible reason for this is that Gauteng has a much denser population per capita than the two provinces mentioned. A denser population results in more districts and schools, which in turn, leads to more resources and funding needed to service and support the educational needs of the province. The GED subdivided each of its metropolitan areas into several education districts, as illustrated in Figures 2-2 and 2-3. With the view of allocating education districts according to metropolitan and municipality boundaries, the aim of the GDE was to improve the control and quality of education in the province (DBE, 2013a, 2013b, 2020a, 2020b; RSA, 2020a).

Table 2-1: Number of districts in each province (DBE, 2013a, 2020a)

Province	Number of districts
North West	4
Mpumalanga	4
Northern Cape	5
Free State	5
Western Cape	8
Limpopo	10
KwaZulu-Natal	12
Gauteng	15
Eastern Cape	23
Total	86
Average	10

The two districts selected for the study are located in Gauteng. As mentioned above, although Gauteng is a small province compared to Limpopo, the Northern Cape, the Eastern Cape and the Western Cape, this province is seen as the economic hub of the South African economy, meaning that it has a denser population per capita and, therefore, has more schools than the other provinces (except for the Eastern Cape). As the population of a province grows and municipality boundaries change, education district boundaries and alignment may be reviewed from time to time by PEDs to take account of the changing circumstances.

In conclusion, it is better for districts and CMs to manage fewer schools rather than too many. Thus, where the population is sparsely settled over wide rural areas, CMs have to travel vast distances to visit and support schools. In these areas, fewer districts are needed and the allocation of schools to a circuit should also be less. Doing so will improve the service, support and resource provision by districts and CMs to schools. More districts can be established in dense metropolitan regions, and more CMs can be assigned to schools to ensure that all schools are serviced and supported. However, this means that more government funding and resources for these districts are needed. This approach provides opportunities for districts to enhance the provision of quality education and support principals in dealing with change. Furthermore, the establishment of circuit offices in districts enables districts, through CMs, to focus on supporting principals, SMTs and SGBs with the idea to enhance and promote quality education. Districts strategically demarcate their circuits and assign responsibilities to the CMs who manage the circuits to provide the best possible support and services to schools. The demarcation of education circuits is critical in the provision of support to schools and has a direct impact on the quality of education and the provision of education to learners.

2.2.7 Education circuits

An education circuit is an area of an education district demarcated by an MEC for administrative purposes (see Section 2.2.7.2 and Figure 2-4). The term *circuit* is used to describe the geographic area or the administrative unit of a district (DBE, 2013b). Education circuits are the second-level administrative subdivision of a PED. Unlike districts, which in many cases follow prescribed administrative boundaries, such as municipalities, education circuits have no defined boundaries and can consist of more than 100 schools. A properly constituted education circuit can be categorised as one where schools are logically grouped together and clearly distinguishable from schools in other circuits. This grouping may include, but is not limited to, the size of the school with reference to the capacity of learners it can accommodate and the quintile classification of the school (fee-paying or no-fee school).

Schools are categorised into quintiles from 1 to 5 (see Section 2.2.8.1.1). The classification is determined by the MEC of the province. The size of the school, the socio-economic status of the community, the availability of resources and the total number of learners attending the school are the main factors that determine the classification of the school. This grouping often results in homogeneous clusters consisting of only former Model C schools (DBE, 2015; RSA, 2019). Former Model C schools are often established in urban areas and are well developed with regard to infrastructure and resources. From the view of available resources and infrastructure, they often need less support from districts than schools in previously disadvantaged areas (Mavuso, 2014). Township and specifically rural and farm schools often have poor infrastructure and are difficult to access. Also, they are, in general, underperforming schools due to resource constraints and socio-economic challenges experienced in the community (Mavuso, 2014). Some provinces have made a deliberate attempt to establish education circuits and clusters with a combination of quintile 1 to 5 urban, rural, township and farm schools. This is done to dedicate district resources to those schools that need them most. The motivation of the demarcation is to have a presentative mix of underperforming and well-performing schools and to maintain a balanced workload for the CM who has to support these schools (DBE, 2013a). The demarcation of circuits, the circuit size and the allocation of CMs to schools all have an impact on the effectiveness of support provision to principals and schools.

2.2.7.1 Demarcation and size of circuits

Within the GDE, the size and concept of an education circuit are perhaps a little more standard than those of other education districts in South Africa. The DBE (2013a) states that districts tend to consist of more or less 30 schools (currently, the country-wide average is 28 schools). These districts are equally divided into circuits, clusters and schools. The distance between district

offices and the schools they serve is on average more or less 42 kilometers (DBE, 2013a). As mentioned in Section 2.3.1.3, the demarcation of districts, circuits and clusters is determined by the municipality boundaries or the total number of schools within the province (GDE, 2019). Larger provinces, such as the Northern and Eastern Cape, Limpopo and Mpumalanga, have a significant number of small schools consisting of fewer than 150 learners located in small towns in areas that are more difficult to reach. These schools are often referred to as farm schools or rural schools (DBE, 2013a; Mouton et al., 2012; RSA, 2019).

An analysis done by the DBE (2013a) shows that the number of schools allocated to circuits and clusters in KwaZulu-Natal ranges in size from 20 to well over 30 schools per cluster. Some circuits are a combination of a logical grouping of schools in a contiguous area, while others reflect fractured, disjointed arrangements. It is often seen that circuits and clusters overlap. This leads to CMs having to travel past several schools allocated to other circuits to reach one of their “own” schools in their education circuit (Bantwini & Moorosi, 2018a; DBE, 2013a). Also, some schools are physically outside a specific education circuit; yet plans are made by the district to use other means to provide service to these schools (DBE, 2013a). For example, Bantustan schools, which in the apartheid era were schools that were geographically separate and isolated from other schools in South Africa for historical or other reasons, are now integrated into circuits or are serviced by an education district. A Bantustan, also known as a “Bantu homeland”, is an area where only black people lived. It was also known as a black state or a homeland, which was a territory that the South African government in the apartheid era had set aside for black inhabitants of South Africa and South West Africa (now Namibia) (Richardson III, 1978; Sharp & Spiegel, 1990). Many of the schools in these areas have depleted infrastructure and resources; so, it is a huge challenge for CMs to support these principals and schools in getting the necessary resources (human and physical) to deal with education change. These schools need a lot of attention, support and guidance. Consequently, CMs spend most of their time supporting these principals and schools, which has a negative impact on the effectiveness of their support to other schools they are responsible for.

In the context of this study, the DBE staffing list for the districts of the GDE (as indicated in Tables 2-1 and 2-2) shows that there are 169 CMs to service and support a total of 2 618 schools in Gauteng, yielding an average ratio of 15 schools to one cluster or CM. The Free State has a similar low ratio with 16 schools per CM, followed by the Northern Cape with 20. Provinces at the other end of the spectrum are KwaZulu-Natal, where the ratio is 52 to one (119 CMs serving 6 159 schools) and North-West (59 CMs serving 1 643 schools). In the Western Cape, there are 21 schools per CM in the Metro Central district but almost double that (37) in the Cape Winelands. In the Northern Cape, there are 16 schools per CM in Frances Baard district (a mainly urban

district around Kimberley) but 27 in Namakwa, which has the greatest distances between schools and the district office of any district in South Africa (an average of 150 kilometers). In the Eastern Cape, there are 22 schools per CM in Grahamstown but 46 in Queenstown (DBE, 2013a). However, it seems unlikely that this is the real ratio of CM to schools in these provinces because there is a high retention rate of CMs and many vacant positions have not been filled (Bantwini & Moorosi, 2018a; Ndlovu, 2018; Nkambule & Amsterdam, 2018; Van der Voort & Wood, 2016).

From the above information, it is clear that many CMs are overwhelmed by the number of schools they have to service and support. Although the limits of circuits and schools per circuit have been outlined in the *Policy on the Organisation, Roles and Responsibilities of the Education Districts* (DBE, 2013b), the PEDs and districts do not always adhere to the prerequisite guidelines in the policy. Consequently, CMs are complaining that they are responsible for too many schools in their circuit and that it is not fair that their peers have fewer schools to support (Bantwini & Moorosi, 2018a).

The circuit demarcation and size have an impact on the level of support CMs in circuit offices can provide to principals to deal with education change. Circuits deal directly with their cluster of schools in both an administrative and a management capacity. Their task is to inform principals and schools of provincial education priorities (DBE, 2015). The perceptions of schools (principals, SGBs, SMTs and communities) are that education districts and circuit offices are the only sources of external support for principals and schools (Bantwini & Moorosi, 2018a; Nkambule & Amsterdam, 2018). The allocation of schools to a cluster enables districts through circuit offices to allocate a dedicated CM who is solely responsible for his or her clusters (schools), which results in better control and management of resources and reporting to district offices.

2.2.7.2 Cluster demarcation in education circuits

Circuits are subdivided into clusters. Each cluster is assigned a combination of quintile 1 to 5 schools (DBE, 2013a). The total number of quintiles 1 to 5 primary and secondary schools in the district boundaries determines the subdivision of circuits into clusters and the size of the clusters. Gauteng has on average a balanced number and grouping of quintiles 1 to 5 schools allocated to clusters. The national average cluster size is 16 schools per cluster, although in some provinces, the number often exceeds 30 schools per cluster, which is contradictory to the DBE (2013b) policy limits. A preliminary mapping exercise conducted in KwaZulu-Natal in 2009 revealed a high level of disparity in the size and number of schools per circuit and clusters, and it seems to be a trend, especially in the larger provinces and metropolises (DBE, 2013a; Diko et al., 2011; HRDC, 2014; Smith & Beckmann, 2016; Van der Voort & Wood, 2016). It is worth mentioning that the quintile classification of schools determines the level of support schools receive from CMs (Moloi, 2014).

In general, quintile 1 to 3 schools are no-fee farm or rural schools or township fee-paying schools (quintile 3) with limited resources. However, some quintile 4 and 5 (former Model C) fee-paying schools experience the same challenges in terms of limited resources as quintile 1 to 3 schools (Collingridge, 2013, GDE 2019).

To conclude, principals depend on circuits and clusters for information, administrative services and professional support. CMs, as the managers of clusters, are required to visit and supervise schools, provide support and communication and be the link to the district and provincial office. The *Policy on the Organisation, Roles and Responsibilities of the Education Districts* (DBE, 2013b) provides a framework to PEDs to demarcate, structure and staff their district offices effectively so that all education institutions receive the services they need to improve the provision and quality of education. National policies, including indicative national norms for district offices, circuit and cluster boundaries, are essential, but they must be implemented with full appreciation for the individual needs and characteristics of the provincial education systems, districts and schools. While some national norms (such as nomenclature) must be applied in the same way in all nine provinces, others, such as district, circuit and cluster sizes, need to be formulated and applied in an educationally defensible manner, depending on the varied conditions among and within the provinces (DBE, 2013b, p15-17). Impoverished education districts that serve farm, township and rural schools, especially those with small and dispersed populations and where roads and other communication infrastructure are poorly developed, deserve special consideration. As this study is specifically focused on the CMs in the Sedibeng East and West districts of Gauteng, their ability or inability to provide sufficient support to principals and schools in a time when education changes are plentiful is key to the study. Although Gauteng is the smallest of the nine provinces of South Africa, the GDE, in comparison to the PEDs of other provinces, deals with more than 10% of the total number of schools in South Africa.

2.2.8 Gauteng Department of Education

The head office of the GDE is located in Johannesburg. The GDE is divided into three regions, namely Twaga Region, Ekudibeng Region and Johannesburg Region (see Figures 2-3 and 2-4). The three regions are subdivided into 15 education districts each (GDE, 2013). These district boundaries are demarcated within local government (municipal) boundaries (GDE, 2019). The PED structure has been designed according to a district service delivery model. The model is based on three pillars, namely district support, circuit support teams and clusters (see Section 2.2.7.2), which are a subdivision of circuits and are managed by CMs (DBE, 2013a). The district service delivery model ensures that district CMs, in their roles, functions and activities, can provide end-to-end support to principals and SMTs. Furthermore, the district service delivery model enables an activist administration approach to service delivery, meaning spending less

time in the office and more time on supporting schools (80% support, 20% compliance). The 80% support means that CMs are more active in supporting principals, SMTs and SGBs in their role and focus on developing principals in dealing with education challenges. The 20% compliance is the time spent on ensuring that the school is well managed within policies and legislation and that a service delivery orientated administration is established (DBE, 2019; GDE, 2019).

Districts are divided into circuits, and circuits are subdivided into smaller clusters for better hands-on support from CMs to principals and SMTs. The GDE has managed to structure its districts and circuits to service all the schools in the province. This study was focused on two districts within the GDE (as discussed in Sections 2.4.1.1 and 2.4.1.2 and presented in Figures 2-3 and 2-4). The demarcation of the districts and circuits within the GDE structure is strategically implemented in an attempt to best serve and support the schools in its boundaries.



Figure 2-3: Education districts of Gauteng (GDE, 2013)

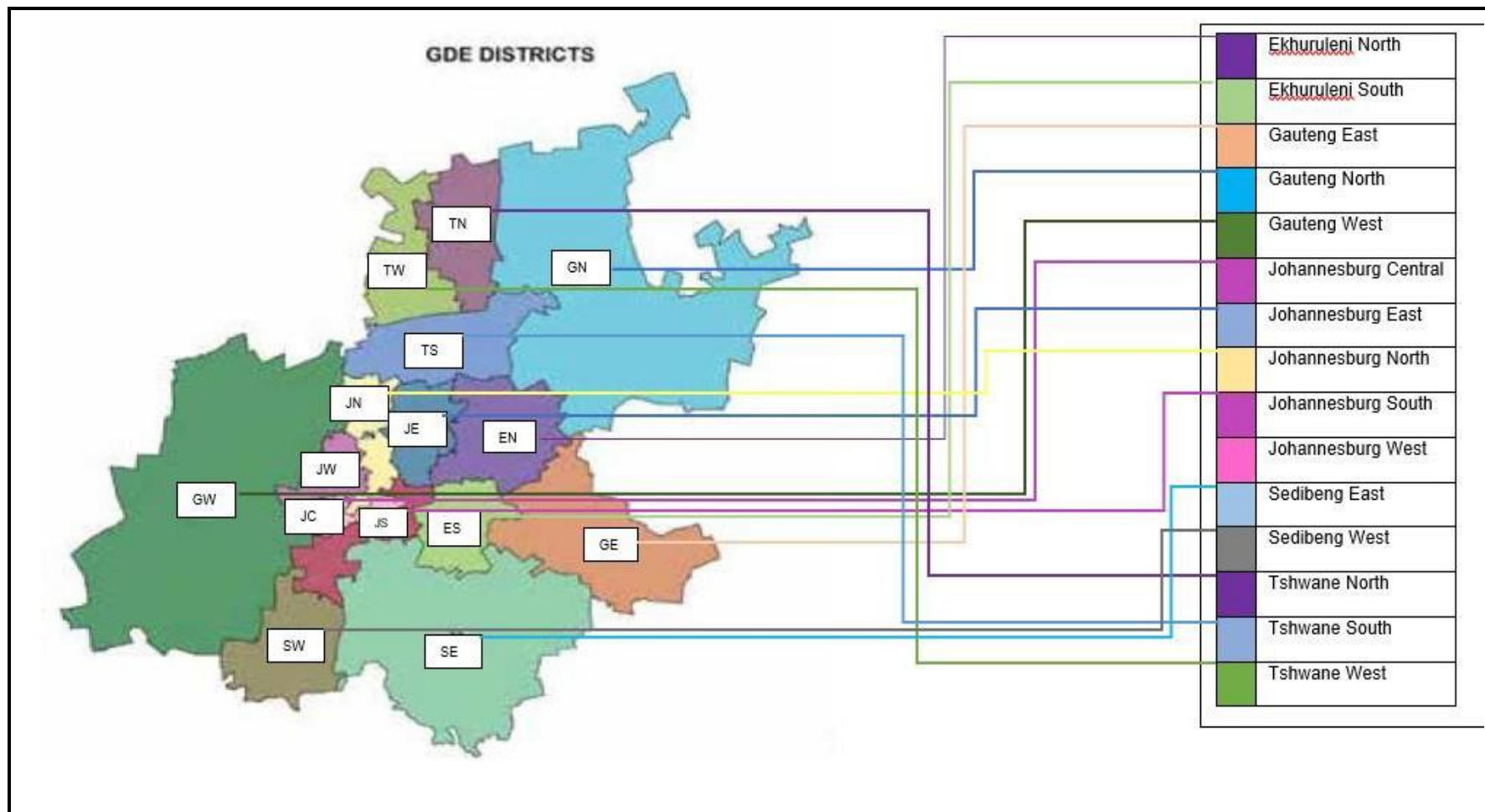


Figure 2-4: District boundaries of the GDE (DBE, 2013a; GDE, 2019)

2.2.8.1 Demarcation of districts and circuits in Gauteng

The GDE has 2 617 primary and secondary schools in its provincial boundaries (GDE, 2013). Each district has its own organisational structure, which differs depending on the geographical location of the district, the classification (quintile 1-5) and type of schools, the total number of schools the district supports and the resources available. The district structures are aligned with the objectives of the PED and the needs of the circuits, cluster schools and community within its boundaries (DBE, 2013a, 2020a). Districts are structured in such a way so as to ensure that the GDE head office and district offices can provide relevant, coordinated and effective support to schools in order to improve education delivery at the classroom level (GDE, 2013). The minister of Basic Education annually determines the national quintiles for public schools, which are then utilised by the MECs to identify schools that may not charge school fees (DBE, 2016b; RSA, 1996a). The MEC identifies and publishes a list of these schools to the districts (DBE, 2020a).

2.2.8.1.1 Quintile classification of schools

Nationally, schools are classified into five groups from the poorest to the least poor (Collingridge, 2013). The quintile to which a school is assigned by the MEC is based on the rates of income and the unemployment and literacy levels of the surrounding community within the catchment area of the school. For example, quintile 1 represents the 20% poorest schools in each province. Quintile 2 denotes the next poorest 20% of schools, and so forth, while quintile 5 schools are the least poor. These schools are often Model C schools of the old education system (Jansen, 1998).

Schools receive funding from the government according to their quintile. Quintile 1 schools receive the highest allocation per learner, while quintile 5 receives the lowest. This classification also determines how districts allocate their resources, support and services. Diagram 2-5 is an example of a generic district structure in Gauteng. Many districts and circuits in Gauteng do not have sufficient infrastructure, transport, finances and staff capacity to handle their current administrative, management and professional responsibilities due to the funding model of school classification as determined by the education minister (Bantwini & Moorosi, 2018b). Therefore, it is often difficult for CMs to address the needs of principals and schools. Findings from Bantwini and Moorosi's (2018a) study show that this factor has a definite impact on the role and responsibilities of the CM to support principals during education change. However, the generic structure of the GDE provides a uniform platform for districts and CM to collaborate with the GDE and ensure that policies and the curriculum are implemented in schools.

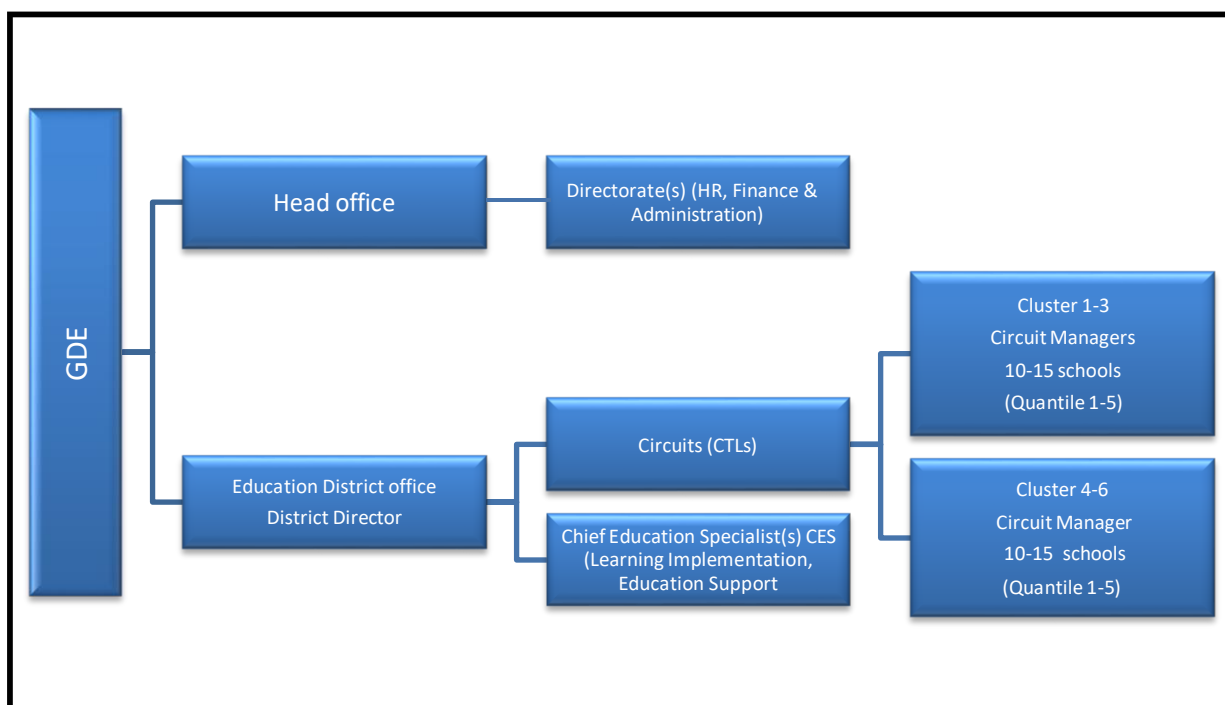


Diagram 2-5: Generic district structure of the GED

Table 2-2 presents the breakdown of the GED districts, circuits, CTLs, CMs and the total number of schools the GED is responsible for. The average size per cluster as determined by the total number of quintiles 1 to 5 schools, as discussed in Section 2.2.7.2, is indicated as well (DBE, 2013a, 2013b).

Table 2-2: Districts, circuits, clusters and number of schools of the GED

District	Circuits after 2018 (CTLs, CMs)	Schools quintile 1-5	School: CM ratio
Ekurhuleni North	3 CTLs, 13 CMs	222	17
Ekurhuleni South	3 CTLs, 10 CMs	198	20
Gauteng East	3 CTLs, 12 CMs	170	14
Gauteng West	3 CTLs, 10 CMs	167	17
Gauteng North	3 CTLs, 8 CMs	71	9
Johannesburg Central	6 CTLs, 17 CMs	224	13
Johannesburg East	4 CTLs, 10 CMs	224	22
Johannesburg North	3 CTLs, 12 CMs	200	17
Johannesburg South	3 CTLs, 9 CMs	177	20
Johannesburg West	3 CTLs, 11 CMs	158	14
Sedibeng East	3 CTLs, 7 CMs	90	13

District	Circuits after 2018 (CTLs, CMs)	Schools quintile 1-5	School: CM ratio
Sedibeng West	4 CTLs, 11 CMs	144	13
Tshwane North	4 CTLs, 11 CMs	155	14
Tshwane South	5 CTLs, 17 CMs	259	15
Tshwane West	3 CTLs, 11 CMs	158	14
Total	53 CTLs 169 (CMs)	2617	Average 16

This study focused specifically on the Sedibeng East and Sedibeng West districts in Gauteng (see Table 2-2). Their district boundaries are determined by factors such as geographic location, size, available resources, the literacy level of their communities and having a combination of schools with different quintile classifications. These schools are also grouped into clusters that are managed by circuits.

2.2.8.1.2 Circuit and cluster structures

Each district is divided into three or four circuits. A circuit is subdivided into clusters of equal sizes, which are determined by the total number of schools and the quintile classification of the schools it has to serve. Circuits are headed by CTLs, and clusters are managed by CMs. CMs are responsible for a cluster of schools within the allocated boundaries of the cluster. Clusters usually consist of between ten and 15 schools, as indicated in the DBE (2013b) policy. However, the possibility does exist that there may be more schools per cluster, which inevitably leads to the establishment of additional circuit offices and the subdivision of clusters. Sedibeng East (D7), with 90 schools, has three circuits, and Sedibeng West (D8), with 144 schools, has four circuits, as presented below in Diagram 2-6. As indicated in Diagram 2-5, it is clear that there is already a discrepancy between the total number of schools assigned to a circuit in both districts and what is stated in the DBE (2013b) policy. The discrepancy in district and circuit size is evident between the two districts in which the research was conducted.

2.2.8.2 Sedibeng East and Sedibeng West districts

The study focused on the Sedibeng East (D7) and West (D8) districts in Gauteng. These districts are assigned to the Johannesburg region of the GDE (2013, 2019). Sedibeng East and West are situated on the western and southern borders of the province. These districts service and support quintile 1 to 5 institutions in the municipality boundaries of Vereeniging, Vanderbijlpark, Meyerton and Heidelberg (see Figure 2-3). The Sedibeng West district office (D8) is situated in Sebokeng Vanderbijlpark, and the Sedibeng East district office (D7) is situated in the central business district

of Vereeniging. The Sedibeng East district (D7) is divided into three circuits, each with a CTL who is accountable for the circuits and the CMs. The CTL monitors the performance and support the CMs provides to the schools in their clusters. Each circuit is subdivided into three or four clusters, and the cluster is managed by a CM responsible for supporting and providing services to principals and schools. Sedibeng East district has 90 schools, encompassing a combination of quintile 1 to 5 primary and secondary schools. Sedibeng West district has 144 schools, which also consist of a combination of quintile 1 to 5 primary and secondary schools. However, Sedibeng West has a fourth circuit with three additional clusters due to the higher number of schools that need to be supported. Diagram 2-6 indicates the subdivision of the Sedibeng East and West districts into circuits, clusters and number of schools each district office services.

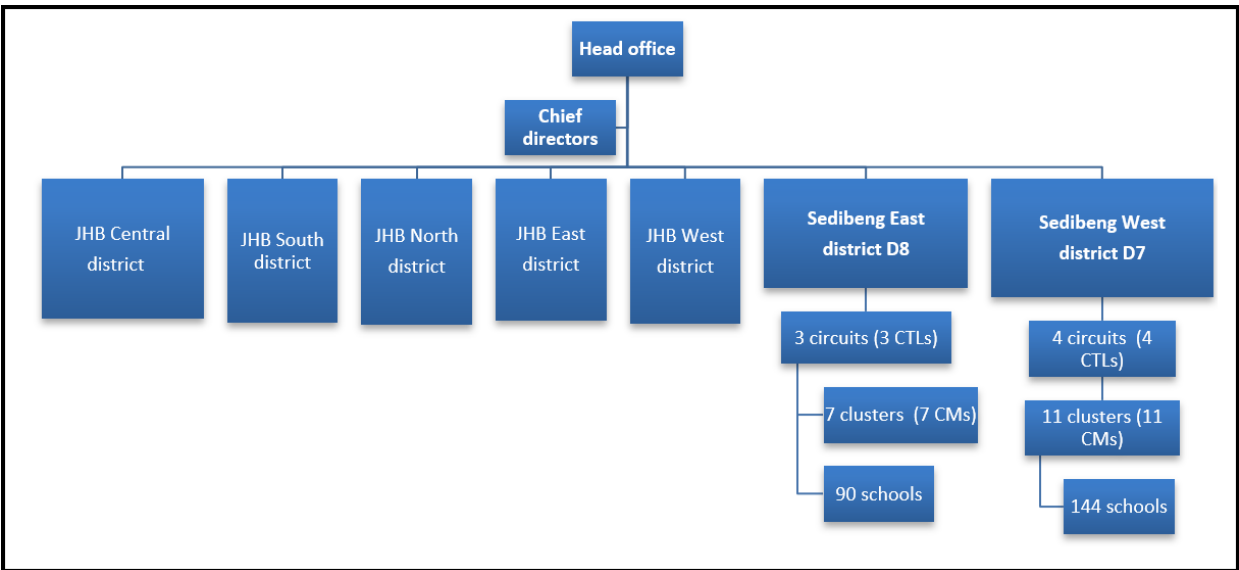


Diagram 2-6: Sedibeng East and West districts (DBE, 2013a)

Sedibeng West education district falls within the Emfuleni West municipality boundaries. The district services and supports schools in the Vanderbijlpark central business district, as well as surrounding farm and township schools in Sebokeng, Evaton, Bophelong, Boiphatong and Orangefarms. Sedibeng East education district office is responsible for schools located in the Emfuleni East municipality, which consists of Vereeniging central business district, Rissiville, Roschnee, Dadaville and Three Rivers. The Sedibeng East education district also services and supports schools in other municipalities. Meyerton, which is located in the Midvaal municipality boundaries, has schools in urban, peri-urban and surrounding rural areas. Heidelberg is more or less 70 kilometers away from the education district office in Vereeniging and is located within the Lesedi municipality, which includes urban, peri-urban and rural and farm schools.

Diagrams 2-7 and 2-8 are visual presentations of the circuit office structure in the Sedibeng East and West districts. Diagram 2-8 indicates the Sedibeng West and East districts that form part of

the GDE and shows the total number of circuits, clusters and schools allocated to the two districts (DBE, 2013a, 2013b, 2020a; GDE, 2013). District offices should be organised into teams to deliver and report on a core combination of services and provide effective support to schools through their circuit offices and CMs. The precise composition of each team and its functions may vary from district to district, as indicated in Diagrams 2-7 and 2-8.

The CMs in circuits play a critical role in the support provided to principals, SMTs, SGBs, teachers and schools as institutions for the provision of basic education. Due to the fact that the role and responsibilities of CMs are intertwined with several responsibilities of the district, additional pressure and expectations are placed on CMs to ensure that principals and SMTs receive the necessary support in dealing with education change. The circuit size of the Sedibeng East and West districts is demarcated according to guidelines provided by the DBE, although the circuits are not consistent in size according to the limitations in the number of schools per circuit (DBE, 2013a).

2.2.8.2.1 Sedibeng East and West districts: circuit and cluster sizes

The average number of schools per cluster in the Sedibeng East district is between 25 and 30 schools, while in the Sedibeng West district, an additional circuit was included for the district to service 144 schools. However, the Sedibeng West district is larger than the Sedibeng East district and has an average of 41 schools per circuit, which is much higher than the national average. The national average per circuit is three or four clusters consisting of between 15 and 20 schools per cluster. The national average cluster size is 16 schools or institutions, usually a combination of quintile 1 to 5 primary and secondary schools, colleges, adult basic education and training centres and special education needs schools. It is clear from Table 2-2 that the Sedibeng East and West districts are aligned with the national average of three or four circuits per district. However, the number of schools per cluster of both districts is above the national average, which raises concern on whether the CMs of these circuits and clusters are able to provide the necessary support to principals and schools, especially during education change. Diagram 2-7 indicates a breakdown of the districts, circuits and clusters within the GDE organisational structure.

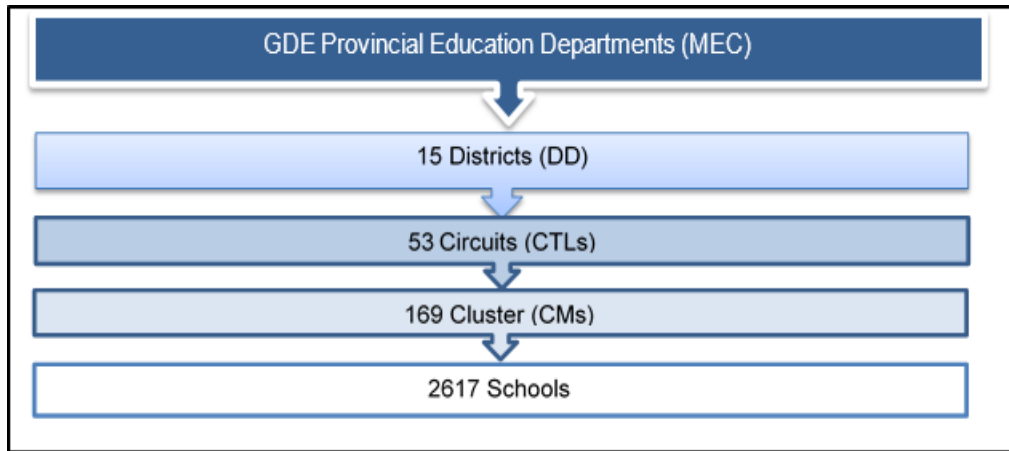


Diagram 2-7: GDE district organisation structure

In conclusion, the structure of districts cannot be cast in stone but must be flexible to adjust to the changes in education. District directors are allowed to adjust the district structure and the circuit and cluster boundaries according to the needs of the community, the schools and the districts. So, the structure of districts depends on the capacity and resources they have at their disposal to support schools. The GDE and its districts are often forced to alter their organisational structure and strategies due to continuous changes in education. These alterations must be communicated with relevant stakeholders before the implementation thereof to ensure productivity, effectiveness and quality of service and support. The district management teams are responsible for developing strategies and establishing an organisational structure that will serve best in supporting the schools within their boundaries. The CM, as the closest point of contact between the principal and the school, acts between the principal and the district and carries out the mandate of the districts (see Sections 2.3.2.7 and 2.3.2.8). The responsibilities of the CM are to ensure that principals receive all the necessary support and resources to manage their schools optimally. CMs also provide training, professional development, financial guidance and mentorship to the principals, SMTs and SGBs in their circuits.

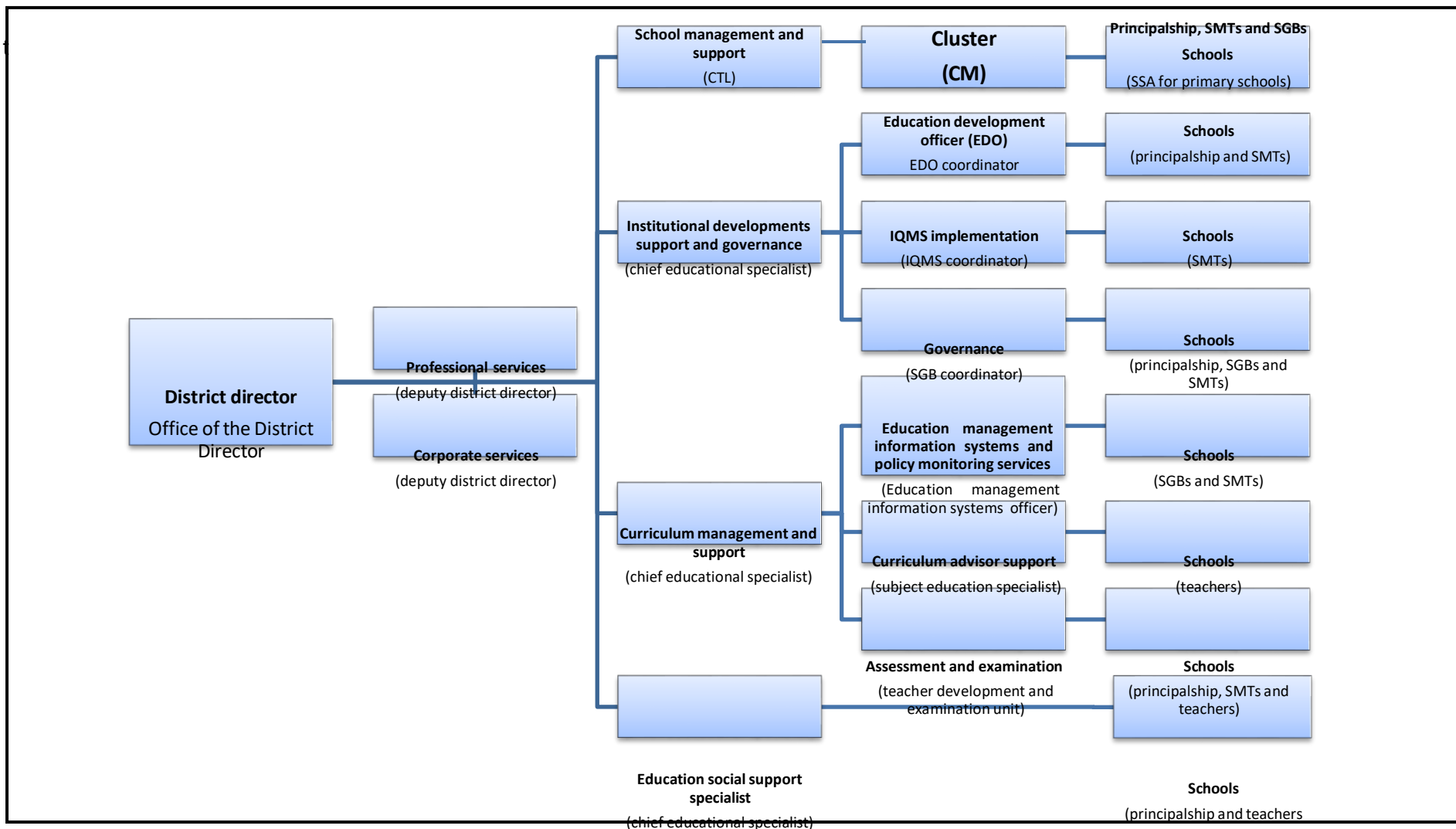


Diagram 2-8: Sedibeng East and West district management structure (GDE, 2013)

2.2.9 Conclusion

It was important to outline the South African education system and to discuss the structure of the DBE in depth in this study because the DBE is responsible for the provision of education across the provinces of South Africa. Discussing the DBE, PEDs and the demarcation of districts and circuits was important in the context of the study because CMs are mandated by the PED and the district structures to support schools in their allocated circuits. The role and responsibilities of support, coordinating support and the monitoring of principals and schools are assigned to the CM. The responsibilities of districts to support schools are often cascaded down to CMs, who have to deal with the needs and complaints of principals, teachers and communities. The demarcation of circuits and the size of circuits are directly linked to the effectiveness of the support CMs provide to schools. Districts and circuits are dependent on the provision of resources by the PED, which has an impact on the provision of support by districts and CMs to schools.

Research conducted in the South African context shows that district and circuit sizes in some provinces are not aligned with the guidelines as set out in the guidelines for education districts and the DBE policy (Ndlovu, 2018; Mthembu, 2014; Van Der Voort, 2016). From the findings of these research studies, it is clear that some circuits have too many schools allocated to them and too few CMs to support the total number of schools in the districts. There is an outcry from CMs and principals that schools need more resources, and the lack of resources has a negative impact on the provision of quality education to learners (Bantwini & Moorosi, 2018, Myende, 2020). The lack of resources also places an additional strain on teachers, as they have too many learners in their classrooms and are provided with insufficient teaching and learning material. This has a severe impact on quality education provision, which is directly influenced by the responsibility of the CM to provide these resources. In the beforementioned studies, CMs and principals reported that they were overwhelmed by the challenges they faced in education; therefore, many CMs and principals have resigned from the profession or are considering early retirement or resignation. As reported, CMs find it difficult to coordinate with human resources departments to recruit qualified teachers when funding by the DBE is not available. From these studies, it has become clear that the role and responsibilities of the CM in the South African basic education system comprise a wide and daunting task and that the CM is seen as a Jack of all trades in ensuring that schools are supported and quality education is provided in schools. The CM fulfils a crucial role within the South African education system in offering sustainable and much-needed support to principals and schools during education change.

2.3 CIRCUIT MANAGER

In the South African education context, *circuit manager* is defined as “the head of a circuit office [who] executes prescribed functions which have been allocated by the District Director or the Head of the Provincial Education Department” (DBE, 2013b, p. 14). CMs are tasked with servicing and supporting schools assigned to their cluster and acting as the direct supervisors of principals. However, in the international context, this role is performed by superintendents and school inspectors.

Providing district support for schools is a worldwide phenomenon (Bantwini & Moorosi, 2018b; Bottoms & Schmidt-Davis, 2010; DBE, 2013b; Diko et al., 2011; Langhan et al., 2012; Prew & Quaigrain, 2010). Countries such as China, Ghana, Mali, the United States of America, Sierra Leone and Canada do not refer to a CM to support schools as in South Africa; they refer to superintendents or school inspectors, and their support provision to schools is usually done as a collective effort by a district team that supports principals and schools. In countries such as Senegal, Guinea, Benin and Mali, education district officials play the role of ensuring policy implementation and managing education change in schools (Mavuso & Moyo, 2014). Education support from district offices is provided through inspection and mandatory advice management teams and teachers. In Canada, education district offices serve as intermediaries in the relationship between the state and the schools (Mavuso & Moyo, 2014). These education district offices initially focused more on governance, but as time went on, there was a paradigm shift as education district offices began to concentrate on improving instruction and the effectiveness of school principals' leadership (Mavuso & Moyo, 2014).

The inspection of schools by inspectors has been part of education systems all over the world from the time formal education was introduced in the late 1800s (Adenowo, 2014; Antonucci, 2012; Mugenyi, 2015). In the 1970s, the word *inspector* came to have a negative connotation, as it was associated with old-fashioned, undemocratic means of supervising schools and teachers. So, the term and this type of supervising were abandoned in some countries and replaced with quality monitoring and supervision. At the 1990 Jomtien Conference on Education and the 2000 Education for All Conference in Dakar, countries worldwide renewed their commitment to and interest in reorganising and strengthening supervision services. The need for accountability, value for money and quality assurance drove policymakers and implementers to use supervision as a strategy for quality control and improvement, and not inspection.

Since the early 1900s, the South African education system has been influenced by the British and American education systems. Even 26 years after the democratic government came into power the system still shows elements of Western influence. The role and responsibilities of the CM in

the South African context are similar to those of the British school inspector, which is not surprising, taking into account that South Africa was a British colony. CMs were called “school inspectors” up until the democratic government came into power, and their role and responsibilities were aligned with those of the superintendent of the American education system. This position of superintendent, which is similar to the present-day CM, was influenced by the American system.

2.3.1 International context regarding the role and responsibilities of the circuit manager

The South African basic education approach is similar to the education services of Uganda and Ghana, which are subdivided into education district offices. The Ghana Education Service is Ghana’s government education body responsible for delivering basic education (Prew & Quaigrain, 2010). School performance review is an initiative by the Ghana Education Service to drive school performance. The Ghana Education Service utilises school performance review data to inform school management practices and provide school principals and education district offices with useful information that informs the school improvement plan to enhance teaching and learning (Prew & Quaigrain, 2010). Furthermore, it uses a data-driven approach to audit schools and to identify the needs of schools, school principals and education districts. The Ghana Education Service is linked with systemic planning and interventions and provides a basis for holding schools and district offices accountable to local communities and municipal districts for their performance (Prew & Quaigrain, 2010).

2.3.1.1 The education superintendent in the United States of America

The role and responsibilities of the superintendent in the education system of the United States of America can be traced back to five important roles, namely that of teacher-scholar, scientist manager, democratic leader, applied scientist and communicator (Kowalski et al., 2011). However, in the past two decades, the role and responsibilities of the superintendent have changed to more of a communicator and education manager.

In the United State of America, superintendents assume major leadership and management roles in planning and implementing programmes that are monitored by federal and state education departments, local trustee boards, the communities they serve, parents and students. The federal government expects superintendents to be creative implementers, facilitators and motivators for change, all in the hope of achieving the primary goal of increasing student learning (Marzano & Waters, 2009).

However, in the past two decades, the role and responsibilities of the American education superintendent were influenced by the complexity of educational reform in the United States of

America. As in South Africa, these reforms have prompted interest among policymakers, practitioners and professors in large-scale, systemic change. As a consequence, thereof, superintendents in the American education system are being viewed as pivotal actors in the complex algorithm for managing districts and leading policy implementation efforts. The challenges – both perceived and real – have provided grist for national debates on the role, expectations and effectiveness of superintendents as school system leaders (Björk et al., 2014).

The position of superintendent in America has increasingly become defined by complexities and challenges stemming from political pressure and conflicting interests. The volatility of government funding to schools, standards-based reform and greater demands for accountability to increase school and student performance through state and federal initiatives have further contributed to this issue (Björk et al., 2014). Superintendents are accountable for the performance of schools and learner attainment. They are responsible for supporting principals in the effective management of the schools, providing an administration service and support function to principals, ensuring that policy is implemented and monitoring compliance (Björk et al., 2014). Superintendents are directly accountable to the school board and the federal state government. They oversee the daily operations and the long-range planning of the school district they are responsible for and are the closest point of contact between schools, education departments and the government. The primary role of a superintendent is to supervise school principals and district staff, work with members of the school board and manage fiscal operations. In addition, the superintendent's responsibilities include hiring staff, solving problems and lobbying for additional resources, when needed (Meier, 2018).

A superintendent serves as the chief executive officer of a school district, very similar to the district director in the South African context. However, many of a superintendent's responsibilities are similar to those of the CM in the South African basic education system, as both manage schools and support principals through training and development initiatives. Education districts in America are not demarcated into clusters, as they are in South Africa, and most districts in the American education system have a central office staff that varies in size depending on the number of students served (Björk, 2005).

The responsibilities of the superintendent are to establish the district and school conditions to improve curricular, instructional and assessment practices towards improved student achievement. Superintendents are expected to cover a broad range of responsibilities, typically either management-related or leadership-related (Mason, 2013). Management-related decisions regarding how to do things commonly encompass actions such as controlling resources, supervising personnel and organising operations. Leadership-related decisions involve what needs to be done to improve schools, such as inspiring people, fostering coalitions and facilitating

collaborative reform efforts (Meier, 2018). Superintendents and district officials are expected to work with teachers and principals to develop evidence-based plans. The areas of such plans include student engagement, teacher efficacy, further education and training and career readiness. Moreover, in some states, superintendents are expected to take on the lead role of turning around designated failing schools in their respective districts.

The key role and responsibilities of education superintendent leadership and management in the federal government of the United States of America is outlined in Table 2-3 below.

Table 2-3: Role and responsibilities of superintendent leadership and management (adapted from Meier, 2018)

Superintendent leadership and management role
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responsible for implementing school board policies and directives as the chief executive officer of the board. • Recommending a comprehensive planning process for student achievement. • Coordinating the operation of schools, the supervision of instructional programmes and management of school personnel. • Providing educational leadership to the board, staff, students and community. • Identifying the needs of schools and reporting them to the board. • Keeping the board aware of state-wide and national educational developments and changes. • Continually upgrading his or her professional knowledge and qualifications through membership of and participation in professional associations, conferences and workshops.

The role of the superintendent in other countries have similarities with that of the superintendent in the American education system. However, their role and responsibilities are informed by the ruling government. For example, China, which has a communist government, has a different education approach than America, which has a democratic government. Superintendents are responsible to prepare and effectively implement budgets (Antonucci, 2014; Bjork, Brown-Ferrigno & Kowalski, 2014).

2.3.1.2 The education superintendent in the Republic of China

The structure of a typical school district remains highly centralised in China and has not had any significant impact on the role and responsibilities of the superintendent in the Chinese education system since the mid-1980s when China still had a centralised political system that caused inequalities in municipal leadership and governance, school administration leadership, school infrastructure and teacher quality (Przybylski et al., 2018). District directors in the South African

system do not often deal with schools directly, as that task is performed by the CM. However, in the Chinese context, superintendents have to deal with schools as an extension of the government and manage them through top-down approaches.

The authoritarian style of management that is carried out in the Chinese education system severely restricts the prospects for transformation and amendments to the overall structure, human capacity and objectives of the school district. There is no consideration to enhance the capacity of principals and teachers, nor is there any strategic plan to enhance the quality and provision of education to children. Seniority matters most when it comes to the superintendent position, and prior experience with school leadership and management is not a prerequisite to taking up the position. Moreover, there is no formal training or development for people who take up the position of superintendent (Cravens et al., 2012).

Superintendents have to deal with educational administration within the confines of centralised government structures, which makes the leadership style of superintendents who prefer bottom-up leadership very challenging. Decision making is based on a bureaucratic format of passing along directives from higher echelons of authority to those who have to ensure that the policies are carried out as mandated (Wang, 2007). This is primarily done at the local school system level that is managed by municipal governments. Unlike in the United States of America, there are no school boards with elected trustees from the community or the district. Typically, administrators – superintendents and principals – are civil service officials with little or no primary or secondary schooling experience. There are even some who have had no direct training and do not even aspire to be involved in education but use the position only as a stepping stone to more lucrative ranks in the government (Przybylski et al., 2018). These superintendents are restricted by political influences; therefore, they cannot make any decisions at will that may cast a bad light on the Chinese government. In the current education framework and for the most part, superintendents are not capacitated to do their job effectively and are often ill-prepared to take on the responsibilities of change if opportunities were to come forth (Przybylski et al., 2018; Wang, 2007).

As in the United States of America, the role of the superintendent in China is to administer to the needs of schools according to government policies and legislation, deal with divergent community beliefs and values and provide resources to schools for functionality (Przybylski et al., 2018). Like CMs in South Africa, these superintendents are challenged by the lack of resources provided by district and government education departments. Furthermore, they must deal with social issues such as poverty in schools and teacher shortage. Many teachers teaching in these schools are only partially qualified or not qualified at all, and it is the superintendent's responsibility to support and develop them. Wang (2007) states that the position (role and responsibilities) of the superintendent stresses authority in the hierarchical structure of China's education system. The

superintendent can be seen as an operational implementer rather than a visionary who plans strategically (Wang, 2007).

2.3.1.3 The education inspector in Sierra Leone

The government of Sierra Leone uses school inspectors to evaluate schools, principals and teachers in schools. These inspectors are responsible for the evaluation of the education system and the educational process in schools, according to the provisions of the law. The monitoring and evaluation of various activities performed within schools are their responsibility (Sabarwal et al., 2013). Table 2-4 below outlines the primary responsibilities of the school inspector in the education system of Sierra Leone.

Table 2-4: Responsibilities of the school inspector in Sierra Leone (adapted from Sabarwal et al., 2013)

Responsibilities of the school inspector
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conducting inspections of school facilities and activities in assigned areas. • Providing supportive supervision to teachers and school administrators in assigned areas. • Providing professional training for teachers and school administrators on lesson plans and other school records. • Collecting information on the attendance of learners and teachers in assigned areas. • Monitoring and supervising the distribution and use of teaching and learning material supplied by the government and donor partners. • Training the school management.

As Sierra Leone is plagued by civil wars and conflict in communities, the government enforces strict laws in its governance. Furthermore, the education ministry dictates what is taught in the education curriculum and how inspections and evaluations have to be conducted and reported on.

2.3.1.4 The education inspector in Uganda

According to the government of Uganda, a school inspector is an official whose job is to inspect schools and to report on their quality and conditions. School inspectors are public officers; hence, they must observe the code of conduct of public officers (Mugenyi, 2015). The code of conduct and ethics is observed to promote good governance, transparency and accountability among public officers and to improve the image of the public service.

Inspectors at the Directorate of Education Standards carry out inspections in secondary schools, vocational and technical institutions and teacher education establishments. In some inspections associate assessors (current or retired professional teachers or educationalists) are occasionally employed to inspect or monitor schools, training institutions or districts (Mugenyi, 2015). Table 2-5 below outlines the functions of the Directorate of Education Standards.

Table 2-5: Functions of the Directorate of Education Standards (Mugenyi, 2015)

Functions of the Directorate of Education Standards
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Setting, defining and reviewing standards in educational practice and provision through planned series of inspections. • Assessing the achievement of standards, and evaluating the effectiveness of education programmes of institutions and agencies throughout Uganda. • Developing systematic approaches to inspection and evaluation, and encouraging evaluation and self-evaluation systems, using appropriate quality indicators within the education service. • Providing and disseminating regular reports on the quality of education at all levels. • Developing the use of the reports as a mechanism to provide support for the dissemination of good practice, and thus to improve the quality of practice in the education service as a whole and in particular aspects. • Providing independent expert comment and advice on educational provision and practice at all levels of education. • Give advice to the minister on matters related to quality control in education.

School inspectors do inspections and evaluations and report on these to the Uganda Ministry of Education. They are employed by district local governments in provinces across Uganda (DeJaeghere, Williams & Kyeyune, 2009). They inspect pre-school centres and primary schools and provide the Directorate of Education Standards with inspection reports on the schools in their districts. Local government inspectors work with the Directorate of Education Standards as associate assessors.

School inspectors work as the eyes and ears of the Uganda education system. Although they focus more on pedagogy (teaching and learning practices), they also perform administrative functions, such as recommending headteachers for transfers and teacher appointments in schools (Mugenyi, 2015). The core function of these inspectors is to control and evaluate, support and advise, and act as liaison agents between the district and the schools, which is similar to the role of the CM in the South African education context. The role of inspectors is technical,

professional and academic in nature, focusing on four key areas, namely quality control, education standards, quality improvement and changes in education (Mugenyi, 2015).

2.3.2 Comparison between circuit managers and their peers in the international context

From the above examples in the international context, the role and responsibilities of the CM in South Africa are a combination of those of the American superintendent and the school inspector in the Uganda education system. The education systems of Sierra Leone and China, which are strictly governed by law, do not focus on support provision and the monitoring and evaluation of schools as such. These countries are focused on abiding by government legislation, and superintendents or inspectors must ensure that schools comply with it. However, due to the political past of South Africa, the role and responsibilities of the CM in the South African context also show elements of those of the superintendent in China and the school inspector in Sierra Leone, especially when reference is made to compliance with policy and legislation in schools. The United States of America, Uganda and South Africa all have democratic systems that drive education; therefore, CMs or inspectors are more focused on providing support to schools, monitoring processes and providing guidance. However, since the establishment of the current education departments and South Africa's independence from British rule and apartheid, the role and responsibilities of the CM in the education system have evolved.

2.3.3 The evolution of the circuit manager in the South African education system

In 1902, Lord Selborne, as the high commissioner of South Africa, initiated the establishment of school boards in schools and the implementation of advisory school boards for larger magisterial districts (Booyse et al., 2013). The role of the school board at that time was to supervise school infrastructure, ensure maintenance of furniture and equipment, carry out the administration of funds and offer advice on the appointment of teachers at a school but not their dismissal (Behr & Macmillan, 1971; Booyse et al., 2013). In addition to this, school boards and advisory school boards had the daunting task of receiving copies of reports from inspectors of schools and then had to make written recommendations to district directors concerning these reports or any other matter concerning the welfare of any institution under the supervision of the board (Behr & Macmillan, 1971; Booyse et al., 2013). However, this task became too overwhelming for school boards to deal with. In 1982, Sir Thomas Muir was appointed as the superintendent of education and brought about significant changes in how inspection was done and how schools were managed (Raath, 2013). Muir ensured that experienced principals and teachers were appointed in the position of inspectors (Booyse et al., 2013; Raath, 2013).

Up until 1994, before the new democratic government was elected, the apartheid education system was very complex, with a lot of ambiguity. The system showed a strong British influence, and school inspection and control were prominent. The system reflected a radically fragmented society with differentiated systems of inspection, control and appraisal across the racially determined departmental sectors (Morrow, 2007). CMs (inspectors) were largely viewed as the extension of a system that was regarded as destructive. During the time of apartheid, CMs created a persona of dictatorship, fault finders, examiners and guardians of standards, and they had no time for providing guidance and advice to principals and schools (Ngubane, 2006). The CM (inspector) played a central role in subduing principals and teachers and holding them accountable for education performance (teaching and assessment) (Jansen, 2004). The unbanning of political organisations prompted the protest in 1990 and large-scale teacher stay-away action took the forefront. These actions were coined “chalk down marches”, where people marched to regional offices submitting lists of grievances, sit-ins and prevented departmental officials from visiting schools (Chisholm, 1999). CMs, as district officials, were prevented to visit schools, for they were seen as “political cadres” of an unjust system. An unintended consequence of this was prominent and it left a dearth of development input in the work of the teacher (Jansen, 2004). As a result of this, there were no systems in place to monitor the work done by schools, as principals were also reluctant to stamp their authority, being viewed as part of what Jansen (2004, p. 110) refers to as “the state apparatus responsible for the administration of apartheid education”.

The role of the CM or school inspector came under the spotlight, and they were perceived as being an extension and an element of the apartheid system, a legacy that would be carried on long after apartheid had been eliminated. However, in 2012, a study in the Limpopo province showed that the challenges that teachers faced intensified when apartheid was demolished (Sadiki, 2012). As a result of this, teachers were reluctant to change from the state of defiance and negativism that was used during the fight against apartheid, to one of cooperation, dedication and sacrifice (Sadiki, 2012). The findings of Sadiki’s (2012) study are supported by Dambuza’s (2015) findings that show that teachers do not appreciate being monitored or supervised and regard class inspections by principals, the SMT and district officials of the DBE as interference with their work. They feel that these visits are done to reprimand them and that they are not trusted to do their job (Dambuza, 2015).

It is evident that there are remaining elements of Western influence in the South African basic education system that contributed to the evolution of the role of the CM in the education system. As mentioned previously, CMs in South Africa were referred to as “school inspectors”, as in most countries that had been colonised and influenced by British imperialism. Locally, the title of school

inspector or *umhloli* is still used by isiZulu-speaking people, even though the English term has been changed from *inspector* to *circuit manager* (Ncwane, 2019).

One of the key duties of the CM is to visit schools; however, the focus of these visits has been changed from inspection to monitoring and support (DBE, 2013b; Education Labour Relation Council, 2008). District support to schools should be in the form of 80% support and 20% monitoring (DBE, 2020a; GDE, 2013; Nkambule & Amsterdam, 2018). The inspection task has been taken over by the Integrated Quality Management System (IQMS) and whole-school evaluation. The IQMS is characterised by self-evaluation and peer evaluation in a school, whereas whole-school evaluation is done by external officials after a school has been selected for this evaluation. In 2020, the IQMS was replaced by the new Quality Management System (QMS), which also focuses on self-evaluation and quality management of school-based educators (DBE, 2020). Again, the British influence is observed, as the self-evaluation used in IQMS and the QMS processes of external inspection used in whole-school evaluation are elements of the British Office of the Standards in Education system (Ncwane, 2019).

The discussion of the evolution of the role of the South African CM helps one to understand the negative perceptions that seem to continue to haunt the position of CM almost three decades after the democratic government in South Africa came into power (Ncwane, 2019). Mthembu (2014) states that when Jacob Zuma, the previous president of South Africa suggested bringing back school inspectors, his views were strongly criticised by educationalists and strongly opposed by the South African Democratic Teachers Union and the National Education Health and Allied Workers Union because of the role school inspectors had played before 1994. This means that 21st-century CMs in South Africa have the challenge of changing principals', teachers' and stakeholders' views and perspectives of them and convincing them to partner with CMs in dealing with education change.

2.3.3.1 The circuit manager in democratic South Africa

Prior to 2013, a circuit team leader (CTL) was called an institutional development and support officer, cluster leader, circuit manager, school management governance and development officer or institutional management and governance or institutional support coordinator, which caused a lot of confusion within the reporting structures of PEDs and the DBE. A general consensus between districts, PEDs and the DBE was reached that a universal name should be used to describe the circuit and cluster leadership structure to prevent any further confusion (DBE, 2013a). The confusion was rectified in 2013 through a district restructuring demarcation process throughout the PEDs in South Africa, where the goals and objectives of providing a service and support to schools were better aligned with the goals and objectives of the provincial departments

and the national department. CTLs were assigned to lead circuit offices, and CMs to manage clusters. The reassignment of their roles and responsibilities resulted in CMs being the closest point of contact between schools and districts to ensure that principals and schools are supported. However, many provinces still use the term *institutional development and support officer* (IDSO) when referring to the CM (Section 2.3.5.1). In the following section, the purpose, role and responsibilities of the CM in the South African basic education system are elaborated on.

2.3.3.2 The purpose of the circuit manager

CMs operate in terms of allocated functions and administrative instructions from the district director and the CTL (Bantwini & Diko, 2011; Bantwini & Moorosi, 2018a; DBE, 2013b). Such functional allocations and instructions must be clear and appropriate to CMs' level of responsibility and allow CMs an appropriate level of discretion (DBE, 2013b; HRDC, 2014). As the closest point of contact between principals and districts, CMs are the direct line of communication between the principal, SGB and SMT of a school and the education district. Circuit offices and CMs are the drivers for education change in provinces, and they report directly to the district directors and HoDs in PEDs (Bantwini & Moorosi, 2018a; HRDC, 2014) (see Diagram 2-8). Therefore, as supervisors of principals, the role and responsibilities of the CM are directed towards the principals in their role as institutional leaders. Like district directors, CMs are expected to exercise significant authority in their dealings with their own staff, principals of schools, SMTs, chairpersons of SGBs and the public at large.

The *Policy on the Organisation, Roles and Responsibilities of the Education Districts* (DBE, 2013b) states that PEDs and district directors must, therefore, ensure that CMs are capable managers who are equipped with the necessary resources, are trained, have the necessary experience to lead their circuits well and are given suitable opportunities for professional and managerial development. Furthermore, CMs must have the necessary knowledge of education policies and legislation and the implementation thereof to sufficiently support principals in governance and managerial issues (Mafuwane & Pitsoe, 2014; Myende et al., 2020; Ndlovu, 2018). Ideally, they must have prior experience of principalship, as it will help them understand what challenges principals and schools face. Also, they should be able to operate effectively in terms of allocated functions and administrative instructions from district directors.

Principals need guidance and training in financial, human, physical and curriculum management to effectively deal with education change, while simultaneously improving the quality and offering of education to learners. CMs provide these support services to improve school management and effectively implement policies for the sole purpose of providing a conducive curriculum environment that does not discriminate against anyone in any form and where the provision of

quality education is the goal (Mthembu, 2014). They must also ensure that the policies and legislation of the national basic education system are implemented in schools and that all stakeholders within the schooling system comply with these (DBE, 2013b, 2018b). In addition, CMs have to mentor principals and ensure the development of principals in dealing with the expectations, demands and challenges of the DBE (Ndlovu, 2018). They have to continuously support districts in the provision of teaching and learning resources, coordinate support services from department subunits and ensure that end-to-end educational guidance between the school and the district is established. Their goal is to ensure that schools are managed according to policies and legislation (see Section 2.2.2.4). They present the needs of principals and circuits to the executive district management team as the decision makers in the allocation and provision of resources.

In the context of this study, it is important to understand what challenges are experienced by the CMs and principals in the Sedibeng East and West districts and what is expected from districts and principals, as these will inform the development of the CM support framework. As organisations continue to change, they have to do more with less and expect that everyone in the organisation is on the same page (Myende et al., 2020). Channels of communication, expectations and alignment on achieving the vision of the organisation are critical to the success of the organisation. People are often put into positions without fully knowing what they are responsible or accountable for (Bantwini & Moorosi, 2018a). The role and responsibilities of the CM in South Africa are wide, and as education reform agents, their actions to support principals and schools in the challenging education environment are critical to the survival of the schools in the system.

2.3.3.3 The role and responsibilities of the circuit manager in the South African context

CMs have common roles that they all seem to perform, irrespective of the context in which they function. A review of related literature pertaining to the leadership role of CMs has a plethora of viewpoints as to what should be the common role and responsibilities of CMs in the 21st century (Bantwini & Moorosi, 2018a; Ncwane, 2019). These common roles and responsibilities are growing in number and in complexity, being overwhelmed by challenges caused by education change. In this study, the researcher focused on the role and responsibilities of CMs in supporting principals during education change. CMs have a wide range of responsibilities that they have to execute. The role of the CM is aligned with the four focus areas of district management, namely planning, organisation culture and support, oversight and accountability, and public engagement (see Section 2.2.6.2). The role and responsibilities of CMs are often misinterpreted by principals and schools, and they use these interchangeably as if they are one function

2.3.3.4 The role of the circuit manager

CMs are accountable for leadership, management and principals' development and provide principals with the space and opportunity to develop. Accountability requires "new roles, and new forms of leadership carried out under careful public scrutiny while trying to keep day-to-day management" (Ndlovu, 2018, p. 49). A role refers to one's position in a team or the part that is played by an individual within a specific work process within an organisation (McNamara, 2019). According to the DBE (2013b, p. 25) policy, the role of the CM is to execute prescribed functions allocated by the MEC and the district director. Bantwini and Moorosi (2018a, p. 1) state that "the role of CMs is an essential component of school district leadership, which provides a necessary collaboration bridge between schools and government". CMs are at the forefront of service delivery to schools and the public. They are representatives of the district at the school level and are direct supervisors and mentors of the principals in their clusters (Ndlovu, 2018).

The main functions of the CM are to represent the DBE at the school level, to provide management and supervisory support to principals in accordance with education policies, to ensure that principals and schools comply with relevant policies, to monitor the progress of school management structures and processes of the management of the school using the quality management database and to provide administrative guidance, service and support to schools through the circuit office (DBE, 2013b). According to the DBE deputy director-general for planning and delivery oversight, Palesa Tyobeka, it is through CMs "that we can truly transform education" (DBE, 2018b, p. 1). She adds that "regretfully it is this level of management that has been largely neglected and has not enjoyed the level of support they need to take their rightful place as leaders in education" (DBE, 2018b, p. 1). The *Personnel Administrative Measures* (DBE, 1998) and the *Policy on the Organisation, Roles and Responsibilities of the Education Districts* (DBE, 2013b) both state that the CM's role and responsibilities are to identify the needs of schools and principals, to design support programmes that are in line with policies, to participate in staff development programmes and to develop teachers during their evaluation programme for professional growth. Therefore, the responsibilities of the CM refer to the tasks and duties of the role of the CM in the DBE structure.

2.3.3.5 The responsibilities of the circuit manager

CMs have a wide range of responsibilities that they have to execute. Their responsibilities are closely aligned with those of the district (DBE, 2013b), which is, in the first place, to provide management, administrative, technical and curriculum support. However, they also have added responsibilities for their role that are categorised under the ten focus areas of whole-school development and evaluation (DBE, 2018a; RSA, 2019) (see Table 2-3). Under these focus areas,

several responsibilities are outlined, such as administrative support, resource provision and the maintenance of infrastructure (classrooms, sport facilities, administrative buildings, etc.). Under human resources, it is the CM's responsibility to assist principals in appointing teaching staff, to retain staff and to create positions where staff is needed, and to provide physical resources to ensure effective teaching (DBE, 2013b). The CM's mandate is to manage the staff that reports to him or her and to ensure that principals and teachers are professionally developed, trained and mentored through development initiatives to deal with education change (DBE, 2013b).

The focus area of curriculum support is where CMs have to ensure that the curriculum is supported and correctly implemented and that teaching and learning take place effectively in the school to ensure academic performance (DBE, 2013b). The provision of teaching and learning material and resources is part of this focus area. However, as stated above, the responsibilities of the CM are wide and daunting, and CMs have to fill the gap in the education system where support is lacking in other focus areas. It is the responsibility of the CM to ensure that support is provided in all areas where challenges are experienced. Therefore, the CM's responsibilities include ensuring that principals receive all the necessary support and resources to manage the school optimally (DBE, 2016b; GDE, 2019; RSA, 2019). The CM has to coordinate the support services and functions of subdepartments to schools.

The responsibilities of the CM in education change have multiplied, and the COVID-19 pandemic has heightened the pressure on CMs during education change. Van der Voort and Wood (2016) recognise the importance of clear communication channels in dealing with education change and add that there must be a sound relationship between principals and their CM if the CM wants to provide effective support to principals dealing with education change. The relationships between the district, the circuit office and the principal are critical. Bantwini and Moorosi (2018b) concur that a sound culture of support (relationship) has to be established between the CM and principals to ensure synergy that will reinforce the CM's provision of support to principals in challenging contexts. This will ultimately contribute to overcoming challenges with regard to change in the system (Fullan, 2009b).

Furthermore, Moorosi and Bantwini (2016) contend that the goals of schools and districts should be aligned with professional development programmes that strengthen a perfect picture of the district priorities that would enable educational leaders to influence student learning and performance. Districts should continuously develop the CM to support principals during education change. The professional development of the support function of the CM should, therefore, be aligned with the needs of the district, principals and schools. Furthermore, CMs, with the assistance of districts, must continuously develop and devise appropriate support plans and initiatives for principals and schools to deal with education change. They should also use data to

identify the management needs of principals. The data are used to implement support initiatives for CMs and principals as well. This is done through several databases (e.g. QMS and the district data-driven platform [DDD]), and the CM does the appraisals of principals through the QMS.

In addition, CMs categorise the needs of principals and schools according to priority and provide support accordingly. As districts expect CMs to use data to develop the profile of a school and develop initiatives to provide in its needs, provincial and district departments should train CMs to do that (Thakasa, 2011). If the CM cannot address the needs of the principal, he or she is responsible for escalating the priority needs to the executive district management team and the district management team as the decision-making authorities. The executive district management team, district management team and CMs have to provide direct services and support to focus areas where support is urgently needed. Then the CM is responsible for facilitating the appropriate support service (GDE, 2013). The profile that CMs are expected to compile is based on the ten focus areas of whole-school development (DBE, 2018b, 2015), as set out in Table 2-6.

Table 2-6: Ten focus areas of the responsibilities of the CM (DBE, 2018a; RSA, 2019, 2020)

Focus areas	Responsibilities of the CM
1. Curriculum support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide adequate curriculum support to Grade R practitioners and teachers, and ensure that curriculum reports are submitted to the circuit as stipulated (DBE, 2013b; Department of Education, 1998). • Ensure the establishment and maintenance of ongoing curriculum support and delivery. • Provide quality subject support to underperforming schools.
2. Educator professional development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitate training for the development of principals, SMTs and SGBs. Principals are to be developed every month in their principals' meetings; SMTs are to be developed each term in management and curriculum issues; and SGB members should be trained in sessions in different categories, such as policy, management and finances. • Consolidate and maintain a database of educators' needs in terms of school improvement plans, e.g. professional development needs of educators.
3. Management and administration support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide management support, and visit all schools to offer sufficient management support.

Focus areas	Responsibilities of the CM
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide administrative support and services to schools, and ensure that learners at schools are registered and that the files are sent to the circuit and district for data capturing. Also, ensure that the allocation of funds is distributed to schools every new financial year and monitor the expenditures of schools. • Ensure effective institutional leadership, management and governance. • Monitor and report on school performance. • Monitor and support the compilation and implementation of the school improvement plan. • Assess the support needs for capacity building of principals, SGBs and SMTs with regard to policy mediation and implementation, financial management and administrative systems and strategic management, as well as sport or cultural and social programmes. • Advance installation and application of information and communication technology for communication, e-education and administrative support. • Advise principals and SMTs on the planning, utilisation and monitoring of budgets in order to meet the objectives of schools
4. Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor infrastructure management planning and delivery.
5. School safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhance school safety and security. • Ensure community liaison and school safety.
6. Resource management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor the functionality of schools, and ensure the correct allocation of teachers and the correct number of classes. Furthermore, ensure that the timetables are correct and that the time allocated to each subject is in line with policy and the fair distribution of subjects. • Assist with the acquisition and maintenance of physical and other resources in schools.
7. Performance appraisal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supervise, monitor and guide the implementation of the personnel administrative measures and performance appraisal system

Focus areas	Responsibilities of the CM
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct performance appraisals of supervised staff, and provide development and support as identified. • Ensure that appraisal of educators is conducted fairly.
8. Inclusive education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure effective implementation of policy regarding inclusive education as contained in <i>White Paper 6</i>.
9. Support programmes (learner health and well-being)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manage learner transport. • Maintain a database of learners' needs. • Advance learner health and well-being. • Ensure the implementation of the National School Nutrition Programme, scholar transport system, school enrichment programmes and HIV/AIDS programmes in schools. • Provide support for special needs education. • Ensure effective systems, quality management and development of the sub-directorate education support programmes. • Facilitate and coordinate education specialised programmes, including psychological, social work, career guidance, remedial and therapeutic services for all learners.
10. Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Liaise between the district and the schools, and ensure that all instructions, circulars and policies from the district office are sent to schools. • Explain the objectives of any intervention to learners, educators and others. • Communicate effectively, both orally and in writing, with principals, other staff, parents, SGBs, external agencies and the education department, and ensure timeous feedback from institutions.

The ten focus areas of the DBE framework are to guide whole-school development and evaluations to enhance the quality of basic education in South Africa. The CM is accountable that the schools are effectively lead and managed by the principals and SMT in all ten focus areas and they have to quarterly report to the district director and the PED on the status of the schools by means of profiling and reprofiling schools according to levels of need, importance and urgency for basic functionality and to ensure quality education provision to learners (Christie, 2010; Mestry 2009; Plowright, 2011). Both the CM and principals role and responsibilities are aligned to the ten key focus areas (DBE, 2013b, 2015; Van Der Voort, 2016). The evaluations conducted by CMs are based on the ten focus areas, and the appraisal of the CM on the schools are reported to the

district, provincial and national education departments. The provision of CM support to principals and schools focus on the ten focus areas in which the schools or principals are performing poorly.

2.3.4 Challenges and perceptions of circuit managers when dealing with education change

A common occurrence is that districts expect CMs to take on more functions of the district, which cause work overload and fatigue (Antonucci, 2012; Arar & Avidov-Ungar, 2020). It is clear from the research that CMs and principals are overwhelmed by the additional expectations of stakeholders to implement change in schools over and above their normal responsibilities (Bantwini & Moorosi, 2018a; Fourie, 2018; Harvey & Holland, 2013; Renihan et al., 2006; Steyn, 2002). Bantwini and Moorosi (2018a) add that because CMs are overwhelmed by the expectations of districts, they often neglect their responsibility to support principals and schools. This issue has become more evident during the COVID-19 pandemic when it was expected of CMs to assist principals and SMTs in managing COVID-19 protocols in schools while simultaneously executing their usual responsibilities (Bantwini & Moorosi, 2018a; DBE, 2018b; Mthembu, 2014). CMs are expected to coordinate and facilitate the implementation of examination and assessment throughout the year, as determined by PED and the DBE (DBE, 2013b). This was a difficult task during the COVID-19 pandemic, as many schools had lost time due to the pandemic and were plagued by limited resources (human and physical).

CMs' ability to fulfil their role and the effectiveness of how they execute their responsibilities have a direct impact on the performance of principals and learners (Bantwini & Moorosi, 2018b; Mthembu, 2014; Ndlovu, 2018; Ngubane, 2006; Sybrant, 2012). This view is supported by Nkambule and Amsterdam (2018), who attest that there is a direct link between quality education, school performance and the quality of leadership support from CMs. CMs are responsible for supporting schools in all ten focus areas (see Table 2-3). However, dysfunctionality in the CM's role and responsibilities cascades down and leads to dysfunctionality in the principal, which in turn, has a significant impact on the school and learner performance. Bantwini and Moorosi's (2018a) perception is that the basic education system will remain in this poor state if school principals and SMTs do not receive the required support from the very people that are employed by the basic education system to provide them with it.

2.3.4.1 Challenges experienced by the circuit manager

CMs face numerous and varying challenges. Some appear to be universally common, while others are contextual (Mason, 2013; Myende et al., 2020; Nkambule & Amsterdam, 2018; Van der Voort & Wood, 2016). According to Bantwini and Moorosi (2018b), Van der Voort and Wood

(2016) and Mavuso (2014), there is no clear definition of the requirements, role and responsibilities of CMs as educational leaders. They are often appointed based on political appointments and are often unqualified to provide professional support to principals. The findings of Bantwini and Moorosi's (2018a) study show that many CMs lack the necessary knowledge and experience to understand the day-to-day responsibilities of principals or lack the appropriate skillset to support principals, SMTs and SGBs. Bantwini and Moorosi's (2018a) and Van der Voort and Wood's (2016) studies show that many CM appointments are indeed politically, nepotistic, race- or gender-motivated, with many of these appointees lacking experience of being in school leadership positions before (principal or deputy principal). Mavuso (2014) concurs with the beforementioned studies and adds that CMs are not clear about the extent of their role and responsibilities because the interpretation of the role and responsibilities of CMs differ and is not standardised or practiced across the nine provinces in South Africa (Bantwini & Moorosi, 2018a; Van der Voort & Wood, 2016).

Although, the *Policy on the Organisation, Roles and Responsibilities of Education Districts* (DBE, 2013b) provides a framework with regard to the organisation of circuits and clusters and the role and responsibilities of CMs, it is not a true reflection of what is happening in reality (Ndlovu, 2018; Van der Voort & Wood, 2016). At times, CMs are lost, and the confusion surrounding their purpose, role and responsibilities and the expectations the districts place on them actually set them up for failure (Bantwini & Moorosi, 2018a). This confusion and different interpretations of their role and responsibilities also cause confusion among principals and schools, which has a negative effect on CMs' execution of their role and responsibilities. Ultimately, this leads to a negative impact on the services and support CMs have to provide to principals and schools.

Insufficient resources seem to be a common problem across the basic education system. CMs complain that they do not have their own offices or even the basic equipment to do their job (Van der Voort & Wood, 2016). Studies show that CMs have to manage between ten and 20 schools in their cluster (DBE, 2013a), which seems to be too many when referring to the latest statistics on school performance (Maynard, 2019; McDonald, 2020). The distance some CMs have to travel between circuit offices and schools is another big challenge, not to mention that they sometimes experience difficulty in finding transport to visit schools (Bantwini & Diko, 2011). In fact, many CMs use their own transport and claim the fuel expenses from the district office. However, they are limited on how much they are allowed to claim per month for their travels. Therefore, CMs' visits to schools are restricted by financial constraints and the allocation and timeous provision of resources to support principals and schools.

Planning support (resources, curriculum material and infrastructure) for principals and schools is a challenge, especially for schools in difficult-to-reach places and rural areas. The main problem

from a planning point of view is that “islands” or pockets of isolated schools are created, which means that schools are classified as poorly performing, moderate- and well-performing schools. The tendency is that schools that need the least support are usually those in urban areas closest to the district offices (Bantwini & Moorosi, 2018b). These schools are visited by CMs more often than their counterparts that perform poorly or are far away from the district offices. However, poorly performing schools and schools that do not have sufficient resources (infrastructure, teachers and curriculum material) need more support than their counterparts in the city, especially during education change. Another challenge is that isolated schools, which are characterised as schools that are geographically separate from the other schools in the circuit to which they belong and located among schools belonging to a different circuit, are not supported by CMs. This could be due to a historical arrangement that no longer serves a practical purpose (Mavuso, 2014; Mouton et al., 2012; Narsee, 2006; Pryor & Lubisi, 2002). However, it causes CMs not to visit these schools regularly and not to support principals although there is an urgent need for support. The support CMs can provide is often limited by these factors.

Van der Voort and Wood (2016) and Bantwini and Moorosi (2018) agree that the lack of district and PED support is undeniable. CMs are overwhelmed by what districts expect them to do and more often than not have to deal with problems outside of their mandate (Bantwini & Moorosi, 2018a; Mavuso & Moyo, 2014; Van der Voort & Wood, 2016). According to CMs, they are not trained, mentored or professionally developed to do what is expected of them (Bantwini & Diko, 2011; Ndlovu, 2018; Van der Voort & Wood, 2016). They feel that they are not sufficiently supported by the DBE in their role as curriculum reform agents, which creates deficiencies in comprehension of the struggles experienced in the implementation of new policies and dealing with education change (Robinson, 2019; Steyn, 2011; Van der Voort & Wood, 2016). The DBE (2013b) policy states that CMs are the accountable management structure to mentor, guide, support and assist principals and school management in their administrative, financial and management roles. The profiling and reprofiling of schools according to the ten key focus areas of whole school development is the responsibility of the CM and they are accountable that schools needs are addressed during the profiling and reprofiling process (Van der Voort, 2016).

As a result of the factors mentioned above, Bantwini and Moorosi (2018a) regard the CM as the weakest link in the school leadership chain. Their being regarded as the weakest link is a result of a lack of resources (offices, office equipment and transport), a lack of district support (training and professional development), the high retention rate of CMs in the education system and political, social and cultural interference from PEDs and the DBE in the appointment of CMs.

The challenges CMs face during education change are summarised as follows by the DBE (2018b):

- The CM's function at present is process-orientated and not outcomes-focused.
- CMs are made to perform their functions as a routine without necessarily focusing on supporting a departmental strategy.
- Circuit management is not structured to enable it to produce the required results (virtual and not physical circuits).
- There are no clear performance routines, targets and objectives for CMs with a clear performance measurement and evaluation framework.
- The authority (delegations) and role of the CM are not necessarily always clarified, which then also undermines accountability processes and performance.
- There is no clear strategy or framework that informs the resourcing of circuits.
- Proper processes around which to operate are not always clear to CMs.
- A portfolio of evidence in terms of the achievement of targets is not always available, nor is it clearly defined.
- Circuit management performance tools are not necessarily aligned or designed to achieve the required targets.
- Circuit management is not necessarily always responsive to the needs of schools.

These challenges faced by CMs seem to be evident across all the provinces when dealing with education change (Bantwini & Moorosi, 2018a; DBE, 2018b; Mafuwane & Pitsoe, 2014; Ndlovu, 2018; Van der Voort & Wood, 2016).

CMs are critical in managing change and transformation in the basic education system. It is clear from the literature that CMs need specific skills and competencies to support and service schools and the school management structure they are accountable for during education change (Bantwini & Moorosi, 2018a; Honig et al., 2010; Nkambule & Amsterdam, 2018). However, according to Bantwini and Moorosi (2018b), the perceptions of district support and specifically the role and responsibilities of the CM in supporting schools in the basic education system during education change seem to be negative.

2.3.4.2 Perceptions regarding circuit managers and districts

There is a general negative perception of districts and especially CMs with regard to providing support to schools (Bantwini & Moorosi, 2018a; Mafuwane & Pitsoe, 2014; Manamela, 2014; Ndlovu, 2018; Nyembe-Kganye, 2005). A survey conducted by the public service commission in the provinces of Limpopo, Northern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal found that schools were not being visited, serviced and supported by CMs (Van der Voort & Wood, 2016). Van der Voort and Wood (2016) point out that some CMs are not trained or do not have the necessary skills to deal with principals' concerns or the needs of schools. Bantwini and Moorosi (2018b, p. 762) add that "their

lack of knowledge in dealing with education reform issues was considered as creating a barrier, suggesting the need for district officials to be developed and empowered". Principals concur that CMs' support and guidance are key to their work. However, principals complain that they are often left in the dark to resolve their own problems and challenges, as CMs do not create an opportunity for them to sit down and discuss school issues or challenges they face, especially those they experience during education change.

According to Van der Voort and Wood (2016), CMs' visits are merely routine, and they seldom have time to interact with principals and teachers. Mthembu (2014) point out that several CMs are incompetent in dealing with school management issues. Van der Voort and Wood (2016) concur with Mthembu and add that principals sometimes even have to guide and inform CMs on management issues that they were supposed to know, as they are appointed in the position to assist principals in managing schools. Similar findings were reported in Limpopo and the Eastern Cape, where CMs' support to principals was seriously lacking and, in some cases, non-existent (Bantwini & Moorosi, 2018a). In addition, a study conducted in the Eastern Cape showed that CMs did not have any formal assessment tools, checklists or intervention plans in place that informed their visits to schools (Bantwini & Moorosi, 2018b). Findings in these studies suggest that CMs face challenges in which they truly understand neither their own responsibilities and role in supporting principals and schools nor the challenges principals face during education change (Bantwini & Diko, 2011; Bantwini & Moorosi, 2018a, 2018b; Ndlovu, 2018; Van der Voort & Wood, 2016). So, although CMs are specifically appointed in the strategic position in the DBE structure to provide direct support to principals and schools, it seems to be a common occurrence that CMs lack experience in managing people or a school, especially during education change (Bantwini & Diko, 2011; Bantwini & Moorosi, 2018a, 2018b). Bantwini and Moorosi (2018a) report that principals expect the CM to have at least experience of principalship to understand their challenges and effectively support them in dealing with education change.

Research shows that there are several factors that attribute towards principals' dissatisfaction regarding district and CM support (Bantwini & Moorosi, 2018b; Fourie, 2018; Goldring et al., 2008; Harvey & Holland, 2013; Hotak, 2018; Korumaz, 2016; Maile, 2012; Mestry, 2017; Wallace Foundation, 2013). Bantwini and Moorosi's (2018b) findings on this topic are summarised in three main themes. The first theme is a lack of support, resource provision and opportunities for professional development; the second is limited visibility of district officials in schools; and the third is a lack of district responsiveness and ability to deal with decision making (Bantwini & Moorosi, 2018b). Mavuso (2014) argues that the idea of support appears to have a number of interpretations as reflected in different practices with regard to school visits by district officials. Nowadays, the idea of inspection in many countries, such as South Africa, is avoided in favour of

support. According to Mavuso (2014, p. 3), “[t]he former is seen as undemocratic while the latter is seen as developmental and in keeping with the democratic dispensation”. Bantwini and Moorosi (2018a) concur that the perceptions regarding the provision of support and service by districts and district officials are often viewed as being in the form of dictatorship, which has a negative impact on principal and teacher motivation. According to Mavuso and Moyo (2014, p. 3), although “district officials’ visits to schools are described as support, they exhibited the trappings of technicism of inspection; supervision and control; and appeared to neglect the developmental aspects implied in the notion of support”.

Furthermore, the conception and practice of district support and visits by district officials are often characterised by tension between support and control. Moreover, at the district level, support for schools lacks coordination among the different district support structures that visit schools. CMs and principals are not involved in the decision-making process regarding support initiatives to enhance school and learner performance. Service delivery by many district officials, especially with respect to the vital function of curriculum support, falls short of what education institutions and the public expect (DBE, 2013b; Mafuwane & Pitsoe, 2014; Mthembu, 2014).

In addition, the disparities that still exist between high- and low-performing districts are gross and unacceptable in democratic South Africa (Bantwini & Diko, 2011; Mouton et al., 2012; Nkambule & Amsterdam, 2018). There are, for instance, disparities in the remuneration of district officials across the provinces who have the same job description, which demotivates district officials and have an impact on their performance. Bantwini and Moorosi (2018b) add that the concepts of *district* and *district office* are still not transparent, nor is the assignment of the role and responsibilities of district officials.

2.3.5 Conclusion

During the international comparison conducted, it was found that the CM’s role and responsibilities have similar elements to those of education superintendents and inspectors in the countries mentioned in Section 2.3.1. However, their approach to support and evaluation is different to that of the CM in the South African context. The approach of education systems to education in schools is established and informed by their political past and influenced by their present governments, which is similar to what has happened in South Africa.

The significance of local school districts and CMs in mediating between schools and the government is undeniable. Their influential role, which includes ensuring quality teaching and learning, effective assessment, increased learner performance and achievement, to mention but a few, is indispensable. Despite the critical role played by districts and CMs, the literature on

school improvement in South Africa continues to show that districts and their officials hardly receive sufficient attention. Districts and CMs find it difficult to support schools due to the limited authority and mandate given to them. They are solely dependent on resources provided by the PED. The delegated authority, roles, relationships and lines of accountability of CMs are not clearly formulated, understood or exercised. As the challenges experienced by districts directly affect CMs' execution of their task regarding resources provision, DBE funding and appointing qualified teachers, the effectiveness of the support CMs provide to principals and schools is found wanting. However, within these changing times, CMs still have to focus on ensuring quality teaching and learning in schools, the establishment of clear and collaborative relationships between them and schools, the provision of support for system-wide improvement and the promotion, interpretation and management of effective leadership during education change.

The challenges CMs experience and the perceptions of them provide a mere glimpse of the problem that the education system in South Africa has experienced for the past two decades during major education change. Dysfunctional districts, CMs, principals and schools will remain in a poor state if a deliberate effort by all stakeholders is not made to provide the necessary support to the very people who have been employed by the system to do just that. The DBE has to provide training and development for CMs to enable them to conduct their role and responsibilities in a professional manner, while they also need guidance, support and mentorship from the district management to enable them to provide the necessary support and service to schools. Without the necessary support, the education system will remain in a poor state. Underperforming schools will dismally fail, and the number of underperforming schools may increase. People are different and they act differently to change. Therefore, in the context of this study, the approach to CM leadership and management must be adjusted to support principals differently, for neither do they act in the same manner nor do they perceive and deal with education change in the same way. Despite the expectation of CMs to support schools, principals, SMTs and curriculum implementation, there is a body of evidence to show that the quality of education and leadership in the majority of schools remains in a poor state. The role and responsibilities of the CM are critical to the success of principals, SMTs, SGBs and learner achievement.

2.4 SCHOOL PRINCIPAL

A school principal holds the highest authority within the school as a basic education institution. The *South African Schools Act* 84 of 1996 defines *principal* as “an educator appointed or acting as the head of a school” (RSA, 1996c, p. 4). The principal is accountable for administrative and strategic planning and curriculum implementation and is responsible for the daily instructional leadership and managerial operations in a school (Day & Sammons, 2013). In the South African basic education context, the principal reports directly to the CM and the district office, which is under the jurisdiction of the PED (DBE, 2013b). The CM, as a leader, directs principals and schools towards achieving the school and district goals and, as a manager, supports principals in their leadership and management functions (DBE, 2013b). Principals, who are in structural positions within schools, have key leadership and management responsibilities duty-bound by the goals and primary tasks of the schools. Success and failure with regard to leadership and management are judged in terms of achieving these goals. Both CMs and principals are officially accountable for the operations and outcomes of schools (Christie, 2010). The principal represents the school formally at ceremonies, assemblies and formal school events, such as prizegiving ceremonies or other functions.

The view of the DBE is that effective leadership and management, supported by an envisioned, needs-driven development of leadership and management, are critical to the achievement of its transformational goals for education (DBE, 2016a). The purpose of the transformation of the education system is to bring about sustainable school improvement and a profound change in the culture and practice of schools (DBE, 2016a). Bantwini and Moorosi (2018a) mention that the role and responsibilities of the CM and the principal in the South African basic education system overlap in many areas of leadership and management; therefore, the CM must know what is expected of principals in their education leadership and management functions in schools.

Bush (2008) points out that there is confusion between the concepts of *education(al) leadership*, *education management* and *principalship*. These concepts are often used interchangeably in the context of schooling. Next, the three concepts are defined and the interrelationships between the concepts are indicated.

2.4.1 Educational leadership

Leadership can be described as a relationship of influence directed towards goals or outcomes, whether formal or informal (Nikolaros, 2015). Leadership is framed in terms of a person’s individual qualities or social relationship of power in which he or she is able to influence others. Whatever its basis, leadership is characterised by influence and consent rather than coercion

(Connolly et al., 2019). As an exercise of power, it necessarily entails ethical considerations (Bottery, 2016). Therefore, leadership can be defined as the exercise of influence that, unlike management, can take place outside of formal organisations, as well as inside them, and can be exercised at most levels in organisations and in most activities (Bush, 2007; Diamond & Spillane, 2016).

Educational leadership in practice is the act of influencing others in educational settings to achieve goals (Bush, 2007). It thus necessitates actions. Educational leaders must be able to influence others. Educational leadership requires authority that may be derived from hierarchical relationships but also from other sources. The way educational leaders act will have a direct and indirect influence on how people in the education system will act and react (Connolly et al., 2019). Therefore, educational leadership involves how actions are taken and how responsibilities are executed in practice. However, it does not entail carrying the responsibility for the functioning of an educational system in which the influence is exercised (Hussain & Al Abri, 2015). Gunter (2005) states that educational leadership is concerned with productive social and socialising relationships, where the approach is not so much about controlling relationships through team processes but more about how the agents are connected with others in their own and others' learning. Hence, it is inclusive of all and integrated with teaching and learning. Therefore, educational leadership can be summarised as a collaborative process that unites the talents and forces of teachers, learners and parents to improve the quality of education and the education system itself (Patro, 2021).

2.4.2 Education management

The term *management* is often used in relation to an organisational hierarchy, with those occupying higher (management) positions in the hierarchy having more power and responsibility than those lower down the hierarchy (Connolly et al., 2019). Management is different from leadership, as management has to do with structures and processes in the organisation and the way in which they are managed and executed to meet the goals of the organisation (Huczynski & Buchanan, 2004). *Education management* refers to people who manage processes and coordinates services and support in the education system. Hence, education management is the management of processes, the delegation of work to subordinates and the coordination and monitoring of services and support. Education management often involves being assigned, accepting and carrying the responsibility for the proper functioning of a system in which others participate in a school (Huczynski & Buchanan, 2004). Connolly et al. (2019, p. 505) state that education management involves “carrying the responsibility is a metaphorical description of a state of mind and does not necessarily entail actions, though it implies them and frequently

prompts them”. These actions are important in the organisational life of educational institutions (Connolly et al., 2019).

Furthermore, *education management* refers to the administration of the school in which a group combines human and material resources to supervise, plan, strategise and implement structures to execute in a school (Bass & Bass, 2009). Hence, education management and education leadership are conceptually different. Arguably, it is more likely to be tied to formal positions than to persons. There is ample research in South Africa to suggest that good management is essential for the functioning of schools (Diamond & Spillane, 2016; Hallinger & Snidvongs, 2005; Wohlstetter & Mohrman, 1996).

2.4.3 Principalship

Principalship occupies a unique defining position that influences the shape of schooling (DBE, 2016a; Steyn, 2002). It designates a structural position that carries with it specific responsibilities and accountabilities. The school principal’s leadership power lies within the ability and mandate to influence others in the schooling system. The power of the principal may legitimately extend beyond consent and influence to compulsion. The significance of the role of the principal is that the principal determines the quality of education provision to learners and secures the outcomes from educational enterprises in modern society (Alsharija & Watters, 2020; DiPaola & Tschannen-Moran, 2003).

2.4.3.1 The principal as school leader

The responsibilities of the school principal as a leader are guiding a school to better teaching and learning and shaping a vision of academic success for all learners. Principals are responsible for creating a school climate conducive to the provision of education and for cultivating leadership in others (Hussain & Al Abri, 2015). Lastly, principals must lead to improve the provision of education in schools by managing people, data and processes (Wallace Foundation, 2013).

2.4.3.2 The principal as school manager

The school principal as a manager is the key delivery agent in the education system. As a manager, the principal drives the education outcomes in the school to achieve its goal. The role and responsibilities of the principal in educational institutions are central in education transformation, especially during education change. According to the *Policy on the South African Standards for Principalship* (DBE, 2016a), eight key interdependent areas constitute the core purpose of principals in the South African context. These are outlined in Table 2-7 below.

Table 2-7: The core purpose of the school principal in the South African education system
(adapted from DBE, 2016a)

Core purpose of the school principal
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <p>• Overall responsibility for leading and teaching and learning in the school</p> <p>Both the principal and the CM are accountable to the employer (district director) and, through the SGB, to the school community. The principal is responsible for leading and managing and evaluating the curriculum. In doing this, the quality of teaching and learning will be ensured. Principals are expected to be competent in different leadership styles, and therefore, they have to show that they are strategic, executive leaders with instructional, cultural and organisation leadership competencies and skills.</p> <p>• Shaping the direction and the development of the school</p> <p>The principal must work with the SGB, the SMT and parents in the school community to create and implement a shared vision, mission and strategic plan to inspire and motivate all who work in and with the school and to provide direction for the ongoing development of the school. The vision and mission identified by the SGB encapsulate the core educational values and moral purpose of the school and should take into account national educational values, the traditions of the school community and the values enshrined in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (DBE, 2016a; RSA, 1996a). The strategic planning process is fundamental for shaping and sustaining school improvement on a continuum.</p> <p>• Managing quality and securing accountability</p> <p>The principal, working with the SGB and the SMT, is responsible for ensuring the quality of teaching and learning in the school and securing accountability. He or she must establish and maintain effective quality assurance systems and procedures within the school and ensure ongoing evaluation and reviewing of all aspects of the school's operation, which promotes collective responsibility. The principal is accountable to a wide range of stakeholders. These stakeholders include the national and provincial departments of education, learners, staff, parents, the SGB and the wider community.</p> <p>• Developing and empowering self and others</p> <p>The principal, working with all stakeholders, embraces the philosophy and practice of Ubuntu and has the overall responsibility of building a professional learning community in the school. This is achieved through establishing effective interpersonal relationships and communication that recognise, manage and celebrate the diversity of ethnicity, race and gender in South Africa. Through the provision of opportunities for shared leadership, teamwork and participation in decision making, the principal promotes the empowerment of those working in the school. By encouraging opportunities for effective and relevant</p>

Core purpose of the school principal

continuing professional development, the principal supports whole-school development. Furthermore, principals need to be reflective to build personal capacity and be committed to their own continuing professional development.

- **Managing the school as an organisation**

The principal must provide for the effective organisation and management of the school. On the basis of ongoing review and evaluation, he or she should continuously strive for ways to develop and improve the organisational structures and functions of the school. The principal is responsible for ensuring that the school and its people, assets and all other resources are organised and managed to provide for an effective, efficient, safe and nurturing education environment. These management functions require the principal to build and strengthen the capacity of those working in the school and to ensure that all available assets and resources are equitably deployed to maximum effect in supporting effective teaching and learning.

- **Managing human resources in the school**

The principal, in managing human resources, needs to understand the human resource requirements of the school. While the DBE provides the post establishment, the principal is responsible for the staff establishment and should create an enabling environment by ensuring that all vacant posts are filled and that there is a fair allocation of workload among the teachers. The principal need to advise and support the staff regarding conditions of service at the school. It is the responsibility of the CM to give guidance on labour-related issues to principals. This will also assist in the principal's leadership in terms of ensuring that all current legislation, departmental policies and collective agreements are complied with.

- **Managing and advocating extramural activities**

In leading and managing the school, the principal must create an environment that takes care of the needs and circumstances of its learners in the form of offering extramural activities.

- **Working with and for the community**

The principal, working within the SMT and the SGB, must build collaborative relationships and partnerships within and between the internal and external school community for their mutual benefit. Schools exist within particular social and economic communities that have an influence on the school and may be influenced by the school. The wider community that the school serves can be a source of support and resources for the school. The school itself can play an important role in the well-being and development of the community. School improvement and community development thus complement each other.

According to the DBE (2016a), the key areas that define the principal's leadership and management role in relation to the core purpose of principalship are underpinned by specific educational and social values that the principal needs to uphold. The educational and social values that principals need to uphold are as follows (DBE, 2016a):

- All learners have the right to have access to relevant and meaningful learning experiences and opportunities.
- The school community has the right to active participation in the school.
- All members of the school community should be treated with respect and dignity and with recognition of their diverse natures.
- The school community has the right to a safe and secure learning environment. The well-being of all learners must be fostered within the school and the wider community.

According to the DBE (2016a, p. 9), "embedded in the principal's leadership and management of the school are core societal, educational and professional values which are reflected in the manner in which he or she deals with all matters pertaining to the curriculum and human resources". These values "inform the core purpose of principalship and, together with knowledge and skills, shape the nature and direction of leadership and management in the school" (DBE, 2016a, p. 9). As principals are bound by their leadership, management and principalship tasks, their success and failure during education change are bound by these tasks (Darling-Hammond & Friedlaender, 2008; Wallace Foundation, 2013; Young, 2009). These days, principals are required to do more than ever before, and the developers of preparation programmes are struggling to find ways in which to make programme and field-based learning experiences more impactful (Bantwini & Moorosi, 2018b; Lynch, 2012).

Together with CMs, principals are accountable for the operations, functions and performance of the schools in their care. Therefore, they are responsible for seeing to it that SMTs, SGBs and teachers effectively act their roles and tasks as the leaders and managers of schools. It is the CM's task to support principals in all these functions. However, principals experience challenges in the education system that hinders the execution of their leadership and management responsibilities, especially during education change.

2.4.3.3 Challenges experienced by principals during education change

As in any profession, principals experience challenges that prevent them from effectively acting their role and conducting their responsibilities. These challenges involve internal or external events, actions or circumstances that affect the duties of the principal (Hill, 2007). CMs have to be aware of these challenges in order to provide the appropriate support to principals and schools.

They must also be aware of events, initiatives, training mentorship and guidance from experts or departments that can be deployed to strengthen their provision of support to principals (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009). The CM, as the direct supervisor of the principal, is responsible for identifying the challenges experienced by principals and initiating suitable and sustainable support to principals in dealing with education change.

A major challenge that seems to hinder principals during education change is that they are overwhelmed by administrative duties and expectations from the district, provincial and national departments. Principals allege that they have to submit continuous reports to departments, often just the same information in a different format. They perceive the communication from these departments as unclear, leading to its often being misinterpreted. Many schools have to appoint additional administrative personnel just to assist principals with completing reports and complying with expectations. Principals state that if they do not appoint additional personnel, they will not be able to meet the expectations from the education department and the district (Bantwini & Moorosi, 2018b). Zulu et al. (2021) point out that principals are overworked and have to work after hours and over weekends to complete their administrative work. Furthermore, Gabster et al. (2020) and McDonald (2020) add that the COVID-19 pandemic has added to the administrative workload of principals, as the DBE expects principals and schools to report on the health measures implemented at schools and the COVID status of teachers and learners on a daily basis. The pandemic has led to principals being restricted in ensuring effective teaching and learning, as they are not provided with the much-needed additional resources to deal with COVID-19 (Kaul et al., 2021).

Physical and human resources seem to be an overall concern for principals, who state that the districts do not provide them with sufficient support in acquiring school and teaching and learning resources (Bantwini & Moorosi, 2018b). Many schools lack human and physical resources, and according to principals, districts do not provide them with sufficient funding for maintenance on existing infrastructure. A shortage of teaching staff is a common challenge in the South African context that prevents schools from providing quality teaching and learning to learners (Mafuwane & Pitsoe, 2014; Manamela, 2014; Myende et al., 2020). More learners enroll in schools, while schools do not have the capacity to accommodate more learners. The shortage of staff is also due to teachers leaving the profession due to work overload and, in the past two to three years, fear for their health during the COVID-19 pandemic. Principals and teachers alike state that they are not sufficiently supported and protected by district officials to effectively deal with education change or the COVID-19 pandemic (Mthethwa, 2020). They feel that their lives are put at risk, and therefore, many CMs, principals and teachers resign or take early retirement, which causes a lot of stress on the system, as finding qualified and experienced teachers is difficult.

Many principals complain that they are hardly ever visited by district officials to provide guidance and support to them, the teachers or the schools. The view of principals is that when district officials and CMs do visit schools, they are often not prepared to provide support and their visits are merely courtesy visits or an exercise that needs to be done (Bantwini & Moorosi, 2018b; Ndlovu, 2018). According to Bantwini and Moorosi (2018a), there are CMs appointed in the position to provide support to principals and schools who do not even have prior experience of principalship, and therefore, they are not able to effectively provide support to principals. Their research indicates that many district officials and CMs do not understand their role and responsibilities with regard to supporting principals during education change.

Principals need to be effectively supported by district officials, and specifically CMs, to enable them to deal with education challenges and change. If CMs do not provide sufficient support to principals and schools, it will be an impossible task to improve the provision of quality education in schools. With the help from principals, the CM has to identify the challenges that the stakeholders at school experience and then implement support initiatives to enable principals to deal with education change. In the following section, the researcher highlights a few support initiatives that could enable principals to deal with the challenges of education change.

2.4.4 Support initiatives for principals to deal with education change

There are several support initiatives that CMs can employ that will assist principals and schools to deal with education change. Providing support to principals in managing issues, school governance, policy compliance and administrative duties is very important (Mc Lennan et al., 2018). Curriculum implementation and the provision of quality education to learners remain the main goals of the DBE, and continuous support from the CM in this area is non-negotiable. Principals need to be continuously developed and prepared for situations during education change.

[E]ffective school leadership and management does not come naturally in the appointment process of school principals; hence, it is essential that school principals must undergo professional training, preparation and development programs, which can impart the necessary competencies, knowledge, and dispositions to enable them to function and perform effectively in the educational reform context. (Hussain & Al Abri, 2015)

Principals need to be prepared for their role and developed continuously to improve their skills and competencies in their leadership and management role to enable them to deal with education change.

2.4.4.1 Principalship preparation and development

The development need of principals is a never-ending component that enables principals to deal effectively with education change. Continuous development is required to enhance the skills and competencies of principals and enable them to effectively deal with any education change that is required. Although the differentiated development needs for professionalising principals and for the development of their role were identified by the DBE and the PEDs, the necessary support to enable principals to deal with change challenges should come from districts, especially CMs (DBE, 2013b, 2016a; Department of Education, 1998). The lack of continuous preparation and development of principals will become a challenge if they are not trained and developed to deal with the changes and challenges in the education system. This is especially true for those who have just taken on the role of principal.

There is a strong emphasis on shared leadership, where the district and the CM play a critical role. CMs and principals work together, as they are both accountable for school and learner performance. The CM is responsible for training and guiding principals and providing professional development opportunities for them to develop and acquire the necessary skills to deal with challenges and education change. The *Policy on the Organisation, Roles and Responsibilities of the Education Districts* (DBE, 2013b) states that it is the responsibility of the CM to provide opportunities for the development of principals and to train and support principals in their role. This is a very important task, as, without the necessary development and training, principals will find it very difficult to deal with education change. CM and principal leadership cannot be excluded from any reform initiatives, for they are the closest point of contact between communities and the education district. Both CMs and principals need to be empowered in their leadership and management role and responsibilities to provide quality education to learners. The professional development of principals in their leadership and management role and responsibilities as reform agents in schools is a very important aspect that needs to be addressed by districts and CMs.

2.4.4.2 Strategic relationship

A number of education systems internationally have made broader efforts to partner with principals in areas such as talent management, strategic and fiscal leadership, curriculum development and teacher professional development. In these cases, the support provided by districts and CMs to principals moves beyond merely delivering efficient customer service (administrative and managerial) to working side by side with principals and offering proactive and differentiated support based on a principal's priorities (Silverman, 2016). As principals are required to create a school organisation where all staff members understand that every learner must be supported and create conditions that will prepare learners for the future, CMs, SMTs and

SGBs must assist principals to create and develop a vision and mission that will capture the imagination of the community. Thus, through relationship building, principals with the support of CMs, can create a collaborative work environment that is site-based, supports teamwork and promotes cohesion and cooperation (DBE, 2016a).

Therefore, CMs must lead, develop and implement alternative ways to provide differentiated and integrated services rooted in an understanding of the needs of each principal and school. They must design support initiatives that can anticipate and proactively meet the needs of principals and schools. What is very important is that the CM should build relationships with principals that will add value to the work of the principal and the school. The relationships should be built on trust that will establish an environment where CMs and principals can share their views and frustration and come up with ideas to deal with challenges and education change (Myende et al., 2020; Van der Voort & Wood, 2016). Through this relationship, both CMs and principals can create a culture of continuous improvement to learn, adapt and respond to the changing needs of schools. This will enable CMs and principals to work efficiently through a well-coordinated and defined set of operational systems. CMs have to support principals to make informed decisions based on data and information extracted from the QMS and the DDD platform. Training principals to use these systems will also empower them to develop action plans to improve teaching and learning in schools (Wohlstetter & Mohrman, 1996). In order to utilise data to make informed decisions and develop strategies and plans to improve education provision in schools, principals need new knowledge and skills.

2.4.4.3 Knowledge and skills training

In the South African basic education context, districts, CMs and principals need to promote school-wide staff development to improve the capacity of the whole school. Training for principals to deal with education change motivates and encourages on-site, continuous staff development, and not the one-shot “go and get” variety, which is more fragmented in nature (Duncan et al., 2011; Fenwick & Pierce, 2002; Hussain & Al Abri, 2015; Mestry & Grobler, 2004). The following three kinds of knowledge and skills are important for effective development (Hussain & Al Abri, 2015; Ndlovu, 2018):

- Stakeholders (principals, SMTs and SGBs) need training to expand their knowledge of the instructional and programmatic changes of schools, including current knowledge about teaching, learning and curriculum. CMs must help principals and various stakeholders to define the knowledge and training needs of schools and how services can be delivered.
- The development of teamwork skills for participating in work groups and training in group decision making and how to reach consensus is needed. If people other than the

principal is running meetings, then leadership training is needed school-wide so that people have the skills to run meetings effectively.

- Teachers and community representatives who have to assist in developing a budget or hiring staff need organisational knowledge, which includes budgeting and personnel skills.

The preparation, training and development of principals to act their role and effectively execute their tasks as leaders and managers are very important for the success of schools. CMs, in partnership with principals, have to strategically work together to find the best solutions to deal with education challenges, while also promoting the provision of quality education during education change.

2.4.5 Relationship between the Circuit Manager and the principal

The principal, as a leader and manager, plays a pivotal role in the provision of education to learners. Their role as a leader and manager is central to education reform in South Africa. Principals have to be continuously supported by the national education department and PEDs, and especially by districts, as they are the closest to schools. The role of the CM to support principals and schools cannot be overemphasised, as the CM is the direct link for the principal to the district. The responsibilities of the CM are to effectively support principals in all areas of school management, governance and curriculum implementation. Principals declare that the lack of district support to provide physical and human resources is of great concern, and they are overloaded with administrative obligations and expectations. However, this is where the support provided by CMs is critical, and therefore, they have to support principals in addressing challenges and implement support initiatives that will enable principals to deal with education change. These initiatives can take the form of professional development, the training of principals and mentorship for principals.

2.5 SUMMARY

In Chapter 2, an overview of the South African education system is given. It is followed by a brief explanation of how the DBE and the DHET came into existence and how education is governed in South Africa. In this chapter, literature regarding the phenomenon the researcher studied was scrutinised and the basic education structure was elaborated on, with emphasis placed on the DBE, PEDs, districts, circuits and clusters. In the context of this study, the researcher elaborated on the organisational structure of the basic education system and the challenges that have been faced by the system since the establishment of democracy in the country. The researcher discussed the compilation of the PEDs and how they had demarcated districts and circuits within

the boundaries of the provinces. The role and responsibilities of the CM, as a district official and representative, are directly aligned with the role and responsibilities of districts, which are focused on planning, organisational culture and support, oversight and accountability, and public engagement.

CMs are the direct supervisors of principals and are responsible for providing them with administrative, managerial and technical support. The aim of this chapter was to determine where the current function, role and responsibilities of the CM reside within the education structure and to investigate the relevant policies and legislation aligned with the CM's position. The perceptions of districts and circuits were outlined, as well as the challenges they face in the different functions they are responsible for in the basic education system. Furthermore, principalship, the barriers principals experience during education change and enablers that can help them in dealing with education change were discussed.

From the discussion in this chapter, it is evident that the role and responsibilities of the CM are central to dealing with change in the basic education system. CMs are seen as the catalyst to education reform. It is, therefore, important that they are supported and enabled by districts, PEDs and the DBE to do so. Principalship has different leadership roles, as a principal has to be both the leader and the manager of a school. They are seen as drivers of education transformation in schools and communities. They are tasked with many responsibilities in managing schools and driving the provision of quality education. Unfortunately, they face many challenges in dealing with education change. It is the responsibility of the CM to put development initiatives in place and provide initiatives of professional support for principals to empower them to deal with change. CMs must ensure that knowledge and information are shared between the district, the CM and principals. Strong relationships built on trust and respect must be established between CMs and principals to enable them to deal with education change and challenges. In Chapter 3, the researcher will provide the theories that underpinned the study.

CHAPTER 3

THEORETICAL UNDERPINNING TO IMPLEMENT EDUCATION CHANGE

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In Chapter 2, an in-depth review of the literature on how education change in respect of provincial structures has affected the South African education system was presented. Education change has been globally prominent in education systems since the introduction of schooling and the establishment of education departments. The transformation of education in South Africa, especially since the inception of democracy, was also elaborated on. Emphasis was placed on the CM; however, limited research was found on the role and responsibilities of the CM in supporting principals in the South African education system. Change is inevitable and affects all living things at one time or another in their lives. Education change is no different, and there are many elements that play a significant role in it.

Chapter 3 expands on the continuous education change in South Africa and relevant aspects of educational and organisational change. The researcher was compelled to identify relevant theories to empower him to design a framework that CMs could implement to ensure effective and sustainable execution of their role and responsibilities in supporting principals during education change. Two theories guided the researcher's thinking and data analysis process in the study regarding the specific phenomenon, namely how CMs could effectively execute their role and responsibilities to support principals during education change. Many change theories have been developed by theorists for change; however, the researcher selected the most suitable theories associated with organisational and education change, which formed the theoretical underpinnings to reach the required objectives. The theories deemed appropriate were Deming's (1993) organisational change theory and Lewin's (1951) theory of organisational change and action – the three-step model.

In the first section of this chapter, the researcher provides insight into change and education change. Thereafter, Deming's four parts of organisational change and 14 principles for quality management and leadership support are discussed. The second theory that the researcher applied was Lewin's theory of organisational change and action – the three-step model. Although Lewin's model refers to transformational leadership, the instructional leadership style, which is most often referred to as the ideal leadership style for dealing with education change, fits comfortably into his model. The chosen theories provide a comprehensive outline of what needs

to be considered and done by leadership, management and teachers to effectively implement change and to ensure that the change is permanent. Change is a very difficult process to implement and drive in organisations, especially in a complex environment such as the education environment, and requires commitment from everyone.

3.2 CHANGE

“Change is ubiquitous. It connotes a lot of concepts such as: progress, improvement, evolution and development” (Mul & Korthals, 1997, p. 245). Change is not uniform, and a variety of concepts of educational change compete for the attention of policymakers, practitioners and the larger public (Alsharija & Watters, 2020; Amanchukwui & Daminabo, 2014). Reigeluth and Garfinkle (1994) state that change can be systemic or local. In terms of educational reform, stakeholders should adopt a system that will benefit all the learners in the school, no matter the environment in which the learners reside (Amanchukwui & Daminabo, 2014). The change process is itself a barrier to achieving change. While change may be ongoing and follows a meta-strategic cycle (Christie, 2010), the mechanism and technology of the change have less of an impact than the actual process of change. Change leads to organisation change and “results in defining new roles for people that work within the system to effectively change a system” (Fullan, 1993, p. 77). It is the people involved in the change process and their commitment to change that make the most significant difference if the change is to be effective. Any disturbance to the status quo is likely to create friction, and according to Fullan (1993, p. 77), “this conflict is inevitable but necessary”.

In recent years, educational leaders have adopted and implemented practices designed to improve the provision of education, which have led to numerous changes (Davies, 2018; Hussain et al., 2018; Ncwane, 2019; October, 2009; Rigby et al., 2016; Zhao, 2011). Fullan (2006b), Hargreaves (2005) and Moloji (2014) agree that there are many challenges to deal with during education change, which puts new demands on the education system. They concur that education change takes a long time, and in a rapidly changing world, it is very difficult to keep up with these changes. Globally, there has been a growing awareness of the necessity to change and improve the preparation of learners for productive functioning in the continually changing and highly demanding world of work. Amanchukwui and Daminabo (2014) point out that change in education can be seen as innovation and innovation processes of making changes to something established by introducing something new. Therefore, change constitutes an integral component of education change.

3.2.1 Education change

Fullan (2006b) states that reform is not just implementing the newest policies.

[T]he interests in educational reform has reached new heights as we enter the 21st century. Grappling with the problem of achieving large-scale reform grounded in local ownership has become the new challenge—overtaking the false choice between local innovation and macro, superficial reform. (Fullan, 2001, p. 1)

The appropriate culture of the school, classroom and district is also required to ensure that sustainable change takes place. There is more to educational change than most people realise. According to Fullan (2016), restructuring an education system, district or school is relatively easy; however, to change a culture is not that simple. Fullan (2011) has found that improving and strengthening relationships between people and transparency in collaboration and information are important if real change is to be achieved. However, relationship building and transparency seem to be more huge challenges in education change in South Africa.

The DBE as an organisation has changed significantly in structure over the past few decades. Education departments and people have been assigned new roles to promote and implement change in education (see Section 2.2). More than three decades ago, Hall (1988, p. 24) stated that change might be described as “the adoption of an innovation, where the ultimate goal is to improve outcomes through an alteration of practices”. After 1994, South Africa found itself at the crossroads of education change, which was inevitable due to the political past of the country and the envisioned future of democracy. South Africa has implemented two major reform strategies since 1994, of which outcomes-based education was the first in 2005. However, the outcome of this reform process was not what the government expected, and it was soon shelved (Jansen, 1998). Outcomes-based education was not clearly communicated, and principals and teachers were not properly prepared and trained to deal with it (DBE, 2005; Jansen, 1998). In 2009, the new, revised curriculum was implemented, which led to major restructuring in the education system (DBE, 2012; Moloi, 2014) (see Sections 2.1 and 2.2).

Change resulted in a new role and responsibilities for districts officials and CMs. CMs and principals were unclear on how they should act their role and execute their responsibilities during the implementation of this education reform. As a result, the new role and responsibilities assigned to these positions shifted the focus from school inspection to self-evaluation, support and the monitoring of schools (Bantwini & Moorosi, 2018b; Mavuso & Moyo, 2014; Narsee, 2006). This change brought additional responsibilities to the role of CMs and principals. In the context of this study, change means that CMs, principals and school leadership are exposed to new methods, growth, technological development, training (professional and personal) and

mentorship initiatives in basic education, and therefore, they must receive the required support and stakeholders need to be skilled and developed (Alsharija & Watters, 2020). However, the education system has been loaded with challenges caused by COVID-19, which the education system was never prepared to deal with (McDonald, 2020) (see Chapter 2). It is important that CMs ensure that they provide relevant support to enable principals to deal with education change.

Change can start in the principal's office. A good scenario to explain this is with the CM as the bus driver and the principal, SMT, SGB and teachers as the passengers. Although the CM can stand as the leader, he or she should ensure that his or her bus can accommodate all the passengers and nobody is left behind. The CM follows the principles of management and educational practice but can apply support innovations (see Chapter 2) and creativity where necessary or when needed. The most effective way is for the CM to apply the management principle of "walking around", providing management, administrative and technical support, guidance and mentorship to principals, SMTs, SGBs and teachers when needed, so as to keep everyone focused on the provision of quality education during education change (Smit et al., 2011). Principals and members of the SMT should apply the same principle of walking around to see what each teacher does with the learners in his or her classroom. As a matter of fact, as the CM is the direct supervisor of the principal, so the principal and the members of the SMT are the internal supervisors of the school who are in a better position to give a genuine account of the teaching and learning practices and activities in the school (Amanchukwui & Daminabo, 2014).

CMs and principals should not be complacent if they want their schools to perform well. The CM must ensure that principals, SMTs, SGBs and teachers match theory with techniques, as that is what makes a school perform well, especially when dealing with education change (Fullan, 2009a). Furthermore, CMs should support principals and teachers in acting as critical thinking educationists by the way they integrate theory and techniques of management and teaching, which will help to make the school an exemplary figure in the changing education environment in which they find themselves (Amanchukwui & Daminabo, 2014).

Many lessons can be learnt from global education reform initiatives and used to inform education change within the South African education context (Björk et al., 2014; Fullan, 2009a; Law & Walker, 2005; Leithwood et al., 2002). These lessons learnt can inform governments, districts and schools of what to expect and what not, and enable education change to become much more detailed about the inner workings of processes of education change. However, education leadership and management must be able to understand why CM, principals, teachers and learners do what they do and why they act the way they do (Fullan, 2001). In the context of this study, for example, the CM must know what education change feels like from the principal's point of view and understand the actions and reactions of principals, teachers and learners. The CM

must integrate the knowledge of the principal and the teachers with an understanding of organisational factors that influence the process of change as governments, teacher unions, school systems and communities interact.

Fullan (2009b) introduces six secrets of change and warns that they are always visible and on the foreground. He refers to them as “secrets” because they are complicated and difficult to comprehend because there are some challenges involved in appreciating them and acting on them in combination (Fullan, 2011). According to Fullan (2006a), permanent change in education can only happen if change efforts are communicated clearly to those who have to drive change efforts. Fullan’s (2009b) six secrets of change can be applied to education change to ensure that the change is effective and sustainable.

3.2.2 Fullan’s six secrets of change

Fullan (2009b) notes that many school systems suffer from “initiativitis” – the implementation of change efforts after change without regard for how such efforts interact with one another in existing systems or players within the organisation. These initiatives often create uncertainty and confusion in teachers and leaders in the education system (Hargreaves, 2005). Many of these initiatives in the system do not produce any significant improvement (Fullan, 2006a). Spillane (2000) contends that such initiatives are often not successful because the people who implement change do not have sufficient knowledge or skills to do so. They do not make sense of the underlying purpose of the change effort. Educational leaders and managers often lack the ability to fully comprehend the underlying theoretical structures associated with successful education change. This is especially true for CMs who are at the heart of organisational change in public schools (Heystek, 2016).

According to Fullan (2009b), for real change to happen in education, a combination of six secrets is needed to achieve the set goals. These secrets are as follows: love your employees; connect peer with purpose; capacity building prevails; learning is the work; transparency rules; and systems learn. Figure 3-1 presents the six secrets that Fullan (2009b) deduced from his education change theory.

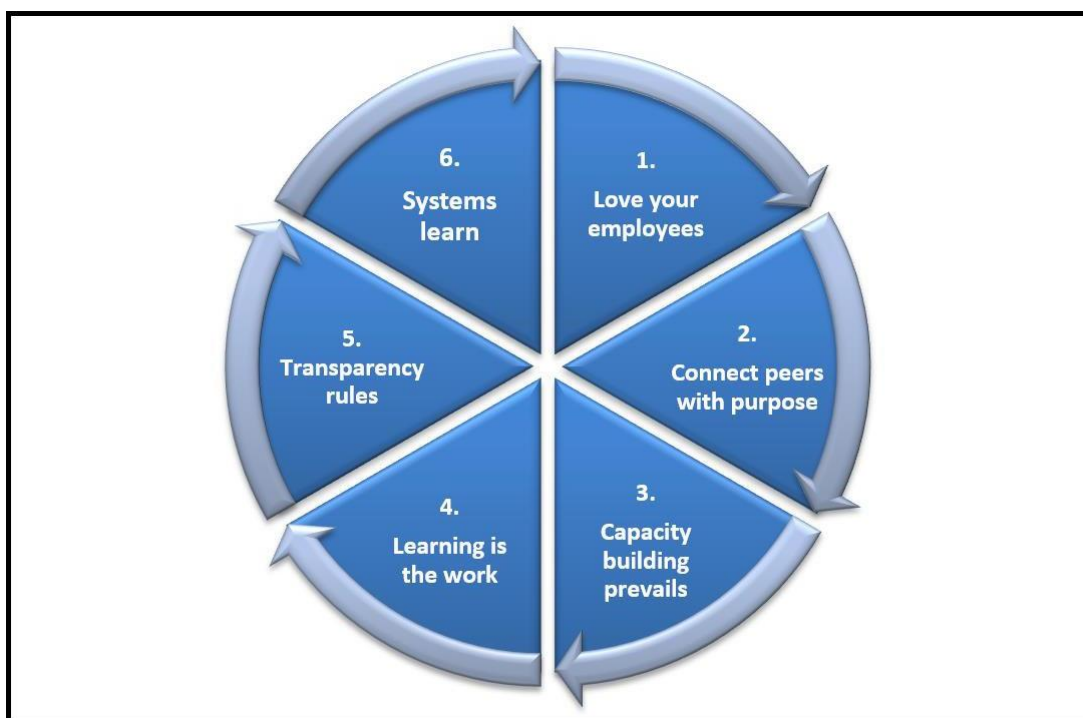


Figure 3-1: Fullan's six secrets to education change (adapted from Fullan, 2011)

3.2.2.1 Love your employees

According to Fullan, the first secret, "love your employees", explores the importance of building the school by focusing on the principal, teachers, learners and the community. The key is enabling staff to learn continuously. Fullan (2009b) warns that although "love your employees" seems easy to manage, leadership in the organisation must realise the importance of this secret. The deeper meaning of this secret encapsulates many things, such as mutual respect, developing people that one works with and having employees who have the same interest as the leadership of the organisation has. In the context of this study, CMs and principals must be adamant that they will not tolerate anyone or any action that would put their efforts in jeopardy.

The CM as the direct supervisor of principals and the principal as the leader of the SMT and teachers have to respect all stakeholders in the education system, such as district officials, the principal's peers, the SMT and the SGB, community members and teachers. The task of the CM is to support them as effectively as possible (DBE, 2013b) (see Sections 2.3.1 and 2.4.1). CMs and principals have to fulfil many different leadership roles in the school and apply different leadership styles, such as authoritarian, laissez-faire and democratic styles. Principals and teachers behave differently, and therefore, they need to be managed and handled differently by the CM. People resist change and fear change. So, for the CM to use an authoritarian style to manage principals may not be the best approach, except if a principal or teacher is stubborn and

refuses to change after a series of warnings (Hargreaves et al., 2014). Then the CM can reprimand the principal or teacher in terms of query (Amanchukwui & Daminabo, 2014). The CM may get support, but, in fact, a large number of people may not have feelings of genuine support. On the other hand, Fullan (2011) states that the laissez-faire CM may say that principals are professional leaders and managers and so need to set high expectations and stay out of their way. According to Fullan (2011), the ideal is an integration of these two extremes. The CM has to be proactive, actively involved, interact with principals and teachers and show appreciation, love, respect and support. At the same time, the CM has to maintain high expectations by applying “carrots” and “sticks” where necessary (Fullan, 2009b). Fullan’s first two secrets involve people and the relationships between them. Thus, the CM can implement support initiatives such as one-to-one support or mentorship to assist principals in dealing with challenges.

3.2.2.2 Connect peers with purpose

Peer interaction with a purpose within the schooling system is crucial. Teacher learning and performance increase substantially when teachers work in teaching and learning communities that are supported by school leaders who focus on improvement. However, connecting peers with purpose can also include the leadership of schools and the management of districts, for example CM workgroups, principal’s forums and communities of principalship.

In view of this, the second secret is also applicable to leadership. Therefore, leadership and management in this study have to connect peers with purpose. Schools are acknowledged to have large populations in terms of learners and teachers, but these should not prevent CMs or principals from carrying out their responsibilities (Fullan, 2009b). The CM can decide to work along with the principals he or she is responsible for and identify their strengths, weaknesses and needs to provide appropriate support. The CM can assist a particular principal who has difficulty in dealing with education change or a barrier such as a large administrative workload or struggling with acquiring human and physical resources or curriculum implementation (Chung, 2012). The CM can act as a mentor or find another principal (peer) who has the necessary experience to assist the principal. The CM or experienced principal can assist the principal who is struggling to deal with the barrier.

In the context of the circuit and the school, the district culture is important; however, the school culture remains paramount (Amanchukwui & Daminabo, 2014). The CM may be able to get a principal to learn from the mentorship initiative to uphold a school culture of excellence in the school and improve learner performance during education change. The goal should be what they are interacting about, that is, interaction on the data and how well the principal and the school are doing (Campbell & Fullan, 2019). All interaction should be focused on management and

instructional practices that get desired results (Fullan, 2011). The CM must focus on support initiatives (see Chapter 2) that will assist principals in managing and dealing with challenges to uphold the school and learner performance. Therefore, the CM should attempt to influence the school culture directly or indirectly, using CM and principal (peer) mentorship initiatives, and positive results will be achieved whether or not the CM is monitoring the principal (Amanchukwui & Daminabo, 2014). All of the staff members should feel that they are working together for the benefit of the whole school. CMs and principals should stop thinking in terms of “my school” and start thinking about “our school, our district”. When CMs and principals start putting theory into practice, learning has taken place.

3.2.2.3 Capacity building prevails

The third secret involves capacity building. This involves effectively assisting teachers and principals in developing the instructional and management of change skills needed for school improvement. For example, the whole-school evaluation process must be linked to principal, SMT and SGB management performance and the instructional practices that achieve school performance.

CMs and principals have to adopt an attitude of improving the strengths and capabilities of SMTs, SGBs and teaching staff in terms of knowledge and skills. It is the responsibility of the CM and the principal to motivate the SMT, the SGB and teachers so as to achieve the desired results. Moreover, the CM is responsible for motivating the principals to act their role as school leaders and managers and to execute their tasks (responsibilities). Fullan (2011) mentions that if the leaders and managers (CMs and district officials) of districts motivate principals to learn through creativity, such as mentorship programmes, training and professional development initiatives, it should, in turn, motivate teachers and the members of SMTs and SGBs to teach and motivate learners to learn. The knowledge and skills acquired should be put into practice, and this is a sure way of bringing about change in schools and curriculum practices (Fullan, 2011). CMs should encourage principals, and principals should encourage SMTs, SGBs and teachers to develop and enhance their knowledge and skills by attending conferences, workshops, seminars and professional development opportunities. Both CMs and principals must undergo preparation for their roles as educational leaders. Deming (1993) states that just-in-time training, on-the-job training and in-service training of leaders and managers in organisations are critical when change in the organisations is initiated. Amanchukwui and Daminabo (2014) suggest that school leaders and managers should be encouraged to read widely so as to enrich their knowledge and skills. All these aspects are expected to change their techniques of leading and managing schools during education change.

Ongoing professional development for teachers, principals, SMTs and SGBs of schools that is clearly coordinated with and integrated into the schedules of the CM, principal and SMT is one factor that greatly influences the success of education, especially during change (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). Education ministries of countries such as Belgium and the Nordic countries excel in the practice of integrating professional development of school leadership into their schedules, as opposed to the developing countries in Africa and even first-world countries such as the United States of America (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Wei et al., 2009). The countries that do excel in these practices have proven that the integration of the training and development of people into work schedules makes a positive contribution to the quality and provision of education (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017).

Education districts in the South African context provide limited development opportunities for CMs and principals, especially on skills development in dealing with a crisis or education change (Bantwini & Moorosi, 2018b). Professional development of CMs and principals in South Africa is crucial in order to deal with challenges. The poor performance of principals and schools can be directly linked to inadequate human and physical resources, deficient infrastructure and a lack of district support (Anderson et al., 2012; Bantwini & Diko, 2011; HRDC, 2014; Myende et al., 2020). Hussain and Al Abri (2015) express that professional development is concerned with people rather than programmes and activities, and can be achieved in various ways. Amanchukwui and Daminabo (2014) maintain that the emphasis in professional development should be carefully planned, coherent programmes, offered over a sustained period at several points in the careers of school leaders. Some of these programmes must provide professionally developed programmes tailored to the challenging contexts of principals and CMs (Bantwini & Moorosi, 2018a). The Wallace Foundation (2013) reports that school and district leadership has been found to be an effective contributor to bring about and promote change in the education system if the leadership (CMs and principals) is trained and developed to deal with education challenges. Principals and SMT members are school-based professional developers who have a direct influence on how education change can be initiated within schools and the community (DBE, 2020). Therefore, the better principals and school leadership are trained and developed in implementing education change practices and managing these changes in schools, the more successful the change will be. Thus, it is a positive contributing factor that determines the success of education change (Fullan, 2011).

Capacity building also involves building up one's diction, giving a person a wide range in understanding and explaining concepts, strategies or plans, thereby making the SMT, SGB, teachers and the community understand the initiated change better and increasing their knowledge of the change. Also, the CM must assist principals in widening their knowledge of

leadership and the management of schools in challenging contexts so as to enable them to deliver successfully on their responsibilities for the benefit of the teachers, learners and the school. Capacity building should be extended not only to principals but also to teachers and members of SMTs and SGBs (Amanchukwui & Daminabo, 2014; Campbell & Fullan, 2019).

3.2.2.4 Learning is the work

Fullan (2009b) calls the fourth secret of change “learning is the work”. Professional development in workshops and courses is only an input to continuous learning and precision in teaching and school management. Only if the culture of the school supports the day-to-day learning of CMs, principals and teachers who are involved in the enhancement of education provision, can successful growth be accomplished.

The principal of a school must establish professional learning as part of the day-to-day work in the school culture (Fullan, 2009b). Hence, it is the responsibility of the CM to support principals in establishing a professional learning culture in schools. Fullan (2009b) states that there is a difference between professional development and professional learning. Elmore (2004) explains that professional development is something one goes off to and does, quite disconnected from the workplace. According to Elmore (2004), professional development programmes can inform and motivate principals to initiate new things, and one can acquire new or innovative ideas from these programmes. However, unless one has a learning culture that actively implements that learning day after day, one will not achieve breakthrough results. Hargreaves et al. (2014) state that people (CMs and principals) will never get substantial change unless they learn in their job. The education environment is changing at a rapid rate, and new technologies are constantly emerging. As Elmore (in Amanchukwui & Daminabo, 2014, p. 89) succinctly puts it, “if we haven’t created an environment which enables people to learn day-after-day, we have failed”. In the school environment, CMs and principals should put into practice what they have learnt, as learning is the work. As they practise it day after day in their leadership and management roles, they tend to know more and find themselves in a better position to impart knowledge and skills (Amanchukwui & Daminabo, 2014). The CM’s provision of support to principals must be clear and direct, informed by the needs of the principals and schools (Bantwini & Moorosi, 2018b). There should be evidence of transparency of management, technical and administrative support. The CM should assist principals to identify strategies and develop plans that will enhance the performance of principals and schools continuously, even during education change. The strategies and plans should yield better results for everyone in the school (Amanchukwui & Daminabo, 2014).

CMs must be conscious about principals' needs in dealing with education change. They have to evaluate and monitor how principals are using strategies and plans to improve their leadership and management practices during education change. Fullan's (2009b) secrets of "learning is the work" and "transparency rules" work together. For example, if a CM enters a school where transparency rules and asks the principal how many learners are struggling in a specific subject area, the principal should immediately point at the data. If he turns around and asks the SMT members the same question, they should be able to identify struggling teachers and even learners by name. Extracting data from the QMS or the DDD system is a powerful tool to inform support initiatives or to report on the school, principal, teacher and learner performance. District and school databases are precision and transparency at their best if it is linked to the other secrets (Amanchukwui & Daminabo, 2014; Fullan, 2009b). CMs and principals are informed by data and information on their schools, and through the information, they can identify weak and strong areas (see Section 2.3.5). CMs use the data to evaluate principals and schools and plan the provision of support for principals and schools where performance in focus areas is weak. It simply means that CMs and principals should all know who is doing well and who is not doing well.

3.2.2.5 Transparency rules

Continuous data collection and analysis of principals and schools on their performance are important for future improvement and success. It takes up the dilemmas of de-privatising practice, where it becomes normal and desirable for CMs, principals and teachers to observe and be observed in management or teaching facilitated by coaches and mentors.

According to Amanchukwui and Daminabo (2014, p. 90), it is assumed "that when the secrets are combined one gets the highest possible leverage". Fullan (2011) believes that there are three important ingredients to improving education provision and teaching, namely that the teacher will be assisted first when there is transparency, when the teacher's teaching practice and results are known and when an empathetic, non-judgemental environment is provided when the teacher is being supported. This is also relevant to the support role of CMs. If principals are assured of the support of the CM and there is transparency so that principals are aware of their performance (execution of responsibilities), they will know where their weaknesses are and where they need to improve. It is also important that they know their strengths so that they can build on them. When the CM is empathetic, a non-prejudicial and non-judgemental environment is established when principals are being supported. Transparency, not being prejudicial or judgemental, and effective CM support make a significant difference to principals when dealing with education change. If this does not happen, all of these factors will demotivate principals for change or, in some cases, even encourage them to leave the profession or retire. To achieve better results in the South African basic education system, CMs have to regularly visit and support principals and schools and walk

around to see what is happening in the school. Although the data extracted from the QMS and the DDD system inform the CM's visits and provision of support, it is always a good idea to get an overview of what is going on in the schools for which they are responsible. Fullan (2009b) attempts to integrate or merge the secret of "learning is the work" with "transparency rules", which is important for the last secret, namely "systems learn".

3.2.2.6 Systems learn

Continuous learning depends on developing many leaders in the district and the school in order to enhance continuity. It also depends on schools being confident in the face of complexity and open to new ideas. Fullan's sixth and final secret is "systems learn". The concept of systems learning focuses on continuous learning during change. Fullan (2009b) states that one way of showing that "systems learn" or continuous learning happens is when the leadership leaves or changes in the organisation. Amanchukwui and Daminabo (2014, p. 89) emphasise that "the sixth secret indicates that sustainable success can only be achieved when the leader has motivated a large number of people working with them". Fullan (2009b) describes this secret as coalescing leadership, in which principals are conscious of developing other leaders. In this case, CMs do not solve problems in isolation but do it in partnership with sub-directorates in the district and with principals. However, they are aware of the fact that they are continuously cultivating leadership in others. This is a very good approach if it is actually implemented (Fullan, 2011). If it is not implemented, it can cause CMs, principals and even teachers to leave the profession due to work overload, insufficient district support and fear of their health and safety, for instance during the COVID-19 pandemic. If implemented, chances are that the system will not collapse but continue to work in the same direction (Amanchukwui & Daminabo, 2014; Fullan, 2009b). Amanchukwui and Daminabo (2014, p. 89) mention that the sixth secret, "systems learn", means that one appreciates uncertainty and learns to get better at figuring out complexity and taking action, even when one knows "that not everything will necessarily work out well and one keeps on going".

The first part of the secret of "systems learn" is broad collaboration, which bears the next generation of leaders while doing today's work. The second part of the secret has to do with leaders, in this case CMs, who handle complexity and education change. Collins (2016) mentions that great leaders have two characteristics, namely deep personal humility and intense professional will. Furthermore, Pfeffer and Sutton (2000) define *wisdom* as using one's knowledge while doubting what one knows. It is observed that some CMs, because of their ineffectiveness may be overly confident, regardless of the facts (Bantwini & Moorosi, 2018a). They may insist that they are right and are not ready to listen to any other ideas. However, CMs should be open to principals' ideas, which will also build trust and mutual respect. The assurance that a CM will

support principals are a motivating factor that will enhance the performance of principals and schools (Fullan, 2009b).

The other extreme is the ineffective approach. It is when CMs or principals are overwhelmed by complexity during education change and have to deal with too many barriers. It may cause them to give up hope and become paralysed and indecisive in making decisions or taking action. In such a situation, a balance is needed, and the CM and the principal need to find an equilibrium. Sometimes, leaders (CMs and principals) do need to be more confident than the situation warrants, but at the same time, they should maintain humility and be open-minded to listen to others' views or contributions (Amanchukwui & Daminabo, 2014). Ideally, CMs and principals should neither be too humble or overcautious to act, nor so overconfident that they miss the learning in a situation.

3.2.3 Conclusion

Implementing change in any district' or school requires a combination of Fullan's (2009b) six secrets to achieve the set goals. By employing the six secrets, the accountability of the CM and principal is already integrated into the culture of the school, granted that ubiquitous transparency is added and things firm up naturally because of the interaction among the secrets (Amanchukwui & Daminabo, 2014). For example, when one combines purposeful peer interaction, learning is the work and transparency, strong internal accountability becomes inherently embedded in the culture (Ehren et al., 2020). However, one should not lose sight of Pfeffer and Sutton's (2006, p. 174) criterion for wisdom – “the ability to act with knowledge, while doubting what you know”. Fortunately, the secrets are so intertwined that working on any one means working on several simultaneously.

South Africa is a very diverse country and has a complex society; so, to implement change in any organisation will ask great effort from everyone in the system. Functional education goes along with a lot of challenges that should be addressed. In addressing them, it is crucial to keep in mind the complexity of the education system that presents itself specifically during change and crises that cannot be averted, such as the COVID-19 pandemic. In actual fact, no simple, single uniform approach can be applied with the expectation that significant improvement of the system will occur. In the South African context, CMs and principals are accountable for school and learner performance, and therefore, they need to be prepared and developed. Principals are seen as agents of change, and CMs must set the pace because they are responsible for bringing necessary information that concerns the running of schools and supporting principals in the daily activities of the school.

Implementing change in any district or school requires a combination of Fullan's (2009b) secrets to achieve the set goals. Although there is a multitude of challenges and barriers in the basic education system of South Africa, there are various possibilities of using concepts and methods of the study of complex systems for providing direction and strategies to facilitate the introduction of viable and successful change in organisations.

3.3 ORGANISATIONAL CHANGE – DEMING'S SYSTEM OF PROFOUND KNOWLEDGE

Deming's approach to organisational change was adopted in this study to understand the relationships between people and the elements in an organisation and to what extent knowledge and thinking should be used to bring about change. Whether these change efforts are in response to education mandates such as No Child Left Behind in America or Access to All in South Africa, change efforts have become recurring actions to adapt to the needs of a country (Darling-Hammond, Noguera, Cobb and Meier, 2007). Research-based education, standards-based instruction, brain-compatible instruction, authentic assessment, professional learning communities and multiple intelligence are but a few of the initiatives implemented by governments to provide in the educational needs of their country (Fullan, 2006a). Unfortunately, many leaders and managers are unsuccessful in their attempts to connect planned organisational changes with an applicable theory of change, thereby forfeiting opportunities to facilitate more effective and sustained improvement (Evans et al., 2012).

Using theories of change to guide organisational change and development is not a new phenomenon (Stepanovich, 2004). Theories of change have been evident in government structures, industry and economic environments and have been discussed in the literature for decades (Braughton, 1999; Gogue, 2005; Scherkenbach, 1986). Moreover, theories of change have been implemented in many education leadership development programmes (Stensaasen, 1995). In a study conducted by Evans (2010) in an urban school district in America, principals and district leaders stated that educational leaders relied more on individualistic approaches to change than system-wide strategies based on a common, articulated framework. Furthermore, Evans et al. (2012) state that individualistic implementation of change is a barrier for the development of a shared vision and district-wide leadership and is a result of limited growth in organisations. A sound understanding of the change theory can provide educational leaders and managers with an opportunity to coordinate meaningful improvements in the education system (Deming, 2018a). In this section, Deming's system of profound knowledge and organisational change improvement model are discussed.

3.3.1 System of profound knowledge

William Edwards Deming is widely known as a change theorist and regarded as one of the leading management thinkers in the field of change and quality in organisations (Stepanovich, 2004). He introduced and outlined the system of profound knowledge, a system that would lead people and organisations out of the “tyranny” of modern management to new management (Shewhart & Deming, 1986). Deming’s theory of knowledge is closely linked with Lewis’s (1929) work, which suggests that knowledge is built on theory, predictions about the future, observation and reflection of the past, and outcomes. Deming argues that rational prediction requires theory and builds knowledge through systematic revision, based on the evaluation of the actual outcome compared with the predicted perceived outcome (Deming, 1993, 2018a). “Information, no matter how complete and speedy, is not knowledge. Knowledge has temporal speed. Without theory, there is no way to use the information that comes to us on the instant” (Deming in Phelps et al., 2007, p. 3).

The first part of dealing with change in an organisation is what Deming refers to as a “system of profound knowledge” (Warm et al., 2019). Deming (1986, 2000) identified the need for the system to be created so that all its parts work well and utilised this philosophy in industries, education, health and other services. He regarded the whole organisation as an operating system – a system wherein leadership is enabled to view the organisation from a systems perspective (Deming, 1986, 2000). The system provides a way of finding out what is going on in the organisation so that it can concentrate on productivity (Padro, 2009). It provides urgency to processes in the organisation so that every person in it may know what he or she is doing and understand why he or she is doing it (Deming, 2018b; Phelps et al., 2007). This entails that the organisational structure, mission and vision have to be realigned to implement effective change. In line with this, competition within the organisation is forbidden because everyone in the organisation has to work together so that everyone can be focused on improving the way the organisation works and not act as isolated entities perceiving their own goals and agendas. The obstacles that obstruct working in silos from performing well are eliminated, and teamwork is promoted (Deming, 2018a), including the avoidance of conflicting instructions or unclear information.

The system of profound knowledge approach requires everyone in an organisation to know the elements that make up the system he or she works in, as well as the different interrelationships that exist and how the hierarchy structures in the organisation function. Deming (2018a) insists that the absence of knowledge about systems and variation is the reason why many organisations experience difficulty during change. He explains that a system is not able to understand itself but needs people to buy into change and make it happen (Deming, 1993, 2018b).

In the context of Deming's theory, competition and a climate of working in silos among PEDs, districts, district subdepartments, schools and communities within the system have to be eliminated. What is needed is to establish an environment where everyone is working together as part of the system to achieve the goals of the basic education system. Although the DBE has gone through several restructuring processes, the prevailing style of leadership and management in the basic education system must undergo continuous transformation (change) to adapt to the changing needs of the country, industry, citizens and schools, whether these are political, socio-economic or cultural needs or dealing with a crisis (e.g. COVID-19) to ensure that education change is sustainable. This transformation means a change in form, shape or appearance (Maguad, 2011). Transformation requires people to comprehend Deming's system of profound knowledge and the application of his 14 principles in every relationship, whether it is among people or between people and the elements in the system (Deming, 1993). Deming's system of profound knowledge embraces an appreciation for a system, knowledge about variation, the theory of knowledge and the psychology of human behaviour (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2007; Deming, 1993; Zhang & Li, 2011). According to Deming (in Maguad, 2011), it is important not only to identify the parts of a system but also to focus on their relationships.

3.3.2 Relationships within an organisation

Stepanovich (2004) explains that Deming's idea of not only identifying the main components of a system but also understanding their interconnectedness and the synergy that must be established between them is important for organisational change. Scholtes (1999) regards this interconnectedness as very important and proposes an additional element, namely "interdependence and interaction". Senge (2006) elaborates on Deming's systems thinking and argues that it is an important part of learning organisations, as it cuts across all features of learning organisations and is the foundation upon which all other fields mature. Senge (2006) concurs with Deming's (1993) view and regards systems thinking as critical to organisational progress, given that the world is becoming more complex. Senge (2006) and Deming (1993) both argue that systems thinking allows situations to be viewed from a broader perspective and not only focusing from the inside. Senge (2006) adds that all decisions made and actions taken within an organisation have a bearing on other parts of the organisation, and their interconnectedness and relationships must be taken into account. Employees within an organisation are better positioned to make decisions after carefully considering their influence on the rest of the system (Deming, 1993). Therefore, knowledge of systems thinking affords leaders in organisations the opportunity to encourage informed decision making and attract wider analysis. Senge (2006) suggests that there are relationships and interconnectedness among all the elements in a system to make it

work effectively. Deming (1993) points out that the relationships among and appreciation of the elements in the system are crucial when initiating change.

3.3.2.1 Appreciation of systems

A system is a network of interdependent components that work in together to accomplish the aim and objective of the system (Deming, 2018b). A system cannot be managed well by simply managing its individual parts in isolation but must have a goal that it can work towards and a mission that drives the people and elements in the organisation to strive towards that goal (Stensaasen, 1995). This goal is usually outlined in the vision and mission of an organisation and is developed on the values and beliefs of the people in the system. The mission statement of the DBE, for example, can be seen as its primary aim, which is “to develop, maintain and support a South African school education system for the 21st century” (DBE, 2020b, p. 3). Each PED and district align their mission and vision with those of the DBE, and CMs are responsible for ensuring that principals do the same in schools.

3.3.2.2 Dynamic systems perspective

Deming (1986) adopted a dynamic systems perspective of organisations, which requires everyone in an organisation to be familiar with the components (elements) that make up the system in which they work, as well as the different interrelationships that exist among these elements. Deming (1993) states that people, the system structure and, to some extent, the components in a system are dependent on one another and have an impact on organisational change. The quality of the output in an organisation depends on the way it is structured rather than only its employees (Deming, 1993). The leadership and management of the system require knowledge of the interrelationships that exist and those that need to be created to seek synergy between all the components and the people that work in the organisation. The obligation of every component is to help optimise the aim or goal of the system. The efforts of all components, for example the PEDs or districts in the basic education system, must be orchestrated towards achieving its goals. If components within a system are left to their own survival, they tend to become selfish, competitive, independent and profit-centred (Maguad, 2011). The healthier the relationships, interdependence and synergy between the components, the greater the need will be for communication and cooperation between them.

To conclude, in the context of this study, this appreciation of a system calls for collaboration among people in districts and circuits. The focus is on the relationships between the district, the CM and principals. An effective education system includes all stakeholders to know the system and actively participate together, even though each one has his or her specific role and

responsibilities. When they work in synergy to optimise the functionality of the entire education system, everybody wins. The efforts of CMs, principals, SMTs and SGBs in a district are not additive but interdependent. One school (which may require a bigger slice of the district and PED budget to achieve its goals), left to itself, may be the cause or the result of the underperformance or closure of another school. The obligation of each component in the district is to contribute its best to optimisation in achieving the goals of the DBE system. It is of the utmost importance that CMs assist principals in strategic and operational planning and send requests for funding and the allocation of resources to the district. Then it is the responsibility of the CM to coordinate the process and provide feedback to principals, reinforcing relationships and interconnectedness. CMs, principals, SMTs and SGBs should take into account how their plans can help advance the mission of the DBE, the PED and the district, and not simply cater to their own interests (Reisenauer, 2017). Narrowly focusing on their own interests may lead to infighting among CMs, principals and teachers and result in an eventual loss for all the components in the education system. Variation between elements and people in a system is another factor to be considered for unplanned changes. Knowledge of variation can prepare the CM to understand why principals act the way they do in challenging contexts.

3.3.3 Knowledge about variation

Knowledge about variation is the second part of Deming's (1993) system of profound knowledge. Variation is always present and will continuously exist when referring to people in an organisation. There will always be some form or margin of variation between people, output and service (output). It is important to understand what the variation is telling one about the process and the people that function in the process (Deming, 2018b). It is premised on the need for the system to be designed in such a way that all its constituent parts perform seamlessly and flawlessly, meaning there must be working synergy among all the elements that make up a system (see Section 3.5). Deming (1986) points out that people in organisations have to understand that variation occurs when people and elements in the system or organisation operate in a conflicting manner. He laments the disorder brought about by what he calls "special causes" and "common causes" of variation (Chingara, 2019; Deming, 2018a). He identifies special causes of variation as those that are peculiar to a staff member or employee and cannot negatively or positively affect the performance of other staff members or employees (Deming, 2018a). An employee who demonstrates extraordinary performance or substantially surpasses the performance of his or her peers represents an example of a special cause of variation. This implies that special causes of variation are separate from the system in which the staff members or employees operate and do not affect the performance or behaviour of other staff members (Deming, 2018a). On the other extreme, a staff member or employee can demonstrate considerable lethargy. What this simply

does is to place the performance of this individual staff member below that of his or her peers, for example, when a CM uses the data submitted on the QMS system to evaluate principals and schools and accordingly do appraisals.

Deming (1993, 2018a) states that a large amount of variation in a system is also due to what he calls “common causes”. Scherkenbach (1986) points out that in a study conducted by Deming, the variations were based on the system as a whole and constituted 85% of the causes of variations that were peculiar to the organisation itself, which informed the way the processes in the organisation were designed. He suggests that it is the responsibility of the leaders and managers of organisations to rectify the causes of significant variation in a system and initiate remedial action to address the variation (Scherkenbach, 1986). Consequently, in the context of education change, it is the responsibility of the district and the CM to identify what the causes for variation are and act accordingly by providing support or initiating actions to act on variations. The relevance of this to the CM’s role and responsibilities as an educational leader is that he or she has to limit the margins of variation because these will have a direct influence on the performance of the school and the system as a whole. Identifying the causes for variation is critical to building relationships and trust among people.

Other causes of variation are related to individuals or special occurrences originating outside the system (Stensaasen, 1995). The result is that organisations often tend to mistakenly respond to the results as if they were from special causes when they are from common causes of variation, or vice versa. The only way an observer can know the difference is by gathering and analysing data to determine whether the system or process is in statistical control (Braughton, 1999; Deming, 1993). Deming (1993) emphasises that it is the system that directs the process of performing a task or a function. Leadership and management should provide the necessary support and resources based on the analysed data. He disagrees with practices of management that actually hold workers primarily responsible for their efficiency and emphasises that the whole system is responsible for efficiency and leaders are expected to establish a resource-informed environment to support change in the system (Deming, 1993). Furthermore, he advocates against practices such as managing through quantitative goals, slogans and catchphrases (Deming, 2018a). Alternatively, Deming (1993, 2018a) encourages leadership to own up to poor performance by its subordinates by pursuing the causes of variation and setting in motion the process of improving incessantly; therefore, leadership and management should understand how people function in a system and how they learn.

3.3.4 Theory of knowledge

Deming's (1986) theory of knowledge is the third part of the system of profound knowledge (Moen & Norman, 2006). The theory of knowledge requires that the leaders of, for example, schools and districts understand how their subordinates learn and how they can improve their capacity to make informed decisions, develop the processes of work and advance the goals of the district and the school (Schultz, 2013). Deming's theory is evident across many change theories. Schön and Argyris's (1996) theory of action and Senge's (2006) theory of personal mastery are synonymous with Deming's theory, as they all refer to organisational learning and processes and identify how and where learning occurs in a system (Padro, 2009).

Education leaders and managers (districts and circuits) need to understand how things work and why decisions are made that affect the future of their departments or schools (Padro, 2009). Any strategy or plan, no matter how simple, requires prediction concerning the conditions, behaviour and comparison of performance (Deming, 2018b). Hence, districts and CMs must be able to predict to some extent why some conditions occur and why elements in the system behave the way they do. They should also be able to compare people's performance to know how support should be enacted. Such predictions should be grounded in theory and informed by data. For example, if a CM wants to implement a plan to support a principal to deal with change, he or she has to determine whether the necessary resources are available to provide sufficient support to align the provision of support with the perceived predicted outcome. The CM has to consider what impact the support will have on the day-to-day functioning and governance of the school and determine whether there will be any financial or resource implications that might prevent achieving the predicted outcome. This requires considering a theory of cause and effect. According to Deming (1993), knowledge is not possible without theory, and experience alone does not establish a theory (Evans et al., 2012; Maguad, 2011). Furthermore, Deming (1993, 2018a) mentions that rational prediction requires theory and builds knowledge through the systematic revision and extension of theories grounded in comparison of prediction with observation and for one to understand cause-and-effect relationships that can be used for prediction and rational management decisions. He emphasises that without theory, experience teaches nothing, and therefore, there will be no questions to ask. Without theory, no prediction can be made on people's behaviour in a system; therefore, there will be no learning (Deming, 1993, 2018a).

3.3.5 The psychology of human behaviour

The fourth and final part of the system of profound knowledge is the psychology of human behaviour. Psychology helps us to understand people, for example the interaction between people and circumstances (Deming, 1993). In the context of this study, it is the interaction

between districts and CMs, between CMs and principals, between principals and teachers and between teacher and learners, and any system of education management.

The psychology of human behaviour is premised on the ability to identify why people act or conduct themselves in the manner they do, and to initiate circumstances that are not a result of slogans, catchphrases, inducements or allotments (Chingara, 2019; Schultz, 2013). Braughton (1999) asserts that humans are unique in many ways. They have the ability to understand and act on their environment or the circumstances in which they find themselves, for the sole purpose of meeting their set goals. Their goals are usually met through intensive collaboration with others who find themselves in similar situations and working with others as a collective (Braughton, 1999).

Much of Deming's work is focused on understanding human behaviour and treating people fairly. Braughton (1999), Deming (2018a) and Schultz (2013) have observed that staff members or employees are fundamentally inspired to do well under circumstances they feel appreciated and empowered to succeed. Failure to appreciate and empower employees is found to be potentially damaging (Schultz, 2013). In the context of this study, it is important that districts empower CMs to act their role and execute their responsibilities effectively, and, in turn, that CMs empower principals during education change. Both Braughton (1999) and Deming (1993, 2018a) argue that understanding is derived from people's beliefs and is, therefore, the responsibility of leadership to utilise this understanding to determine the course of action to be taken in future. Leadership must consider teamwork, collective participation and decision making. Individual psychology can provide quality-conscious organisations with the opportunity to involve their employees so that they can contribute meaningfully to the process of change (Braughton, 1999).

For a CM to be an effective leader, he or she must be cognisant and have the ability to recognise that people differ from one another and learn in different ways and at a different pace. The CM needs to understand that people are born with a need for love and esteem in their relationships with others (Deming, 1993). Deming's (1993) argument is that fear does not motivate people but demotivates them, which is often a result of employees underperforming in their role and not executing their duties effectively. This fear can be manifested in various ways, such as fear of reprisal, fear of failure, fear of the unknown, fear of relinquishing control and fear of change (Deming, 2018a; Evans et al., 2012; Maguad, 2011). Leadership and managers, such as CMs and principals, may hesitate to report quality problems because they fear that they may have to take accountability for the problems in the system. They often fear taking the blame for something they do not have control over. If CMs and principals do not enjoy what they are doing, they cannot lead and support others. They will lack creativity and willingness to take on risks, control or implement change that will have an impact on their performance. Furthermore, CMs will be

counterproductive in their role as educational leaders and will not meet the expectations of the system (district, principals and schools), which can lead to many issues within the basic education system. Adapting to education change requires a cumulative effort from everyone within the organisation and an understanding of the different ways in which people learn and adjust to circumstances (Deming, 2018b). The leadership of an organisation must, therefore, strive towards continuous improvement to enable people to deal with education change and sustain changes that have been made.

3.3.6 Deming's continuous improvement model

Deming (2018b) discusses the concept of continuous improvement in his seminal work *Out of the Crisis*. His continuous improvement model is based on his work with Japanese companies in a post-World War II environment and the application of his 14 key principles, often called "strategies for continuous improvement of an organisation". Since then, several scholars have contributed to the theory of continuous improvement and enhanced the usability thereof across social science fields (e.g. Evans et al., 2012; Maguad, 2011; Reid, 2001; Schön & Argyris, 1996). Deming (2018a) offered 14 principles to support continuous improvement in an organisational setting. These were refined as he conducted more research on organisational change over the years (Deming, 2018a). These principles are having long-term leadership vision, adopting a new philosophy, ceasing dependence on inspection, ending the practice of awarding business on price alone, improving constantly and forever every process, instituting training on the job, adopting and instituting leadership, driving out fear, breaking down barriers between departments, eliminating slogans, exhortations and targets for production, eliminating quotas and management by objectives, removing barriers to pride workmanship, establishing a vigorous programme for education and self-improvement for everyone, and including everyone in the transformation of the organisation (Deming, 2018a; Evans et al., 2012).

Deming posits that if applied consistently by management, a shared vision representing these core values would evolve within the organisation and would serve as the foundation of the resulting quality organisation (Evans et al., 2012). Several of Deming's points are applicable to the continuous improvement of education quality during education change.

His 14 principles are Deming's contribution to the understanding of quality and support in a system. He believes it is the decision and prerogative of leadership to create a conducive environment that enables employees to succeed (Deming, 2018a). Although not all 14 points have a direct or major impact on education change, they all have a role to play and they all have an influence in some way, whether big or small.

3.3.6.1 Having long-term leadership vision

Deming's first principle suggests that leaders and managers should create and adopt a long-term leadership vision that emphasises an enhancement in quality, research, continuous improvement of processes, support provision or service and investment in the human and physical resources of the organisation (Deming, 2018a). In this principle, Deming requests leaders and managers to be visionaries who can envision the future of the organisation. As stakeholders collectively imagine the possibilities for their organisation, their shared vision drives their subsequent actions (Deming, 2018a). The same holds true for education and school systems. As leaders and managers throughout education and school systems imagine what might be possible for the school, for them and for the learners, their vision becomes the guiding force by which decisions are made.

In the context of education change, adopting this principle entails crafting a quality vision, mission and set of objectives (Lunenburg, 2010). It means that the leadership and management of a district, circuit or school have to be progressive and open-minded, and the development of the vision and mission of the school should involve all relevant stakeholders. As educational leaders, they must imagine what their department, circuit or school would look like or be in the immediate future (Evans et al., 2012). The leadership and management have to share the quality vision, mission and objectives with all stakeholders in the system.

3.3.6.2 Adopting a new philosophy

Deming's (2018a) second principle recommends that the leadership and management in an organisation accept the new way of doing things as articulated by the long-term quality vision espoused in the first principle. Thus, the old way of doing things is disregarded and it is substituted with leadership and management that are open-minded with regard to quality and continuous improvement through innovation (Deming, 2018a). In the context of this study, CMs have to be open-minded with regard to principals' thoughts and ideas to improve the school and learner performance. CMs must be willing to adjust the old ways of doing things by being creative and using alternative methods to be innovative to do things differently. Good leadership is all about providing leadership, influencing people and, most importantly, providing support by building trust, giving inspiration and helping everyone in the organisation to deal with challenges. Supportive leaders motivate people, encourage teamwork, pay close attention to people's relationships and show full commitment towards everyone and the change being implemented. Without leadership and management support in a system, quality within the system cannot be maintained or improved, nor can organisation change occur or be dealt with. Therefore, Deming strongly encouraged organisations to eliminate reliance on inspections to force quality (Evans et al., 2012).

3.3.6.3 Ceasing dependence on inspection to achieve quality

Deming's third principle is premised on the notion that it is always more expensive to solve a problem than to prevent a problem from happening (Lunenburg, 2010). According to Deming, "[q]uality comes not from inspection, but from improvement of the production process" (Chingara, 2019, p. 30). Therefore, effective leadership support is important in quality management processes during change (Deming, 1993, 2018b; Maguad, 2011; Stensaasen, 1995). In the context of districts, circuits, clusters and schools, this means that relying on and carrying out remediation for principals can be evaded if proper strategies are employed during the supervision of the CM. Intervention strategies such as support, principal development, professional development, data-informed support, evaluation tools and support intervention can help principals to avoid leadership and management underperformance. Implementing this principle requires CMs to incorporate quality management support processes for principals and avoid inspecting the final result (the principal's performance), as this will have been done already (Chingara, 2019; Lunenburg, 2010). Lunenburg (2010) provides examples that he calls "preventive approaches" in schools. He states that preventive approaches will help principals to avoid underperformance, thereby ultimately preventing underperformance of the school and the learners (Lunenburg, 2010).

3.3.6.4 Ending the practice of awarding business on price alone

Deming's (2018a) fourth principle is related to budget issues, which are predominantly handled by the DBE, PEDs and districts; however, it could also be applied to the budget of a school. The fourth principle discourages organisations (districts and schools) from relying on suppliers that offer the lowest prices, arguing that their products (e.g. teaching and learning material, personal protective equipment, cleaning products, fuel and maintenance of equipment) or services might not necessarily be cost-efficient (Deming, 1986). This is a factor that has a direct influence on the operations of districts and schools. The supply chain that districts and schools use in acquiring services and resources to deal with education change is very important in their daily operations. This principle advocates for organisations (districts and schools) to use reliable suppliers for services and product delivery. Thus, a dependable and trustworthy relationship is established between the organisation and the supplier. According to Salami and Ufoma Akpobire (2013), there is a misconception that cheaper products bring along with them some value to the organisation that purchases these, which is often not the case. In fact, acquiring cheap products or services can be detrimental to the organisation. Salami and Ufoma Akpobire (2013) suggest that paying less does not always mean getting the best, and organisations (districts and schools) may not get more value from cheaper products.

3.3.6.5 Improving constantly and forever every process

Deming's fifth principle refers to constant improvement in every process through the plan-do-study-act method (Evans et al., 2012) (see Figure 3-1). This involves organisations and leadership (districts, CMs and principals) to plan for the changes they want to make and to implement those changes, analysing the results and refining the changes to improve them. Although Lunenburg (2010) states that the focus of this principle is on teaching and learning, it can also be relevant to leadership training and support in organisations. In the context of this study, it means that CMs' training and support provision to the principal, SMT and SGB in dealing with change must be continuously improved and realigned as education change occurs.

3.3.6.6 Instituting training on the job

Evans et al. (2012) argue that through Deming's sixth principle, organisational leadership (CMs and principals) has to undergo specific context-related training and development to deal with change and challenges to improve its performance in the system. Lunenburg (2010) adds that training on the job entails three aspects. Firstly, it entails training leadership (principals and teachers) in new leadership methods and management and instructional processes that are developed. In the context of this study, the training on the job or just-in-time training of the CM and the principal is critical during education change. Secondly, leadership (principals, SMTs and SGBs) should be trained in leadership and management techniques and in the utilisation of teaching, learning and assessment techniques. Thirdly, everyone in the system (CMs, principals and teachers) has to be trained in how the new system works.

The education of employees is prominent in many of Deming's principles; however, the sixth principle has a direct influence on the development of institutional and educational leaders for change. As Deming argues, all employees must be afforded appropriate professional development opportunities and training, especially on the job training that will enable them to perform better (Gogue, 2005). Deming supports job-embedded training and just-in-time training to improve the skills and competencies of everyone in the organisation. In recent years, principals and teachers discovered that job-embedded professional development was a contributing factor to improved school and learner performance (DHET, 2014; Mestry & Grobler, 2004; Ndlovu, 2011; Parker & Walters, 2008). For some time, governments, heads of education departments, district leaders and principals knew the value of job-embedded professional development although there was no real effort, funding and resources provided by the DBE to activate and implement it (Arar & Avidov-Ungar, 2020; Chikoko et al., 2014; Cummings & Worley, 2014; Eacott & Asuga, 2014; Hussain & Al Abri, 2015; Msila & Mtshali, 2011; Naicker & Mestry, 2016).

Job-embedded professional development or just-in-time training on the job occurs when CMs are actively involved in the daily process of supporting principals in school management activities, not by interfering with the role of the principal but by providing mentorship, guidance and assistance where needed. These initiatives are often focused on the challenging contexts in which principals and schools function. Principals do not want to be micro-managed by CM and district officials; however, they need the assurance of knowing that when they request assistance from CMs or district officials, they will be supported. Evans et al. (2012) refer to Knowles's (1980) work *From Pedagogy to Andragogy* where he states that such approaches to professional development can apply the adult learning theory. He posits that effective adult instruction should apply the following concepts: adults learn best when they are self-directed; past experiences can provide a basis to understand new information; adults are most ready to learn new information when they know why they need it; and adults are problem-centred learners (Knowles, 1980). Effective job-embedded professional development and just-in-time training and development initiatives can promote and enhance the capacity of each individual in the system, which in turn, enables people to become more effective while addressing the needs of the organisation.

3.3.6.7 Adopting and instituting leadership

According to Evans et al. (2012), the principle to adopt and institute leadership is where Deming distinguishes between leadership and supervision. Evans et al. (2012) contend that leaders must be capacitated with leadership skills so as to pass on such skills to their subordinates. "These should include the skill of owning up to the organisation's vision and embracing the view of the organisation as a system made up of different stakeholders who must all work together as one" (Chingara, 2019, p. 31). Supervisors (CMs) are responsible for directing and guiding people towards the planned vision. The responsibility of leaders is to minimise the differences that exist or may occur among the different stakeholders in the system so as to bring everyone towards a common purpose. Deming claims that managers must be skilled in leadership to build the capacity of their workers (Gogue, 2005). Managers should be able to apply different leadership styles to deal with organisational change (Copeland, 2013). When acting their role and conducting their responsibilities, managers must embrace the vision of the organisation and hold a systems view of the organisation. Importantly, Deming (2018a) states that it is the responsibility of the leadership and management to bring about change and improvement to the system and not that of their subordinates. Leadership and management are expected to lead by example. Through leading by example, they also encourage others to follow.

3.3.6.8 Driving out fear

Eliminating people's fear of change is critical in organisational change processes. Stensaasen (1995) suggests that principals' and teachers' fears may emanate from leadership (CMs, district officials and experts) and peers. He states that inspection and evaluations done on principals and teachers have revealed that fear in people resonates from higher authority. To illustrate, a principal may instill fear among the teaching staff of schools, and districts may instill fear among CMs that if they do not perform or meet expectations they will face possible reprimanding actions. Deming (2018b) and Fullan (2016) both have found that fear may also resonate from external or unknown sources. Both suggest that such fear needs to be dealt with promptly and pushed away, as fear may impede leadership, management and instructional processes in districts and schools. When leaders create a disabling environment where people cannot do their job, fear can be driven out (Deming, 1993; Salami & Ufoma Akpobire, 2013). CMs have to continuously reinforce their support provision to principals and teachers, which will assist them in dealing with their fear of failure (Gogue, 2005; Van der Voort & Wood, 2016). However, people's fear of change is a common phenomenon during organisational change, and this is even more evident in education because the system works with vulnerable children and changes in the system can have a severe impact on their lives and future.

Principals and teachers work with children, and their interest must take first priority irrespective of the challenges that schools face (Bantwini & Moorosi, 2018a). Bantwini and Moorosi's (2018a) findings show that there is a great need for training and development initiatives to enable CMs and principals to make informed decisions on support provision to deal with education change. Deming (2018a) emphasises that reducing fear is key to organisational change and the success thereof. He asserts that fear within an organisation can be associated with several other factors too, such as fear of knowledge, fear of losing one's job, fear of reprisals for offering suggestions and fear of making mistakes (Deming, 2018a). He contends that effective leaders use data and relevant information to provide continuous, open feedback to drive out fear (Deming, 2018a). An effective CM or principal should identify the source of fear and then specifically address its source to assist principals and teachers in dealing with that fear. For example, if a principal's fear is related to making a mistake, the CM should assist him or her to develop strategies to better manage the school finances and resources and to learn from previous mistakes in managing them in the future. The CM will support the principal through this process to make management improvements, while at the same time reinforcing a culture of learning informed by mistakes made in the past. Thus, the CM as a leader supports the principal in improving his or her management skills while reinforcing effective actions of education change.

The current culture in the American education system, reinforced by the No Child Left Behind Act, often uses data to punish superintendents, principals, teachers and schools for underperforming (Gober, 2012). Thus, the challenge for CMs and principals in South Africa is to collectively develop a positive culture throughout the school and to promote the effective use of data for decision making to enhance principal and school performance (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007). Both of them must use every opportunity to illustrate how data can be utilised to improve school and learner performance (Male & Palaiologou, 2015; Mestry, 2017; Schrum & Levin, 2012). As districts expect CMs to support principals and take ownership by analysing data, they also need to use the data to reinforce change in their schools, relationships and decisions. CMs and principals have to realise the power of data and information to improve school performance, which can assist in breaking down barriers and transforming education provision (Corral, 2019; Male & Palaiologou, 2015)

3.3.6.9 Breaking down barriers between departments

Breaking down barriers between departments is a phenomenon that a democratic system needs to deal with (Bantwini & Moorosi, 2018b; D’Ortenzio, 2012; Kaul et al., 2021). According to Corral (2019), Kelley (2016), Myende et al. (2020), Schoeman (2004) and Stensaasen (1995), breaking down barriers between departments constitutes to transforming the education system and schools. Deming (2018b) points out that transactional leaders are ignorant of the functions of and interconnectedness among departments. These leaders prefer working in silos and not being dependent on anyone else (Al Khajeh, 2018; Kadiyono et al., 2020). Deming argues against this by promoting the development of teams that incorporate members from all departments to work on issues that affect them all (Evans et al., 2010; Gogue, 2005).

The majority of education systems and institutions globally are departmentalised, which often creates an environment for “silo functionality”. Stensaasen (1995) believes that although such an arrangement has been found to improve performance in some departments, the barrier of working in silos may prevent effective collaboration among departments, districts and PEDs in the education system. Working in silos can potentially result in barriers that may need to be removed if the mission of the basic education system is to provide quality education. According to Deming (1993), implementing this principle requires developing teams comprising members from across all departments to work together on issues of mutual concern. Therefore, subdepartments in districts must work together as one support team, and CMs are responsible for coordinating the subdepartments’ support and service to principals and schools in dealing with education challenges (Bantwini & Diko, 2011; Stensaasen, 1995). Such support teams should be cognisant of the functions and interconnectedness of departments and thus be willing to encourage teamwork among themselves and work on areas of mutual concern (Chingara, 2019).

According to Evans et al. (2012, p. 158), Deming encouraged a “system-wide approach to improvement rather than relying on incentives that do little to alter the underlying issue of substandard quality”. Professional development and training of CMs and principals, as well as working with interdepartmental and district networks, can contribute to greater interconnectedness throughout a district education system by acting as a stimulus for lasting and deeper improvement, increasing motivation throughout the educational community and advancing equity and innovation (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2015; Hargreaves & Shirley, 2009). Linking this principle to having a long-term leadership vision and instituting training on the job, Deming (2000) promotes a change process through which everyone can contribute to establishing a long-term vision of the organisation. He states that without an appropriate mental model and a deep understanding of the 14 principles by all members of the organisation, change efforts will be unsuccessful (Deming, 2000).

3.3.6.10 Eliminating slogans, exhortation and target production

Deming encourages organisations to move away from using slogans, catchphrases and objectives (Gogue, 2005), as these create adversarial relationships and often do not yield lasting results. Organisations often change their slogans or catchphrases, depending on what they stand for or what their strategic objective are. Deming (1996) insists that catchphrases, slogans and objectives neither encourage nor focus on deep improvement in the performance of staff or organisations, but are aimed at improving the way of doing things, which accounts for 90% of the problems experienced in an organisation. It is only the leadership in organisations with the buy-in of people that can change how things are done (Deming, 2018a). PEDs, districts and schools generally have been known to use slogans, exhortation and targets to promote their vision and mission; however, it is important that they do not lose sight of the overall system (vision and objectives) in which they work (Lunenburg, 2010; Ncwane, 2019).

3.3.6.11 Eliminating quotas and management by objectives

Deming (2018a) encourages organisations to avoid using practices that constrain the ability of leadership and management in organisations from performing well. According to Lunenburg (2010), such practices include rigorous and systematic evaluation systems and management by objectives, grades and quantitative goals. While this principle is true for business organisations, education departments and schools generally have been known to use this principle for staff that are appointed on a contract basis by the SGB. According to Evans et al. (2012), implementing this principle requires that the leadership in districts and schools be encouraged to adopt a system that focuses on processes so as to capacitate people (CMs, principals and teachers) to enhance academic quality and the provision of support.

3.3.6.12 Removing barriers to pride workmanship

Deming's (2018a) principle of removing barriers that restrain people from priding workmanship focuses on matters that deprive people of promotion, progress and job satisfaction in the organisation. Organisations (districts and schools) are encouraged to do away with obstacles that deprive employees (district officials, CMs, principals, SMTs, SGBs and teachers) of job promotion and satisfaction. This can be done by promoting effective collaborative and development programmes in districts and schools and eliminating obstacles that make them less enthusiastic about performing their duties. Removing such barriers will motivate employees to perform better, as they know that hard work pays dividends in the end (Gogue, 2005). CMs and principals are held accountable for the performance of schools and learners, and therefore, both must be involved in managing schools and providing quality education to learners (Ehren et al., 2020). A caring relationship builds trust and encouragement among the CM, principal, teachers and members of the SGB and the SMT when dealing with challenges of education change.

3.3.6.13 Establishing a vigorous programme for education and self-improvement for everyone

This principle advocates for the leadership in organisations to be retrained, professionally mentored and guided in new methods of leadership and management practices (Deming 2018a). According to Lunenburg (2010), this happens when the leadership is retrained in new processes or approaches of leadership that include group dynamics, consensus building and collaborative styles of decision making. Deming (2018b) encourages organisations to support the continuous development and education of their managers to enable them to adapt and deal with change as it is happening. He states that only through development and education can leaders and managers in organisations widen, broaden and intensify their understanding of various concepts that add value and promote continuous improvement (Deming, 2018b; Evans et al., 2012). Within an educational setting, ongoing professional development for system and school-based leaders is vital to organisational improvement. Through ongoing professional development and education, education leaders "can support collaborative inquiry in their school systems by developing structures to support the collaboration actions, promoting the development of common formative assessments, and building the capacity of new leaders to enhance the leadership capacity of the system" (Evans et al., 2012, p. 157). However, according to Evans et al. (2012), attention to experienced leaders' professional development remains an overlooked critical element in school improvement efforts.

3.3.6.14 Including everyone in the transformation of the organisation

Putting everybody in the organisation to work to accomplish transformation is extremely relevant in the context of education transformation in South Africa. Deming encourages all stakeholders in an organisation to contribute to the creation of a shared quality vision for the organisation (departments, districts and schools) (Stensaasen, 1995). The ability to articulate a compelling future through developing a vision and mission is one of the distinctive skills that leaders and managers in organisations should have (Schultz, 2013). When people are enabled to contribute to change, they feel wanted and appreciated and are motivated to work.

3.3.7 Deming's improvement cycle

Although a brief outline of Deming's principles is provided above, the following principles, which have a significant influence on education change, are elaborated on in Section 3.3.3: instituting training on the job; adopting and instituting leadership, breaking down barriers between departments and establishing a vigorous programme for education and self-improvement for everyone. To assist in this process of implementing the 14 principles, Deming developed an improvement cycle that provides a structure to direct change (Evans et al., 2012). It is also known as the plan-do-study-act cycle (Kelemen, 2003). In this cycle, everyone in the organisation expects continuous and enhanced improvement through deliberately planned changes. Change is informed by data analysis and stringent observation, which would most likely produce positive outcomes. Stakeholders enact the plan, which is often small, providing for quick cycles. These plans are implemented directly, which represents the "do" portion of the cycle. Once the change has been initiated and implemented, teams involved in the change process explore and disseminate its effect and collect and analyse various data that are available. The data will then inform the team if a plan needs to be changed or if alternative action should be taken to either improve or institutionalise the practice. CMs and principals can use the plan-do-study-act cycle to promote continuous improvement of instruction. To illustrate, a CM and a principal can develop a simple plan to improve management for principals and SMT members, design and implement the processes thereof, collect and study data in the form of school results and, finally, make a data-based decision on the next step. At each step, the CM and the principal should provide the structures, resources and encouragement to promote this continuous cycle of inquiry.

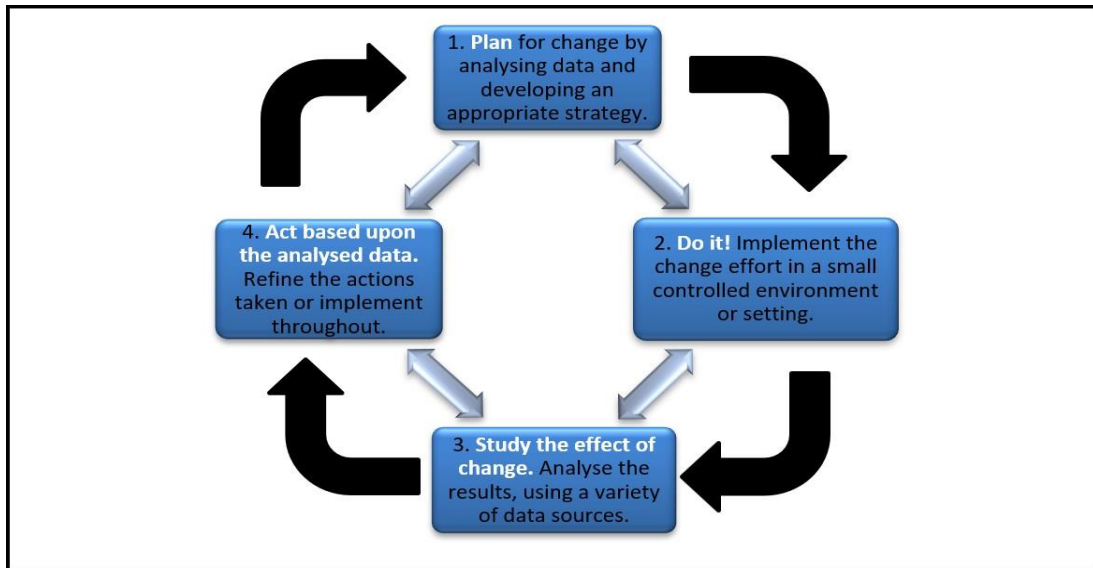


Figure 3-2: The plan-do-study-act cycle (adapted from Evans et al., 2012)

As district leaders support and encourage distributed leadership throughout a school system, CMs, principals and teachers become the primary quality control agents. As workgroups, they can collectively analyse school performance and make adjustments to management processes when necessary to drive change and improve school performance during education change. Collaborative structures such as workgroups, forums and professional learning communities can promote and enhance performance through professional interaction. However, “this is in contrast to directives by district and school administrators to reach arbitrary targets, which tend to force compliance rather than foster professional engagement” (Evans et al., 2012, p. 157). Furthermore, as CMs and principals engage in collaborative inquiry that is driven by authentic circuit management, they develop the necessary skills and acquire new knowledge to develop strategies to deal with the challenging context of each school, and they create plans of action that positively affect principal and school performance during education change.

In conclusion, Deming’s four parts of organisational change are directly linked to the change in the basic education system of South Africa. Deming’s system of profound knowledge guides people from existing management practices to new management practices in the same way as is expected from CMs during education change. Deming’s theory of knowledge will assist CMs and principals to acquire new knowledge and make informed decisions, predictions and observations of the past to inform future actions to be taken to achieve the desired goal during education change. Therefore, it is important that CMs have knowledge of the basic education system, their role and responsibilities and principals’ need to effectively support principals during education change. Underpinned by Deming’s theory is the fact that CMs need to understand that everyone in the education system has to be focused on improving the way the basic education system

works. They should also identify the barriers that obstruct CMs and principals from performing well, and as a collective, they have to find ways to deal with these barriers. The prevailing style of CMs in the basic education system must, therefore, undergo transformation to adapt to the needs of the district, principal and school. To enable CMs and principals to drive education change and deal with education change, they must follow Deming's 14 principles to guide planned action. CMs must establish a sound relationship between themselves and principals, SMTs and SGBs to ensure that everybody is focused on the task at hand (see Sections 2.3.6 and 2.4). Effective communication between CMs and principals is critical if principals are to deal with education change and challenges. In terms of Deming's knowledge about variation, CMs should be cognisant of the fact that people are different and act differently. It is, therefore, important for CMs to understand what such variation is telling them about a process and the people that function in it. CMs must be aware of it and know that people react differently to change, and therefore, need to be managed differently. In addition, CMs need to understand how principals, SMT and SGB members and teachers learn, make informed decisions and develop processes and training and development initiatives towards the predetermined goals of the education system and school. For education change to be effective and to enable people to deal with education change, the organisation must implement initiatives to support a change to become sustainable and permanent. Lewin's change and action theory and three-step model explains how this can be effectively done.

3.4 LEWIN'S THEORY OF ORGANISATIONAL CHANGE AND ACTION

Kurt Lewin's theory of organisational change and action, also known as his change model, is the foundation of many change and action models used by organisations, systems and education institutions (Fullan, 2006b). Deming's organisational change theory and system of profound knowledge and Fullan's change theory all have similar elements and relationships between them (Chingara, 2019). These theories also have similar elements to Lewin's change model, such as leadership motivation, relationships, communication, common trust and behavioural change. All of these theories see the beforementioned elements as important for organisation, education, human change and behaviour (Chingara, 2019; Davies, 2018; Durand & Calori, 2006; Fullan, 2002; Mele et al., 2010). Lewin's change model primarily focuses on change development and mediates implementation and leadership initiatives for change in complex organisations. The model includes four main elements, namely the field theory, group dynamics, action research and the three-step model of change. The three-step model of change has long been viewed as a seminal contribution to the fields of organisational and social development (Burnes, 2004).

3.4.1 Model of organisational change

Lewin's model of organisational change explains the movement of an organisation from a known (current) state to an unknown (desired future) state, because the future of the change is uncertain and concerns people's worth, coping abilities and competency. Thus, the people in the organisation do not support change unless they are convinced that the change will be for the better for all in the organisation (Cummings & Worley, 2014; October, 2009). Although an organisation has invested time, people and money for the current state the organisation find itself in, to continuously improve, organisational change must be initiated and implemented by the leadership and management towards new goals; however, change will be resisted to avoid the unknown and uncertain future of the organisation. Hence, the necessary action needs to be taken by the team members who are leading the change process. They need to motivate employees throughout the process of change. Lewin (1951) states that change happens through a series of events, which are steps taken in the implementation of change. These steps can be viewed as continuous loops between leadership, management and the organisation, as illustrated in Figure 3-3. In Figure 3-3, the arrows indicate different stages of Lewin's three-step model.

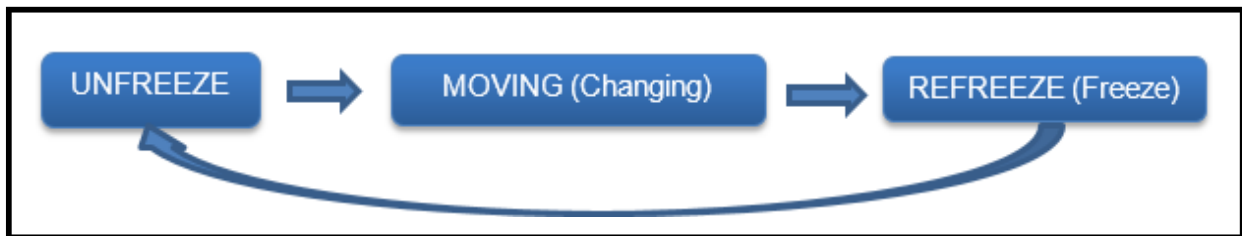


Figure 3-3: Lewin's three-step change model

Lewin's 1947 model indicates the process of organisational change through the three-step change model, denoting the steps of unfreezing, moving (changing) and refreezing (freeze). Employees are involved and instructed by leaders regarding the issues related to change processes. Burke (2017) emphasises the importance of the leadership and management role at the beginning of each step or stage of change in Lewin's model. First, the leadership and management initiate change and communicate the change to employees (see Sections 3.3.6 and 3.3.7). During this stage, the role of the leadership and management is to motivate employees that the change is for the better. In the move stage, the leadership and management implement strategies for change and lead by example for others to follow. This stage usually takes the longest, and the leadership and management continuously have to provide feedback to employees on the change process. As soon as the change has happened, it is the responsibility of the leadership and management to "freeze" the organisation into its new state. Although this study does not focus on leadership ethics, it is important to mention that ethical leadership in the

change process cannot be overemphasised (Durand & Calori, 2006). Hussain and Al Abri (2015) mention that in the context of the process model of change, culture has been recognised by theorists as the moderator for organisational change.

According to Lewin (1951), successful organisational change can be planned, and this requires the system to be “unfrozen”. Change does not depend on size and age but occurs in all organisations (Burnes, 2004). The world changes very fast; therefore, organisations must change rapidly for the development and survival of the organisation. Models and theories have been proposed in driving change in organisations (Argyris, 1970; Deming, 2018a; Dewey, 1916; Senge, 2006). They require managers and leaders to prevent stagnation by “unfreezing” the current state of the organisation (Lewin, 1951), initiating change (or what Lewin calls “move”) and then refreezing when change is visible. Change models imitate different levels affecting the process of organisational change, and each level identifies distinctive change implementation stages.

3.4.2 Lewin’s three-step model

Lewin’s three-step change process reflects momentous stages in the change implementation process.

... to change the “quasi-stationary equilibrium” stage, one may increase the striving forces for change, or decrease the forces maintaining the status quo, or the combination of both forces for proactive and reactive organizational change through knowledge sharing of individual willingness with the help of stimulating change leadership style. (Hussain & Al Abri, 2015, p. 123)

According to Hussain and Al Abri (2015), Lewin’s model is fundamental in the planned change process of organisational change. He states that there are external and internal forces present that force organisations to progress from its current state (status quo) to a new state, hence to adapt and initiate change to eliminate the internal and external forces that caused change (see Figure 3-4). Lewin emphasises that employee involvement is central in each stage for successful change adaptation. Lewin’s model of organisational change is illustrated in Figure 3-4 below.

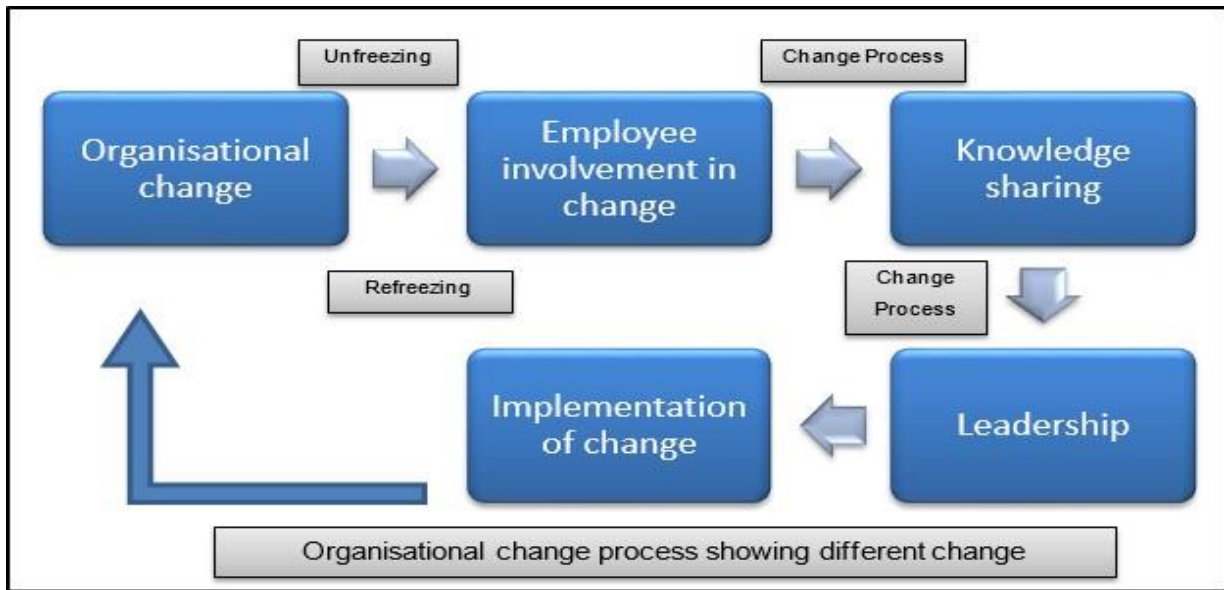


Figure 3-4: Model of organisational change (adapted from Hussain et al., 2018)

3.4.2.1 Unfreeze stage and implementation

Before food in a freezer can be cooked, it needs to be unfrozen. This idea can also be applied to change in an organisation. Before a change can be implemented, it needs to be clearly communicated to everyone in the organisation, and then only can they change towards the initial step of unfreezing. People do not appreciate having to move out of their comfort zones. They will always have some form of resistance towards change. The goal during the unfreeze stage is to establish an awareness of how the status quo, or current level of acceptability, is preventing or obscuring the functionality or performance of the organisation. Lewin (1951) states that old behaviour should be disregarded, including the way in which processes were managed and the way people thought. Organisational structures must all be carefully examined to show employees how necessary a change is to enhance performance and productivity.

Communication by leadership and management is critically important during the unfreeze stage. People must be informed in advance about the change that has been initiated, which is the planned change. They must be enlightened about the logic behind the planned change and how it will benefit each employee in the organisation. The idea is that the more people are informed about a change and the more they feel and understand that it is necessary and urgent, the more motivated they will be to accept the change (Burnes, 2004; Hussain et al., 2018). Organisational leaders have to be actively involved in the unfreezing process by monitoring, evaluating, planning and implementing changes, using existing or new structures for rapid response to the internal or external environment. They also have to be aware of and foresee the patterns of change by individuals, products, technology and environments. The implementation of change involves the

current state of an organisation, which has to be changed into the desired state. However, changing from the current state to the desired state will not happen rapidly but over a period of time (Burnes, 2004; Fullan, 2006a; Hussain et al., 2018).

In the late 1980s, Beckhard and Harris identified three activities for implementing change in organisations, namely activity planning, commitment planning and change management structures. These activities are directly linked to the unfreeze stage of Lewin's model. Activity planning is the road map for organisational change, where specific events and activities must occur simultaneously to bring about long-term successful change (Harris & Beckhard, 1987). The events or activities involve the integrated change tasks and explicitly tie the tasks according to change priorities and goals of the organisation. For the purpose of formulating and gaining people's support for change, commitment planning is necessary (Harris & Beckhard, 1987). Commitment planning identifies the persons or groups whose commitment is required for organisational change. The people or groups that are required for commitment planning are political support structures, unions and relevant stakeholders. Through consultation with political support structures, unions and stakeholders, the change management structure in the organisation is enabled to identify the direction and structure for managing change processes, including the resources to promote change, the current leadership structure, change consultants and interpersonal and political skills to initiate the change process (Harris & Beckhard, 1987). Only then can organisations initiate the moving or transition stage.

3.4.2.2 Move stage

After unfreezing, Lewin (1951) suggests moving to the next stage, which he refers to as the moving, changing or transition stage. He recognises that change is a process where the organisation must transition or move into this new state of being. He explains that now that the people are "unfrozen", they can begin to move towards the direction that will best allow the leadership to implement change and empower people to change (Burnes, 2004). This transition stage is marked by the implementation of the change (Hussain et al., 2018; Kaminski, 2011; Wang & Ellinger, 2009). This is when the change becomes real, and it is the time that most people struggle with the new reality (Hussain et al., 2018). It is the time marked with the most uncertainty and fear among people in the organisation (see Section 3.6.2.2.1). Wang and Ellinger (2009) assert that it is the time when people resist the new reality the most, which is the hardest step to overcome. Although adapting to change is difficult, Lewin (1951) states that during the move stage, people begin to learn the new behaviour, processes and ways of thinking. They also become more at ease with sharing knowledge and information (see Section 3.6.3). The more prepared they are for this step, the easier it is to complete and overcome it (Hussain et al., 2018). For this reason, education, communication, support and time are critical for employees as they

become familiar with the change. Again, change (moving or transition) is a process that must be carefully planned and executed.

3.4.2.3 Refreeze stage

The final stage of Lewin's three-step model is the freeze stage, which many scholars adopting Lewin's model in their research refer to as the "refreeze stage" to symbolise the act of reinforcing, securing and solidifying the new state after the change (Burnes, 2004; Kaminski, 2011; Wang & Ellinger, 2009). The change made to enhance improvement and productivity included processes, goals, structure, offerings or people. When the change has happened and is accepted, the organisation is refrozen as the new norm or status quo. Lewin finds the refreeze stage especially important to ensure that people do not revert to their old ways of thinking or doing prior to the implementation of the change (Hussain et al., 2018; Kaminski, 2011). According to Kaminski (2011), Burnes (2004) and Lewin (1951), all possible efforts must be made to ensure that the new status quo is not disrupted, meaning that the change must not be lost. The new change needs to be reinforced, cemented into the culture of the organisation and maintained as the acceptable new way of thinking and doing. Positive rewards and acknowledgment of individualised efforts are often used to reinforce and secure the new state because it is believed that positively reinforced behaviour will likely be repeated.

Many scholars argue that the refreezing step is outdated in contemporary business due to the continuous need for change (Burnes, 2004; Kaminski, 2011; Wang & Ellinger, 2009). They contend that change is continuously happening at an accelerated pace, especially in this day and age of technology development, economic changes and the world of business. Hussain et al. (2018) report that leaders and managers in the business sector have expressed their view that it is unnecessary to spend time on freezing a new state when organisations are often forced to make rapid changes to adapt to the demands and needs of the business sector. However, as Hussain et al. (2018) point out, without the refreezing step, there is a good chance that people will revert to the old way of doing things, and the effort and investment by people in the initial change process will be for naught. Taking one step forward and two steps back can be a common theme when organisations overlook the refreezing step in anticipation of future change.

To conclude, it is important to emphasise the critical role the leadership and management play in communicating change to all stakeholders in the unfreeze stage. Organisational members' readiness for change and perceptions towards the change and organisational leaders' perceptions towards the external environment are critical (see Figure 3-3). Preliminary diagnosis is the most important facilitating factor in an organisational change process. The limited existing literature on learning in organisations demonstrates that leadership, empowerment, reward

systems, knowledge management and managing workplace diversity are effective interventions that may be effective in the move stage in moving an organisation towards becoming an improved learning environment. Lastly, developing and facilitating a learning culture are regarded as the most effective approach to sustaining the planned change in the freeze stage.

Lewin's model for change was identified by the researcher as having a direct influence on this study, specifically with regard to the changes that CMs and principals have to deal with in the basic education system. The model allows the leadership and management in organisational structures to involve all people in the organisation to contribute to actions and decision-making processes, which involves all three stages, namely freezing, moving and unfreezing. As Hussain et al. (2018) recommend, organisations should elevate the awareness of change and stages, as sharing knowledge is the catalyst for the unfreeze and move stages of the process, considering that employee involvement is regarded as the primary factor for moving from one stage to another. All these factors are interrelated in the change process in organisations. At each stage in the process model, leaders and managers (CMs and principal) and employees (teachers) are considered to be one unit, and each phase will be shifted to the next step of the model. Furthermore, from a social perspective, the exchange of rewards and recognition can bring about significant social implications for enhancing the organisational change process. After the unfreeze stage is initiated and completed by the leadership, then only can the next stage of Lewin's model – the move stage – be implemented.

Lewin's change model removes any doubt that might still exist about the importance of change in organisations and needs to be executed, because the needs of an organisation change to adapt to the current and future needs of the organisation and the country.

3.4.3 Knowledge sharing and change process

Knowledge sharing is the flow of information back and forth between multiple levels (employees, management and leadership) to function efficiently to develop plans, strategies and ideas to improve the organisation and share skills and expertise (Hussain & Al Abri, 2015). Development programmes are initiatives that can be implemented to assist people in an organisation to deal with context-relevant challenges, that is, those challenges that are unique to the specific context in which they function (Cummings & Worley, 2014). Håkansson (1993) mentions that knowledge sharing is crucial among individuals to function optimally, especially when change is happening in an organisation. Foss and Pedersen (2002) explain that knowledge sharing and organisational resources are critical for growth, sustainability and maintaining a dynamic economy. Ambrosini and Bowman (2001) add that organisations do not rely on training, staffing and managing systems

alone, but also greatly on knowledgeable individuals who share beliefs, experiences, skills, competencies and abilities among peers and leadership.

Employee involvement and knowledge sharing are also emphasised in Deming's theory of organisational change and the foundation of his 14 principles. By sharing knowledge, new knowledge is created that adds to the value of organisations and mechanisms for change (Hussain et al., 2018). Sharing knowledge is actually the organisational learning process that concludes what members or employees know about the organisational processes, clients and environment of the organisation (Deming, 2018a; Hussain et al., 2018; Hussain & Al Abri, 2015). This knowledge may be explicit knowledge that can be easily transferred in documents, databases and manuals or tacit knowledge, which is the members' internal skills, intuitions and memories (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995).

Knowledge sharing in and during the change process is codified and personalised. In the codification phase, the knowledge that would be used by members is stored. In the personalisation phase, the knowledge is being focused on how to transfer it from person to person. The codification of knowledge is called "explicit knowledge" which can be easily transferred. Personalisation is called "tacit knowledge", which is not easily transferable (Ambrosini & Bowman, 2001).

3.4.4 Leadership and change process

Leadership is a process by which an individual has the ability to influence a group of people or individuals to work towards a common goal (Bhengu & Myende, 2016; Das et al., 2011; Heystek, 2016). Hussain et al. (2018, p. 125) define *leadership* in the change context as "the process of diagnosing where the work group is now, and where it needs to be in the future, and formulating a strategy for getting there". They add that "leadership also involves implementing change through developing a base of influence with followers, motivating them to commit to and work hard in pursuit of change goals, and working with them to overcome obstacle to change" (Hussain et al., 2018, p. 125). Cummings and Worley (2014) identify five key activities of leadership in change processes, namely motivating change, creating a vision, developing political support, managing the transition and sustaining momentum. Motivating change and creating a vision are directly linked with the unfreeze stage in Lewin's three-step model or the current state of the organisation being considered for change. Developing political support and managing the transition show the moving phase of change, while sustaining momentum shows the implementation and refreezing phase of the change. During change, two factors play an imminent role. The first is employees' resistance to change (Deming, 1993; Stanley et al., 2005), and the second is employees' openness to change (Cummings & Worley, 2014). Resistance to change directly affects the

change process. It can hinder the process and cause a negative impact on the outcomes so that the goals of the organisation are never reached. The openness of individuals and groups towards change has to be a priority for the leadership of organisations.

As change is happening at an accelerated pace, leadership types and approaches to how leadership is conducted have become more important in change processes. Findings from Lewin (1951), Burnes (2004) and Kaminski (2011) show that the leadership style and employee involvement are key if a system-wide change in an organisation or education system is to be successful. Although the focus of this study was not on a specific leadership style that would be required to effectively implement change, the researcher acknowledges the positive impact of leadership and management styles in terms of support provision in dealing with change in an organisation or system. Transformational leadership has been identified as the best leadership style for change (Gong et al., 2009). Transactional leadership has become less relevant, whereas transformational and instructional leadership styles have become more prominent in organisations. While transactional leaders are mostly involved in the reward and punishment of employees to encourage the performance of an organisation (Male & Palaiologou, 2015; Moorosi & Bantwini, 2016), transformational and instructional leaders are often intrinsic, charismatic, inspirational, intellectual, individualised and considerate (Conchie, 2013; Qadach et al., 2019; Silverman, 2016). Transformational and instructional leadership identifies the stakeholders of change processes. In the context of this study, district leadership and management, CMs, principals, SGBs, SMTs and teachers can support change and make broad-based support decisions to maximise the risk of success and minimise the risk of resistance in a change process by asking the following question: Who stands to gain or to lose from the change? (Male & Palaiologou, 2015; Marzano & Waters, 2009; Nikolaros, 2015; Qadach et al., 2019).

In conclusion, the relevance of Lewin's change model to this study is that the model identifies organisational change as a feature of organisational life on strategic and operational levels (Barnes in Hussain et al., 2018). Lewin's change model removes any doubt that may still exist about the importance of change in organisations because organisation needs change to adapt to current and future needs for organisational development and the country. It is evident from Lewin's model that organisations should be unfrozen and people should be informed about a change and given the opportunity to adapt to the change before the (re)freezing on the new changes can be secured. As shown in Figure 3-3, in the unfreeze stage, the organisation members' readiness for change and perceptions towards the change project, as well as organisational leaders' perceptions towards the external environment, are critical. A preliminary diagnosis is the most critical facilitating factor in an organisational change process. The literature has demonstrated that in the movement stage, leadership, empowerment, reward systems,

knowledge management and managing workplace diversity are effective interventions that may be effective in moving an organisation towards becoming an improved learning environment. Lastly, developing and facilitating a learning culture are regarded as the most effective approach to sustaining the planned change in the refreeze stage.

As education change is a continuous process, leadership and management have an active role to play in organisational outcomes, employee satisfaction and performance. From Lewin's model, it is clear that leadership and management play an active role as change agents to freeze current actions, plan towards moving to enable the unfreezing process to initiate change in the organisation and then freeze the change and reinforce it. Knowledge sharing is very important during any change processes, and collaboration between leadership and subordinates is critical if organisational change is to succeed. Although the researcher did not disseminate the different leadership styles in the study, reference was made to transformational and instructional leadership styles contributing positively towards organisational change processes. With these two leadership styles, the leaders coordinate with employees (communication), share their knowledge, give support (mentorship, training and development) and provide opportunities for making decisions on multiple organisational levels, which are very important when this model is utilised to bring about change and manage change in the basic education system. Thus, leaders and the way they manage people and initiate change in their organisations are an important element of convincing people to make the change effort.

3.5 FACTORS FOR THE BASIC EDUCATION DEPARTMENT TO CONSIDER

Deming believes that an understanding of his system of profound knowledge will result in the transformation of the management in an organisation and his 14 principles will guide organisations towards effective change. In the context of this study, it requires effective leadership in the DBE, PEDs, districts, circuits, clusters and schools to adapt to the initiated change. Thus, by implementing Deming's theory, the people in the organisation (education system) will have the knowledge, personality and persuasive power to influence people (MECs, HoDs, district directors CMs, principals and teachers) to accept the proposed change and make it happen (Deming, 1993). Everybody in the basic education system needs to understand that the efforts of districts, CMs and principals of schools are not additive but interdependent. In view of this, each part, whether it is a district, a circuit, a CM, a principal or an SMT, has an obligation to contribute its best to optimise the change objectives of the education system. Simply doing the best for the individual components amounts to sub-optimisation and results in losses for everybody in the system (Evans et al., 2012). For example, an optimised circuit, cluster or school is like a well-oiled machine that is judged by its reliability and performance or like an orchestra, which is judged not so much by how many brilliant musicians it has but by the sound of the music the musicians

make together. All members of the education system (teachers, SMTs, SGBs, principals and district officials) are there to support one another to deliver quality service and support to their constituents. Pitting individuals, schools or departments in the DBE, PEDs or districts against one another for resources is self-destructive to the education system because the CMs, principals or schools involved will simply strive to maximise their own expected gain at the expense of the entire DBE system. Optimising the aim of the DBE, PEDs, districts or schools requires internal cooperation among all of its components.

Managing schools in the DBE system requires leadership experience and sound knowledge of the interaction of forces (individuals, schools, principals, CMs and districts, etc.). This knowledge comes from Fullan's six secrets of change. Good leadership and management require an understanding of how the system affects individual performance. For example, many factors in an educational system affect the performance of the principal or the school. These include the training that principals, SMTs and SGBs receive from CMs and districts in their roles as educational leaders (see Section 2.4). Factors such as the CM's workload and nature of tasks performed, the information and resources provided, the type and number of principals, SMTs and SGBs trained, the type and number of people worked with, the leadership exhibited by CMs and district directors, everyday disruptions on the job, the fairness of leadership and management policies and practices and other environmental conditions (e.g. administrative red tape, low morale, insufficient training and support, work overload and unrealistic expectation) have an impact on the effectiveness of change (Maguad, 2011). Furthermore, the QMS performance and whole-school development evaluation do not recognise such factors, often placing the blame or accountability on individuals who have little control over their environment (Bantwini & Moorosi, 2018b). In the basic education system, it is a common occurrence that principals, CMs and even districts are pitted against one another for resources or rewards, for example Grade 12 NSC performance and teacher awards at the end of each year (Stensaasen, 1995). This practice is destructive for the basic education system, as it encourages individuals to focus on maximising their own expected gain, not the enhancement of the school, district or education system. Similarly, in such a stressful and continuously changing education environment, performance targets for schools, principals, CMs and districts or arbitrary financial reduction goals will not motivate anyone to improve the education system. All employees in the system will act only to meet their own goals or targets at the expense of others.

3.6 PERFORMANCE EVALUATION

Performance evaluation that serves to rank people is deeply flawed. When individuals in a group are ranked, there will always be one at the top and one at the bottom. The same is true with ranking principals or schools in a district (Anderson et al., 2012; Darling-Hammond et al., 2017;

Evans et al., 2012). The following questions should be asked (Evans et al., 2012; Hussain et al., 2018): What does it mean to be an underperforming or performing district, CM, principal or school when the challenging context they are working in is often not taken into consideration? What do these differences mean? How is this measured? Is it measured by the number of Grade 12 throughput results or by the pass rate of all the learners in the different grades or by the performance of the principal, SMT, SGB and teachers? These differences may not mean anything at all. Evaluating such differences requires knowledge and a deep understanding of the people, schools, districts, PEDs and DBE as a system, the challenging context in which they function, the interaction of various components and the existence of variation in different processes. This is what Lewin suggests in his model.

Lewin believes for permanent change to happen, an organisation or system should be unfrozen from its current ways of doing things. That means that people should be informed and involved to understand the change that is being initiated and provided the time and space to adapt to and accept the change before the freezing of the new state can be initiated and reinforced. Moreover, it is important to be aware that people are different from one another and will not all act the same in similar situations; hence, the context in which they function should be taken into consideration when change is initiated. People adapt to change in different ways. The way they learn to adapt to change or circumstances happens at their own different pace (Evans et al., 2012). Maguad (2011) concurs that individuals respond differently to intrinsic and extrinsic sources of motivation. CMs must be aware of these differences in helping their staff (teachers, principals and SMTs) boost their individual capabilities and work towards a common goal (Hussain et al., 2018).

In the context of this study, many questionable practices of CMs and principals in districts arise during education change (Bantwini & Moorosi, 2018a; Mafuwane & Pitsoe, 2014; Mthembu, 2014). Deming's system of profound knowledge and his 14 principles serve as a framework to support people in a changing organisation. The four parts of Deming's system of profound knowledge require leadership and management to allow every component of the education system to contribute to the enhancement of the system (Section 3.3.3). Deming's 14 principles provide insight into how quality and support are managed in the leadership of organisations and how these principles lead to effective change. However, the leadership in an organisation must be competent to apply these theories to implement change. Therefore, continuous professional development is of the utmost importance throughout the change process. Lewin's three-step model emphasises that for change to become permanent, CMs have to unfreeze the current state. For example, if the management practice is one of the reasons why a school is underperforming, the CM should discuss and involve the principal and relevant stakeholders that the management practice needs to be revised (unfrozen) for the school to perform better. In this initial stage, the

CM should convince the principal and relevant stakeholders why change is necessary to enhance the performance of the school. Then the change should be initiated and the necessary time should be provided for the principal and staff to adapt to the new way of management, which is the move stage. As soon as the change has taken place, the CM can refreeze the new management practice in the school.

3.7 SUMMARY

Chapter 3 was a follow-up on Chapter 2 and discussed the theoretical underpinning to deal with education change. The change theory provides a framework for learning both within and between programming cycles by articulating the causes of a development challenge, making assumptions on how the proposed strategy is expected to yield results and testing these assumptions against evidence – including what has worked well or not in the past. In the context of this study, Fullan's six secrets of change must be implemented by CMs to effectively bring about education change in schools and provide support to principals when needed. CMs must have the required knowledge of change processes to effectively implement change and should link theory with change efforts. Understanding human behaviour and the way people react to change will inform a CM's provision of support to principals and schools. The CM's support must also be informed by data that will help him or her to identify the needs of principals and where support is needed in the weak focus areas identified. Teamwork between the CM and the principal is key, and the relationship and interconnectedness between them are critical when dealing with education change. The change theory ensures a sound logic for achieving education change. The change provides for remedial and support initiatives to address and correct what is wrong and to plan for future outcomes. Therefore, Lewin's change model will assist CMs to unfreeze the current state (the challenges principals face or the support they need) and then discuss the change collaboratively. The change is then initiated, and as soon as the change has happened, the change is frozen into its new state.

In Chapter 4, the researcher will focus on the research methodology for the research. The research design and methodology used in the study to collect data and answer the research questions to inform the development of the CM support framework to support principals during education change will be presented.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In Chapters 2 and 3, the researcher discussed the literature review in which the conceptual and theoretical framework of the research was extrapolated. In Chapter 2, a comprehensive discussion of the South African education system was given with a particular focus on the policies and legislation of basic education. Attention was also given to the role and responsibilities of CMs, as the main focus of the study was on their role and responsibilities in supporting principals during education change. Chapter 2 encapsulated all the concepts pertaining to the research study, thereby forming the conceptual framework of the study. The theoretical framework that was used to frame this study was presented and discussed in Chapter 3. The use of Deming's organisational change theory and Lewin's change model that constituted the theoretical framework that underpinned the research study was justified.

Chapter 4 validates the philosophical perception and research paradigm of the study that led the researcher to select the appropriate research design and methodology for the intended research. The research design and methodology guided the researcher throughout the research process and ensured that the virtual interviews with participants to investigate the phenomenon met all the criteria of trustworthiness that are discussed in this chapter. Phenomenology focuses on "what" participants experienced and "how" they experienced a phenomenon. In the context of this study, a phenomenological strategy of inquiry was particularly suitable, as it was regarded as small-scale research. Chapter 4 is a discussion of the methods used to reach the research aims and answer the research questions, as well as the methods used for sampling, collecting data, analysis of the data and ensuring trustworthiness, validity and reliability. The discussion includes reasons for the methods that were used and how they relate to the study. The qualitative research approach that was employed for this research is set out in the chapter. Lastly, aspects regarding ethical considerations and the limitations and delimitations of the research are discussed.

4.2 THE PHILOSOPHICAL PERCEPTION AND PARADIGM OF THE STUDY

Philosophy means the use of abstract ideas and beliefs that inform the research (Sloan & Bowe, 2014). Identifying the philosophical perception at the beginning of the research process was very important as it determined the choice of the research design that the researcher selected as best appropriate for the research (see Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). The main research question was “How can CMs effectively execute their role and responsibilities to support principals during education change?”

The main research question obviously called for an understanding of what was happening in the DBE structure, districts and schools during education change, that is, how CMs act their role and execute their responsibilities to support principals in schools during education change. Phenomenology was used as the philosophical underpinning of the study (see Merriam & Tisdell, 2015), and the interpretative paradigm was deemed an important foundation of the research (see Thomas, 2017).

4.2.1 Phenomenology as philosophical underpinning

Phenomenology is the philosophical research approach that aims at probing and exploring the understanding, significance and meaning of people’s lived experiences as humans (Creely, 2018). When applying phenomenology, a researcher attempts to provide an accurate description of the phenomenon (Creely, 2018; Thomas, 2017). In this study, the researcher attempted to ensure that it was the participants’ lived experiences that were used to describe and interpret the phenomenon and not the perceptions and experiences of the researcher.

The researcher chose phenomenology as the most suitable strategy, as it was used to assess the role and responsibilities of the CM, as well as principals’ experience and expectations of CM support during education change (see De Vos et al., 2011). The primary purpose of phenomenology is to pursue reality from the participants’ stories of their lived experiences and feelings and to produce a comprehensive description of the phenomenon (Creely, 2018). By using the phenomenological approach, the researcher was determined to understand the role and responsibilities of the CM to support principals during education change in Sedibeng East and West education districts, which have quintile 1 to 5 farm, rural, township and urban schools (see Section 2.2.7). In applying this approach, the researcher endeavoured through all means possible to avoid being influenced by any pre-existing knowledge and ideas about the researched phenomenon and to remain as neutral as possible to avoid any bias or pre-perceived perception of the phenomenon.

The appropriateness' of phenomenology in this research study is accentuated by Nieuwenhuis's (2020b) statement that educational researchers are attracted to phenomenology as it suits the natural setting – the schooling environment – and upholds the truthfulness of the situation where it is employed. The researcher focused on the role and responsibilities of the CM to support principals during education change by interacting closely with the participants. Appreciating and clarifying the meanings they ascribed to their experiences were critical to the chosen research design and for collecting rich data. The phenomenologist researcher looked at an understanding of social and psychological phenomena from the perspectives and experiences of the CMs and principals involved in the research (see Mollenhauer, 2014).

The primary focus of this phenomenological study was to collect data on the perspectives of CMs and principals of the role and responsibilities of CMs in supporting principals during education change (see Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The researcher used qualitative methods of data gathering, such as interviews and field notes, focusing on gathering rich information and the participants' own points of view (see Lester, 1999). The participants were interviewed in their place of work using the or virtual conferencing platform Microsoft Teams. Their perspectives and experiences of the research phenomenon were sought through in-depth interviews (see Thomas, 2017). The in-depth interviews were conducted by posing semi-structured questions that were utilised as a foundation for guiding and giving the interview structure, while enabling the researcher to inquire deeper on issues he felt were important for the research and where the participants needed to clarify their perspectives in more detail (see Thomas, 2017). The researcher then interpreted what the participants said and ensured that he captured and understood their responses as intended. The interpretive paradigm was a critical aspect that steered the researcher in the direction of following a qualitative approach in the study.

4.2.2 Interpretivist paradigm

The interpretivist paradigm integrates human attention and involvement into a study (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020; Pham, 2018). This paradigm was employed in the study in an attempt to clearly understand the relationship of the participants to their natural world and how they interrelated with it. Furthermore, the interpretivist paradigm was employed to interpret the relationships between and interaction of the participants (CMs and principals) and how they formed meaning of the world they live in. The interpretive paradigm enabled the researcher to see and observe the world through the experiences and perceptions of the CMs and principals (see Thanh & Thanh, 2015). The researcher used the experiences of the CMs and principals to construct and interpret their understanding of the phenomenon being researched (see Klakegg, 2016). Through the interpretivist paradigm, the perceptions of all the participants were viewed as meaningful and

were interpreted and understood within the context of education change (Fullan, 2001; Grosseohme, 2014).

According to Merriam and Grenier (2019) and Silverman (2020), there is no specified or strict way in which answers to research questions are attained, and reality is approached from the participants' own experiences when interpretivism is applied. Interpretivism integrates human interest into a study, as well as the interpretivist researcher's understanding of the phenomenon, to access people's sense of reality, which is usually through social constructions such as language, consciousness and shared meaning (Creswell, 2014; Scotland, 2012). As this study explored the role and responsibilities of CMs in supporting principals during education change, the interpretivist paradigm orientated the researcher's thinking by directing it towards appropriate research methodologies used to inform the phenomenon under study. In the interpretivist paradigm, knowledge was constructed not only by an observable phenomenon, but also by descriptions of the CMs' and principals' intentions, beliefs, values and reasons, meaning made and self-understanding (see Creswell, 2017). Another critical element of this study was to clarify the researcher's understanding of how education change influences the manner in which CMs act their role and fulfil their responsibilities to support principals.

Merriam and Grenier (2019) and Scotland (2012) assert that by employing the interpretative paradigm, a researcher can study the phenomenon in depth, which may lead to a high level of validity due to the trustworthiness and honesty generated by this research approach. In the following section, the research design employed by the researcher to answer the research questions is set out.

4.3 RESEARCH DESIGN

Creswell (2014) explains that the research design is the explicit procedure involved in the research process of data collection, data analysis and report writing. In this study, the researcher built a multifaceted, universal picture, analysed words, reported detailed views of information and conducted the study in a natural setting. Nieuwenhuis (2012, p. 70) describes a research design as "a plan or strategy that moves from the underlying philosophical assumptions to specifying the selection of participants, the data gathering techniques to be used, and the data analysis to be done". It is important to clarify the research design, as it is the template for the study in order to provide results that are credible (Creswell & Poth, 2017). From these explanations and views, the research design of this study can be stated as the plans that the researcher used to understand the role and responsibilities of the CM in supporting principals during education change in an attempt to answer the research questions and reach the predetermined research objectives. This research can, therefore, be seen as a qualitative research study, focused on a phenomenological

design and underpinned by an interpretive paradigm (see Section 4.2.1). The qualitative research approach was chosen to assist in specifying the plan to gather the empirical evidence used to answer the research questions and attain the research objectives (see Merriam & Grenier, 2019; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). This research approach was also employed to gain a sound understanding of the participants' responses and to interpret their lived experiences (see Maree & Van der Westhuizen, 2007; Nieuwenhuis, 2020). Through the research questions, the researcher pursued to understand the lived experiences of the participants, who were CMs and principals in this research (see Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). The following secondary research questions were formulated and assisted the researcher in obtaining the research objectives:

- What is the current education system and structure in which CMs execute their role and responsibilities?
- How do CMs experience and understand their role and responsibilities in supporting principals during education change?
- What are the experiences, expectations and needs of principals pertaining to the support provided by CMs?
- What are the challenges perceived by CMs and principals when dealing with education change?
- What support framework can be implemented by CMs to ensure the effective and sustainable execution of their role and responsibilities to support principals during education change?

The above secondary questions needed to be answered to finally answer the primary research question, namely: How can CMs effectively execute their role and responsibilities to support principals during education change?

Qualitative research pursues to know and understand more about people's practices and improve their practice, which leads to the researcher asking researchable questions as indicated above (see Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). In this study, the researcher depended a great deal on the responses of the participants during the interviews. The participants' views were used to construct meaning about the phenomenon under investigation (see Creswell, 2014). The goal of qualitative research is to collect rich data that are descriptive in nature on a particular phenomenon or context in order to develop an understanding of the phenomenon under study or observation (Maree, 2007), which in the case of this research, is the role and responsibilities of the CM in supporting principals during education change. The participants also became co-constructors in the development of the CM support framework to support principals during education change (see Smit, 2013). The qualitative approach, therefore, explores people in their natural world to

understand their meaning of their natural environment by interacting with them in their environment (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). In this research, the natural environment of CMs and principals is determined as the schools in the specific district where they work. The researcher's interaction with the CMs and principals was through in-depth interviews in which the researcher asked open-ended questions to acquire meaning and understanding from the participants. Diagram 4-1 illustrates the steps the researcher followed throughout the research design (see Creswell, 2017).

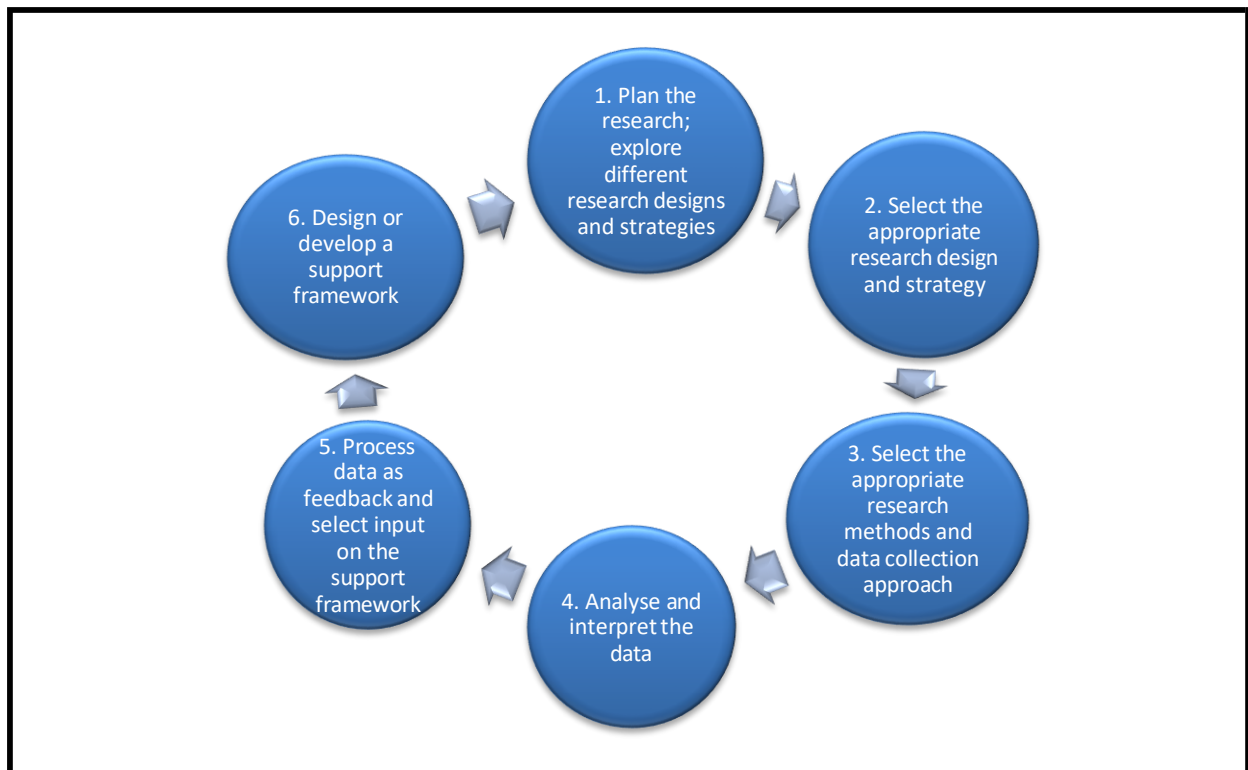


Diagram 4-1: Steps in the research design (adapted from Creswell, 2014)

Qualitative research enabled the researcher to conduct a comprehensive examination of the phenomenon and made it possible to achieve data saturation, which was acquired by asking for further explanation and clarification if he felt there was a need to do so (see Nieuwenhuis, 2020). The qualitative research approach also assisted the researcher in gathering the relevant factors and analysing them in accordance with the objectives of the study. The research methods used in this qualitative research are discussed in the following section.

4.4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research methods refer to the variety of techniques and procedures to generate data to answer research questions, which also include other processes by which information is gathered (Bowen, 2009; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Through qualitative research methods, the researcher attempted

to gain an understanding of the underlying reasons and motivations for actions and establish how the CMs and principals interpreted their experiences and the world around them (see Creswell, 2017). According to Creswell (2012), the qualitative research approach is often the best suited to investigating a phenomenon where people are the central focus in a study in which the variables are also unknown. As the researcher explored a phenomenon in which people are involved, the qualitative research approach was selected and deemed appropriate for the study.

The research participants in a study are carefully selected based on criteria stipulated by the researcher. Selection criteria ensure that applicable participants are selected in an environment where the participants have knowledge and experience of the phenomenon under study.

4.5 SITE, POPULATION AND SAMPLING

The selection of research participants is a process of selecting people to participate in a research investigation on the grounds that they provide information that is regarded as relevant to the specific research problem (Oppong, 2014). Moser and Korstjens (2018) point out that research participants must be carefully selected and the selection of participants must be based on their experience and knowledge of the phenomenon before they are included in a study. There are three main categories of qualitative sampling, namely theoretical, purposive and convenience sampling (Palinkas et al., 2015). In purposive sampling, the logic rests in selecting information-rich participants to study in depth (Moser & Korstjens, 2018; Palinkas et al., 2015; Patton, 2002a). Information-rich participants are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research; hence the term *purposive sampling* (Alshenqeeti, 2014; Jamshed, 2014). Purposive sampling was employed in this study, because the participants (CMs and principals) had a profound knowledge and perception of the researched phenomenon. A non-probability sampling procedure was used for this research to select knowledgeable and experienced participants (see Moser & Korstjens, 2018). In purposive sampling, which is a non-probability sampling procedure, members of the target population meet specific practical criteria and are included for the purpose of the study (Creswell, 2017; Moser & Korstjens, 2018; Palinkas et al., 2015). The criteria for selecting appropriate participants for the study were as follows:

- CMs with at least two years' experience in their position of supporting and training principals, who were willing to participate in the study.
- Secondary school principals appointed in the Sedibeng East and West education districts who had at least five years' experience as a principal of a secondary school and were willing to participate in the study.

While the sample selection in qualitative research has an acute effect on the ultimate quality of the research, it is not as strictly prescribed as in quantitative research. Using purposive sampling, the population in this study consisted of CMs and principals in the Sedibeng East and Sedibeng West districts of the GDE in South Africa. The researcher selected these districts in the Vaal Triangle region in Gauteng, as he resided in this region and had identified the problem in these districts.

The justification for using purposive sampling is that the researcher presumed that the participants (CMs and principals) had an unsullied viewpoint on the researched phenomenon in question and their presence in the sample was warranted (see Creswell, 2017; Moser & Korstjens, 2018; Palinkas et al., 2015). CMs are experts in the specific phenomenon due to their close involvement in working (providing service and support) with principals and schools (see Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Moser & Korstjens, 2018; Thomas, 2017). Independent district officials recruited CMs and principals to be participants in the research. The CMs and principals were selected to provide rich information on the role and responsibilities of the CM (see Creswell, 2017; Moser & Korstjens, 2018; Palinkas et al., 2015). CMs are knowledgeable on the phenomenon of their role and responsibilities in supporting principals and schools, while principals have experience of the support provided by CMs. As participants, the CMs and principals could articulate and reflect and were motivated to communicate at length and in depth on the topic with the researcher (see Moser & Korstjens, 2018).

The sample of qualitative studies is smaller than that of quantitative studies. The sample of this study consisted of 17 participants. The CMs and principals were located in different cities and townships across the Vaal Triangle region (Meyerton, Vereeniging, Heidelberg and Vanderbijlpark, Sebokeng, Evaton and Orange Farms) on the southern borders of Gauteng. The principals of these schools represented farm, rural, township, semi-urban and urban schools. The two districts have a combined total of 72 no-fee and fee-paying secondary schools. The schools are grouped according to size and the funding they receive from the government and are classified as quintile 1 to 5 schools, as indicated in Table 4-2.

Quintile 1 to 3 schools mostly have low-income parents and are found in farm, rural and some township areas. They are no-fee schools, meaning that the parents do not pay any school fees for their children who attend these schools (Bisschoff & Mestry, 2009; RSA, 1996). They annually receive a once-off payment from the DBE, which is calculated according to the total number of learners enrolled in the school (RSA, 1996). The funds are allocated according to the social standing of the schools, where financially better-off schools receive less funding than schools that are struggling financially (RSA, 1996). The SGB is responsible for utilising the funds in accordance to set rules and regulations as set out in the policy (RSA, 1996). Part of this

expenditure is dealing directly with service providers, paying for services and procuring services that are valuable to the school (RSA, 1996). On the other side, quintile 4 and 5 schools are schools found in medium- to high-income communities, which are usually found in semi-urban and urban areas closer to established towns and cities that have a medium to high population and sound economic activities (Collingridge, 2013). However, there are some quintile 4 and 5 schools in township areas that have very poor communities. These schools find it financially challenging to accommodate the influx of learners to the school and provide sufficient resources for effective teaching and learning. The parents in quintile 4 and 5 schools pay school fees that are determined by the SMT and SGB, as these schools receive a smaller subsidy and less financial support from the DBE compared to quintile 1 to 3 schools. Table 4-2 below indicates the total number of secondary schools in both districts and summarises the number of participants selected for the study. Four CMs and 13 principals were selected to participate in the study, giving a total of 17 participants in the study.

Sedibeng West district is divided into four circuits and Sedibeng East into three circuits. Each circuit is managed by a CM and divided into clusters. In this study, the researcher selected participants according to the research design selected for the study (see Bottery, 2016; Creswell & Poth, 2017; Merriam & Grenier, 2019). The participants in the study were CMs, as members of district management teams and direct supervisors of principals, and secondary school principals from the Sedibeng East and West districts.

Two principals of quintile 1 to 3 schools and four principals of quintile 4 and 5 schools in the Sedibeng East district were selected as participants. In the Sedibeng West district, one principal from quintile 1 to 3 schools and six from quintile 4 and 5 schools were selected. Two CMs from each district were also selected to participate in the study.

Table 4-1: Participant selection in the Sedibeng East and West districts

Criteria	District: Sedibeng East (D7)	District: Sedibeng West (D8)
<i>CM: At least two years' experience in his/her role of supporting principals</i>		
*CMs	2	2
Total number of CMs	4	
<i>Principal: At least five years' experience as principal in a secondary school</i>		
*Principals selected (quintile 1-3 schools)	2	1
*Principals selected (quintile 4 and 5 schools)	4	6
Total number of secondary school principals	13	

Criteria	District: Sedibeng East (D7)	District: Sedibeng West (D8)
Total: Participants from each district	8	9
Total: Participants in the study	17	

The reason for the sample selection was not to compare the perspectives of the different quintile categories of schools but to provide a balanced picture of how CMs and principals exercised their support within and through the structure of their respective districts, circuits and schools to deal with education change. This helped to portray a balanced picture of the participants' understanding of the relationship between the organisational structure and the CM support structure, as they could improve the provision of support by CMs to principals during education change.

The selection criteria used by the researcher were not prejudiced towards the gender, cultural background or ethnicity of the participants. The data collected were free from any prior assumptions and gave comprehensive, in-depth data results necessary to answer the primary and secondary research questions. Steyn (2017, p. 47) states that "there are no rules for sample size in qualitative inquiry". Sample size depends on what the researcher seeks to know, the purpose of the inquiry, what the risks at stake are, what will be useful or can be disregarded, what will be credible and what can be done in the available time and with the resources available (Etikan et al., 2016). The participating CMs and principals were selected because they met the sampling criteria, were qualified, had an optimistic attitude and were experienced. An optimistic or positive attitude was determined by their willingness to participate in the research, while being qualified was determined by their position in the basic education structure and their years of experience in the system. For the purpose of this study, the qualified CMs and principals had the necessary management and leadership experience in their current roles.

Experience was determined by the number of years the CM or principal was in his or her role. Participating CMs were at least two years in their position and principals at least five years. Therefore, they could provide a clear understanding of how the role and responsibilities of the CM support in the organisational structure (leadership of Sedibeng East and Sedibeng West districts) could be enhanced to support principals during education change. In this regard, seniority was defined by the number of years the CM had been in the district leadership and management structure and the principal in his or her role as a school leader. For the purpose of this study, the more years CMs had as managers and principals as school leaders, the more experience they had. Involving participants from districts, circuits and schools assisted in the interpretation of the

data by enhancing the trustworthiness of the results (see Hancock & Algozzine, 2017; Hollweck, 2015). This helped to portray a near complete picture of the phenomenon under investigation.

The researcher assumed that the participants were people who were experiencing the phenomenon under investigation. The CMs and principals were experiencing the phenomenon of working under a hierarchical structure in the education system and were in a situation of being bound by specific rules and regulations within the system. They were limited by the mandate they had in their respective positions in the education structure. The participants were affected by the context in which they worked, that is, the context of policies, education change, the CM's provision of support to principals and the challenges they faced in education change. Van der Voort and Wood (2016) point out that these challenges are often due to demanding administrative duties, a lack of human and physical resources, poor communication and continuous pressure and expectations to improve the quality of education in schools.

Some principals found it difficult to work under leaders (the district and CM) who were experiencing the said phenomenon. They were in a better situation to provide their own understanding of the phenomenon under study. The ideal sample size for this research was reached by interviewing the participants until data saturation was achieved (see Guest et al., 2020; Ness, 2015). Interviewing until data saturation is achieved means to interview participants up to a point at which all questions have been thoroughly investigated and answered so that no new ideas or responses come out in resulting interviews (Creswell & Poth, 2017). The final sample was decided on after data saturation.

The number of participants for this research was viewed as being sufficient, as it was based on data saturation. The saturation principle is where the same answers to interview questions (same returns) are received without the prospect of getting any new information (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). Moser and Korstjens (2018) state that during saturation, each additional unit of information will supply less new information than the preceding one, or new information dwindles to nothing. In the case of this research, the saturation principle was applicable, as it can be confirmed that the number of participants was adequate (see Palinkas et al., 2015). The data from the interviews provided enough information to draw conclusions from the responses of the participants. To obtain data, the researcher had to gain access to the participants first.

4.5.1 Gaining access to participants

Gaining access to a participant means gathering or acquiring the appropriate participant to attain the data required to answer the research questions (Thomas, 2017). De Vos et al. (2011) state that it is important to identify the sites and the selection of participants from where and from whom

data will be sourced. The participants were contacted, and appropriate arrangements were made with those who were willing to participate in the research. The success of the qualitative design and the actual research was dependent on the researcher's ability to gain access to the research site and participants or through other means, such as virtual conferencing platforms to conduct interviews virtually in order to collect data (see De Vos et al., 2011; Santhosh et al., 2021). The research sites for this research were the district and circuits (CMs) and secondary schools (principals) (see Table 4-2). The researcher had to form and maintain relationships with the participants and the independent district officials of each district (see Thomas, 2017). The independent district officials acted as gatekeepers. Gatekeepers are people in authority or strategic leadership positions who can assist in the approval for access to research sites and participants (De Vos et al., 2011). The independent district officials had knowledge and experience of the CMs, principals and schools in their respective districts.

First, the researcher applied to the GDE for permission to conduct research in Gauteng (Sedibeng East and West districts), Appendice B. The application was done in written form through the research offices of the Sedibeng West district to an official in the division for research at the GDE head office. Once permission was granted, the researcher approached the district office through the independent district official with the permission letter from the GDE. Then the researcher formally requested permission to conduct research from the district director's offices, and permission was granted by both district directors (Sedibeng East and West), Appendice C. The independent district officials were then presented with the permission letters from the provincial and district offices, in hard copy and via e-mail. Thereafter, the independent district officials recruited potential participants (CMs and principals) via telephone and e-mail to explain the researcher's interest in conducting research in their circuits and schools. The explanation included the research topic, the sample frame and size and the reason why they specifically were recruited in the circuits and schools. The researcher then wrote formal letters to various CMs, school principals and SGBs to request them to participate in the research. The GDE consent form, the permission letter from the district director, the participant consent form and the SGB goodwill consent form were all sent to the independent district officials who collaborated with the participants who were willing to participate in the study. All of the documents (permission letters and interview confidentiality consent forms) used for application to conduct the research are included at the end of the thesis as Appendices A to H. Finally, once the CMs and principals confirmed receipt of the documents via the independent district officials, the researcher set appointments with the CMs and principals.

There was no need to visit the district offices (circuits) or schools to explain to the participants what was expected of them or how the research would unfold. The independent district officials

explained that the interviews would be conducted online via Microsoft Teams, a virtual conferencing platform. The duration of the interviews, the way in which the sampling was done, the implications for the participants, the consent forms and the matter of confidentiality were all explained to the participants. Furthermore, the independent district officials explained the research ethics and that the researcher was bound by the research ethics of the North-West University. These explanations were well received by the participants, and a date was set to schedule the interviews. When the researcher received permission to schedule the interviews, he electronically scheduled the interviews upon the availability of the participants. Once the documents were sent, appointments for interviews set and permission from principals and SGBs secured, the data collection commenced through semi-structured interviews via the virtual platform.

4.5.2 Semi-structured interviews in qualitative research

The researcher used semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions to collect data from CMs and principals. He e-scheduled individual interviews with each of the CMs and principals. The participating CMs and principals were expected to answer questions during the interviews. Although the interviews were professionally conducted, they were mostly informal and friendly, and the discussions between the researcher and the participants were open, honest and in trust (see Leedy & Ormrod, 2014). Interviews enable researchers to gather a great deal of information as the open-ended questions posed explore new avenues about the topic under discussion (Gill & Baillie, 2018; Jamshed, 2014; Leedy & Ormrod, 2014). The researcher used pseudonyms to guard against revealing the participants' true identities and to ensure their integrity. Accordingly, the CMs are referred to as CM1, CM2, and so forth, while the principals are referred to as P1, P2, and so forth.

One of the many advantages of the utilisation of semi-structured interviews is that they enabled the researcher to ask follow-up questions to explore and further investigate particular circumstances (see Turner, 2010). This advantage enabled the researcher to explore even deeper and not rely on the interview guide only. It also allowed him to ask follow-up questions until he had clarity on the participants' responses to questions he posed (see Gill & Baillie, 2018). Barrett and Twycross (2018) mention that supplementary and unexpected questions may be asked to eliminate any misinterpretation or to clarify a specific answer from the interviewees.

Due to government restrictions imposed on account of the COVID-19 pandemic (World Health Organisation, 2020), such as social distancing and limitations on face-to-face contact, the researcher opted to use a virtual conferencing platform as a substitute to face-to-face interviews (see Gray et al., 2020; Santhosh et al., 2021). The researcher obtained consent from the Ethics

Committee of the Faculty of Education at the North-West University and the GDE based on the restriction that conducting face-to-face physical interviews during the pandemic was not allowed.

The GDE granted permission for the research based on the limitation that no face-to-face interviews would be conducted (see Appendix B). By using technology, virtual conferencing platforms or application software such as Microsoft Teams, Google Chat, Zoom and Voice over Internet Protocol can be used as an alternative to face-to-face meetings (Santhosh et al., 2021). Santhosh et al. (2021) express their views on the use of video-conferencing platforms as a method for collecting data and suggest best practices in using video-teleconferencing programs to continue qualitative research during the COVID-19 pandemic or in other circumstances when a researcher cannot conduct face-to-face interviews. Virtual conferencing may provide researchers and research participants with a convenient and safe alternative to in-person (face-to-face) interviews in order to adhere to social distancing in qualitative research. Virtual interviews have many similarities to face-to-face interviews but also some important limitations and considerations to be aware of. The five stages of virtual conferencing are indicated in Diagram 4-2.

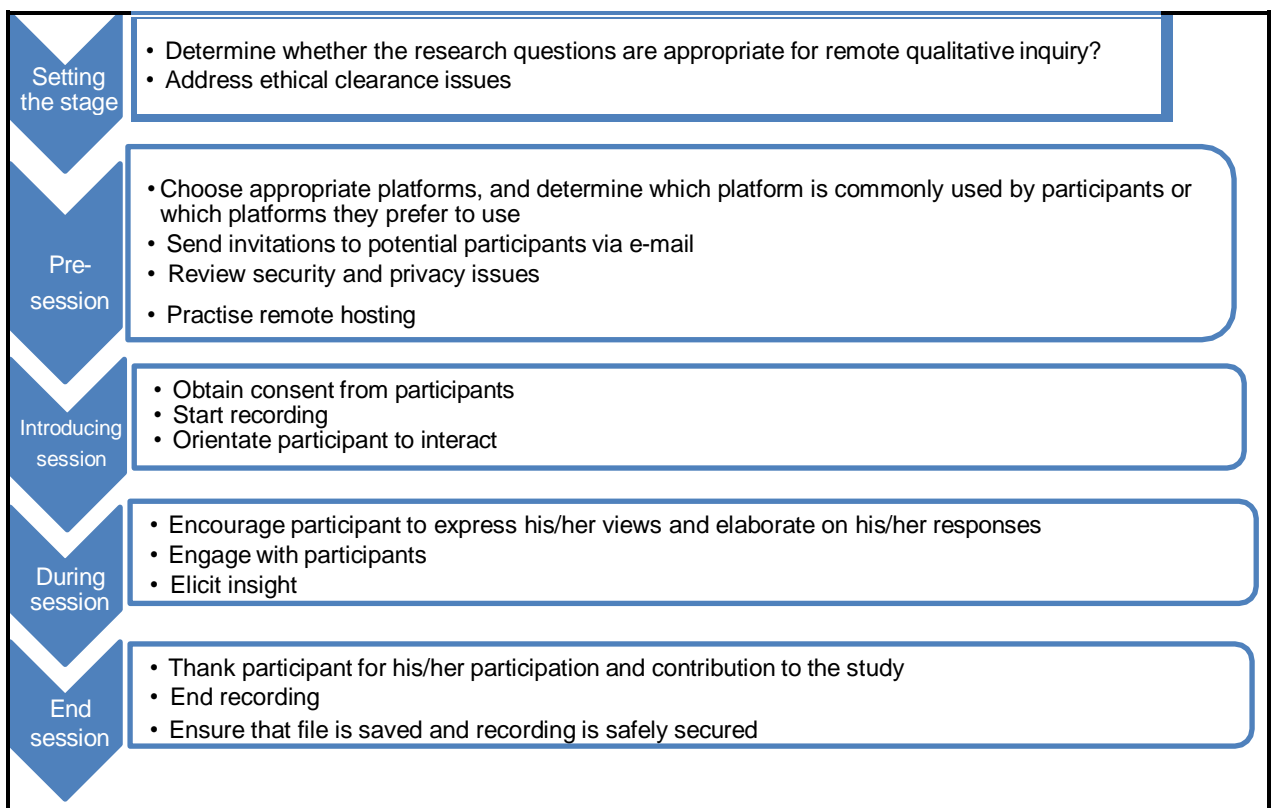


Diagram 4-2: Five-stage process of virtual conferencing (adapted from Santhosh et al., 2021)

In planning to use virtual conferencing platforms as a data collection method, the researcher followed the five-stage process of virtual conferencing.

4.5.2.1 Setting the stage for the virtual interview session

The COVID-19 pandemic has forced governments and organisations to adapt to change. This change has had an enormous impact on the way education is provided in provinces, districts and schools and in the way, districts provide information and support to schools (World Health Organisation, 2020). Principals, along with their staff, are forced to implement alternative teaching and learning practices, which cause many additional changes and challenges. Added to this, they must all follow stringent health protocols prescribed by the government to protect the staff and learners. Adhering to health protocols has forced organisations, and in this case CMs and principals, to use alternative methods of conducting business and providing support to deal with education change (World Health Organisation, 2020).

Because of the closure of schools during the various lockdown levels, as implemented by the government to contain the pandemic, many district officials, principals and teachers were engaged in planning and strategising actions to deal with support provision, management and online teaching and learning while simultaneously caring for their own children and supervising remote management or learning (Gabster et al., 2020). Therefore, it was assumed that most CMs and principals were familiar with using technology and virtual conferencing platforms. The online interviews were carefully planned. The researcher carefully considered the timing of the planned interviews to maximise participation and minimise the strain on the participants. He gathered input on the optimal planning and duration of interviews from studies already conducted (e.g. Santhosh et al., 2021), as well as from potential participants.

4.5.2.2 Pre-session: Selecting an appropriate virtual conferencing platform

The researcher used independent district officials to recruit participants, which was done via e-mail “blasts”. The e-mail correspondence outlined the study and the context of the research and provided information for informed consent. After the recruitment was completed, all participants received an electronic password-protected invitation to ensure privacy. Each individual invitation included an attached electronic calendar event, which allowed them to cross-reference their personal calendar and prevent them of scheduling another meeting in the place of the interview timeslot. Gray et al. (2020) found that participants wanted to synchronise invitations with their electronic calendars and preferred the interview to be limited to one hour at most to avoid fatigue and schedule disruptions. Microsoft Teams, Zoom and similar virtual conferencing platforms all have calendar integration capabilities and offer participants the option to add the interview session automatically to their personal calendar (Santhosh et al., 2021).

After permission was granted by all relevant stakeholders, the researcher again explained the purpose of the study to the participating CMs and principals before the interviews commenced. All ethical considerations were obtained from the North-West University, the education department structures and the participants before the interviews began. Before the interviews commenced, the researcher reminded the CMs and principals that their participation in the research was voluntary. He also reiterated that the interviews would be conducted on a one-on-one virtual basis and that their personal information was to be regarded as confidential and kept anonymous (see Appendices C, D, E and F). The participants were informed that they had the right to withdraw from the study at any stage if they wished to do so. In addition, they were informed that there was no remuneration for participation. The participants were required to complete and sign the electronic consent form linked to their respective positions in the organisation before taking part in the interviews. These forms were collected by the independent district officials. Table 4-2 below provides an overview of the virtual conferencing platforms the researcher considered for conducting the online interviews. Microsoft Teams was chosen as the preferred platform, as the participant were familiar with the program since they used the program for their official meetings in their workplace.

Table 4-2: An evaluation and comparison of virtual conferencing platforms (Santhosh et al., 2021, p. 179)

	Zoom	Microsoft Teams	Google Meet	Bluejeans
Supported operating systems	Windows	Windows	Windows	Windows
	MacOS	MacOS	MacOS	MacOS
	iOS	iOS	iOS	iOS
	Android	Android	Android	Android
	Web browser	Web browser	Web browser	Web browser
Cost	Free tier available	Free tier available	Free tier available	Monthly charges for individuals or enterprise
	Monthly charges for individuals or enterprise	Monthly charges for individuals or enterprise	Monthly charges for individuals or enterprise	
Encryption	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Time limits	40 min on free tier	No limits	60 min on free tier	No limits
	No limits on paid tiers		No limits on paid tiers	
Screencasting supported	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Chat functionality	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Audio recording	Yes	Only on paid tiers	Only on paid tiers	Yes
Breakout rooms	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Waiting room	Yes	No	No	No
Electronic calendar Integration	Outlook	Outlook	Outlook	Outlook
	Google calendar		Google calendar	Google calendar
	iCal			

The flexibility of virtual conferencing allowed the independent district officials to recruit participants by eliminating health risks and any possible cost implication for participants. Santhosh et al. (2021) point out that by using virtual conferencing platforms as a substitute to face-to-face or focus group meetings, transportation and transit time barriers are removed. Moreover, using virtual conferencing allows for increased flexibility to consider scheduling focus groups or interviews at non-traditional times to accommodate the participants' schedules (Santhosh et al., (2021).

It was crucial for the researcher to familiarise himself with the virtual interface and options of the Microsoft Teams platform to maximise the effectiveness of interview sessions. Careful preparation during the pre-session enabled the researcher to facilitate and solve common technical difficulties that could arise during the interviews (see Santhosh et al., 2021). The preparation was done on the laptop that the researcher intended to use for the interview sessions to ensure that the video, audio volume and internet speed were adequate to host a successful virtual conference meeting. The researcher recorded practice sessions to familiarise himself with the recording process and logistics. He ensured that the recording (video and audio file) could be secured and stored in a safe place. He then conducted a sound check before the interviews commenced to ensure that the voice recordings were captured clearly, without any interference. This enabled the researcher to easily load the transcripts onto the voice-to-text electronic application Otter.ai.

The practice (mock or test) sessions served the second purpose of familiarising the researcher with the interview guide. Furthermore, the researcher evaluated the adequacy of the storage capabilities of the device, given the large file sizes required to record audio and video (see Gray et al., 2020). The researcher acknowledged that recorded data (i.e. audio, video and transcripts) are confidential and must be secured and protected. He was aware that data require additional privacy considerations, especially with regard to storage and electronic transfers. Before the researcher made contact with the participants for interviews, a successful practice run was conducted to identify possible technical issues and address concerns that might arise before the researcher moved on to the introduction session.

4.5.2.3 Introducing the virtual interview session

Initiating a virtual online meeting is similar to how a face-to face meeting is conducted (Davies et al., 2020). Like face-to-face or in-person meetings, attendees or participants may log in late because of preceding scheduled events or technical difficulties; however, in this research, the researcher and the participants logged in at least five minutes before the scheduled meeting (see Santhosh et al., 2021). The researcher allowed one to five minutes at the beginning of each

session to address technical issues if any were apparent. He assisted the participants where necessary. Throughout the interviews, limited interruptions or technical problems occurred, which were quickly resolved. The researcher introduced the semi-structured interviews in the same way as he would have done during face-to-face meetings. As in face-to-face meetings, he reassured the participants of the confidentiality of the interviews and their anonymity. He then presented an overview of the objectives of the session and the ground rules that would be followed during the interview.

The researcher reconfirmed consent from each participant to record the semi-structured interview and provided the participant with the opportunity to leave the session if he or she did not consent to the recording or felt uncomfortable during the session. In addition, the researcher used a visual cue (emoji) on a shared slide to remind the participant that the recording was to be initiated before the recording actually commenced. To ensure that the sessions were recorded and the data were gathered and preserved, the researcher recorded the interviews on other devices as well. He used a cellular phone and an external hard drive to record the interviews.

Before each interview session, the researcher also described how the participant's opinions would be solicited. For example, he could mute and unmute himself or the participant or use the "gestures icons" function on the meeting service to interrupt the other person or to ask permission to talk.

4.5.2.4 During the virtual interview session

The remote qualitative inquiry sessions followed the same structure as that of a face-to-face session. The researcher used the same interview techniques as he would have done during face-to-face interviews. His guiding semi-structured questions and follow-up probing questions avoided misinterpretation (see Appendix G). Within the general guidelines, the researcher was cognisant of the ways in which remote interaction differs from a live discussion. For instance, he acknowledged that the participant might be hesitant to use technology for interviews (see Davies et al., 2020). The researcher also took into account the need to maintain the privacy and anonymity of the participants, as outlined in the document on the ethical considerations of the North-West University (see Appendix A). These considerations include any potential protected personal information and strict anonymity.

4.5.2.5 End and after the virtual interview session

The researcher concluded the virtual interview session in the same way as he would after a face-to-face session. He thanked the participant for his or her contribution to the study and, in particular, for his or her time, given the stressors caused by the pandemic. Furthermore, he asked

if he could contact the participant or schedule a follow-up meeting if he was unclear about answers to questions for the sole purpose of avoiding any misinterpretation of the data collected. The researcher used professional transcription software (Otter.ai and Atlas.ti) to transcribe the audio recordings from the interviews (see Friese, 2019). He analysed the data with the qualitative framework outlined in the study design stage (see Figure 4-1).

Qualitative analysis of online (virtual) interviews is typically conducted on transcribed audio; however, using a virtual platform enabled the researcher to load the recording on a voice-to-text application to do the data analysis (see Santhosh et al., 2021). Also, the researcher found that the virtual interviews proved to be an advantage compared to face-to-face interviews because the interviewees seemed more comfortable in their own environment. He concluded that the inclusion of video facilitated the differentiation of the interviewer and interviewee and the clarification of unclear words during the transcription and transcript reviews. Furthermore, the video recordings provided a clearer context around pauses and the participants' body language, gestures and facial expressions. Davies et al. (2020) point out that researchers must be aware that participants behave differently when observed in virtual meetings as compared with a face-to-face or audio-only setting (e.g. telephone). Santhosh et al. (2021, p. 182) explain that "one implication could involve the perceived acceptability of multitasking or split attention; not infrequently, video participants elect not to share their individual video feeds".

4.5.3 Avoiding pitfalls and obstacles of strategies for success

Santhosh et al. (2021) caution that qualitative interviews, regardless of the setting, are subject to pitfalls and obstacles along with the progression of the project from research question to analysis and dissemination. They provide an example where they refer to suboptimal recruitment practices (e.g. a lack of advertisement or collaboration) that may limit participation, whereas incomplete or rushed interview scripts may not elicit complete or nuanced insights from participants. Moreover, online interviews, network coverage (connectivity to the internet) and physical technology resources, such as laptops, cell phones and iPads, may cause additional problems or present obstacles (or interact with known risks), which may be a risk for the success of a project (Davies et al., 2020; Santhosh et al., 2021). The pitfalls of virtual interviews and strategies for avoiding these are summarised below in Table 4-3. Overall, the virtual qualitative experience offers a trade-off between participant availability and an increased number of potential distractions. "[W]hether these potential threats to qualitative insight are worth access to participants who might be unable to attend face-to-face sessions is likely to vary across research questions and teams of investigators" (Santhosh et al., 2021, p. 183). Santhosh et al. (2021) concur that these pitfalls or obstacles can be eluded or avoided with careful preplanning, practice sessions and deliberate attention to areas of risk.

Table 4-3: Potential remote interview pitfalls, obstacles and potential strategies for success (Santhosh et al., 2021, p. 182)

Pitfalls	Success Strategies
Before the session	
Limited attendance	Advertising, incentives Electronic calendar invitation Limit duration to 1 h or less
During the session	
Technical difficulties	Arrange for a backup host at each session Practice sessions, including pretesting virtual environment Dedicate beginning of session to orientation and technical troubleshooting
Low participant engagement	Set "ground rules" at the beginning—ask participants to turn on video if able and to engage with full attention for the limited time Can call on participants to draw out their thoughts if individuals are not being as responsive
Suboptimal data collection	Backup host Visual recording reminder
Throughout	
Privacy risks	Work with IRB to ensure appropriate privacy protections, including HIPAA compliance when needed Ensure that commercial video chat platform used for research meets both HIPAA and institutional standards for secure data storage Password-protect sessions Use the "waiting room" feature, when available Always consider privacy deliberately for both data storage and electronic transfer

By using a virtual conferencing platform for interviews, a researcher can see interviewees' reactions and body language to the questions being posed (Santhosh et al., 2021). During these sessions, the researcher also made field notes. Permission to record the conversations and virtual interviews had been obtained from the participants prior to the interviews session and was confirmed again by the researcher just before the interviews started. The researcher and participants agreed that there would not be any interference during the interviews, and the researcher ensured that no participant experienced uneasiness during the interviews. Principals were interviewed in their offices, and in the cases where virtual meetings were preferred, the interviews were conducted at a venue suitable for a virtual meeting (computer and internet connection). The interviews lasted approximately 40 to 60 minutes per participant. The researcher used an interview guide to conduct the interviews.

4.6 INTERVIEW GUIDE

A qualitative investigational perspective through a self-developed interview and semi-structured guide (Appendix H) was employed to enable the researcher to collect rich data (see Cohen & Crabtree, 2006; Creswell & Poth, 2017). An interview guide is a necessity when conducting interviews and comprises a list of pre-determined questions that the researcher wants to ask during the interview to answer the primary and secondary research questions (Kallio et al., 2016) (see Appendix G). The interview guide was used to enable the researcher to explore, find answers to and collect data and to ensure that the data collected were from the same areas of information. The interview guide was regarded as a tool that the researcher utilised to maintain focus on the task at hand and which enabled him to exercise freedom and flexibility to get information from the participants. Furthermore, with the interview guide, the researcher could maintain control of the interviews (see Turner, 2010).

Two common interview guides are used in qualitative research, namely structured and semi-structured interview guides (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006). A semi-structured interview guide, such as the one the researcher used during the interviews, has a predetermined set of open-ended questions. Using the guide allowed the researcher to ask follow-up questions to attain clarity and ensure accurate interpretation of the participants' responses. It also enabled the researcher to pursue topics that came up during the interviews that were deemed appropriate and applicable to the research questions (see Alshenqeeti, 2014; Cohen & Crabtree, 2006).

The role of the researcher in this study was critically important during the interviews. He had to maintain control of the interviews because he posed follow-up and probing questions that might have been uncomfortable for some of the participants to answer.

4.7 THE ROLE OF THE RESEARCHER IN THE STUDY

It is nearly impossible to remove the researcher from the qualitative research approach. The researcher is always present in and during the qualitative research processes (Barrett & Twycross, 2018). Likewise, in this study, the researcher was an integral research instrument during the data-gathering and analysis process (see Harrell & Bradley, 2009; Moser & Korstjens, 2018; Nieuwenhuis, 2020). While the researcher conducted the interviews, he was simultaneously recording the interviews (see Merriam & Grenier, 2019; Moser & Korstjens, 2018; Nieuwenhuis, 2020) and making field notes.

Furthermore, the researcher was a research instrument because he planned and conducted all the interviews himself. He received mentoring from his supervisor and explored literature (e.g. Davies et al., 2020; Kallio et al., 2016; Santhosh et al., 2021; Shepard, 2021) on how to conduct

semi-structured interviews virtually, which allowed him to remain unbiased. The mentoring and available literature on virtual semi-structured interviews helped the researcher to decrease his personal views and perspectives to avoid contaminating the collected data, interpretation and analysis (see Merriam & Grenier, 2019; Silverman, 2020). The interviews were conducted according to the interview schedule (see Appendix H) and interview guide (see Appendix G) to ensure uniformity of questioning and to remain neutral during the interviews (see Creswell, 2014). The researcher showed professionalism throughout the interview process, carefully paid due attention to the participants' feelings and maintained objectivity by allowing the participants to respond to questions without any influence or prejudice (see Creswell, 2014). Maintaining a professional approach throughout the interview process allowed the researcher to consider the well-being of the participants. Their well-being was the researcher's primary concern, and he made it his mission to ensure that the participants' interests were taken to heart. His professional approach throughout the research enabled him to ensure the accuracy of the data collected, which can be defended if needs be. In the researcher's mind and professional approach, he was continuously working towards the trustworthiness of the research.

4.8 TRUSTWORTHINESS OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

The quality of a qualitative study is evaluated in terms of the trustworthiness thereof. The term *trustworthiness* originated from Lincoln and Guba (1985), who view the trustworthiness of qualitative studies as parallel to rigour in quantitative studies. Trustworthiness reveals the truthfulness and reliability of data, as well as consistency in the findings. Therefore, trustworthiness may be described as the extent to which the research is accurate or true. In this qualitative study, the researcher was the interviewer (see Maree & Van der Westhuizen, 2012), and so, he had the responsibility to declare his own predisposition (see Nieuwenhuis, 2020) and to record and transcribe the data authentically and without any bias. He took the four criteria mentioned by Nieuwenhuis (2020), Babbie and Mouton (2006) and Mertens (2010) into account during this qualitative research in order to ensure trustworthiness through credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability.

4.8.1 Credibility of research findings

Credibility is defined as confidence that can be placed in the truth of the research findings (Merriam & Grenier, 2019; Stuckey, 2015). Credibility deals with how similar or compatible the findings are with reality (Merriam, 2002). Persistent observation, peer debriefing, prolonged engagement, member checks, thick, rich descriptions, the triangulation of data and random sampling are strategies suggested by scholars and research experts to ensure the

credibility of findings (Merriam, 2002; Moser & Korstjens, 2018; Newby, 2014; Punch & Oancea, 2014; Silverman, 2020; Walliman, 2017).

Maree (2007) states that credibility is the authenticity and believability of a study; it is about the honesty of the research. Credibility exhibits the degree to which the collected data are truthful and appropriate, and generated in concurrence with the accepted procedure – the so-called “truth value” (Cohen et al., 2018, p. 248). According to Mertens (2010), the truth value is directly aligned or linked with the researcher’s capacity and aptitude to take the difficulties that present themselves during the research into account. Truth value can also be described as the researcher’s ability to deal with samples or patterns that are not easily explained, by giving a true and accurate account of the research findings. In the current study, the findings reflect the reality and lived experiences of the participating CMs and the principals in their respective contexts. The researcher used the triangulation of data sources and research methods as an additional strategy to ensure credibility (see Mertens, 2010). Data on the same issues were collected from the CMs and principals throughout the interviews.

Moreover, the researcher ensured that the information obtained from the participants was recorded and analysed accurately, which also contributed to the credibility of the findings. Regular debriefing sessions between the researcher and his supervisor, the researcher’s reflective notes and member checks with the participants ensured that the collected data were truthful and not based on the opinion of the researcher but on the research findings (see Nieuwenhuis, 2020).

4.8.2 Transferability of research findings

The extent to which the findings of a research study can be utilised in similar contexts is called *transferability* (Maxwell, 2012; Merriam & Grenier, 2019; Nieuwenhuis, 2020). Transferability has surfaced as an alternative to what the positivists refer to as “generalisability” or the external validity of a study (Creswell, 2017; Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Creswell (2017) adds that a researcher must provide a comprehensive description of the research findings to ensure transferability to those interested in reaching a conclusion about whether the transfer can be contemplated as a possibility to use in other studies.

Transferability considers the possibility of the research to be comparable to other research in similar contexts (Nieuwenhuis, 2020) or, in the case of this study, the possibility to apply the research findings to other comparable CMs and principals in the education system. The researcher provided a comprehensive description of the findings, as well as context-specific information, in order to increase the transferability of the research (see Nieuwenhuis, 2020). He added value to the research by using specific coding procedures, such as signs, labels and

symbols, during the data analysis to ensure descriptive findings that would enhance applicability or transferability to other comparable scenarios (see Nieuwenhuis, 2020).

4.8.3 Dependability of research findings

Dependability refers to the capability of the research to reveal as much detail of the research findings as possible (Grosser et al., 2018:65) “through the research design and its implementation, the operational detail of data-gathering and the reflective appraisal of the project”, also referred to as *consistency* (Cohen et al., 2018, p. 248). Dependability is known as a qualitative parallel to reliability (Mertens, 2010). Lincoln and Guba (in Shenton, 2004) emphasise that a demonstration of dependability ensures credibility, and vice versa. Cohen et al. (2018) concur that dependability or reliability is determined by the credibility of research findings.

To enhance dependability in this research, the researcher made a detailed video and audio recording of the data collected. In addition, he kept notes to reveal the choices he had made throughout that the qualitative research processes. The process can be openly described, tracked, inspected and defended if needs be (see Mertens, 2010). In addition, dependability was also reinforced by creating document category labels, revisions made to categories and any observations made during the data collection and data analysis process in order to assist the reader in following the reasoning process and choices made throughout the study (see Nieuwenhuis, 2020). These notes were also utilised as a reflective tool and served as a critical and reflective guide with regard to the soundness and reliability of the choices made by the researcher.

4.8.4 Confirmability to warrant research findings

Confirmability involves the steps followed by the researcher to warrant, as far as possible, that the research findings are a true reflection of the experiences and ideas of the participants and not the preferences and characteristics of the researcher (Shenton, 2004). Confirmability is the qualitative alternative to the objectivity of the researcher (Shenton, 2004). It refers to the degree of neutrality or the amount to which the findings of the research are formed by the perceptions and opinions of the participants (CMs and principals in the case of this study) and not through the prejudice, stimulus or attentiveness of the researcher (Nieuwenhuis, 2020). Strategies to increase the confirmability of this qualitative study included minimising the effect of researcher prejudice by declaring the researcher’s own predisposition and conducting regular member checks with the participating CMs and school principals (see Nieuwenhuis, 2020).

The researcher kept an audit trail that allowed him to keep track of the progress made in the research. The audit trail helped him to enhance his comprehension and judgement regarding the confirmability and trustworthiness of the research findings (see Nieuwenhuis, 2020). Furthermore, the audit trail enabled him to track what had been completed and will enable the reader to determine the level of objectivity and trustworthiness throughout this qualitative study. Shenton (2004, p. 72) explains that an audit trail demonstrates that the research findings are the “result of the experiences and ideas of the informants, rather than the characteristic of and preferences of the researcher”. The data analysis procedure followed by the researcher is discussed in depth in the following section.

4.9 DATA ANALYSIS PROCEDURE

Stuckey (2015) describes data analysis as an organised and structured process of selecting, categorising, synthesising and interpreting data to provide an explanation of the phenomenon under investigation. To explain the single phenomenon of interest in this study, which is the role and responsibilities of the CM in supporting principals during education change, the researcher employed a phenomenological data analysis strategy in the study.

Data analysis can be described as

a process of observing patterns in the data, asking questions of those patterns, constructing conjectures, deliberately collecting data from specifically-selected individuals on targeted topics, confirming or refuting those conjectures, then continuing analysis, asking additional questions, seeking more data, furthering the analysis by sorting, questioning, thinking, constructing and testing the conjectures, and so forth. Hinckely (in Maree & Van der Westhuizen, 2012, pp. 71-72)

The researcher chose an inductive process of content analysis as the method to do the data analysis of this study (see Moser & Korstjens, 2018). The inductive process used was the participants’ honest and personal comments, opinions and perceptions that were first captured as raw data (see Miles et al., 2014). The data collected regarding the role and responsibilities of CMs in supporting principals during education change were methodically examined and compacted into content categories by following the coding rules stated by Nieuwenhuis (2020). Blair (2015) states that content analysis is reliant on creating codes or labels that can relate to data in order to develop data into meaningful categories to be analysed and interpreted.

4.9.1 Coding

Nieuwenhuis (2012, p. 100) defines *coding* as “the process of reading carefully through one’s transcribed data, line by line, and dividing it into meaningful analytical units”. The first step in

coding is to read and know the data before the actual coding process commences (Blair, 2015; Stuckey, 2015). The process of organising and sorting the data is the second step in the data analysis process (Stuckey, 2015). Many scholars refer to coding as technical preparatory work for higher-level thinking about the research (Blair, 2015; Chowdhury, 2015). Miles et al. (2014) say that coding is a process of data analysis. Stuckey (2015) points out that before a researcher even thinks about the coding process, he or she must consider and think clearly about the research questions posed to see the bigger picture of what was originally intended by the study. One of the main aspects in coding data and conducting a qualitative analysis is developing a storyline or meta-narrative (Creswell, 2017; Stuckey, 2015). The story is directly related to the primary research question, such as: What are the data telling the investigator that will help him or her to understand more about the research question? Blair (2015) suggests that the investigator's primary research question and secondary questions (purpose of the study) are the guiding storyline. Keeping the purpose of the study in mind will assist the researcher during the following stages when themes are being developed that are linked to the storyline. While coding is being done, other codes may need to be created (Stuckey, 2015). Stuckey (2015) mentions that during the coding stage, the researcher may find that some of the codes he or she has created need to be separated or divided into other descriptive codes. Chowdhury (2015) adds that when codes have to be separated, it is important that the researcher refers to or reflects back on the storyline and the research purpose. The reflection will enable him or her to confirm whether the codes created were in response to the purpose of the study (Barrett & Twycross, 2018; Chowdhury, 2015).

Stuckey (2015) defines *coding* as denoting the sections of data with signs, expressive words or distinctive, identifying names. It simply means that the researcher assigns a code or a label to signify that he or she deems a particular segment of data as an important segment of text in a transcript. Blair (2015) makes reference to two common techniques for coding, namely open and template coding. Open coding is an emergent coding technique that is drawn from the grounded theory methodology, while template coding is an a priori coding system drawn from template analysis.

Codes are usually used to retrieve and categorise data that are similar in meaning so that the researcher can quickly find and cluster the segments that relate to one another (Barrett & Twycross, 2018; Stuckey, 2015). Stuckey (2015) and Blair (2015) suggest that the process of creating codes can be predetermined – often referred to as deductive or a priori coding (Stuckey, 2015), emergent coding or a combination of both (Boyatzis, 1998). When a researcher uses predetermined coding, it is often based on a previous coding dictionary from other studies conducted or key concepts in a theoretical construct. Codes may also derive from a list of research

questions or interview guides (Guest et al., 2020; Stuckey, 2015). According to Faherty (2009), there are no absolute or hard-and-fast rules to coding.

The researcher used ATLAS.ti, a data analysis software program, to code the transcripts. The program help him to systematically organise the data, but ATLAS.ti does not code data; it still needs to be done by the researcher (Friese, 2019). ATLAS.ti is a data management system that is extremely helpful for large projects or projects that require the cross-analysis of variables, such as demographics, to specific codes (Friese, 2019; Stuckey, 2015). During the data analysis process, the raw textual data are gathered and coded into themes, concepts, explanations, interpretations, understandings and summaries, which will explain the phenomenon under study expansively (Cohen et al., 2018).

The coding procedure in ATLAS.ti enabled the researcher to quickly recover and gather all wording and other data that he had linked to ideas and allowed him to arrange them into small pieces that could be scrutinised together and compared within the program (see Creswell & Poth, 2017). Blair (2015) and Creswell and Poth (2017) refer to this process as open coding. The researcher continued with the open coding until all the data were segmented and the initial coding was completed.

Once the transcribed data had been coded, the researcher moved on to the next phase of the data analysis process. In this phase, the codes were organised and related codes were combined into categories.

4.9.2 Categorising data through identifying themes

During the categorising stage, the categories were each assigned with a label (identifying name), using descriptive phrases or words from the text to create a category. When all the categories were created and the data coded or labelled, the coded data were grouped into the specific categories where they belonged (see Blair, 2015). The categorising continued until all the coded data were identified and labelled into relevant categories. When the categorising process was completed, the researcher read through the transcripts again to ensure that all the essential insights that had emerged from the data through coding and categorisation had been coded and categorised.

The next step was to structure the categories into relevant or related themes. Qualitative research analysis is both a structured or linear and a creative or iterative process (Creswell, 2017; Stuckey, 2015). The coding process enables researchers to divide the data into manageable “chunks” and then rebuild the data to create a storyline that is related to the establishment of themes (Blair, 2015). The process of breaking up data and rebuilding it into manageable pieces allowed the

researcher to minimise any possible threats to the research validity by constantly referring back to whether the themes still conformed to the prescripts of trustworthiness. These themes were then analysed to reveal the true meaning of the data and to allow the researcher to draw conclusions that would form the basis of new knowledge or support existing knowledge (see Barrett & Twycross, 2018).

4.10 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethical considerations are concerned with honest moralities and appropriate conduct during research (Grosser et al., 2018). *Ethical considerations* refer to the moral responsibilities of the researcher (Cohen et al., 2018) and involve attributes of fairness, such as admission, permission and safeguarding the participant (Grosser et al., 2018), as well as kindness, appreciation for people and righteousness (Creswell & Poth, 2017). Ethics comprises a prevalent awareness applicable from the start to completion of the research and should be prominent in the researcher's intent (Creswell, 2012). Nieuwenhuis (2020) states that an essential ethical aspect is the issue of the confidentiality of the results and findings of the study and the protection of participants. This includes obtaining official letters of consent from the leadership and management in the organisation or system authorised to grant permission (Nieuwenhuis, 2020). Consent must also be granted by each participant recruited for the research. According to Steinke (2004), informed consent is the unconstrained permission granted by a person to be researched, and his or her decision must be made on accurate information provided by the researcher about the research. Several actions to address ethical considerations were taken in this study.

In this qualitative study, written and voluntary informed consent was obtained from the participants for the video and voice recording of the semi-structured interviews. The CMs' and principals' anonymity and confidentiality were protected, and they were treated professionally, fairly and with respect, consideration and honesty throughout the study (see Cohen et al., 2018). The participants were assured that the researcher would avoid any possible invasion of their privacy, and he iterated that they had the right and freedom to withdraw from the research at any stage. He gave the participants sufficient time to indicate if they did not want to answer the interview or probing questions during the interviews and ensured them that they would not be harmed in any way during the research (Cohen et al., 2018). COVID-19 protocols were strictly adhered to in order to protect the safety of the interviewees and the interviewer.

Ethical considerations during data analysis involve respect and consideration of participants' rights and safety and that the reporting of data is done in an honest manner, without altering any findings (Creswell, 2012). Throughout this qualitative study, the best interests of the participants served as the leading standard to ensure that the study complied with professionalism and was

conducted in an ethical manner. Ethics was adhered to not only to take the participants into account but also to ensure the ethical collection, analysis and reporting of the data and findings (see Barrett & Twycross, 2018).

Ethical clearance to conduct the research was obtained from the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Education of the North-West University. The university provided ethical clearance with an ethical clearance number (NWU-01016-21-A2) (see Appendix A) prior to the researcher continuing with the research. The researcher abided by all regulations with regard to research as set out by the university.

The researcher also requested permission from the Gauteng provincial education director (office of the MEC) and the Sedibeng East and Sedibeng West district directors to conduct the study at the schools in these districts. Furthermore, individual permission was obtained from the CMs and principals who were willing to participate in the research. Due to the COVID-19 health crisis the world was facing, the researcher utilised virtual conferencing platforms to conduct interviews and collect data (see Section 4.5) to ensure that the participants were protected from any form of harm.

4.10.1 Protecting participants from harm

When a researcher involves people in a study, it is extremely important that the researcher considers the ethical issues surrounding the employment of humans in research (Kallio et al., 2016). When people are involved in research, there is always a possible risk of physical, emotional and psychological harm (Creswell, 2017; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Silverman, 2020), which the researcher has to understand, foresee and minimise at all times (Thomas, 2017). In this study, the researcher took ethical precautions when he collected data to limit harm to the CMs and principals throughout the study and especially throughout the data collection process when he interacted directly with the participants. He did not coerce the participants into taking part in the research but attained their clear, willing and full consent (see Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). In order to avoid emotional, physical and psychological harm, he also considered other ethical processes, such as voluntary participation during the data collection.

4.10.2 Participants' voluntary participation

As part of the researcher's responsibilities and as an ethical requirement, the participants were informed by the independent district officials that their participation in the research would be voluntary (see Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). In addition, the participants were ensured that they could end their involvement or participation in the research at any given time without any repercussions for them (see Thomas, 2017). It was clearly explained to the participants that they had the right

to withdraw from the research without having to reveal to the researcher or anyone the reason for their withdrawal (see Thomas, 2017). The independent district officials ensured that the participants were informed verbally and via e-mail about the importance of this ethical aspect of the research process. The issue of voluntary participation also formed part of the discussions and agreements reached between the GDE and the researcher. Any coercion or exploitation of the participants from the researcher's side was, therefore, automatically ruled out as they were made aware that they were in control of their participation throughout the interviews and research process. They were in control of their independence; hence, informed consent needed to be obtained from them by the independent district officials before any interviews could be scheduled.

4.10.3 Informed consent

Informing participants about what the research is about and what their role in the research will be is a requirement that a researcher should take care of either him- or herself or through an independent person (Denscombe, 2017; Steinke, 2004). Accordingly, the CMs and principals who had been recruited by the independent district officials for the research received consent forms (see Appendix D) before the research commenced, and the researcher confirmed that they had received the consent form and signed it before the interviews started (see Denscombe, 2017). All of the participants confirmed that they had completed and signed the consent forms when they were informed of the purpose, procedure, risks involved, benefits and anticipated length of interviews during the data collection.

The researcher ensured that he gave due consideration and respect to the participants in his research (see Thanh & Thanh, 2015). His consideration was also imperative to ensure the participants' autonomy and confidentiality (see Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Thanh & Thanh, 2015) and that they would directly or indirectly benefit from the research.

4.10.4 Anonymity and confidentiality

During the entire research process, it was the responsibility of the researcher to keep the anonymity and confidentiality of the participants in mind (see Desimone, 2009; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Furthermore, the participants were assured that the information received from them during the interviews would be kept stringently private and that their identities would remain anonymous at all times in the research report, the audio and video recordings and the field notes. To ensure privacy, the participants were given code names (abbreviations or letter codes) so that only the researcher would know who they were, namely CM1 to CM4 for the CMs and P1 to P13 for the principals. The researcher took care at all times not to connect any data to specific CMs, principals, districts or schools (Miles et al., 2014; Moser & Korstjens, 2018; Nieuwenhuis, 2020;

Palinkas et al., 2015). In addition, he made audio recordings of the interviews as a safeguard if there were to be any technical glitches during the virtual recordings. The participants were therefore requested to give the researcher permission to record the interviews via the Microsoft Team platform and the audio-recording device.

4.10.5 Permission to record interviews

The researcher followed a qualitative interview approach to collect data for the study (see Nieuwenhuis, 2020). This data collection approach was used as it permitted him to study the feelings, attitudes, interests, concerns and values of the participants with ease (see Paradis et al., 2016). The interaction, reaction and assessment of the situation were easy to determine due to the virtual conferencing platform used (see Gill & Baillie, 2018; Gray et al., 2020). The researcher was able to make a video and audio recording at the same time, which made it very convenient considering the volume of data collected and the fact that the researcher had to ensure that the exact words of the participants were captured. The video and audio recordings enabled him to listen to the recordings as many times as were needed and make additional field notes that could be reviewed at a later stage, as taking prolonged field notes during the interview sessions could divide his attention from the participants' answers (see Creswell, 2017; Merriam & Grenier, 2019). The recordings provided a word-for-word account of the interviews, and no words were missed during the analysis as might happen with other methods of data collection, such as note taking. The video recording also allowed the researcher to see how the participants reacted during the interviews, meaning their body language could be observed (see Creswell, 2017; Gray et al., 2020; Merriam & Grenier, 2019). At the start of each interview, the researcher reminded the participants of the use of video and audio recording. None of the participants indicated that they were uncomfortable about the researcher recording the interview. The participants were not deceived or coerced in any manner during the interview. Their participation was voluntary due to the ethical and professional approach followed by the researcher during the interaction with them.

4.10.6 Honesty and transparency

To maintain ethical research transparency and integrity, the researcher undertook to write and report honestly and truthfully on the data he had collected and on the findings of the research (see Thomas, 2017). All work (research and articles, electronic and in hardcopy) that had been published before this study was credited, cited and referenced in the study to prevent plagiarism (see Cohen et al., 2018; Moser & Korstjens, 2018; Thomas, 2017). After each question posed during the interviews, the researcher ensured that he had clarity on what was answered, and the participants acknowledged and confirmed when asked to do so. The data analysis was done from the transcripts of the interviews, as well as relevant documents such as articles, policies and

legislation. The data were coded and placed into relevant categories, which were then assigned to relevant themes. The transcripts made it impossible to falsify the data, as the video and audio recordings could easily be consulted by the researcher, supervisor or examiner to verify the responses from the participants. By following all the ethical prescripts of data collection, analysis and reporting, the honesty and transparency of the research process were assured.

4.11 LIMITATIONS AND DELIMITATIONS

Limitations are weaknesses with the potential to limit the validity of the research results (Creswell, 2017). Delimitations refer to boundaries or zones within which a research study is confined (Pyrzczak, 2016). The confinement is deliberately done (Pyrzczak, 2016). This research was limited to the factors that were most relevant to the research, that is, the inclusion of principals of secondary schools and CMs in two districts (Sedibeng East and West) in Gauteng, South Africa, who could explain how they perceived the phenomenon under study. The interview process and the participants' anonymity, confidentiality and privacy were explained in detail to the participants. The results of this research were sourced from the sampled participants (CMs and principals). However, the way in which the research design was drawn made the findings transferable so that they can be used by other researchers in similar contexts to that of this study. The transferability of the results stems from the fact that the composition of the GDE is comparable to other PEDs in South Africa and some countries in the rest of Africa and the world (see Arar & Avidov-Ungar, 2020; Campbell & Fullan, 2019; Montenegro, 2008; Mugenyi, 2015; Myende et al., 2020; Sofo & Abonyi, 2018). The role and responsibilities of the CM in South Africa are in some ways similar to those of education superintendents and inspectors in other developing and developed countries (Santiago-Marullo, 2010; Sperry & Hill, 2015; Waters & Marzano, 2006; Yin, 2013).

4.12 SUMMARY

In this chapter, the researcher presented the philosophical perception and research paradigm followed by the research design and methodology for this research. The study assumed an interpretive paradigm, which takes it for granted that knowledge can only be made and understood from the point of view of the people who live and work in a particular society or organisation. The chapter also presented the qualitative research design, data collection method and the population and sampling methods. The interview guide, comprised of open-ended questions, was presented as the research instrument that was used in the virtual semi-structured interviews to collect data. The researcher explained how the data had been analysed through coding, categorising and establishing themes and summaries of the collected data. Lastly, the ethical considerations taken into account by the researcher throughout the study were discussed. Chapter 5 will focus on the data analysis and presentation.

CHAPTER 5

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 4 focused on the research methodology, design and interpretive paradigm that guided the researcher in the execution of the research study. A qualitative research approach was applied, and semi-structured interviews were conducted in two districts of the GDE – Sedibeng East and West (see Section 4.4.1 and Table 4.2). In Chapter 5, the qualitative data collected through the semi-structured interviews are analysed. The researcher's aim was to turn the collected data into findings that would answer the research questions (see Section 1.6.2) and to achieve the research objectives (see Section 1.6.3). The content analysis was done by using an inductive process.

5.2 DATA ANALYSIS

The researcher utilised ATLAS.ti, a data coding and analysis platform, to analyse the transcripts. Coding was also used to analyse the data inductively (see Section 4.9.1). Creswell (2017) explains that by using an inductive approach, a researcher allows findings to emerge from frequent, dominant or significant themes that are inherent in the raw data. Through inductive coding, the researcher focused on themes that emerged from the data (see Nieuwenhuis, 2020). He used a particular method and undertook specific steps in the data analysis process.

5.2.1 Method and steps in the data analysis process

As the data were analysed, bulky volumes of data emerged. It was essential to label the emerging themes under unique categories (see Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). The data were coded by identifying category names and organising them into themes as they emerged (see Johnson & Christensen, 2019). Labels were applied to passages and texts to show that they belonged to specific themes (see Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Important information from the data was immediately coded as it emerged to support the qualitative richness of the phenomenon. The emergent themes were labelled or abbreviated with a code written next to the corresponding data so as to facilitate the reference and analysis at a later stage. Codes such as "CM R&R" for "CM role and responsibilities" and "CM (DMT and EDMT)" for "CM as part of the executive district management and district management" were employed for ease of reference (see Table 5-1).

The researcher scrutinised the literature and clarified and formulated a conceptual framework, as presented in Chapter 2, which helped him to identify emerging themes and categories. In Chapter

3, Deming's and Lewin's organisation change theories, which served as the theoretical underpinnings for the study, were introduced and discussed (see Sections 3.3 and 3.4). As the analysis and interpretations unfolded, it was clear that both Deming's theory of organisational change and Lewin's organisational improvement model were key to this research. Deming (1993, 2018b) states that organisational change is specific to each organisation; therefore, everybody in an organisation must know the elements in the system, as well as their interrelationships. Deming (1993) emphasises that during organisational change, it is imperative to consider the people involved in the change, the elements of change and how they interpret the change. Both Deming and Lewin highlight the interconnectedness between the elements in an organisation and the synergy between them. Deming's (1993) system of profound knowledge and 14 principles for organisation change were key to the current research. The 14 principles are Deming's contribution to the understanding of quality and support in a system. Deming (2018a) believes it is the decision of leadership (such as CMs) to create a conducive environment that enables employees to succeed with and strive towards improvement.

Lewin's organisational improvement model was also regarded as an important theoretical underpinning for the study. Lewin (1951) states that effective organisational change can only happen when change is communicated to all stakeholders and initiated by leadership, such as CMs, to implement the required changes, which he refers to as the "unfreezing" of the organisation in its current state (see Section 3.4). Only when people are convinced that a change is necessary, and the change is implemented, the movement to the new state can happen. The last step of Lewin's model is the re-freeze stage; that is, when change has happened, the organisation must be frozen into its new state (Hussain et al., 2018). The above theories were the lenses through which the researcher navigated the analysis and interpretation of the data to answer the main research question: How can CMs effectively execute their role and responsibilities to support principals during education change?

As the data were analysed and interpreted, it became clear where the role and responsibilities of the CM fit into the education structure during education transformation change, specifically when significant change or forced change happens, for example during the COVID-19 pandemic. It became evident that CMs and principals needed to be supported to be able to effectively deal with education change. From the analysis, it was discovered that the role and responsibilities of the CM to support principals are paramount during education change. It was discovered that principals found dealing with education change overwhelming and sometimes impossible to deal with, as everyone in the schooling system looked up to them to lead the change process and give the required guidance. Compelling data revealed that principalship in the South African education system has become a very stressful position, as a principal is held accountable for the

performance of the school and the learners. In the same way, CMs as the direct supervisors of principals are accountable for principals' performance and overall school performance. The conceptual framework (see Chapter 3) and the theoretical framework (see Chapter 4) assisted the researcher in the data coding and analysis process, especially in the formulation of the themes and categories that are discussed in this chapter. The researcher carefully prepared the data to ensure trustworthiness and that the richness of the data was maintained.

5.2.1.1 Preparation of data

A large volume of data was collected from the 17 participants during the interviews. The data comprised transcriptions of the video and audio recordings and field notes made during and after the interviews. The audio recordings were immediately converted electronically into a word processor and processed verbatim; therefore, the transcripts contained the true and personal responses, opinions and perceptions of all the participants (see Nieuwenhuis, 2020) regarding the role and responsibilities of the CM in supporting principals during education change. The researcher listened several times to each recording to ensure that the participants' words and responses were captured verbatim and that his field notes corresponded with the participants' responses. The process of preparing data involved sorting and organising the transcribed scripts of the interviews into electronic folders. These transcripts were saved under codes assigned to each participant, district, quintile classification of the school and the field notes that the researcher had made. They were saved as password-protected files and folders to protect the identity of the participants and the schools (see Table 5-1). The researcher regularly revisited the files and repeatedly listened to each recording to increase his understanding of the content (see Nieuwenhuis, 2020). The preparation of the data was followed by the coding of the organised data.

5.2.1.2 Coding of data

The process of coding allowed the researcher to repeatedly read through the transcripts of the interview questions that had been posed to the first group of participants, which were the CMs (CM1-4). Reviewing the transcripts enabled him to gain a sound, in-depth understanding of the text and helped him to focus and clarify aspects that the CMs had mentioned in their interviews and incorporate these in the interviews with the principals (P1-13). He repeated the process of reading the transcripts of the second group of participants several times. Prior coding and predetermined codes were used, based on the conceptual and theoretical frameworks (see Chapters 3 and 4). The secondary research questions and research objectives (see Sections 1.6.2 and 1.6.3) guided the researcher in the analysis process to determine possible themes (see Blair, 2015; Nieuwenhuis, 2020; Stuckey, 2015). Corresponding text was highlighted and colour-

coded (see Nieuwenhuis, 2020). Then the transcripts were uploaded to ATLAS.ti to code corresponding parts of text and label them under predetermined codes (see Appendix H). When new information arose and a predetermined code was not available, an additional code, sub-code or category was created, and the text was coded. This process enabled the researcher to once again review the transcripts several times for enhanced understanding. The process of coding was used to reduce significant volumes of raw data into manageable chunks applicable to the research questions and research objectives. The researcher repeated this process with all ten interview questions posed to the participants in both groups. When the process of coding the data was completed, he moved on to the process of categorising the coded data.

5.2.1.3 Categorisation of coded data

During this process, corresponding codes and coded data that were deemed relevant to answer the specific secondary research questions to achieve the research objective were categorised. Specific themes and categories were grouped and linked to the particular secondary research question. This was done to make sense of the meaning of the coded textual data (see Nieuwenhuis, 2020). Then the coded textual data were analysed as a unit that was grouped together to answer a particular research question, and not according to the ten interview questions posed. The researcher posed the interview questions to get clarity on the role and responsibilities of the CM and the context in which they execute their role and responsibilities during education change and to answer the secondary research questions and objectives (see Sections 1.6.2 and 1.6.3). Thereafter, the coded textual data were grouped into predetermined categories. If a predetermined category or code did not emerge from the analysed data, the specific category or code was then eliminated. The eliminated categories or codes were discussed separately in the themes. New categories that emerged which did not correspond with the predetermined categories were highlighted. The researcher was aware that the new categories that emerged could implicate the development of new data. When the step of categorising data had been completed, the researcher moved on to the last step, which involved interpreting the data.

5.2.1.4 Data interpretation

Data interpretation was the final step in the data analysis process. The researcher's aim during this process was to understand the role and responsibilities of the CM in supporting principals during education change through the experiences and perceptions of the participants in their work environment (see Nieuwenhuis, 2020). This aim was achieved through the division of themes from the identified categories, grounded in the conceptual and theoretical frameworks of Chapters 3 and 4. It is important to note that the researcher was guided by the research questions and research objectives (see Sections 1.6.2 and 1.6.3) of the research study, as it is indicated by

Merriam and Grenier (2019) as a prerequisite to effectively analyse qualitative data. The research data are methodically unpacked, discussed, described and presented.

For ease of reference, *most* means the majority of or *significant* means any number of participants beyond half of the number of participants (two or more CMs; seven or more principals), while *fewer* means less than half of them (one CM; six or fewer principals). Where both participants from a district responded almost similarly to the same question, the closest response to the question was recorded; for example, if CM1 and CM2 from DA1 responded almost the same to a question, the closest response to the question is the one quoted in the analysis. The districts, CMs and principals are presented in detail in Section 4.5 and outlined below in Table 5-1.

Table 5-1: District areas: CMs, principals and quintile classification of schools

District area (DA1)		
2 CMs (CM2 & 3):	7 principals	Quintile: Q(1, 2, 4 & 5), (P1, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8 & 10)
District area: (DA2)		
2 CMs (CM 1 & 4)	6 principals	Quintile: Q(1, 3, 4 & 5), (P2, 6, 9, 11, 12 & 13)
Code (example)	Explanation	
DA (1-2)	District area (1 or 2)	
CM (1-4)	Circuit manager (1-4)	
P (1-13)	Principal (1-13)	
Q (1-5)	Quintile (1-5) classification of schools	
CM (R&R)	CM role and responsibilities	
CM (DMT)	CM as part of district management team	
CM (EDMT)	CM as part of executive district management team	

To identify the participants, codes such as DA1 for Sedibeng West district and DA2 for Sedibeng East district, CM1 to 4 for the CMs and P1 to 13 for the principals were used. This was done to ensure confidentiality and to avoid mentioning their names and possibly revealing their identities (see Section 4.10.1). In this way, the anonymity and confidentiality of the participants were constantly ensured (see De Vos et al., 2011; Denscombe, 2010; Schreier, 2012).

During the analysis and interpretation of the data, the researcher used *in vivo* coding, whereby the participants were quoted verbatim to ensure that their voices were represented and heard in the research and the analysed data (see Friese, 2019; Stuckey, 2015). The data were divided into broad themes that were subdivided into categories and subcategories, which in turn, made it easier to discuss the data analysis.

5.2.2 Information regarding years' experience of participants in their position

The researcher deemed it important to mention the years' experience of the participants in order to make it clear that the participants were knowledgeable and had ample years of experience to give rich data on the research phenomenon. In Table 5-2 below, the participants' years of experience are presented.

Table 5-2: Years' experience of the participants in their positions

Participants	District	Professional experience in the role (years)
CM1	DA2	8
CM2	DA1	10
CM3	DA1	5
CM4	DA2	15
CM2 & CM3, average years' experience in the position in DA1		7,5 years
CM1 & CM4, average years' experience in the position in DA2		12,5 years
CM1-4, average years' experience in the position		9,5 years
P1	DA1	13
P2	DA2	9
P3	DA1	20
P4	DA1	12
P5	DA1	15
P6	DA2	9
P7	DA1	7
P8	DA1	7
P9	DA2	10
P10	DA1	15
P11	DA2	11
P12	DA2	6
P13	DA2	5
P1, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8 & 10 in DA1, average years' experience in the position		12,7 years
P2, 6, 9, 11, 12 & 13 in DA2, average years' experience in the position		8,3 years
P1-13 (average years' experience in the position)		10,7 years

The above table indicates the years' experience of each participant, thereby making it clear that the participants did meet the prescribed sampling requirements (see Section 1.10.4) for selection to participate in the research. Their years' experience were sufficient to provide in-depth knowledge of the experience of the phenomenon as discussed in the following sections.

5.3 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

In the data analysis and interpretation, the researcher aimed to determine how CMs could effectively execute their role and responsibilities to support principals during education change. For ease of reference, the discussions in the sections below must be read in conjunction with the figures before each section. During the data analysis and interpretation, several themes, categories and subcategory emerged (see Chowdhury, 2015; Friese, 2019; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Miles et al., 2014). Categories with similar roots were put together to form themes (see Stuckey, 2015). Key themes emerged that addressed the main research question (see Section 1.6.2). Each of the themes was divided into a number of categories and subcategories.

The research purpose during the data analysis process was to determine suitable support approaches and strategies to enable the researcher to develop a support framework that could be implemented and utilised by CMs to support principals during education change. Raw data were collected and reduced to manageable chunks during the data analysis process in order to formulate and report on the findings. During the inductive process of content data analysis, themes, categories and subcategories were identified, as indicated in Diagrams 5-1 to 5-4. This process was guided by the aim of answering the research questions (see Section 1.6.2) and objectives (see Section 1.6.3), as discussed in Chapter 1.

5.4 THEME 1: THE CIRCUIT MANAGER IN THE EDUCATION SYSTEM AND STRUCTURE

The first secondary research question and objective (see Sections 1.6.2 and 1.6.3) were to explore and describe the current education system and structure in which CMs execute their role and responsibilities. It was evident from the literature that South Africa has undergone major changes in its education structure and system. It was also clear from the literature that some districts had different structures (GDE, 2013; Mavuso, 2014; Moorosi & Bantwini, 2016; Thakasa, 2011). The researcher wanted to determine the participants' understanding of where CMs execute their role and responsibilities within the South African education system and structure. The theme that emerged during the data analysis was the CM position in the education system and structure, as outlined in Figure 5-1 and Diagram 5-1. The concept *circuit office* refers to the management sub-unit of the district and the hierarchical report structures in the district structure and system. The theme was subsequently magnified through the categories and subcategories (see Figure 5-1) that emerged from the transcribed text and field notes. This section must be read in conjunction with Figure 5-1.

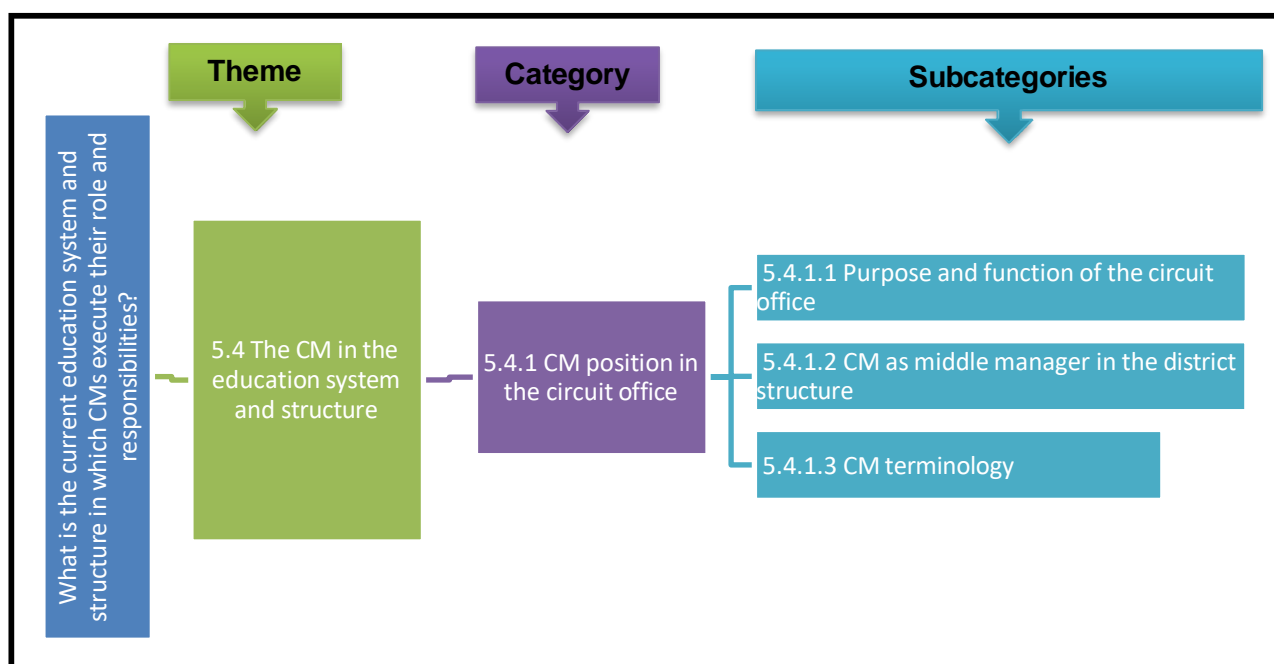


Figure 5-1: Themes, categories and subcategories identified according to the first secondary research question

5.4.1 Category 1: Circuit manager position in the circuit office

In an attempt to understand where CMs execute their role and responsibilities in the education system and structure (see Figure 5.1), the category that emerged from the analysed data was the concept of circuit office, which is, accordingly, analysed and discussed. According to the DBE (2013) the circuit office is the “management sub-unit of a district which is responsible for the basic education institutions in its care” (DBE, 2013, p. 10) (see Section 2.7), and the CM is the “head of a circuit office and executes prescribed functions which has been allocated by the District Director or the Head of the PED” (DBE, 2013, p. 10).

From the analysed data, Diagram 5-1 was created to provide a visual presentation of where CMs execute their role and responsibilities within the education system and structure.

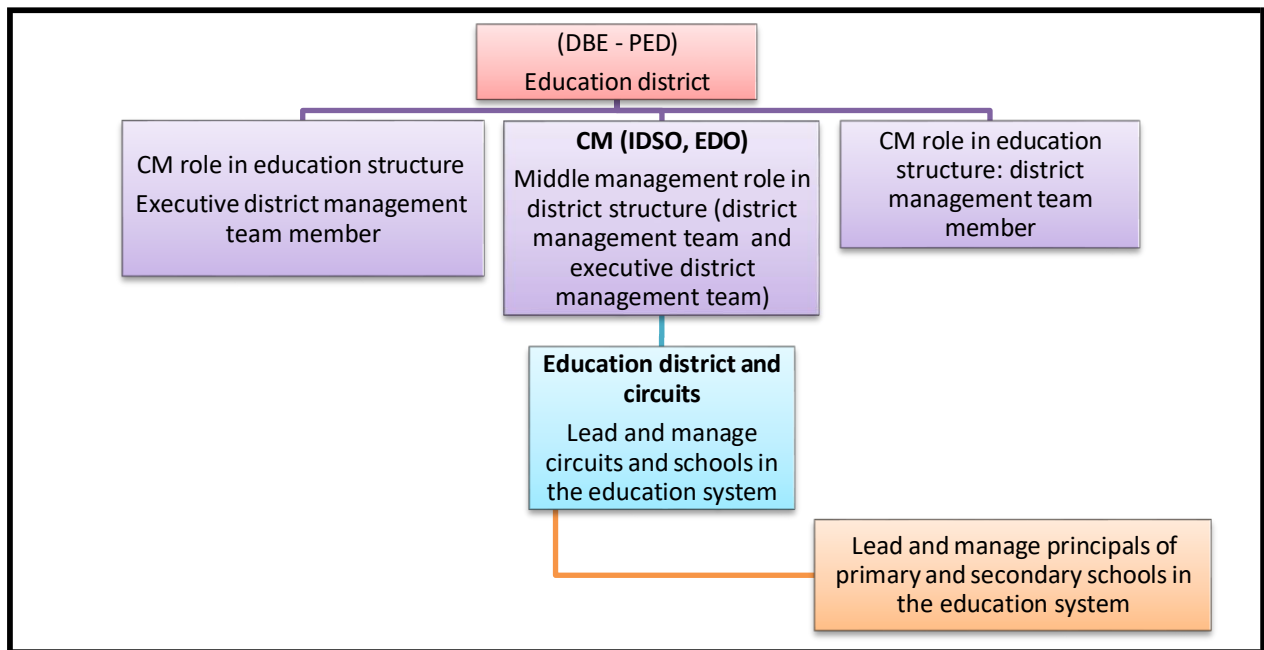


Diagram 5-1: The CM in the district structure

According to the DBE (2013), CMs execute their role and responsibilities from the circuit offices to the schools (primary and secondary) (see Section 2.2.4.6). Circuit offices and managers are accountable for the performance of the schools in their care. The CM reports directly to the district director and, in some cases, also to the HoDs in the PED. School principals report directly to the CM (DBE, 2016). Both the CM and the principal in their roles are responsible for the functionality, management and performance of schools and the provision of quality education to all learners (DBE, 2013) (see Section 2.3).

5.4.1.1 Subcategory 1: Purpose and function of the circuit office

The first subcategory that emerged regarding the circuit office was the “purpose and function of the circuit office” (see Figure 5-1, subcategory 5.4.1.1). Bantwini and Moorosi (2018a) mention that in some provinces, CMs have virtual circuit offices, meaning that many of them use their vehicles as offices or they work from a remote location to connect with principals and schools. In their study, CMs were very unhappy and stated, “When you look at the other provinces like KwaZulu-Natal, like the Western Cape and other Circuit Managers, the way their portfolio is made up is way different from ours. For if you can ask me to go show you my office at Circuit level, I will tell you that I don’t have it” (Bantwini & Moorosi, 2018a, p. 4). Similar findings were made by the researcher in the current study, as all the CMs interviewed worked from the district office and did not have circuit or field offices that they managed. The following views of the CMs were captured:

We operate and function from the district office. (CM3, DA1)

IDSOs [i.e. CMs] are allocated at the district offices. (CM1, DA2)

The circuit manager operates from the district offices. (P3, DA1)

Most of the CMs stated that they worked from the district office and did not have dedicated circuit offices or offices in the field as they should have according to the DBE (2013) policy.

5.4.1.2 Subcategory 2: CM as middle manager in the district structure

The second subcategory that indicates the CM as the middle manager in the district structure (district management team and executive district management team) was identified and analysed (see Figure 5-1, subcategory 5.4.1.2). According to this study, the CM's position is allocated within the middle management in the district leadership structure (see Diagram 2-5 and Section 2.3.2.2). The CM reports directly to the district director on all educational matters concerned with schools (see Diagram 5-1). This was confirmed by the participating CMs in DA1 and DA2, who all concurred that they were representatives of the DBE or the MEC of the GDE at schools, served as middle management in the district structure and formed part of the district management team.

In both districts, the CMs confirmed that they served in the executive district management, as their district directors believed that they knew more of what was going on in schools, and therefore, their contribution in the executive district management team could be valuable (see Diagram 5-1). This aspect was confirmed as follows by all the CMs:

... middle manager in the district structure and serve on the EDMT [executive district management team] and DMT [executive district management team]. (CM1, DA2)

I understand the reasoning for a circuit manager in the organogram, because somewhere, all these things need to be pulled together from all the schools in a district. (CM1, DA2)

In [the] middle management structure within the circuit or district setup, I am an EDMT and DMT member. (CM 3, DA1)

From the above responses, it is clear that the CMs in both districts understand where they fit into the education district structure as middle managers and they are all part of either the district management team or the executive district management team or both.

The interviewed CMs execute their role and responsibilities predominately with regard to principals in public primary and secondary schools through the district offices. The schools they are responsible for are quintile 1 to 5 farm, rural, township, semi-urban and urban schools (see Section 2.3.2.3). The CMs' responses with regard to the execution of their role and responsibilities in the education system were as follows:

I'm a representative of the district and DBE at primary and secondary schools, which is a combination of quintile 1 to 5 schools in the township and the CBD. (CM4, DA2)

... quintile 2 to 5 township schools in the areas of Sebokeng and Boipatong. (CM3, DA1)

... in township and CBD quintile 3, 4 and 5 schools. (CM4, DA2)

Only principals of secondary schools in the Sedibeng East and West districts were interviewed. Although the CMs know where they fit into the district structure, there is still confusion about the term *circuit manager* used to describe their position, which can have an effect on their leadership and management role within the education system and structure (see Section 5.4.1.3). Diagram 5-1 is a visual representation of where CMs execute their role and responsibilities in the education district. From the above responses, Bantwini and Moorosi's (2018a) finding that CMs do not have field offices or dedicated offices outside of the district offices is confirmed. In these two districts, they operate and function from the district offices. Many CMs have to travel vast distances and even have to cross district borders to visit schools that they are responsible for, which corresponds with Bantwini and Moorosi's (2018a) findings. Furthermore, the above response from CM1 DA2 makes it clear that there remains confusion about the terminology used to describe the CM position in the basic education system (see Section 5.4.1.3). It was also noted in the literature discussed in Section 2.2.1.3 that some provinces still used the term *IDSO* or *EDO* to refer to the CM's position. The term *IDSO* that is used to refer to the CM is discussed and analysed in the following subcategory on the terminology for CM and CMs' perceptions of the term describing their position.

5.4.1.3 Subcategory 3: Terminology for CM

The third subcategory identified involved the terminology for CM that replaced the term *IDSO* to refer to a position in the district structure in 2013 (GDE, 2013) (see Figure 5-1, subcategory 5.4.1.2). The term *IDSO* replaced the undemocratic term *inspector* that had been used during the apartheid era before 1994. Inspectors, as the word suggests, focused on school inspections and compliance. Most of the participants mentioned that the term *circuit manager* was confusing:

The IDSO or what they are also referred to as "circuit manager" causes confusion because they do not manage circuit offices; they operate from within the district offices. (P7, DA1)

We are called "IDSOs" at the district; however, the correct terminology now is actually "circuit managers". In the Gauteng province, some people in IDSO positions refuses to adapt to the name "circuit manager". It can be very confusing at times. (CM4, DA2)

... *IDSO or the circuit manager. (CM2, DA1)*

Using the term *IDSO* to describe the CM is in direct contradiction to what the GDE attempted to do in its organisational restructuring efforts in 2013. The GDE created the position of circuit manager in the district structure to manage the circuit and the schools in the district. The term *IDSO* actually does not belong within the structure and IDSOs should be called "circuit managers", as they form part of the district management team in the district structure and are the management sub-unit of the district. This causes a lot of frustration, as indicated by the participants, and many

IDSOs refuse to be called “circuit managers” because they do not have dedicated circuit offices or people that they manage. They are not willing to accept being called “circuit managers”, as they do not even have the basic resources such as circuit offices to operate from (Bantwini & Moorosi, 2018a; Van der Voort & Wood, 2016). The majority of the participants clearly stated their confusion and indicated the differences in structure between provinces:

When you talk or refer to IDSO, people would recognise that the IDSOs are also a circuit manager ... it is confusing because they do not manage a circuit office; they are located within the district offices. (CM3, DA1)

There is a difference in Gauteng in comparison with what is supposed to be the structure like in other provinces. (CM2, DA1)

In the old dispensation, they were your typical school inspectors. In the new dispensation, of course, they are now called either “IDSO” or “circuit managers”. It is a contradiction. (P3, DA1)

From the above responses, it is evident that there is still confusion in terms of the terminology used to describe CMs and where they specifically fit into the district structure from where they execute their role and responsibilities in the education system. One CM clearly stated:

The CM is the direct supervisor or line function of the principal. The provincial department has restructured the district structure; however, some people do not want to adapt to the new name changes given to specific job roles. Our district structure in Gauteng is not aligned to the rest of the other provinces education structures. (CM3, DA1)

5.5 THEME 2: CIRCUIT MANAGERS’ EXPERIENCE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THEIR ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES IN SUPPORTING PRINCIPALS

The second secondary research question was to determine how CMs experienced and understood their role and responsibilities in supporting principals during education change. The categories that emerged under this theme was CM’s support, CM’s role and CM’s responsibilities.

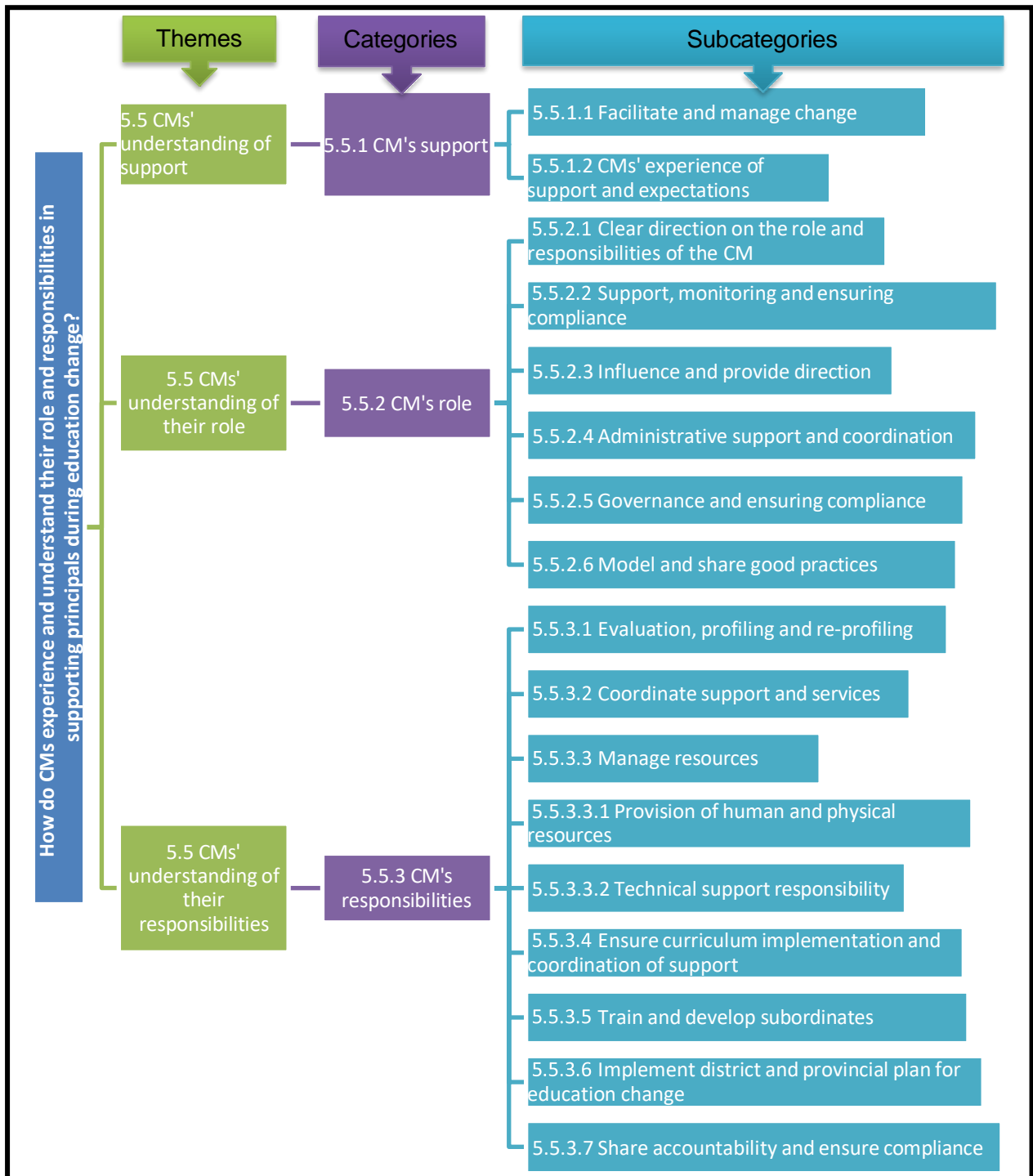


Figure 5-2: Themes, categories and subcategories identified according to the second sub-research question

5.5.1 Category 1: Circuit manager support

The participants' understanding and experiences of CM support were identified and analysed (see Figure 5-2, category 5.5.1). The emerging category was to determine the participants' understanding with regard to CMs' support provided to principals during education change and

what it entailed. Most of the participants concurred that CMs' support was about providing support to principals in the management of the basic functionality of the school.

... CM to manage principals and schools to fulfil their responsibilities, align with processes, manage staff and resources, and monitor extracurricular activities and evaluation of school curriculum. Coordinate policies, processes and plans prescribed by district and head office for schools. Ensure schools' compliance and fulfilment of obligations and regulations. (CM1, DA2)

Circuit manager support is linked to direct support. When I refer to direct support, it means when the principal reports to the circuit manager, anything, whether it's infrastructure or a labour case or whatever, is in the report. The circuit manager is directly responsible in the support that should be given to the principal and the school. Whether it's to resolve a matter or give advice on, or how the principals should handle certain things. And also, the direct support is specifically one key focus area within whole-school evaluation. (CM2, DA1)

90% support and to ensure compliance, 10% compliance, smooth running of the school and ensure that the school produce good learner results. (CM3, DA1)

So, circuit manager support is support provisioning all nine key focus areas of whole-school development. (P13, DA2)

CM support is to have someone at the level within the district management structure that takes account of the implementation of deliverables in that particular circuit. The circuit manager manages processes between the districts and schools to meet the DBE's predetermined objectives. (P5, DA1)

The above responses confirm the CM support role that is indicated in the policies of the DBE (2001, 2013, 2015) and that they are held accountable for the performance of schools. Leadership and management support during organisational change is critical, as Deming (1993) points out in his system of profound knowledge. Furthermore, people must be aware of external and internal variation within the organisation towards providing support during change (Stensaasen, 1995). CM support encapsulates many functions and is critical during education change processes, as stated by Van der Voort and Wood (2016) and confirmed by the participants. Deming (1993, 2018b) states that support must be prioritised and resources provided based on statistical data and does not mean holding employees primarily responsible for their performance. From the responses, it is clear that CMs are held accountable for principals; and schools' performance, and their provision of support to principals mainly entails managing processes and ensuring that schools comply with policy.

In an attempt to determine the participants' experience and understanding of the role and responsibilities of the CM regarding providing support to principals during education change, the researcher identified two subcategories.

5.5.1.1 Subcategory 1: Facilitate and manage education change

The first subcategory that was identified and analysed was “facilitate and manage education change” (see Figure 5-1, subcategory 5.5.1.1). According to the literature, the CM is responsible for managing the circuit and schools and improving school and learner performance (Bantwini & Moorosi, 2018b; DBE, 2013; GDE, 2013; Ncwane, 2019; Van der Voort & Wood, 2016). The CM’s tasks and duties are fulfilled through the support functions executed by the CM, which are outlined in the DBE (2013) policy (see Section 2.2.4.7).

The responses below signify the processes that CMs are responsible for in terms of the provision of support to principals in the basic functionalities and day-to-day management of the school during education change.

COVID-19 forced us to change and the CM support role in managing and adapting to the challenges was significant – initiate change and manage change processes. (P3, DA1)

The CM’s support during the school’s transition to offering technical subjects was very important. The CM supported me during the initial process, and she facilitated and managed several process between the schools and the district. (P6, DA2)

You have to continuously adapt the continuous challenges, especially during the pandemic, and it requires a lot of time and effort to manage the change process. (CM2, DA1)

Many things are continuously changing in education and you have to manage change and whatever processes is [sic] given to you by the district. (CM1, DA2)

... to initiate, develop, [and] implement new plans and strategies in dealing with education change. (CM3, DA1)

From the above responses, it is clear that the CM’s role in managing change and supporting principals to deal with education change has a direct impact on how principals manage school during education change.

One CM summarised the role of the CM as follows:

Circuit management has got a lot to do with the overall embracing concept of managing education in schools, whereby they’ve got to make sure that education is being run in a proper manner according to policies and legislation, ensuring that schools comply and everybody understands their tasks. (CM3, DA1)

The above responses resonate with what is outlined in the DBE (2013) policy that CMs have to support principals and implement strategies and plans to manage processes in schools. The CM’s role to manage change processes is aligned with what Deming (1993) mentions in his system of profound knowledge (see Section 3.3.1), namely that knowledge about change theories and gathering information are important when developing strategies and approaches to adapt to change and managing change processes in organisations. From the above responses and

analysed data, it was evident that the participants understood the CM's role and responsibilities towards principals and schools during education change (see DBE, 2018b; Mthembu, 2014; Ndlovu, 2018). There was a common understanding that they had to assist and support principals in implementing plans and strategies to deal with challenges during education change. The participating CMs concurred that they had to manage processes and support principals during education change and were responsible for supporting principals in schools to implement change effectively.

5.5.1.2 Subcategory 2: Circuit managers' experience of support and expectations

The second subcategory that emerged (see Figure 5-2, subcategory 5.5.1.2) was CMs' experiences regarding support and meeting district expectations during education change. The focus was clearly on CMs and the district expectations with regard to improving the quality of education provision to learners and the enhancement of school performance. CMs' provision of support to improve performance is a challenging task in a continuously changing environment where resources are limited. Most CMs responded along the following lines:

There is a lot of expectations on principals and CMs to improve the quality of education in schools, especially the Grade 12 results, but we are faced with many challenges like resources and the COVID-19 pandemic. The DBE needs to prioritise its support if they want principals and CMs to take accountability. (CM2, DA1)

Making sense of what is being requested – need clarity on expectation. (CM3, DA1)

A lot is expected of us to enhance the performance of schools. However, we have limited resources to our disposal, which makes performing our task very difficult to meet district expectations. (CM3, DA2)

We need to perform; yet we are not sufficiently supported. (CM4, DA2)

I was expected to introduce technical subjects in my school. I was promised all the support and resources. Now I'm struggling. No one can support me in this district; I have to ask guidance from other districts [on] what is best to do. (CM1, DA2)

For people to improve without the necessary or sufficient resources or support from the district is a very difficult task to fulfil in a system that is decentralised, with many departments working independently, causing difficulties in CMs' provision of support. The type of support CMs provide also depends on the needs of the school, the quintile classification of the school and its geographic location, as indicated by most of the participants –

... provide minimal support to quintile 4 and 5 schools; CM support are [sic] mainly focused on underperforming schools. (P3, DA1)

Different approaches and levels of support is [sic] determined by the quintile level and geographic location of the school ... CM focus and level of involvement depends on needs of the school. (P4, DA1)

CM support depends on the quintile classification. (P6, DA2)

One principal expressed his views on the quintile classification of schools and where schools are situated within the district as follows:

The quintile 1 school needs a lot of resources. To an extent that when these changes take place in education, it does [sic] not really cause major disruptions. But it shows us that there is still huge discrepancies and a gap between the different quintile schools, especially schools like mine, which is a farm school and the school in the neighbouring rural area. Those gaps that do exist need to be closed. ... to ensure that the department provides more resources that gaps between the different quintile schools can be closed. (P7, DA1)

The above responses resonate with the findings of Bantwini and Moorosi (2018a) and Moloji (2014) that show there are still many schools, especially in farm, rural and township communities, that do not have the necessary resources to function optimally. Moreover, many of these schools are not sufficiently supported by the district or the PED. However, the district still expects the quality of education provided to learners to be improved (Ncwane, 2019).

From the above responses, it is clear that the expectations of the districts and the PED are unreasonable because they do not provide sufficient resources to CMs to support principals in schools. The participants' views are that they are expected to improve the quality of education in schools and enhance learner performance with very little or no resources to deal with education change challenges.

One principal elaborated as follows on principals who were not receiving the same support:

The district does not provide equal support to schools. Schools are not treated equally. Some schools are attended to more than others even though they have similar challenges. (P10, DA1)

This statement confirms Van der Voort and Wood (2016) findings that well-performing schools or schools in urban areas do not get the same support from districts as their peers in townships that have similar challenges in dealing with education change. Principals depend on the circuit office for information, administrative services and professional support. Hence, it was necessary to determine how the CMs understood their support role in terms of principals during education change. The majority of the CMs stated that their role and responsibilities in supporting principals during education change encapsulated many responsibilities. From the above, it is clear that the CM's role is to support principals and schools, to monitor processes and school functionality and to ensure that principals and schools comply with policies and legislation. Furthermore, they should align their support to schools based on the needs of each school. Apart from their managing support role of managing education change and facilitating change processes, they have to enact their support role in all the areas of basic school functionality.

5.5.2 Category 2: Circuit manager's role

The next category that emerged was the CM's role during education change and the enactment of CMs' support (see Figure 5-2, category 5.5.2). The overall aim was to achieve the second research objective, namely to determine how CMs experience and understand their role and responsibilities in supporting principals during education change.

5.5.2.1 Subcategory 1: Clear direction on the role and responsibilities of the circuit manager

The first subcategory identified and analysed was clear direction on the role and responsibilities of the CM (see Figure 5-2, subcategory 5.5.2.1). It was clear from the participants (the principals as well as the CMs) that there was uncertainty with regard to exactly what constituted the CM's role and responsibilities. This is regrettable, because when CMs do not have clear directions in terms of what constitute their roles and responsibilities, they will most likely not be able to effectively execute their role and responsibilities. The participants' view on the role and responsibilities of the CM was gained when they elaborated on their experiences. Thakasa (2011) also raises the issue of what constitutes the exact role and responsibilities of the CM, which are indicated in his research on the circuit improvement programme that was developed in the Limpopo province, South Africa.

Some of the participants responded as follows:

CMs do not have a clear formulation of their roles and responsibilities. (P10, DA1)

Often your real job is at a standstill because you are following mandates or other units' demands and requests elsewhere that is not you role or responsibility. (CM2, DA1)

We need clarity of what we are actually responsible for. (CM1, DA2)

It seems the CM does not have clear direction of what their job entails. (P9, DA1)

From the above responses, it is evident that the participants need clearly defined roles and responsibilities to effectively support principals and schools to deal with education change. It is clear that the district expects CMs to take responsibility for some things that are not outlined in their job description or responsibilities, which are above their management role and are actually the responsibility of other departments or leadership structures. This finding resonates with that of other studies on CMs and principals in the Eastern Cape and North West (Bantwini & Moorosi, 2018a; Mafuwane & Pitsoe, 2014; Ndlovu, 2018; Thakasa, 2011). Mafuwane and Pitsoe (2014) warn that not clearly defining the role and responsibilities of the CM may have an impact on CMs' provision of support and enactment of adequate leadership in schools. In Deming's (1993) system of profound knowledge, he clearly emphasises that from a dynamic systems perspective,

everyone in the organisation must know and understand what he or she is responsible and accountable for to implement effective organisational change (see Section 3.3.2.2).

5.5.2.2 Subcategory 2: Support, monitoring and ensuring compliance

The second subcategory that was identified was “support, monitoring and ensuring compliance” (see Figure 5-2, subcategory 5.5.2.2). Monitoring education provision in schools is a key management role that CM perform within the basic education system. CMs monitor principals and school management processes and report on these processes through their evaluation responsibilities. Furthermore, they are responsible for ensuring that schools comply with education policies and legislation throughout the basic functionality of schools (Human Resource Development Council, 2014; Langhan et al., 2012).

Most of the participants responded that their role was a combination of support and monitoring –

I always say support first, then monitor. (CM2, DA1)

90% support and to ensure compliance 10%. I monitor the principal and the school's function. (CM3, DA1)

We support and monitor processes of principals and schools. We also coordinate submission requests from the district level. We ensure compliance by principals and schools with policies. However, 80% of our role and responsibilities is support and monitoring in the nine key focus areas of whole-school development, and 20% is focused on compliance. (CM4, DA2)

CMs monitor whole-school evaluation and compliance. (P8, DA1)

... monitoring, and the minority will be focused on compliance; visit school to monitor and see that all is in line; support and address problems when the issues are still small; not wait until they have grown into big ones. (P13, DA2)

One participant summarised CM support comprehensively as follows:

CM support is to have someone at the level within the district management structure that takes account of the implementation of deliverables in that particular circuit. The circuit manager manages processes between [the] district and schools to meet the DBE's predetermined objectives. The circuit manager's duties and or responsibilities are to ensure that the school is assisted in developing and implementing strategies to ensure education takes place in schools. The circuit manager's duty is to ensure that there is homogeneity in all the schools within the circuit. The CM should ensure that schools comply with policies and legislation. The CM supports the principal in his or her leadership and management role. (P10, DA1)

The above responses resonate with the literature that principals need district leadership and management to provide sufficient support throughout education change processes. Although monitoring and ensuring compliance with policies and legislation are important, support must come first, and then monitoring. Mc Lennan and Orkin (2018) emphasise that districts should

monitor schools through their circuits; however, the focus must remain on support provision and not as much on monitoring and compliance.

5.5.2.3 Subcategory 3: Influence and provide direction

The third subcategory identified was “influence and provide direction” (see Figure 5-1, subcategory 5.5.2.3). Although the CMs concurred that CM support was about providing support to schools, monitoring processes and ensuring compliance, they added that they had a direct influence on the way principals led and managed schools to meet the education goals of the district and the DBE. According to Bush and Glover (2016), education leadership is about influencing people. It is important to mention that the relationships and interaction between leaders and followers are essential, which is also what Deming and Lewin both referred to in the organisational change theory and the model of what leaders must do to effectively lead and support people in and during organisational change (Deming, 1993; Hussain et al., 2018; Lewin, 1951). This research adopted Silva’s (2016, p. 3) definition of leadership as “the process of interactive influence that occurs when in a given context, some people accept someone as their leader to achieve common goals”. It further adopted the definition of management as being about the processes and strategies followed to achieve the goals of the district and the DBE (Bass & Bass, 2009). The latter was confirmed by most of the participants, as can be seen in the following responses:

My role is to lead my circuit and principals in school management processes. (CM3, DA1)

As manager, I supervise principals’ and schools’ functionality. (CM4, DA2)

The CM has a direct influence on the way I lead and manage my school. (P1, DA1)

A few participants agreed with the above responses and added the following:

... mentor them so that they can be empowered to influence and assist the system. (CM1, DA2)

Mentoring support is very important during education change. (P3, DA1)

From the above responses, it is clear that the participants view mentorship by the CM as the experience and knowledge they have of dealing with education change and understanding how people learn in an organisation. This is an important initiative that should be promoted throughout the education system to enable principals to deal with education change (D’Ortenzio, 2012; Schön & Argyris, 1996).

5.5.2.4 Subcategory 4: Administrative support and coordination

The fourth subcategory that was identified and analysed was “administrative support and coordination” (see Figure 5-2, subcategory 5.5.2.4). Principals perceive CMs as resource centres for information and playing a major role in providing administrative support to principals, especially during education change. This could be seen during the COVID-19 pandemic in the reporting on schools, teachers and learners to the DBE. The COVID-19 pandemic has influenced how schools report on teachers and learners. Circuit offices are the administrative point of submission for schools. The CM is responsible for ensuring that schools comply with submission requests and the circuit office coordinate the reports, data and analysis of schools to the district and different departments in the PED (DBE, 2013, 2016, 2018a).

A few participants concurred with the above and responded as follows:

The circuit manager is our resource centre and point of administrative submission ... the CM reminds me of submissions to districts ... they ensure that submissions are coordinated to the correct units or departments. (P6, DA2)

We have to coordinate administrative services from sub-directorates and report on that to [the] DMT and EDMT. (CM1, DA2)

The CMs' support is enacted through their administrative function. (P1, DA1)

They are the administrative hub for submissions to district and provincial offices ... the CM ensures that my submission reaches the district and provincial offices. (P7, DA1)

A few of the participants viewed CM administrative support and coordination as being in control of principals' and schools' submissions to districts and PEDs –

... support in daily COVID-19 reports and weekly submissions; he is in charge to ensure that principal report. (P2, DA2)

The CM ensures that my COVID reports are in before 10:00 a.m. (P9, DA2)

From an administrative role, I ensure that principals submit reports and I coordinate the reports to the applicable departments. (CM4, DA2)

The above responses concur with the descriptions of the administration role of the CM and circuit office in the DBE (2013) policy. CMs' provision of support to schools is often activated through their administrative responsibilities, which may also prompt unplanned visits or contact with schools that do not comply with the requested submissions. These responses substantiate Bantwini and Diko's (2011) findings.

5.5.2.5 Subcategory 5: Governance and ensuring compliance

The fifth subcategory identified and analysed was “governance and ensuring compliance” (see Figure 5-2, subcategory 5.5.2.5). CMs have to govern and ensure schools’ compliance with policies and legislation. The *National Education Policy 27* of 1996 is the foundation of all education policies (RSA, 1996b). The policy guides the delegation of the authority of the role and responsibilities of the CM and the district. According to this policy, the CM’s role as a district representative is to ensure that schools are governed according to the DBE policy and schools comply with policies and legislation (DBE, 2013; RSA, 1996a, 1996b, 2005, 2007).

Most of the participants mentioned the importance of compliance in schools –

The CM ensures governance and compliance in school to ensure a conducive environment is established for quality teaching and learning. (P3, DA1)

... governance and ensuring schools’ compliance. (P4, DA1)

... monitoring the school in terms of governance and compliance. Compliance in terms of what we find in the whole-school evaluation document. And that is also captured very correctly in Gauteng Circular 1 of 2020. (CM2, DA1)

Although the DBE is responsible for ensuring that schools in the system are governed according to the relevant policies, it is the CM’s role as direct line manager of the schools in the circuit to ensure that schools are governed well and comply with the relevant policies (RSA, 1996a, 1996b). The above responses suggest that part of the CM’s role and responsibilities should be to ensure that schools are governed according to policy and legislation, which indicates that CMs must be knowledgeable regarding policy and legislation (see Section 2.2.4).

5.5.2.6 Subcategory 6: Modelling and sharing good practices

A sixth subcategory was identified and analysed (see Figure 5-2, subcategory 5.5.2.6). It involved modelling and sharing good practices, where the focus was on whole-school development and models used by schools to enhance education or deal with education change. In Deming’s (2018b) 14 principles for organisational change, he mentions in the second principle that organisations should adopt new ways of doing things towards organisational change (see Section 3.3.6.2). Modelling and sharing good practices are approaches used to build trust and inspire CMs and principals to deal with organisational change. Through modelling and sharing, CMs can pay close attention to people’s relationships and show commitment towards everyone.

A few participating CMs indicated that in modelling best practices, one must consider the context in which principals manage and lead schools. The need for sharing good practices has increased

as principals are finding it difficult to deal with education change and challenges. The participants expressed the importance of disclosing best practices to principals as follows:

Some schools have resources, and others don't, and to implement a generic approach to manage a school is difficult; one has to consider the resources available to principals and schools. (CM1, DA2)

We need to meet more to share best practices. (P8, DA1)

Over the years, these shared practices have dissipated. Districts do not provide these types of meetings anymore. Sharing good practices initiatives has disappeared, and it is not about COVID; it has disappeared long before that. We need that to be re-established again. We need sessions where principals of all the different quintile schools can share experience, advice, practice and challenges (P9, DA2).

One principal said:

The CM took my curriculum approach model during COVID-19 and gave it to the district to implement in other schools. (P4, DA1)

From the above responses, it is evident that modelling and sharing good practices are needed by principals to deal with education change, which substantiates Deming's views and aligns with his ninth principle. However, from the participants' responses, in modelling and sharing good practices CMs have to consider the different challenges that arise in specific contexts in which principals function. Without the necessary resources, they will not be able to deal with education change effectively. In Deming's ninth principle (see Section 3.3.6.9), he warns that if barriers are not broken down, as in this case the lack of resources, it will demotivate people to adapt to the necessary changes to be implemented.

5.5.3 Category 3: Circuit manager's responsibilities

In this category, the various responsibilities of the CM are discussed and analysed. Bantwini and Moorosi (2018a), Van der Voort and Wood (2016) and Ncwane (2019) mention that the responsibilities of the CM are very wide and vague, and moreover, are affected by the context in which they function. This coincides with statements from the participants (see Section 5.5.2.1), who said that although the DBE (2013) policy broadly outlined the task of the CM in the education system, there was no clear definition of what the responsibilities of the CM were, especially considering the challenging contexts that some of them were working in.

One participant stated that the role and responsibilities of the CM were as follows:

... staff management, resource management, the monitoring and evaluation of curriculum, extramural co-curricular activities; so it encompasses all those processes that makes a school work the way it's supposed to work. (CM1, DA2)

This was confirmed by the majority of the CMs –

It cannot be written as in a concise form what I'm responsible for. (CM1, DA2)

My responsibilities encapsulate many things. (CM3, DA1)

The CM has many responsibilities and we are not always clear on what our tasks really are. (CM4, DA2)

From the above responses, it can be deduced that there is a concern that CMs do not receive clear directions from the district or the PED on what their role and responsibilities are. This concern is raised by Bantwini and Moorosi (2018a) as well. Moreover, district support to principals and clear direction on the role and responsibilities of some positions have been found wanting, as emphasised by Ingle et al. (2012) and Smith and Beckmann (2016). Even though the DBE (2013) policy outlines the role and responsibilities of the district and the different functions in the district, the policy does not take the context in which the different roles and responsibilities of the CM are enacted into account. The DBE (2013) only provides a generic description of what the CM's role and tasks are. Bantwini and Moorosi (2018a) also raise their concerns in their findings on the role and responsibilities of CMs being unclear.

The CM's responsibilities are analysed and discussed in the subcategories below (see Figure 5-2, category 5.5.3).

5.5.3.1 Subcategory 1: Evaluation, profiling and re-profiling

The subcategory "evaluation, profiling and re-profiling" was identified and analysed (see Figure 5-2, subcategory 5.5.3.1). CMs profile schools and principals according to the nine key focus areas of whole-school development, which inform the performance status of the school (see Section 2.3.2.3) and identify where their weak areas are and where support is needed (DBE, 2001, 2015; Van der Voort & Wood, 2016). Profiling also identifies the schools' and principals' strong areas of performance and where improvement can be made. The CM and the school submit these reports to different sub-directorates in the district or PED (Van der Voort & Wood, 2016). The MEC uses the data to report to the CEM annually, and the CEM develops improvement plans or new policies according to the data (see Section 2.2.6.2).

The profiling, re-profiling and reporting on the performance of principals and schools are the main administrative responsibility of the CM. A few participants expressed their understanding of CM support from an administrative responsibility perspective as follows:

... responsibility is to profile a principal and school according to the nine key focus areas of whole-school development, meaning we profile the principals and school and identify the weak areas by coding those areas red (urgent support needed), amber (continuous support needed) and green as performing (maintain support). Support provision is focused on red and then amber. As soon as red becomes amber, and amber becomes green, then we re-profile the principal and school. (CM2, DA1)

... profile principals, teachers and the school according to the nine key focus areas of whole-school evaluation. (P1, DA1)

Therefore, the red and amber identified areas must be prioritised, and the support provision from the CM must then be aligned according to those challenges and the needs of the school. (P3, DA1)

However, there were also mixed responses with regard to the experience of the administrative responsibilities of the CM –

The administrative responsibilities is [sic] a huge challenge and concern. From the CM's side, the administration responsibilities are overwhelming and we delegate a lot of our administrative duties to schools. We are guilty of that. When we request data or submission, it's most of the time malicious compliance. (CM3, DA1)

... admin work has doubled in the last ten years; however, the CM does support when I need support. (P4, DA1)

The participating CMs and principals seem to have a clear understanding of what their administrative responsibilities are. From the above responses, it is clear that they have to support principals and schools in many facets concerning schooling and know that their administrative support provision to principals and schools is a major support service that principals need, especially during education change (see Section 2.3.2.5). The policy on whole-school evaluation (DBE, 2015) is the DBE's approach to improving education provision and quality in schools. However, from the above responses, it is also evident that CMs and principals spend a lot of time on administration and compliance. In his third principle, Deming (1993, 2018b) gives a warning about this when he says that although evaluation is a good practice to identify weak areas in the system, dependence on inspection alone to achieve quality should be ceased, as quality comes from improving processes. Through the evaluation process, the CM's data are submitted on the QMS and DDD systems, and reports can then be generated to establish what should be improved on and where. The administrative responsibility is then for the CM to render services and support in the weak focus areas (see Section 2.3.2.5).

5.5.3.2 Subcategory 2: Coordinating support and services

The subcategory “coordinating support and services” was identified and analysed (see Figure 5-2, subcategory 5.5.3.2). CMs are responsible for coordinating services and support from other sub-directorates in the district to principals and schools. They should usually coordinate services and support between the finance, human resources and curriculum departments in the district. However, they also have to coordinate the nutrition programmes and extracurricular activities in schools. CMs report on the needs of principals and schools to the sub-directorate and coordinate the support provision to schools. However, there is a common agreement among the CMs that coordinating services and support from other departments is challenging as the CMs’

responsibilities and expectations from the district to fulfil their duties often overlap within these departments (Myende et al., 2020). Although CMs are mostly responsible for coordinating administrative submissions from schools to different departments, they also need to coordinate support and services with schools, as the following responses suggest:

I coordinate the nutrition programme in the schools that I am responsible for. It is the food scheme programme. (CM1, DA2)

The CM coordinates the food scheme programme at my school. At first, I was not open for the idea of a food scheme programme, but it has changed many people's lives. (P6, DA2)

The CM approves the extracurricular activities we want to host at schools and ensures we comply to [sic] safety policies; he assists us in coordinating support from other departments. (P11, DA2)

Although CMs coordinate many instances of support and services from other departments and units in the district, it was found that the responsibilities of the CM and other units overlap. The participants had the following to say on the topic:

Overlapping is the confusing part ... it stems from the fact that we've got various sub-directorates that obviously play a role in ensuring that our schools are functionally optimally. But the communication is poor and sometimes I do not know what other units are doing in my school. (CM2, DA1)

Service departments request information from schools that I'm not even aware of ... I'm embarrassed when principals ask support from other departments and I do not know what it is about ... Head office does not inform [the] CM of data request from schools. (CM3, DA1)

One CM gave the following statement:

I have to ask an embarrassing question to the principal: "Can you just tell me, what is it that you've received? And what is it all about?" So, I think that that in itself is frustrating and an embarrassment. (CM2, DA1)

Most of the principals responded along the following line:

Coordination of support and services in the district is very poor; no teamwork in the districts; it is non-existent. (P8, DA1)

The CM attempts to drive and coordinate things, at the end of the day, with little success because he gets no support from the district. (P10, DA2)

... to ensure that they coordinate support from other units to the schools' needs and challenges. (P13, DA2)

Principals depend very much on the CM's coordinating ability for them to deal with education change. From the above responses, it is clear that CMs need support from the sub-directorates and units in the department to effectively support principals and schools. However, this task remains a challenge, as CMs are dependent on the support they receive from different structures on the district, provincial and national levels. The CM's coordinating responsibility and mandate

are limited, and therefore, it is often beyond their control. This role of the CM to coordinate additional services as a support function in schools correlates with the role and function outlined in the DBE (2013) policy. However, Myende et al. (2020) state in their findings that although the government initiates such plans in schools to improve the lives of learners and communities, the DBE and the districts do not provide the necessary support to CMs to coordinate these processes within the district and among district sub-directorates that are responsible for supporting CMs.

5.5.3.3 Subcategory 3: Managing resources

The subcategory “managing resources” was identified and analysed (see Figure 5-2, subcategory 5.5.3.3). Managing resources involves managing and reporting on school resources. CMs and principals are responsible for managing resources in the school to ensure the basic functionality of the school. Evans et al. (2012) emphasise that managing processes and the provision of resources is an important task of managers in education change, as it has an impact on the functionality of schools in the education system. Most of the participants indicated that managing resources was critical in dealing with change and that there was a great need for more resources, as education challenges escalated during education change –

I manage resources and resources provision in schools and report on it to district management. (CM4, DA2)

I have to ensure that resources are properly managed in schools and reported on. (CM3, DA1)

The CM role is to ensure that school resources are utilised for the purposes they are intended for. (CM8, DA1)

From the above responses, it is clear that the CM’s responsibility for managing resources is in line with the DBE (2013) policy. As a management sub-unit of the district, it is the responsibility of the circuit office and the CM to manage resources in schools (DBE, 2013). CMs have to report to the district management team, the executive district management team and the PED on the status of resources in schools, which is done through the whole-school evaluation process.

5.5.3.3.1 Subcategory 3.1: Provision of human and physical resources

The category “provision of human and physical resources” emerged (see Figure 5-2 and Section 5.5.3.3.1). CMs are responsible for supporting principals and schools to receive the necessary human and physical resources to effectively run the school. According to the literature, schools are seriously lacking physical and human resources, especially schools in challenging contexts (Bhengu & Myende, 2016; Myende et al., 2020). A significant number of CMs concurred that the provision of resources and support to principals and schools was an important responsibility that

they had to execute and that it affected the basic functionality of schools and the provision of teaching and learning in schools.

Most of the CMs gave responses along the following line:

You cannot develop if you do not have the human and physical resources. We really need to look at the infrastructure and the number of schools we have in the province ... teacher establishment in schools, it got stuck in 2019. (CM1, DA2)

The facilities that we are giving to our educators and learners are lacking in a big manner. (CM3, DA1)

It puts a lot of stress on the educators, and especially the principal, having overcrowded classrooms. There is not enough space to accommodate all the learners, nor teachers to teach. (CM4, DA2)

The lack of resources and support from the Department of Basic Education, especially during the past five years. (CM3, DA1)

There is a common understanding that the provision of resources to principals and schools is a critical service that the CM has to provide and that it remains a challenge (Fiske & Ladd, 2004; Mafuwane & Pitsoe, 2014; Moloi, 2014; Tanveer et al., 2020). The CMs expressed their view through the responses provided above and below. Two CMs mentioned specifically that providing sufficient resources was a problem –

The majority of schools that I have are located in townships ... we can only make domestic changes in terms of infrastructure ... there are many things that we do not have control over and we do not receive sufficient support from provincial and national offices. (CM2, DA1)

Coordination and monitoring become very challenging without sufficient resources. (CM4, DA2)

Most of the principals concurred as follows:

We do not have sufficient space for learners; it makes teaching difficult. (P2, DA1)

Classrooms are overcrowded. The school does not have enough resources. (P3, DA1)

My teachers are teaching subjects that they are not qualified for because I do not have enough teachers and the vacant positions are not being filled. This has a serious impact on the school's performance. (P1, DA1)

I need more classrooms. (P10, DA2)

I need more infrastructure to accommodate the learners and teachers. (P12, DA2)

The above findings are aligned with the concerns raised in the findings of scholars who highlight the lack of resource provision to and in schools (Bantwini & Diko, 2011; Bantwini & Moorosi, 2018a; Ncwane, 2019; Van der Voort & Wood, 2016). In this study, the principals stated that the teacher component in their schools had stayed the same, and some schools even received fewer

teachers in the past few years to teach even though the learner numbers in the schools had increased. The principals concurred that the way CMs conducted themselves regarding resource support in their role and responsibilities had a severe impact on the way principals and schools functioned and performed. The CMs added that the reprioritising of human and physical resources issues in schools was lacking and was a major issue to contend with. A lack of resources seems to be a common problem in other countries as well (Mafuwane & Pitsoe, 2014). What is concerning is that the CMs reported that they were not capacitated enough, especially not when it came to support from district or provincial departments to provide physical and human resources. They can only coordinate services from other sub-directorates. The fact that the sub-directorates in the district are working in silos although CMs are responsible for monitoring processes and services in schools, makes it difficult to manage. Yet the CM remains responsible for supporting principals and schools. However, CMs also support principals in a technical manner to ensure that they are able to connect to the QMS and DDD platforms to submit data (see Section 2.3.2.5).

5.5.3.3.2 Subcategory 3.2: Technical support responsibility

Under the subcategory “managing resources” (see Figure 5-2, subcategory 5.5.3.3.2), the subcategory “technical support responsibility” emerged (see Figure 5-2, subcategory 5.4.3.3.1). CMs also provide technical support to principals and school staff to utilise the QMS and DDD database to capture the data needed by districts and PEDs. These databases are used to do evaluations and generate reports, which are then used by CMs, principals and relevant education departments for education planning in South Africa. CMs and principals can utilise the DDD system to extract the data to identify where support is needed in the nine key focus areas and do their operational and strategic planning accordingly (see Section 2.3.2.5).

The majority of the participating principals responded that they had received online training on the QMS and DDD platforms in 2020. They were supported by their CMs on how to submit their schools’ data via the QMS and DDD systems and to report on the COVID-19 health status of staff and learners, as requested by the World Health Organisation and the South African government (World Health Organisation, 2020). A few of the principals said that their CMs supported them to ensure that they had continuous internet connectivity and assist them to extract data from the DDD system –

DDD system is a database, and SA-SAMS is a profiling tool. (CM3, DA1)

The CM explained if I want my school to perform, well, I need to utilise the DDD platform ... anyone can immediately extract information from the DDD site. (P7, DA1)

Information on everything in the school can be extracted using the DDD system. (P10, DA2)

Electricity, water supply and internet connectivity were dealt with by the CM as a matter of urgency. (P8, DA1)

The above responses resonate with the DBE policy to supply basic necessities for schooling. The responses are also in line with the paperless approach the DBE initiated in 2019 when COVID-19 protocols and regulations were introduced in schools. CMs have driven this approach throughout the schooling system to assist schools in reporting on the health status of learners and teachers and to drive the school evaluation processes according to the nine key focus areas of whole-school development. According to Deming's fifth principle, it is important to initiate and implement improvements and processes through the plan-do-study-act method and analyse these processes and refine changes to improve them (Evans et al., 2012)

5.5.3.4 Subcategory 4: Ensure curriculum implementation and coordination of support

The fourth subcategory identified was "ensure curriculum implementation and coordination of support" (see Figure 5-2, subcategory 5.5.3.4). CMs are responsible for ensuring that the national curriculum is implemented in schools and comply with curriculum policies. The CM coordinates the service and support from district curriculum units in the school (DBE, 2013). Deming (1993) mentions in his 12th principle that organisations must break down barriers towards effective change (see Section 3.3.6.12). Corral (2019) affirms that breaking down barriers between departments constitutes transforming the education system and schools. The following responses of the CMs indicate that they do coordinate curriculum services and support, although there seems to be limited support from the curriculum sub-directorates:

We do not have a direct impact on the curriculum. We can just give our opinion to the curriculum unit and thereon coordinate their services to principals and schools. (CM1, DA2)

The CM has limited influence on the curriculum. I ensure the curriculum is implemented and that schools comply. ... I coordinate the curriculum service from the curriculum unit to support schools although I do not get sufficient support from the curriculum unit. (CM3, DA1)

The principals concurred as follows:

... message that relates to curriculum issues within the curriculum departments does not follow the proper line function. (P4, DA1)

... curriculum is not in the CM's hands. I believe the CM has to coordinate with the curriculum unit. (P9, DA2)

... curriculum units work in silos; they do not communicate with the CM on curriculum matters. (P3, DA1)

From the above responses, it can be deduced that the impact of the CM on curriculum matters is limited. The responsibility of CMs with regard to the curriculum is that they have to ensure that the national curriculum is implemented in schools and that schools comply with policy and

legislation. In Bantwini and Moorosi's (2018b) study, principals voiced their concerns on the limited impact that CM had on curriculum matters, although they were aware that the CM was dependent on the service and support from the curriculum sub-directorates and departments in the district. CMs coordinate service and support from the curriculum units within the district when needed. However, the communication between CMs and the curriculum unit seems to be poor. Lewin (1951) warns that a lack of communication and teamwork in any organisation can be detrimental to effective change.

5.5.3.5 Subcategory 5: Train and develop subordinates

The fifth subcategory identified was “train and develop subordinates” (see Figure 5-2, subcategory 5.5.3.5). Deming (1993) mentions in his sixth principle that training on the job has become more relevant during organisational change than extended programmes over a long period of time when dealing with change (see Sections 3.3.6.6 and 3.3.8.8). Because people fear change, they need to know that they are supported throughout the change process. Deming (1993) emphasises that education leaders such as CMs and principals need to be developed and trained aligned to the challenging contexts they are dealing with. Therefore, CMs have to prepare their own staff in their circuits and specifically the principals they are responsible for in their role and function as leaders and managers of schools (DBE, 2013). Training and development of people during organisational change are critically important if the leadership and management of organisations expect people to embrace change and effectively implement change in the organisation (Deming, 2018b; Fullan, 2011; Lewin, 1951). However, CMs must also be prepared, trained and developed by the district, provincial and national departments to enable them to effectively support principals during education change. The majority of the principals expressed the following views:

Personnel development impacts the professional and personal relationship between CMs and their principals and directly [sic] staff performance. (CM1, DA2)

... support I provide for training and development of principals. (CM2, DA1)

Training and development need to be engaging; it is for more reasons than merely complying. (CM3, DA1)

From the above responses, it is clear that the responsibility of CMs to train and develop their personnel, principals and SMT and SGB members cannot be overemphasised. It is very important that they, as education leaders, provide opportunities for development to principals during education change (Myende et al., 2020; Ndlovu, 2018; Robinson, 2019). However, CMs themselves need to be trained and developed by district, provincial and national departments to effectively train principals in their challenging contexts (Mafuwane & Pitsoe, 2014; Ndlovu, 2018).

The responses resonate with Deming's (1993) sixth principle and the findings of Bantwini and Moorosi (2018a) and Van der Voort and Wood (2016). However, more can be done in terms of the implementation and offering of context-relevant training and development opportunities for principals and CMs to deal with education changes and challenges.

5.5.3.6 Subcategory 6: Implementing district and provincial plans for education change

The sixth subcategory identified was "implementing district and provincial plans for education change" (see Figure 5-2, subcategory 5.5.3.6). Throughout education reform strategies implemented by the DBE to improve the quality of education provision to schools with the intent to address the inequalities that still exist within the system (DBE, 2001, 2005, 2012, 2018b), it is the CM's responsibility to implement policies and provincial and district plans for schools to adapt to change. This subcategory is aligned with Deming's (1993) fifth principle, namely to continuously improve through plans and processes to implement and deal with change

Most of the participants stated that the responsibility of the CM to implement district and provincial plans is important to deal with and adapt to education change. The PEDs, as education policymakers and drivers of change, initiate change, and the CM is responsible for implementing these plans and policies in schools. The following responses were given by the participants:

... implement district and provincial plans in schools to improve whole-school development and education provision and education change initiatives ... I then develop my year, term and bi-weekly plans to manage the change and implement policies. (CM 1, DA2)

... show principals and SMTs how to develop strategies and plans or implement a policy. (CM4, DA2)

... guide and assist principals in implementing district and PED plans. (CM3, DA1)

The above responses from the participants resonate with the importance of implementing plans to drive change and assist schools in dealing with education change (see Corral, 2019; DBE, 2005, 2012). Initiating plans and initiatives to deal with organisational change also resonates with Deming's (1993) sixth principle, namely that it is critical that people and elements within the system work towards a common goal.

5.5.3.7 Subcategory 7: Share accountability and ensure compliance

The seventh subcategory identified was "share accountability and ensure compliance" (see Figure 5-2, subcategory 5.5.3.7). Most of the participants emphasised that it involved taking accountability and ensuring compliance to manage principals and schools (see Hallinger & Ko, 2015). CMs have the management responsibility to hold schools accountable and control the activities within the schools they are responsible for (Prew & Quagrains, 2010). Both the CM and

the principal share accountability for the performance of the school, thereby confirming accountability and compliance, and ensuring that processes are followed and effective action is taken (Mason, 2013; Myende et al., 2020) (see Section 2.4.2.2.5). Burke (2017) cautions that too much focus on accountability places negative pressure on people, which can be harmful to any organisation, especially during organisational change. D'Ortenzio (2012) points out that taking accountability is a cumulative effort from everybody in an organisation. Accordingly, the majority of the CMs responded that they were accountable and must ensure that principals and schools comply with policies and legislation –

I take accountability to ensure schools are governed according with [sic] policies and legislation. (CM3, DA1)

We are accountable to ensure schools comply. (CM2, DA1)

... responsibilities as manager and accountability officer ... it is 80% support and 20% monitoring and compliance. (CM4, DA2)

As both the CM and the principal are held accountable for the optimal functionality and performance of a school and the provision of quality education to learners, the needs of CMs and principals identified should be addressed. A few participants stated that CMs and principals were both accountable for the performance of the school and the learners –

The CM and principals are accountable for the performance of the school; they are responsible to make things work. (CM1, DA2)

As a collective team, the principals and I are both responsible for the day-to-day running of the school. (CM4, DA2)

... district holds the CM and principal accountable for the functionality of the school. (P4, DA1)

As a team, we have to ensure that the school functions optimally. (P7, DA1)

One principal mentioned the following:

The school's performance is directly linked to the compliance, authority and responsibility of the CM and principals; they are held accountable by the DBE. (P4, DA1)

Both the CMs and the principals concurred that accountability, monitoring and compliance were very important leadership and management responsibilities that they had to fulfil their roles. However, there was mutual agreement that they needed to be guided and supported by the district and the DBE to ensure that CMs, principals and schools comply with what was expected of them. One CM stated that often things were just dropped on their desks and they had to comply; hence, in the end, the CMs and the principals were responsible for making things happen. He said:

... things land on my desk from the GDE and district, and I have to take accountability for things that I have no control over or are mandated to do. (CM2, DA1)

The structural decentralising of the DBE has caused confusion among the leadership management in the GDE and the district of who is responsible and accountable for what needs to be done. Mixed communication is at the order of the day. This aspect confirms Narsee's (2006) statement that this issue will have serious repercussions for the management of education in schools. Although accountability, compliance and effectiveness are key management roles of the CM, the rate at which education change occurs, as mentioned by the participating CMs, indicates that there is a dire need for continuous communication, training and transparency of who is accountable for what (see Sections 2.2.6.3.2 and 2.3.3.1).

From the above responses from both the CMs and the principals, it is clear that they all value relationships as very important, especially those between the CM and the principals. This confirms Deming's (1993) and Lewin's (in Hussain et al., 2018) statements that if organisational change is to succeed, the key thereto is good relationships between people and understanding the way in which they deal with change. It is clear that the CMs and the principals have a sound understanding of the CM's support role and provision of support to principals, especially in governance and compliance with policies and legislation within the nine key focus areas of whole-school development and evaluation (see Section 2.3.2.3). The CM's support role is key to supporting principals during education change. There is also a strong administrative service role that CMs perform, which seem to be integrated within the management role of CMs.

The above findings are aligned with the concerns raised by the findings of scholars who highlight the shortage of providing resources to and in schools (Bantwini & Diko, 2011; Bantwini & Moorosi, 2018a; Ncwane, 2019; Van der Voort & Wood, 2016). These scholars state that the teacher component in schools has stayed the same, and some schools have even received fewer teachers in the past few years to teach, even though the learner numbers in schools have increased. They concur that the way CMs conduct themselves regarding providing resource support in their role and responsibilities has a severe impact on the way principals and schools function and perform. The CMs added that the reprioritising of issues of human and physical resources in schools was lacking and was a major issue to contend with. What is concerning is that the CMs reported that they were not being capacitated enough, especially not when it came to support from district or provincial departments to provide physical and human resources, as they could only coordinate services from other sub-directorates. The fact that the sub-directorates in the district are working in silos although the CMs are responsible for monitoring processes and services in schools makes it difficult to manage; however, the CM still remains responsible for supporting principals and schools.

5.6 THEME 3: EXPERIENCE, EXPECTATIONS AND NEEDS OF PRINCIPALS PERTAINING TO SUPPORT PROVIDED BY THE CMS

The third secondary question was to explore the experiences, expectations and needs of principals with regard to CM support when dealing with education change (see Figure 5-3, Themes 5.6.1-5.6.3). As stated in the literature, CMs and principals have various expectations and needs regarding CM support, influenced by the challenging contexts in which principals have to function (Bantwini & Moorosi, 2018a; Myende et al., 2020; Van der Voort & Wood, 2016). Deming (1993) states that leadership and management must understand the organisation and how the elements in an organisation are connected to one another. He adds that experience within a system is critical when support is provided to people when dealing with change (Deming, 1993; Stensaasen, 1995).

The role and responsibilities of the CM and principal are intertwined and, in many ways, overlap (Bantwini & Moorosi, 2018a; Myende et al., 2020; Van der Voort & Wood, 2016). Therefore, the principals' needs are also closely related and similar. This section attempts to answer the third secondary research question and reach the objective that corresponds with this research question (see Section 1.6.3). This section must be read in conjunction with Figure 5-3.

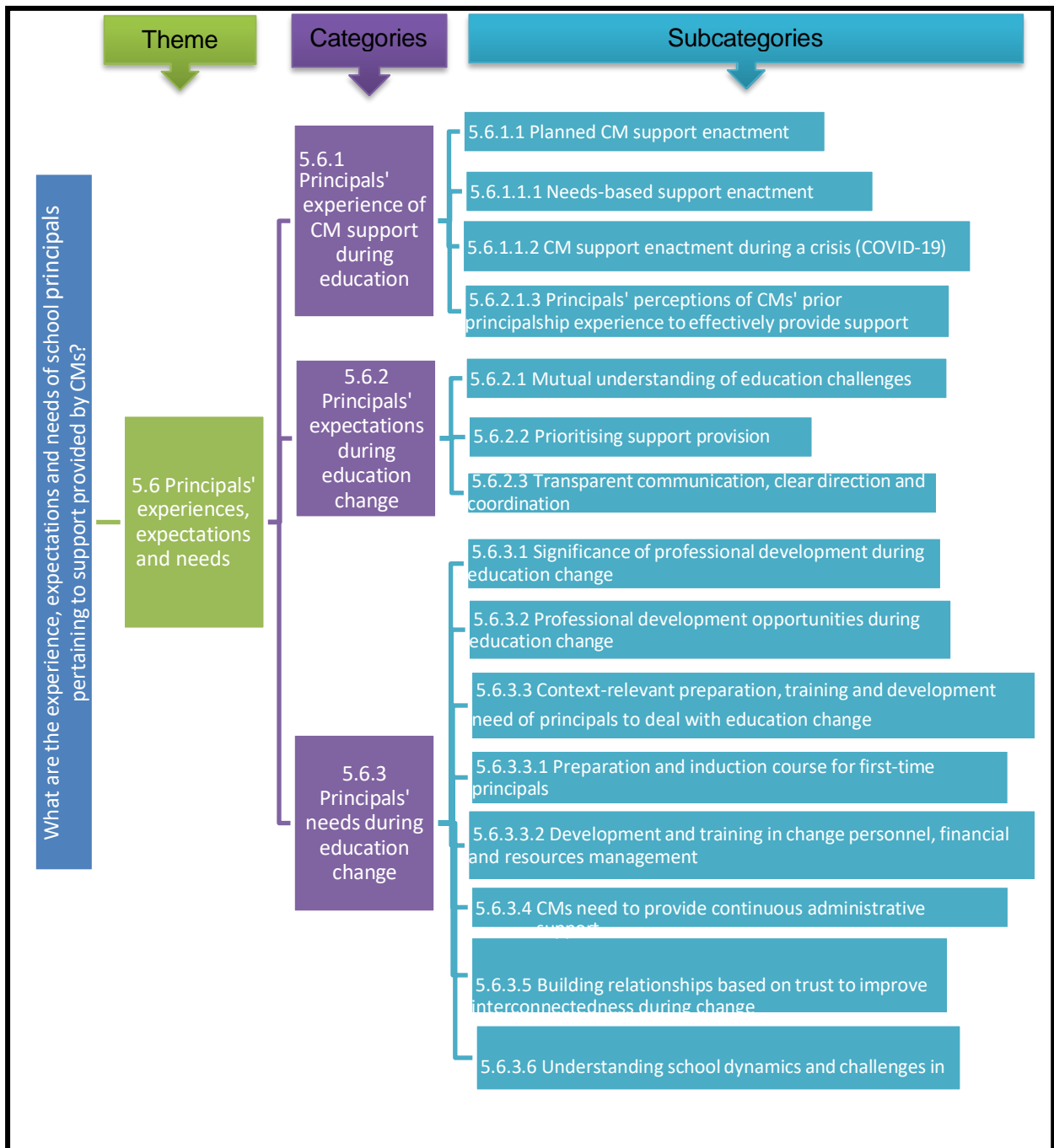


Figure 5-3: Themes, categories and subcategories identified according to the third sub-research question

5.6.1 Category 1: Principals' experience of circuit manager support during education change

CMs' provision of support to principals and schools is activated in several ways. The category "principals' experience of CM support during education change" was the first to emerge from the coded data of the transcribed text and field notes (see Figure 5-3, category 5.5.1). Darling-

Hammond et al. (2009) mention that although principals face many challenges during education change, support provided by the district and the CM must be planned to ensure that effective support is provided. Deming (1993) mentions in his first principle for effective change that leadership and management must inspire people to work towards a common vision. According to his 12th principle, everyone must understand the challenges each person is facing, which will help to break down barriers, as mentioned in the ninth principle (Deming, 1993).

Since 1994, education in South Africa has gone through two major transformation processes, the first in 2005 (DBE, 2005) and the second in 2009 (DBE, 2012), when the government introduced new and revised democratic-aligned curricula in schools. In 2009, the South African government divided the education system into DHET, responsible for mainly tertiary education, and the DBE, responsible for the schooling system from Grade R to Grade 12. In 2013, the DBE introduced two new policies to outline the role and responsibilities of education districts, and in 2015, the policy on standards for principalship. Both of these policies were implemented to enhance the quality and provision of education to learners, as well as the image of the districts and principals in the basic education system (DBE, 2013, 2016). Although this study focused on the CM's support provided to principals during education change with a focus on the role and responsibilities of the CM to support principals and schools, it was also necessary to understand what challenges principals were dealing with during education change within their specific contexts.

5.6.1.1 Subcategory 1: Planned circuit manager support enactment

The first subcategory identified was “planned CM support enactment” (see Figure 5-3, subcategory 5.6.1.1). Most of the participants responded that the CM's support enactment is usually through scheduled formal meetings with principals, yearly, quarterly and bi-weekly. Most participants concurred that school visits must be planned –

You cannot just go and visit the school for the sake of visiting a school, or what we sometimes also referred to as “butterfly visits”. Just to visit for the sake to say, “I was there!” And when you visit a school, you actually don't know what the purpose of the visit is. I believe the time for doing that has passed. In today's changing education landscape, it is important to go to a school and have a serious conversation with the principal and staff. Visits to school should be based on needs. (CM2, DA1)

I schedule formal visits with the principal at least once a month. We have planned quarterly meetings and in the beginning of each year. (CM1, DA2)

My CM visits me at least twice a month. (P2, DA2)

My CM schedules regular school visits to discuss either administration submissions or the profile of the school. (P7, DA1)

The above responses resonate with Deming's (1993) system of profound knowledge that people must understand the interconnectedness among all the elements within an organisation to effectively bring about sustainable change in an organisation (Maguad, 2011). In Fullan's (2009b) six secrets to education change, he mentions in his first secret that organisations must love their employees. This can mean many things; however, in the context of this study, it is about the CM paying regular visits to principals and schools to build on their relationships by showing them that he or she really cares.

5.6.1.1.1 Subcategory 1.1: Needs-based support enactment

The second subcategory, "needs-based support enactment", was identified and analysed (see Figure 5-3, subcategory 5.6.1.1.1). De Clerq (2008) points out that the DBE introduced the IQMS system to evaluate schools according to their performance and cautions that the system had flaws, as it generically identified weak performance areas, not taking into account the challenging context that schools face during education change. In 2015, the DBE revised the IQMS system and introduced the whole-school evaluation process. This system focused on the nine basic areas of schooling, which enabled districts and PEDs to profile schools according to different levels – red, amber and green – where red represents "urgent attention" and green "maintain support" (DBE, 2001).

Over and above the formal meetings that CMs schedule bi-weekly, quarterly and annually with principals, their support is enacted through the needs identified by principals and schools. The DBE (2013) policy states that as a management sub-unit of the education district, the CM's responsibility is activated through the CM's administrative and management role and the needs of principals and schools. Most of the participants agreed that CMs' support enactment is needs-based or through the profiling and re-profiling of the whole-school development evaluation process. The following responses were given:

Support enactment is needs-based, and how do I determine the needs without even asking the principal. It's what we call "data driven conversations", meaning the data that's available through the previous quarterly report, the reports that were sent by various units, maybe reports submitted by principals or a request from the school that was made. (CM3, DA2)

My support enactment is, most of the time, needs-based support. (CM1, DA2)

Over and above my scheduled school visits, my support enactment is needs-based. (CM4, DA2)

When I need support, I just call my CM. (P4, DA1)

I just call or e-mail my CM, and he will support [me]. (P3, DA1)

My CM continuously supports me. The CM knows my school has many challenges. (P7, DA1)

A few principals mentioned that they felt they were not being supported because they were either a quintile 4 or 5 school or a well-performing school, which they perceived was the reason the CM did not visit regularly –

The CM only visits when I need to comply to district or provincial submissions. (P9, DA2)

The CM support is enacted through their administrative function; however, their visits are bi-weekly or when I need support. (P7, DA1)

Van der Voort and Wood (2016) states that many CMs visit schools merely as a “tick exercise”. In their study, some principals complained that CMs’ school visits were lacking and, in some cases, non-existent (Van der Voort & Wood, 2016).

Many principals revealed that from their experience, CMs only visited and supported quintile 1, 2 and 3 schools, with quintile 4 and 5 schools hardly ever being visited –

Because I’m a well-performing school, my CM does not visit often. When the CM visits, it is merely a courtesy call to say that he was here. (P2, DA2)

Because I’m a quintile 4 school, the CM thinks I do not need support. Yet, the district seconded me to the school to resolve the school’s problems. They know I have many challenges, and the CM does not visit me or provide support. (P3, DA1)

I hardly receive any visits from my CM. (P5, DA1)

CM support provision to quintile level schools differ. Quintile 1, 2 and 3 schools receive much more support from the CM and district than quintile 4 and 5 schools. (P13, DA2)

The above responses resonate with findings by Bantwini and Moorosi (2018a), Mafuwane and Pitsoe (2014), Mthembu (2014), Myende et al. (2020) and Ndlovu (2018) that CMs’ support enactment is based on needs. According to Van der Voort and Wood (2016), CMs’ support must also be aligned with the challenges principals and schools are dealing with during education change. Furthermore, CMs’ support must be more prominent in addressing challenges using multiple strategies and approaches to affect the whole education system.

5.6.1.1.2 Subcategory 1.2: Circuit manager support enactment during a crisis

The subcategory “CM support enactment during a crisis” was identified and analysed under this category (see Figure 5-3, subcategory 5.6.1.1.2). The COVID-19 health crisis has caused many challenges for governments across the globe, and education systems were severely affected by the rules and regulations implemented by governments as an approach to deal with the pandemic (World Health Organisation, 2020). Initially, the South African government implemented strategies to curb the rate of infections, but later, schools were forced to close to protect teachers and learners when the number of infections rose (eNCA, 2020). Teacher and labour unions placed

tremendous pressure on the South African government as fear for their members' health escalated. As the number of infected people rose, the government realised that schools could not be closed indefinitely, and the process of initiating alternative methods of education provision commenced.

Although Deming's and Lewin's models do not discuss organisational change during change forced by external factors or elements (Hussain et al., 2018), their theories were somewhat relevant during the crisis. A new vision for education was established by the DBE, which is in line with Deming's first principle (see Section 3.3.3.1). This vision was adapted to a new philosophy of providing teaching and learning, which resonated with Deming's second principle (see Section 3.3.3.2) to adopt a new philosophy through alternative methods such as the implementation of technology and virtual or online offerings and processes, which is aligned with Deming's fifth principle (see Section 3.3.3.5). Vigorous programmes were implemented to train district officials and principals to submit COVID-19 reports on the QMS system and to report on the teachers' and learners' health status. Teachers received training on online teaching methods, which resonated with Deming's 13th principle (see Section 3.3.3.13) to enable the people in the basic education system to deal with the forced change (Deming, 2018b; Stensaasen, 1995; Warm et al., 2019).

Through the processes mentioned above, the current status of the system was unfrozen (see Section 3.4.2.1), change was initiated and communicated and the move stage was implemented vigorously to commence with the provision of education (see Section 3.4.2.2). Although the education system has not totally adjusted to the forced change, it had to be refrozen (see Section 3.4.1.3) to deal with the current health crisis. The forced change unfortunately did not allow for any preparation or intense training of people, and mostly, the training was just-in-time training only to commence and manage teaching and learning. The DBE expected PEDs to implement the forced change, which was cascaded to the district and circuit offices. However, the forced change brought about new challenges for principals and schools, as they did not have the necessary capacity and resources to deal with the changes during this education change (eNCA, 2020; Gabster et al., 2020). Moreover, these changes exposed the poor state of basic education in South Africa, which opened up new challenges that the education system had to deal with (McDonald, 2020).

A few participants voiced their experiences on CMs' enactment of support during the COVID-19 pandemic as follows:

CM support: nothing really changed before or after COVID ... They are rubber stamps; CMs tick boxes to ensure principals and schools comply. (P2, DA2)

The CM's visit is merely a compliance exercise ... my CM does not have the experience to support me in my needs. During COVID, he just called to confirm if I received my PPE [personal protective equipment]. (P5, DA1)

The CM used to be here every second day. In the past two years, I maybe had a visit once a month. (P13, DA2)

I also need it immediately. I just cannot get hold of my circuit manager when I call and even when I sent an email. To be more diplomatic, there is support, but it's clearly not the support I want or need. During COVID we had to resolve our own challenges. (P9, DA1)

The experiences I have had, circuit managers would only support you where they think support is needed, and their focus is only on underperforming schools because they fear that the school will perform badly in the end of the year Grade 12 results. I'm a school that faces a lot of challenges, but it seems that they think my challenges are not a priority. If the school is labelled red or amber, those schools will get support, hopefully! But when you are predominantly green in the majority of the nine focus areas, you will receive very little or no support. (P3, DA1)

A few participants mentioned that they received regular visits from their CM, and when they needed support, the CM was there to assist –

I have been fortunate to have good experiences with CMs. A principal and CM has to have mutual respect for each other and a child's best interest as a central common focus. (P1, DA1)

I am supported by my CM, especially during COVID-19. (P4, DA1)

During the past two years, the CM was at the door of the school with a concerted effort to monitor activities, address fears of COVID-19 [and] polarised school to deal with rotational systems. The CM stood at the centre to ensure and provide additional resources and aligned and spoke with the school as one voice. (P10, DA1)

Immediate reaction time. CM contact time and turnaround time excellent. The CM and I have a very good working relationship. (P4, DA1)

... CM assisted me throughout COVID-19 with learners who have no access to devices for communication purposes. (P7, DA1)

The last two years, it's where resources were provided ... we were able to add two new classrooms to accommodate the learner numbers. (P11, DA2)

CM provide exceptional support to principal and school, especially during COVID. (P12, DA2)

A few participants mentioned that the CM often tried to take over the role and responsibilities of the principal and overstep their mandate in the school. A few of them also mentioned that they would never allow the CM to speak to their teachers on matters that the CM had no experience of. One principal (P2, DA2) mentioned that the CM's role was to support him in disciplinary issues with teachers when needed; however, the CM was not mandated to reprimand his teachers, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. The principals raised their concerns that CMs often overstepped their mandate and visited schools to lay down their authority or micromanage the principals and teachers. A few principals affirmed this practice of CMs as follows:

I'm past the stage that a CM has to police me. They are there in a supportive capacity, in a supportive and monitoring role. I do not need to be micromanaged. (P6, DA2)

Sometimes they overstep their mark or boundaries. Often when circuit managers are appointed in their positions, they often get too involved in too much politics of the school without ... understanding that their role should be to give support and not take over from the principals' function. (P11, DA2)

Gaining an understanding of the principals' experiences of CM support was very important for this study, as it would inform the proposed conceptual and theoretical framework that the researcher wanted to develop to enhance CMs' support provision to principals. From the responses, it was clear that the principals' experiences of CM support were a combination of positive and negative responses. Where there were positive responses, the principals stated that they had good relationships with their CMs. Bhargavi and Yaseen (2016) point out the importance of leadership approaches towards successful transformation in education. The importance of building sound relationships among people during organisational and education change is emphasised (Braughton, 1999; Deming, 2018b; Fullan, 2002, 2006, 2009b). Deming (in Maguad, 2011) adds that people must also understand the interconnectedness of all the elements in the system to effectively bring about change in an organisation (see Section 3.3.2). The following responses from principals justify this statement:

Through mutual sharing and discussions, you establish sound relationships. CMs build trust with the principal. (P11, DA2)

Sharing is key in dealing with education challenges. (P1, DA1)

Teamwork and sound relationships build on trust, and mutual respect is a key component in the effectiveness of CMs' role and responsibilities in supporting principals and how principals share their views and experiences with the CM (Bantwini & Diko, 2011; Bantwini & Moorosi, 2018a; Ncwane, 2019; Nkambule & Amsterdam, 2018; Van der Voort & Wood, 2016). From the above, it is evident that CMs' support is crucial during education change.

5.6.1.1.3 Subcategory 1.3: Principals' perceptions of circuit manager prior principalship experience to effectively provide support

The subcategory "principals' perceptions of CMs' prior principalship experience to effectively provide support" was identified and analysed under this category (see Figure 5-3, subcategory 5.6.1.1.3). Bantwini and Moorosi (2018a) and Mavuso (2014) mention the relevant experience of people in critical positions in the education system. They raised their concerns that CMs must have the relevant experience, either in school management or principalship, to effectively support principals in their leadership and management role and responsibilities.

When probed whether they thought that a CM should have experience of principalship before taking on the position of a CM, the following responses were given by most of the principals:

I think it can be one of the major things of identifying a candidate for the position. (CM1, DA2)

It is my opinion that you need to have had principalship experience prior to becoming a circuit manager; it will help you in your role and responsibilities as CM. (CM4, DA2)

I thoroughly believe that, because if you did not progress through the ranks, you are not able to place yourself in the shoes of a person on a specific level. You might have expectations that are unrealistic expectations. Because when you go through the ranks, you are exposed to more responsibilities. And I cannot manage something if I haven't been part of the process. (CM3, DA1)

My circuit manager has no prior principalship experience. He was a head of department. So, he doesn't really know what is really going on at the school. He didn't manage a school; he has no experience or reference to work from ... has no knowledge; however, he does not have experience, and that is what is required. (P2, DA2)

I definitely think it is important that the CM has principalship experience. In my opinion, I think they must have progressed through the line functions of being a teacher up to at least a deputy principal before progressing to leadership structures in the district offices. I think that is very important. (P4, DA1)

Experience has taught me that you can't lead a school or be part of the management if you do not have the necessary experience or knowledge to do so. (P13, DA2)

The idea stated in these responses is very important, as principals need to be assured that CMs know what their challenges are and have the experience to support them in dealing with change (see Nkambule & Amsterdam, 2018). The above responses are also aligned with Mavuso's (2014) findings that CMs do not necessarily have to have principalship experience to be appointed in the position, although he mentions that it should be a guideline to consider CM appointments. The appointment of a CM must be carefully considered because it is a strategic position in the district structure and they need to have experience and knowledge to support principals (Mavuso, 2014; Myende et al., 2020).

One CM made the following suggestion:

There must be a bit of an identification in the system for people to be to become circuit managers. A curriculum vitae and experience might sort of paint a picture, a different story than what is needed. (CM1, DA1)

The participants believe that people should be identified out of the fraternity of education leaders and managers. CM3 and CM4 warned that job preservation or reservation should not be done but candidates selected for interviews should be people that the system or the fraternity have identified. All of the participating CMs concurred that the selected people should be educationalists who are serving education in a manner that is needed in the department.

CM1 and CM2 argued that prior principalship as a prerequisite for CM appointment might eliminate competent candidates. According to them, the prerequisite of prior principalship experience makes it very difficult for many people to be identified, especially where people at a district office may be in leadership and management roles in the district or another unit and are competent administrators and educationalists. Then the prerequisite of principalship experience would keep such a person from becoming a CM. They warned that if a person who was identified did not have strong administrative and management skills, he or she would not be successful in performing the role or executing the responsibilities of the CM.

Bantwini and Moorosi (2018a) and Van der Voort and Wood (2016) perceived in their studies that many CMs were appointed based on union or political involvement, and therefore, they could not effectively support principals. This matter was also raised by a few participants –

My experience is that many CMs have been appointed through political or union interference. (P3, DA1)

The CM has no prior experience in managing a school. I question his appointment in the position. (P3, DA2)

I do not know on what grounds the CM was appointed on because he cannot assist me. (P5, DA1)

One participant summarised the problem of appointing the wrong people in the CM position as follows:

In our district, we had schools which were classified to be a well-performing school. They were doing very well. But in the years, five years or six years down the line, their performance was declining rapidly, and when you analyse the problem, you will find that the support provision of the district office was not direct or the wrong people were appointed in positions. They were earmarked or promised positions through political interference and union involvement. They were appointed in those positions to drive their political or union's agendas. They were not developed or prepared for the positions. Like I said, many of these people were political appointments or appointed on a friend-to-friend basis. (P10, DA1)

A few of the principals concurred that union involvement and political appointments in district structures were realities –

I'm sorry to be this blunt, but it is true, and you will find it across the districts. (P13, DA2)

The view of the majority of the participants was that CMs should have some form of identification in the system for people to be appointed in this position. There were mixed views among the CMs on how people should be recruited into the CM position. The participants made reference to headhunting and sorting out the fraternity of qualified people that can be identified for the CM position. However, they all agreed that a CM must have some form of leadership and management experience in the education environment, and they stated that prior principalship

experience was a good foundation to work from. Deming (1993) points out that during organisational change, it is important that leaders and managers have the necessary experience to support people in dealing with change. His 11th principle states that quotas and management by objectives should be avoided at all times in working towards effective organisational change (Deming, 2018b; Gogue, 2005) (see Section 3.3.6.11). The above responses resonate with Fullan's (2009b, 2016) view that experience of education and the way in which things work and interact with one another is very important during transformation processes. From the above responses, it is apparent that the principals question the CM's knowledge and experience in the administration of schools, and feel that perhaps, as some of them had never been principals prior to assuming the role of CM, this may be the reason for their knowledge gap. Also showing discontent, one principal stated:

It will be very difficult to gain respect from principals that have many years' experience in their role, and now the CM comes, with no experience, and wants to dictate what the principal must do. (P2, DA1)

From the above responses, it is clear that all of the participants thought that CMs should have principalship experience. This resonates with Bantwini and Moorosi's (2018a) finding that CMs' principalship experience will gain respect from principals, as they will know that the CMs are knowledgeable in their role and have the experience of principalship. It serves as a consolation for principals that they are not alone in the battle in dealing with the challenges of education change (Nkambule & Amsterdam, 2018). It also builds trust and consolidates relationships, which is in line with Deming's eighth principle, namely to drive out fear (see Section 3.3.6.8).

5.6.1.2 Category 2: Principals' expectations during education change

The second category that arose was to determine the expectations of the principals during education change (see Figure 5-3, category 5.6.2). Bantwini and Moorosi (2018b) state that principals need continuous support, especially in the challenging contexts in which they have to function. In Deming's (1993) system of profound knowledge, he raised the issue that the leadership and management of an organisation must understand that people fear change and adapt to change differently; therefore, they must have knowledge about people's relationships and the interconnectedness between the elements in the system. Lewin (1951) also raised this issue in his model, positing that fear of change could set back the change efforts of an organisation and that sound communication and relationships serve as a comfort for people when dealing with change. Hargreaves (2005) add that teachers' emotional responses to change must be a factor to consider when education change is initiated. Hargreaves and Shirley (2009) mention that building relationships and creating a sound communication culture within an organisation inspire people to buy into change initiatives.

5.6.1.3 Subcategory: Mutual understanding of education challenges

The first subcategory, “mutual understanding of education challenges”, was identified (see Figure 5-3, subcategory 5.6.2.1). A few participants stated their view that they expected that there must be a mutual understanding between CMs and principals on what they experienced on a daily basis. One principal (P12, DA2) mentioned that she needed the CM to have more empathy with her with regard to the challenges she faced within the school and that she could not do everything on her own. Moreover, the CM must understand that as a woman, she also has a family to look after, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, the CM must take into account the challenges brought about by the pandemic and understand that she cannot be at the school every day.

Another principal gave the following response:

I need the circuit managers to understand that their support to us as principals goes a long way. We need them; we need their support. And we applaud them for giving us that support. Because giving support and not giving us support can do two things. When you've got the right support, as a principal you grow, [and] the chance of that school doing well in terms of results is high. When you've got the right support from the circuit manager, even the resources of the school can improve through the contacts between the principal and the circuit manager. But withdrawing the support from the circuit manager, that can leave the principal exposed. That can make the principal to be [sic] frustrated because of failure to deal with certain challenges. (P1, DA1)

Most of the participants concurred as follows on this matter:

The understanding of the dynamics of the community and parents is also important. Therefore, the support and training of circuit managers must be aligned to the needs and challenges his or her schools have. (CM4, DA2)

... CM needs to consider the dynamic make-up of a school. (P2, DA2)

... know the school and understand the dynamic of the school. The dynamics may include different things, depending on the quintile classification of the school and the type of school. (P4, DA1)

... CM's understanding of the school's dynamics, SMT and SGB – how they operate and act. (P13, DA2)

The above statements resonate completely with findings by Bantwini and Moorosi (2018a), Bantwini and Moorosi (2018a) and Van der Voort and Wood (2016) that CMs have to understand the dynamics of the schools they are responsible for, which includes the learners, parents and surrounding community, to effectively plan their support provision to schools and provide relevant support aligned to the challenging contexts they have to deal with. The responses are also aligned with the findings of Myende et al. (2020) on the experience of CMs in deprived schools in South Africa.

5.6.1.4 Subcategory: Prioritising support provision

A second subcategory, “prioritising support provision”, was identified (see Figure 5-3, subcategory 5.6.2.2). Deming, Fullan and Lewin all emphasised the importance of leadership and management support during organisational change (Deming, 1993; Fullan, 2009a; Hussain et al., 2018). Wang and Ellinger (2009) verify that people must have knowledge of change theories and that change provides for remedial and support initiatives to address and correct what was wrong and plan for future outcomes.

Most of the participants responded that they expected the district and CMs to prioritise support enactment, as they all felt that the challenges they faced must be prioritised and should not just be informed by analysed data from school evaluation processes. A few participants responded as follows:

CM support is not always immediate or instant; delays do happen. (P11, DA2)

When I urgently need the CM, she will come; however, that does not say that she will help me to solve my problem immediately. It can sometimes take weeks or it never happens; then I sometimes have to find other ways beyond my job description or mandate to seek help. (PA6, DA2)

When [the] principal requests assistance or support from the district or the CM, reaction is delayed, never immediate, and might even only be received after a month. When I call the circuit manager, there must be immediate support. (P9, DA1)

I think that the district and provincial department must start to look into prioritising their support to the CM. We have to answer to principals and parents, and it is difficult when we are not sufficiently supported. (CM1, DA2)

Green represents good, amber represents cautious and needs support, and red being alarming – urgent support is needed. (P3, DA1)

From the above responses and the analysed data, it is clear that CMs depend on districts and PEDs for support. CMs need assistance, guidance and support from the district and the PED to effectively execute their role and their responsibilities to provide effective and sustainable support to principals during education change. Both CMs’ and principals’ needs and challenges within the context in which they function must be considered and addressed to enable them to deal with education change challenges. This leads to the following category, namely the needs of CMs and principals. The above also substantiates Wang and Ellinger’s (2009) view that prioritising support ensures that people are focused on correcting what is wrong and planning and improving support, not based on needs only but on the perceived vision and outcome of the organisation.

5.6.1.5 Subcategory: Transparent communication, clear direction and coordination

The third subcategory, “transparent communication, clear direction and coordination”, was analysed and discussed (see Figure 5-3, subcategory 5.6.2.3). Baker (2015) emphasises that sound communication within an organisation is the catalyst for innovation during organisational change that enables people to deal with significant changes in the organisation. CMs are the communication link between the district and the school (Nyembe-Kganye, 2005; Van der Voort & Wood, 2016), and so, they have to ensure that whatever is communicated by the district or the PED must reach schools timeously. Furthermore, they should coordinate whatever is submitted by schools to the districts and PEDs. Deming (1993) refers to the psychology of human behaviour and states that the leadership and management in organisations need to understand that people are born with the need for love and esteem in their relationships with others. He argues that fear does not motivate people; in fact, it demotivates them. This fear is often a fear of change, of reprisal, of failure or of the unknown. Districts and CMs should not install fear in principals that they are there to reprimand them but rather reinforce the notion that they are there to provide support, mentorship, direction and guidance by creating a conducive environment where clear direction and transparent communication are given (Salami & Ufoma Akpobire, 2013). In Deming’s eighth principle, he points out that fear is caused by many different factors such as fear of losing one’s job, fear of making mistakes and so forth, and then adds that the source of fear needs to be identified and addressed (Deming, 1993; Stensaasen, 1995; Van Oosten, 2006). Deming (1993) argues that reducing fear will assist people in dealing with change, and therefore, there should be good and transparent communication with people in the organisation to reduce their fear (see Section 3.3.6.8).

Departments in the district tend to work in silos, and there is often poor communication, insufficient coordination and a lack of direction among service departments. CMs and principals complain about poor communication, and they expect these practices to be improved to enable them to deal with education change (Bantwini & Moorosi, 2018b; Myende et al., 2020). The participants in the current study expect improved collaboration among all relevant stakeholders in the education system. The participating principals expressed their views on communication and the coordination of services among stakeholders. Most of the principals indicated that they had a great need for better collaboration among the relevant parties. The following responses were given:

You would often receive a new department circular that states, “Do this, do that”, without any explanation or reasoning. It is frustrating and, most of the time, last-minute communication. We need to be properly and timeously informed by the department. (P2, DA2)

Communication is important when dealing with issues or seeking support. In that way, you can have a very good reciprocal way of dealing with issues. (P5, DA1)

There is no correlation, cooperation or coordination between circuit management and curriculum management. Circuit management is not supported by the curriculum unit. (P3, DA1)

... circuit manager can maybe play a more prominent role to make sure that they communicate to different management sections of the district. (P4, DA1)

... clear instruction and communication from all parties within the district structures. There should be a common communication approach to say these identified challenges are going to be dealt with in X or Y manner. (P10, DA1)

There needs to be communication networks between district units. Communication is poor and confusing at times, and sometimes you have to figure out by yourself what needs to be submitted to districts. My CM informs me of the things she has control over but not what is requested from other units. (P13, DA2)

From the above responses, it was clear that there was poor communication among the district structures and units and between CMs and principals, which causes confusion and frustration among principals. They feel that they are not respected by the district and they have to comply with administrative requests and submissions without clear direction. Van der Voort and Wood (2016) also raise the issue of poor communication within district structures and mention that principals are overworked and are often expected to submit similar reports to different district units, where data could instead have been extracted from the IQMS system.

From the above responses, it is evident that there are challenges that CMs and principals face regarding communication and clear instruction and direction in the districts. There is a great need for communication and coordination among district units to be improved to enable them to deal with education challenges. Principals' needs are not just based on evaluations, but there is also a need that the education system must improve its processes. This resonates with Deming's (1993) fifth principle to continuously improve and his ninth principle, which emphasises that barriers among departments should be broken down to create a collaborative and sharing working environment.

In response to the question of what the CMs expected to be improved in the education system, most of the CMs concurred with the principals' view. The following responses were given:

CMs need one common framework or system in order for all CMs to work as a team and treat all schools with the same work ethics. (CM2, DA1)

I often find myself working on things that is [sic] not even my responsibility or in my job description. Those expectations are often from units within the district. There is definitely overlap in the role and responsibilities in the district. The overlapping is the confusing part, and we need clarity on that. (CM3, DA1)

We need clear direction from the GED of what is expected of us. (CM2, DA2)

Clear communication from [the] district and CM. (P4, DA1)

We need clear direction. (P3, DA1)

One principal mentioned his frustration and stated:

It seems that there is no common understanding between district units; there is no communication. For instance, there is no curriculum support. (P9, DA2)

From the above responses, the assumption can be made that communication among all stakeholders is important for any successful change effort in an organisation. This assumption is aligned with the view of many scholars (Bantwini & Diko, 2011; Bantwini & Moorosi, 2018b; Bhengu & Myende, 2016; Braughton, 1999; Bush & Glover, 2016; Deming, 1993; Evans et al., 2010; Van der Voort & Wood, 2016; Zulu et al., 2021). It is noted that when communication is not transparent and clear direction is not provided by the district, the PED and the DBE, it causes people to lose focus of what they are supposed to do and become demotivated. The coordination of support in the district structure must be improved, as it is evident from the analysis that the departments in the district work in isolation and often do not know what the other departments are doing. Deming proclaims the importance of people understanding the different interconnections and relationships among people for change to be effectively executed (Braughton, 1999; Deming, 1993; Gogue, 2005).

5.6.2 Category 3: Principals' needs during education change

The third category to be identified was “principals’ needs during education change” (see Figure 5-3, category 5.6.3). Bantwini and Moorosi (2018b) state that principals need continuous support, especially in the challenging contexts in which they have to function. The widening of access for all race groups to former Model C schools has caused an influx of learners to urban and semi-urban schools and has placed tremendous pressure on the already ill-resourced infrastructure and human and physical resources in the system (Moloi, 2014; Morrison, 2013; Przybylski et al., 2018; Renihan et al., 2006; Sutton, 2012; Xaba, 2011; Zulu et al., 2021). The influx of learners to schools has created a great need for resources, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic when alternative methods for education provision needed to be implemented to adapt to a blended learning approach. Transformation in education and dealing with transformation have created a need for people to be trained and developed in their leadership and management role (Hussain & Al Abri, 2015; Msila & Mtshali, 2011; Ndlovu, 2018; Pashiardis & Brauckmann, 2009; Platter, 2010; Santiago-Marullo, 2010). Principals need relevant training to ensure effective and sustainable change. CMs are placed at the centre of education transformation (DBE, 2018b), and

therefore, they play a critical role in the training and development of principals to deal with education change (Ndlovu, 2018).

5.6.2.1 Subcategory: Significance of professional development and training during education change

Professional development is seen as a motivator for people to enhance their skills and competencies (Arar & Avidov-Ungar, 2020). Furthermore, it is an enabler that can assist people in an organisation to initiate change in the organisation for the benefit of all (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; DBE, 2016; Duncan et al., 2011; Hussain & Al Abri, 2015). Therefore, it is the responsibility of the district and the CM to create opportunities for principals to be trained and developed to deal with education change and challenges. CMs play a central role in the training and development of principals (Ndlovu, 2018). The first subcategory, “significance of professional development and training during education change”, was identified and analysed (see Figure 5-3, subcategory 5.6.3.1).

Most of the participants responded that professional development and training during education change were very significant during education change –

During education change and the current state in which the basic education find itself, I think professional development plays a significant role in moving forward for a circuit manager to provide support to principals and schools during education change. (CM2, DA1)

Professional development is very crucial; we need to do it as much as we can. I fully believe that when people are developed and they are able to understand their roles, then it becomes very easy for them to run their schools. (CM3, DA1)

Professional development is a process of gaining experience in your role and your own experience within the schooling system by progressing through particular processes of development. (CM4, DA2)

Professional development must happen; it is very important when people are dealing with challenges and change in a system. (P4, DA1)

I think it's very important that when it comes to change that professional development becomes a priority. People need skills and upskilling to deal with change. (P8, DA1)

From the above analysed data, it is clear that most of the participants understand professional development and the importance thereof, especially in adapting to dealing with education change. The participants emphasised that professional development must be a continuous process. As Deming (1993) suggests, it prepares people to deal with change and to drive out fear for change, as they will be prepared for the change. Professional development initiatives serve as a motivator for principals, as it gives them opportunities to gain new knowledge and empowers them to deal with change (Burnes, 2004; Deming, 1993, 2018b; Hussain et al., 2018; Wang & Ellinger, 2009).

Myende et al. (2020) confirm the importance of professional development and training programmes for principals in dealing with change in their challenging contexts. There is a great need for context-relevant training and development (Ndlovu, 2018), as the generic programmes currently offered by the DBE for principals to deal with change will only assist a specific population of principals in the country.

5.6.2.2 Subcategory: Professional development opportunities during education change

The second subcategory, “professional development opportunities during education change” was identified and analysed (see Figure 5-3, subcategory 5.6.3.2). Pashiardis and Brauckmann (2009) emphasise the importance of the professional development of principals, and Platter (2010) and Steyn (2011) suggest that more opportunities should be created by education districts to empower principals during education transformation. According to Bantwini and Moorosi (2018a), CMs fall short in providing training and development for principals and do not provide or create opportunities for principal development through different sub-directorates in the districts. Many of the development programmes provided by the DBE on the IQMs system are generic and not context-relevant programmes that would enable principals to deal with the challenges within their specific contexts (Bantwini & Moorosi, 2018a; Van der Voort & Wood, 2016). A few of the participants stated that they had received opportunities for professional development and training. The following responses were given:

There has been an improvement in professional development in the basic education system through the QMS system. However, I think there needs to be more improvement, especially on specific needs of principals and teachers. At least you can see that there are some plans in place for professional development for teachers. (P9, DA2)

There are many opportunities. The evaluation tool (IQMS and SA-SAMS) informs you, as the principal, and also the CM where you have shortcomings in your role and where you need development. (P4, DA1)

We do get some opportunities. But that is a short day course here or there. It helps, but it does not address the real professional development needs of principalship. (P6, DA2)

Principals turn to unions for professional development opportunities. (P5, DA1)

Opportunities are available; however, you have to probe into the DBE system to find professional development opportunities. (P10, DA1)

A few participants revealed that they neither received opportunities for professional development, nor did their districts initiate or provide opportunities. The following responses were given:

... the circuit manager's side, there was no opportunities provided. There was no effort or professional development from his side. (P3, DA1)

... so we need to empower ourselves and colleagues, as well as coordinate the development of principals. There are no programmes to help (provided by the Department) CMs to develop skills for project and function coordination. Maybe it is the COVID-19 [pandemic], but there has only been like two opportunities. (CM3, DA2)

The above responses indicate that there are mixed responses with regard to professional development opportunities for CMs and principals. The analysed data show that there are opportunities available for training and development. However, some of these programmes are generic, and the principals and CMs feel that they are not context-relevant; therefore, it will not be to their benefit to attend these programmes. This resonates with the findings of Steyn (2011) and Van der Voort and Wood (2016). From the analysis, it is evident that CMs must be more proactive in creating opportunities for principals to be professionally developed.

5.6.2.3 Subcategory: Context-relevant preparation, training and development need of principals to deal with education change

The third subcategory identified was “context-relevant preparation, training and development need of principals to deal with education change” (see Figure 5-3, subcategory 5.6.3.3). Continuous training and development of people to deal with education change are critical for the success of organisational change (Fullan, 2009b; Hussain et al., 2018). According to Deming and Lewin, people cannot move towards the new status quo if they are not trained and developed in the new ways of doing things (Hussain et al., 2018). Most of the participants responded along the following lines:

I do believe that contact sessions with regards to professional development is [sic] necessary. People do not need long training courses. They need training on specific issues or how to deal with specific problems. (P2, DA2)

Things change too rapidly, and people need skills to deal with challenges; we need just-in-time training, training on the job. (P6, DA2)

... develop and training; it is very important when people are dealing with COVID, challenges and change in a system. (P4, DA1)

Remember with COVID-19, nobody prepared us, and when that took place, there were so many frustrations that one had to deal with – rotational systems like timetabling, learners and teachers, PPEs, reporting – and it was an administrative overload. (P1, DA1)

It's not limited development; it's not ending development; it's becoming development. I want to emphasise it: development from [the] district, whether it is professional or self-development, those initiatives must never stop. (P3, DA1)

It was noted that some principals were frustrated with the fact that they had not been sufficiently trained to deal with the COVID-19 challenges that caused a lot of changes in the education system. The following responses were provided:

Some of us were trained on how to submit COVID-19 reports, but no training was provided to deal with the challenges when it came to management issues during COVID. (P11, DA2)

... training provided is generic and not focused on the challenges that principals have to deal with. (P6, DA2)

IT [information technology] skills are important and required to function in the current situation of educational change. (P12, DA2)

5.6.2.3.1 Subcategory: Preparation and induction courses for first-time principals

The subcategory “preparation and induction course for first-time principals” was identified under this category (see Figure 5-3, subcategory 5.6.3.3.1). Findings by Steyn (2011) and Hussain and Al Abri (2015) suggest that principals must be prepared for their role as principal, and induction courses should be implemented to assist them in taking on the position of principal. These courses should be well developed to provide insight into the role and responsibilities of principals in the education system. These programmes should not just be offered at the beginning of a principal’s career but should be implemented as refresher courses over a period of time (Fluckiger et al., 2015). Fluckiger et al. (2015) emphasise that these induction and preparation programmes should be updated to the changing context of education in South Africa. Most of the participants emphasised the importance of preparation and induction courses on their role and responsibilities as manager and school leader. They provided the following responses:

... induction course, refresher course in change management, personnel, resources and financial management. (P3, DA1)

Principals are in many ways forced to grow into the position or the job. Principals need to be prepared, trained and developed for their role as principals, especially new principals that take on the position. (P6, DA2)

My CM did not provide any preparation, training or any opportunities for development at all, which I think it is very important when I became a principal at the school. (P9, DA2)

There must be preparation and development for principals taking up the position. (P10, DA2)

From the above responses, it is evident that limited preparation or induction courses are provided to principals or CMs throughout their careers. Both CMs and principals have a need for such programmes offered by the DBE and districts as refresher courses to support them in executing their roles and responsibilities.

5.6.2.3.2 Subcategory: Development and training in change, personnel, resources and financial management

Under this category the subcategory “development and training in change, personnel, financial and resources management” was identified (see Figure 5-3, subcategory 5.5.3.3.2). Fluckiger et al. (2015) argue that principals need different pathways towards professional development and training to address their needs. The DBE (2015) policy on standards for principals corroborates that principals are accountable for effective management in all aspects of basic school functionality. As education change is happening at an accelerated pace, principals are faced with even more challenges, and they need training and development in different areas of school functionality to adapt to change. Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) indicate that there is a need for tailor-made professional development programmes to assist and support principals and teachers in dealing with education change. Most of the principals responded that there was a need for context-relevant training and development programmes –

Development and training in financial resources is very important when people are dealing with COVID and change in the education system. (P4, DA1)

... workshop on financial and people management. (P1, DA1)

There is a critical need for induction and training on change management, especially during COVID 19. (P13, DA2)

A few principals also emphasised the importance of the utilisation of technology during education change. The following responses were given:

It is very important that development takes place on a continuous basis to assist principals in doing their job. Without technology, it is basically impossible to be successful in your job. I will go as far as to say that if you are not technology literate, you will not become a well-functioning school or a well-performing school. (P4, DA1)

... training on SA-SAMS and DDD systems. These systems allow you to generate reports on a school and use that data to do informed school visits. (CM2, DA1)

Training [in] how to extract data and analyse it. (P7, DA1)

From the responses captured during the analysis, it is important to note that in preparation programmes for CMs and principals to act their role effectively, they need training and development specifically on COVID-19 reporting and submissions to the DBE.

From the above responses of the principals and CMs, it is clear that there is a need for training and development to deal with change. This resonates with Chingara’s (2019) findings. Although the CMs expressed that they themselves and the DBE had vested a lot of time and energy in

training and development, there needs to be continuous training and development to address the specific challenges CMs and principals face during education change (see Van der Voort & Wood, 2016). Such training must be context-relevant with regard to specific challenges that principals face (Pashiardis & Brauckmann, 2009; Robinson, 2019). Many principals stated that they needed just-in time training or on-the-job training.

5.6.2.4 Subcategory: Circuit managers need to provide continuous administrative support

The fourth subcategory that was identified was “CMs need to provide continuous administrative support” (see Figure 5-3, subcategory 5.6.3.4). According to Bantwini and Moorosi (2018b), transformation in education has overburdened CMs and principals with administrative duties, and CMs’ support to principals are mostly enacted through their administrative function. Van der Voort and Wood (2016) state that the district’s expectations of CM and principals are overwhelming; consequently, many of their efforts go into complying with administrative submissions. Bantwini and Diko (2011) mention that administrative submissions to districts and PEDs are a factor that is affecting the support provided to principals and schools. The participants responded as follows on the topic of the administrative expectations of districts:

We need the CM’s support to assist us to deal with administrative submissions and meeting deadlines. (P8, DA1)

Administrative expectations and obligations, for instance, and the pandemic caused a lot of disruption and added administrative duties for the schools within the DBE system which they we need to comply with. (P10, DA1)

The administrative support of the CM is critical especially during COVID-19 reporting. (P12, DA2)

Organisations need strong leadership and management to initiate change and implement change effectively (Hussain et al., 2018). Deming (in Gogue, 2005) warns that if people are not prepared, guided, mentored and supported and their needs addressed for change, the organisational change will fail. In Deming’s (1993) 14 principles for effective change, he emphasises that people in an organisation must have good relationships and understand the interconnectedness of all the elements in the system. He adds that people need to be trained to adapt to new changes. Furthermore, Fullan (2009b) states that continuous support is critical and that there should be less focus on just compliance but rather on sustainable support until people have adjusted to the new norm of change. Transparent communication and clear instructions from leadership and management in education structures are critical if change is to be effective and sustainable to improve the quality and provision of education to learners. Planned change is initiated to improve education performance or quality and must therefore be clearly communicated to everyone in the

education system. If not, the initiated change may cause harm and not what it is intended to do, which is to improve the quality and provision of education in the education system. Forced change cannot be planned by the leadership and management of an organisation but must be clearly communicated to inform people of what has to change and when, thereby allowing them to prepare to deal with the forced change (Fullan, 2006).

5.6.2.5 Subcategory: Building relationships based on trust to improve interconnectedness during change

The fifth subcategory, “building relationships based on trust to improve interconnectedness during change”, was analysed (see Figure 5-3, subcategory code 5.6.3.5). The principals and CMs viewed their relationship as critical in dealing with education change, which is what theorists of change, such as Fullan, Deming and Lewin, emphasise in their theories as a critical factor in dealing with organisational change and assisting people to adapt to change (Fullan, 2009b; Hussain et al., 2018; Hussain & Al Abri, 2015; Stepanovich, 2004; Wang & Ellinger, 2009). Most of the participants reported that they had good and sound relationships that enabled them to deal with education change –

Relationships are built on trust and mutual respect. (P1, DA1)

CM must avail [sic] themselves or provide principals accessibility to them as the direct support function. One-on-one interviews or discussions are desperately needed taking into account the profile of the school during these consultative discussions. (PA3, DA1)

I think a factor that enables you as a principal to effectively operate within policy frameworks is the relationship between the CM and the principal. A good relationship with your circuit manager and your district office makes life as [a] principal a bit easier. (P4, DA1)

By sharing information and exchanging ideas, it promotes out-of-the-box thinking. The relationship also allows you, I'm not saying unauthorised, but doing things differently or in a different way to what the norm is. (P7, DA1)

We have a very good relationship. (P10, DA2)

A few participants agreed that there must be closer working and communication relationships among the district, CMs and principals. The following responses were given:

CMs need to support principals and schools to succeed through good human relationships and personal positive attitudes towards the job, principals and co-workers and have empathy and be able to adapt. (CM2, DA1)

We can improve on our relationship with principals. (CM3, DA1)

The above responses resonate with the findings of Fullan, Deming and Lewin that effective communication among departments and people breaks down barriers between departments and creates an environment for sharing and teamwork (Deming, 1993, 2018b; Fullan, 2009b; Hussain

et al., 2018; Warm et al., 2019). They also resonate with Deming's 14th principle that makes reference to the inclusion of everyone in the transformation of the organisation through establishing relationships to understand the interconnections among people. Some participants mentioned that these relationships could be improved. Moreover, it is important to maintain and further build on these relationships (see Section 3.3.3 14).

5.6.2.6 Subcategory: Understanding schools' dynamics and challenges in context

The sixth subcategory identified was "understanding schools' dynamics and challenges in context" (see Figure 5-3, subcategory 5.6.3.5). Principals need CMs to take the dynamics of the school and the specific challenges they face during education change into account (Bantwini & Moorosi, 2018a; Bhengu & Myende, 2016; Hussain et al., 2018). Although a few participants had different views on what needed to be considered, the majority concurred with Myende et al. (2020) that the context in which CMs and schools function was an aspect that needed consideration. All the principals concurred that CMs must understand that the dynamics that made up a school were different, and therefore, they had to be supported in different ways –

For the same reason as a principal cannot run all schools in the same way. I can use my own experience as an example of being a principal at two different schools. Though I managed and ran the schools totally different. For that same reason the circuit manager must look at especially the kind of school that he or she is dealing with. (P4, DA1)

I need the CM to have a better understanding of the dynamics of the school when he provides support. (P8, DA1)

The quintile classification and the subjects offered at the school have to be taken into consideration, as well as the geographic location of the school. Where is the school situated; how do people and learners function in the school and the community? (P10, DA1)

All these aspects, the knowledge of the school and the dynamics that make the school function have to be taken into consideration when support provision is activated or enacted. (CM1, DA2)

[A] principal is still a human being; yet you are expected to be at school in all circumstances, even when you are sick. You are expected to respond when [the] CM calls about issues. As a principal, you need people to assist you on different levels, need staff to be capacitated to fulfil [sic] jobs as well as additional tasks if needs be. (P12, DA2)

From the above responses, it is evident that schools differ, and therefore, they have different challenges and must be managed in different ways. The view of the participants resonates with the findings of Bantwini and Moorosi (2018a) and Myende et al. (2020) that CMs must understand the dynamics of a school and the challenging context in which they operate to effectively provide principals with support. Support enactment should not just be on the needs of the principals but also on the challenges they face during education change. Professional development and training must be provided within the context in which principals operate and manage schools. CMs must

be knowledgeable and have the relevant experience to support principals, which would break down principals' fear of dealing with change (Deming, 1993). In providing context-relevant preparation and development training, love for employees is shown (Fullan, 2009b), which would empower principals to deal with challenges with regard to change. Regular and planned visits by CMs to principals and schools create trust and understanding among people, which is very important during organisational change.

5.7 THEME 4: CHALLENGES OF CIRCUIT MANAGERS AND PRINCIPALS DURING EDUCATION CHANGE

In an attempt to answer the fourth secondary question, the challenges that CMs and principals encounter when dealing with education change were determined. The theme was subsequently magnified through five categories (see Figure 5-4), namely “overwhelming administrative responsibilities”, “lack of resource support and coordination”, “communication challenges during education change”, “professional development and training” and “support enactment during change”, that emerged from the identified codes of the transcribed text and the field notes. The role and responsibilities of the CM and the principal overlap in many areas, and the challenges they experience are very similar, as reflected in the codes. One participant mentioned that he had been seconded by the district to act as administrator for the schools to try to resolve challenges in the schools. He stated that his actual role was that of a CM and that *“the CM and principal roles and responsibilities overlap in many areas; they have similar challenges”* (P3, DA1). This section must be read in conjunction with Figure 5-4.

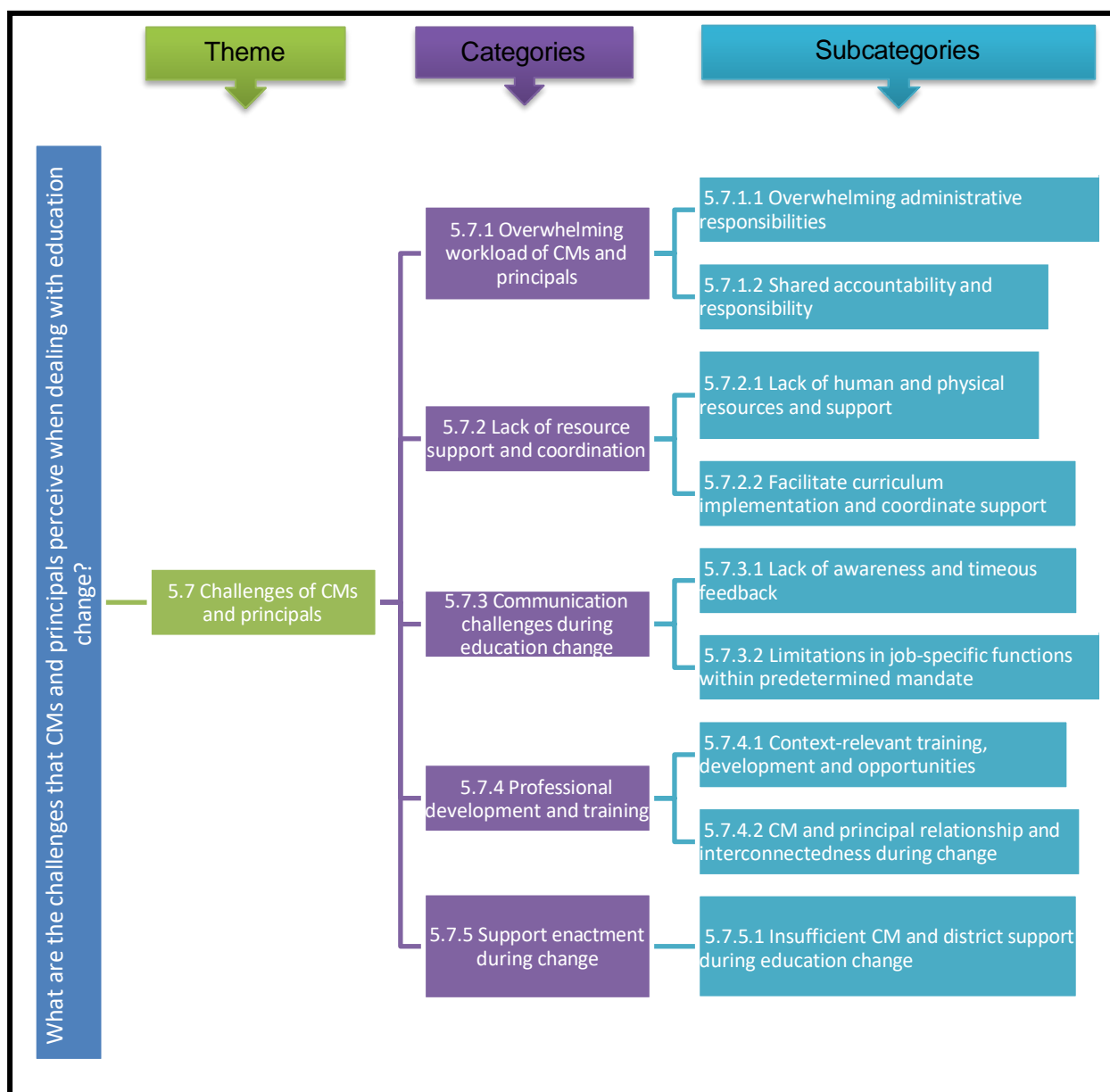


Figure 5-4: Themes, categories and subcategories identified according to the fourth sub-research question

5.7.1 Category 1: Overwhelming workload of circuit managers and principals

The first category that was identified was “overwhelming workload of CMs and principals” (Figure 5-4, category 5.7.1). Bantwini and Moorosi (2018b) state that principals need continuous support, especially in the challenging contexts in which they have to function. Most of the participants found the workload in their leadership and management task overwhelming, and they revealed that their workload had increased drastically over the past decade. Moreover, the additional workload that the COVID-19 pandemic has caused has intensified the strain produced by expectations from the districts and the provincial and national education departments. This is in

line with the findings of Gabster et al. (2020) and McDonald (2020). Most of the participants referred to their overwhelming workload as follows:

Role as leader is overwhelming; there is a lot of administrative expectations and from the district. (P3, DA1)

After ten years of being a principal, I still find myself being overwhelmed, especially when there are certain things that are expected from me or the school which is [sic] out of my control or things that cannot really be managed. (P4, DA1)

The role of the principal is very lonely and overwhelming, with too many responsibilities. (P11, CM2)

It is a very hard and overwhelming job, and if you do not have experience and knowledge, you will not succeed. (CM3, DA2)

From the responses above, it is evident that the principals are overwhelmed by their administrative duties, which is in line with the findings of Mafuwane and Pitsoe (2014), Mavuso (2014) and Ncwane (2019). They experienced additional strain for the past two years as the COVID-19 pandemic forced the reporting of teachers' and learners' health status in the system (see Gabster et al., 2020). The administrative overburdening of CMs and principals in the education system is a serious concern that needs to be addressed (Bantwini & Moorosi, 2018a; Moorosi & Bantwini, 2016; Van der Voort & Wood, 2016).

5.7.1.1 Subcategory: Overwhelming administrative responsibilities

The first subcategory identified was "overwhelming administrative responsibilities" (see Figure 5-4, subcategory 5.7.1.1). Mafuwane and Pitsoe (2014) emphasise that CMs are centred as change agents in the education system to provide administrative and management support to principals. CMs' provision of support to principals are activated through these functionality areas, and they are responsible for effectively monitoring schools and providing support according to principals' needs and school evaluation data (DBE, 2013). Most of the participants responded that their administrative responsibilities were overwhelming and that it took most of their time. Hence, they find it difficult to attend to other school matters that need their attention.

The administrative responsibilities is [sic] a huge challenge and concern. From the CM's side, the administration responsibilities are overwhelming, and we delegate a lot of our administrative duties to schools. (CM3, DA1)

There's a lot of admin. I had to appoint a secretary just to do that for me. If I did it myself, I won't get to [the] children; I can't do my work. (P2, DA1)

The education system is in transition to move to a paperless system. Therefore, the amount of electronic submissions that need to be completed is overwhelming. (P4, DA1)

You will be surprised how much admin must be done and how many things need to be submitted to district offices daily. The amount of administrative duties are [sic] ridiculous. Sometimes, more than often, I will sit till late at night just to submit what is needed to be submitted to district, provincial or sometimes even to the national department. (P6, DA2)

The administrative expectations are overwhelming, especially documents that need to be submitted to the district offices. (P12, DA2)

When it comes to administration, to be honest, it is just to comply to, and we submit the same things over and over again often to the same or different sub-directorates in districts and [the] GDE. (CM4, DA2)

The administrative responsibilities are overwhelming, and we delegate a lot of our administrative duties to schools. We are guilty of that. When we request data or submissions, its most of the time malicious compliance. (CM3, DA1)

One participant showed his frustration and mentioned:

The only support I got was reports that must be handed in daily before ten o'clock. The daily COVID reports must be handed in and reported on weekly. And if it's not in, it's a phone call telling you, "Listen, you did not do your work!" But support? No, no, no! (P9, DA2)

The above responses resonate with the DBE policy that it is the responsibility of the CM to support principals and schools in administrative and management issues (DBE, 2013, 2018b). The above responses also echo Bantwini and Moorosi's (2018b) findings that CMs do not provide principals with sufficient support, that some principals are neglected by their CM and the district and that principals are struggling to deal with the administrative workload and compliance forced on them.

5.7.1.2 Subcategory: Shared accountability and responsibility

The third subcategory identified and analysed was "shared accountability and responsibility (Figure 5-4, subcategory 5.7.1.2. The DBE (2013) policy states that the CM is responsible and accountable for the performance of the schools in their care and the DBE (2016) policy stated that principals are also accountable for the performance of the school. Thus, both the CM and the principal are responsible for the performance of the school and the learners. Ehren et al. (2020) point out that the changing education landscape has forced CMs and principals to adapt to change, and therefore, they have to share responsibility and accountability for the choices made.

A few of the participants stated that a lot of finger pointing is made to them during the discussions of the Grade 12 results at the beginning of each year. As the accountable person, they have to face the district management team. Although the CM is also held accountable and responsible for the performance of schools, they do not share in the accountability and responsibility. The following responses were given:

How can I take accountability if I'm not supported by the very same people that sent me here to salvage what can be saved at the school. (P3, DA1)

Both the CM and the principals have to take accountability for the school. (P10, DA1)

I'm responsible for the schools in my circuit and accountable for their submissions and the support I have to provide. (CM1, DA2)

I'm held accountable for the schools in my circuit. (CM3, DA1)

From the above responses, it is evident that both CMs and principals are held accountable for the performance of schools, and therefore, they have to work as a team. This idea is emphasised in Deming's 14th principle that everyone must be accountable and included during organisational change processes. The above responses also resonate with Smith and Beckmann's (2016) finding that districts' support and sharing accountability are often absent. CMs and principals are not only accountable to the district and the PED (Prew & Quaigrain, 2010) but also held accountable by parents, teachers and surrounding communities. However, Deming (1993) cautions that focusing too much on accountability and inspection can negatively affect organisational change.

5.7.2 Category 2: Lack of resource support and coordination

The second category is "lack of resource support and coordination" (Figure 5-4, category 5.7.2). Sharing and providing resources in an organisation are very important for organisational growth (Foss & Pedersen, 2002; Harris & Beckhard, 1987). Harris and Beckhard (1987) state that resource provision during the unfreeze stage of organisational change encourages people and promotes their intentions towards change. Lewin (in Hussain et al., 2018) suggests that resources for change must be carefully calculated and provided during the move stage and the refreeze stage of organisational change. The departments should not be in competition with one another to get the required resources to deal with change (Fullan, 2009b). Many scholars indicate that the DBE is lacking in providing effective resources for all the schools, which also makes the task to coordinate resources between the education department and the schools in their care very difficult; therefore, they find it difficult to deal with education change (Arar & Avidov-Ungar, 2020; Chikoko et al., 2014; Cummings & Worley, 2014; Eacott & Asuga, 2014; Hussain & Al Abri, 2015; Msila & Mtshali, 2011; Naicker & Mestry, 2016).

5.7.2.1 Subcategory: Lack of human resources and support

The first subcategory that was identified was a "lack of human and physical resources" (Figure 5-4, subcategory 5.7.2.1). Education is changing very quickly, and adapting to change is very challenging for most people in an organisation (Fullan, 2006; Gogue, 2005). CMs need human and physical resource support from the district to assist schools; accordingly, principals need support from the CM to deal with issues of human and physical resources. However, most of the participants found the resource support and coordination from CMs and districts to be lacking.

CMs need resources to effectively support principals in enhancing education in schools. Most participants stated that the district expected them to be innovative and develop plans and strategies to enhance the quality of education provision; yet, they did not receive sufficient resource support, and the support provided was not coordinated. Most of the principals responded as follows:

CMs do not coordinate or assist schools in getting sufficient resources. (P1, DA1)

We do not have enough teachers; there is limited support from [the] district or circuit manager. (P5, DA1)

I have to appoint teachers on SGB contract, even though I have positions available. My learner numbers increase, and the district just says there is no money. (P10, DA2)

... shortage of teachers. Teachers are often forced to teach subjects that they are not qualified in. (P3, DA1)

Every year, you are promised that you will have posts available. Nothing ever happens. It's empty promises ... For example, if I notify the department that I have an additional 120 learners, the answer will always be, "Sorry, there's no money, there's no teachers, and that's it. It is a dead end; not even red tape. (P2, DA2)

I have vacant positions available; I have put in many requests to the CM and human resources department but I do not get feedback. I urgently need teachers. (P9, DA2)

Most of the participants responded along the following lines:

I'm responsible to coordinate resources to schools but I do not get the support from sub-directorates in the district. (CM1, DA1)

So just a couple of schools are receiving extra posts that they're not receiving, according to the real need. If you don't have space, and you don't have enough classrooms, it makes the job of the principal and, therefore, the circuit manager very, very difficult to try and improve education. (CM1, DA2)

The things that inhibit me or prevent me to act my role and responsibilities are the lack in [sic] resources and provision thereof from the district and Department of Basic Education. We have to wait for support from the Department of Education, and that does not mean you will get the resources you need to support the schools. (CM3, DA1)

The resources that we have and still need ... we are not supported by the CM or the district, definitely not in the manner that they should support us. (P9, DA2)

I need more teachers, classrooms and curriculum resources. My school is growing in numbers and I cannot provide quality education if I do not have the resources. (P11, DA2)

I'm coordinating mobile schools, not enough space. We can have all these fantastic plans. But in the meantime, our schools and our facilities are not modernised. Most of our schools don't have halls, or ... our schools don't have sporting facilities. The facilities that we are giving to our educators and our learners are lacking in a big manner. (CM1, DA2)

I'm responsible for a few schools in the township. They have very old infrastructure. We could only do some cosmetic maintenance; however, they need infrastructure urgently, and there is limited support from the district and provincial offices. (CM2, DA1)

From the above responses, it is clear that human and physical resources are a central concern, and CMs and principals need support from the district to provide human and physical resources to accommodate their learners and provide quality education. This echoes the findings of many scholars (Arar & Avidov-Ungar, 2020; Chikoko et al., 2014; Cummings & Worley, 2014; Eacott & Asuga, 2014; Hussain & Al Abri, 2015; Msila & Mtshali, 2011; Naicker & Mestry, 2016). It also is in line with Moloji's (2014) view that it is shocking that more than 20 years after democracy, there are still so many schools without the necessary resources or teachers to effectively provide education to all learners. Many schools in deprived areas across South Africa do not have the necessary human and physical resources (Bantwini & Moorosi, 2018a; Moloji, 2014; Myende et al., 2020).

5.7.2.2 Subcategory 2: Facilitate curriculum implementation and coordinate support

The second subcategory is "facilitate curriculum implementation and coordinate support" (Figure 5-4, subcategory 5.7.2.2). The DBE (2005, 2012, 2013) clearly outlines that the CM is responsible for ensuring that the national basic education curriculum is implemented in schools and is accountable for the school complying with policies and legislation (see Section 2.2.2.1). The literature accentuates that districts and CMs are key elements and authorised agents in education change who are responsible for appointing qualified staff, policy implementation, curriculum provision, coordinating support and overseeing and guiding schools (Anderson, 2003; Bantwini & Diko, 2011; GDE, 2013; Langan et al., 2012; Mavuso, 2014; Moorosi & Bantwini, 2016; Nkambule & Amsterdam, 2018; Smith & Beckmann, 2016).

The participants revealed their overwhelming concern about the lack of support and coordination of curriculum services from the district offices. A few participants responded as follows:

You only see the circuit manager when Grade 12 results are published. (P13, DA2)

If they [CM and curriculum unit] have been continuously supportive of the curriculum throughout the year, then there will be no finger pointing or war amongst circuit management and curriculum management. (P10, DA1)

... this tussle or type of war between circuit management and curriculum management unit, especially when year-end results of Grade 12 are published. (P11, DA2)

... really finding it difficult to function, especially in curriculum delivery; the CM must facilitate and coordinate curriculum support. (P3, DA1)

The CM has very little impact on the curriculum. He can only facilitate and coordinate service and support from the curriculum unit. (P9, DA2)

From the above responses, it is evident that the participants understand that CMs have to ensure that the basic education national curriculum is implemented in schools. According to the DBE (2013) policy on the role and responsibilities of education districts, the DBE holds CMs accountable to ensure that the national basic education curriculum is implemented in schools. However, within their mandate they have a limited impact on the curriculum offering and change to the curriculum. Therefore, CMs communicate curriculum issues to the curriculum sub-directorate at the district offices and coordinate the service and support from them to schools. This was also confirmed by most participants that CMs do not have a direct impact on curriculum support provision and are dependent on the services and support of other units within the education departments to support schools. Deming (1993) mentions in his ninth principle that such barriers between departments should be removed for effective change (see Section 3.3.6.9). Findings by Bantwini and Moorosi (2018a), Moorosi and Bantwini (2016) and Van der Voort and Wood (2016) show that CMs find the coordination of services and support from other units very difficult, as they work in silos and CMs feel that they do not have the mandate to tell other departments what to do.

5.7.3 Category 3: Communication challenges during education change

The third category was “communication challenges during education change” (see Figure 5-4, category 5.7.3). As the direct link between schools and the district, the CM is responsible for ensuring that effective communication between the district and schools is established (DBE, 2013). Mafuwane and Pitsoe (2014), Mthembu (2014), Myende et al. (2020) and Ndlovu (2018) state that communication between districts and schools is a concern, as there are many mixed and unclear messages from districts and PEDs that principals have to contend with. Deming (1993) emphasises the importance of good communication protocols to ensure that everybody understands what the organisational change is that is being implemented and what the way forward is. He adds that sound communication reinforces trust and includes everyone in the organisation.

5.7.3.1 Subcategory: Lack of awareness and timeous feedback

The first subcategory identified was “lack of awareness and timeous feedback” (see Figure 5-4, subcategory 5.7.3.1). Most of the participants found the communication in the district structures to be poor and revealed that communication was often unclear. Most of them stated that communication and coordination could be improved in all areas between the district and the schools. The following responses were given:

There's no feedback from that either – feedback from district and circuit manager level. Even learner failures or whatever they do with the information, I do not know. (P2, DA2)

Sometimes my CM is not even aware of the submission or request ... I have to make to provincial and national departments. (P6, DA2)

To be honest, most of the time, the communication is so blurry that I cannot understand most of the time what the district or the CM expects from me to submit. There is no transparency, and when you submit and it is not in the correct format or template, then there is trouble. (P9, DA2)

Scholars of change theories warn that if there is no effective communication during change processes, people will not be able to adapt to the change and the efforts of change implementation will fail (Deming, 1993; Fullan, 2009b; Wang & Ellinger, 2009). Some participants revealed that they did not receive timely feedback from the district and CM, and they were often not aware of requests made by provincial or national departments –

... lack of communication and conflicting messages. It is something that, when I look at it, and can say that is a major factor that limits our ability to fully support schools. (CM1, DA2)

We must be made aware of the training and development opportunities. (P7, DA1)

We are not made aware of workshops or meeting where we can share and develop. (P3, DA1)

One participant provided the following example:

We often have, as a circuit management unit, complained about the fact that direct support usually is found at the district level. But what we found was happening, and maybe over the past two years, it has increased dramatically now, because of COVID, where people [sic] instead of using the electronic devices that we have. The MS Teams meeting platform, for instance, to support us. We are actually frustrating principals and schools. Because what will happen from head office? They would actually communicate directly with schools, have certain mandates which need to be fulfilled, certain data that should be captured through on cloud surveys, on emails, and that information is not shared with us here at district level. (CM3, DA1)

From the above responses, it is clear that effective communication is lacking in the district structure, which negatively affects education provision to learners and the quality of education in general. This resonates with findings by various scholars (Mafuwane & Pitsoe, 2014; Mthembu, 2014; Myende et al., 2020; Ndlovu, 2018). The responses also highlight the need for CMs to establish communication strategies between the district and principals or schools to ensure that messages are clear of any misinterpretations and that messages and information can be coordinated effectively between the district and schools.

5.7.3.2 Subcategory: Limitations in job-specific functions within the predetermined mandate

The second subcategory, “limitations in job-specific functions within the predetermined mandate”, was identified and analysed (see Figure 5-4, subcategory 5.7.3.2). The policies of the DBE (2013, 2016) outline the mandate given by the MEC for CMs and principals to function as educational

leaders in schools. Both CMs and principals are limited by their mandates and can only function and operate within education policies and legislations (e.g. DBE, 2005, 2013, 2015, 2018a; Department of Education, 2001, 2006, 2009; RSA, 1996a, 1998, 2005, 2007) (see Section 2.2.6.2-2.2.7).

Most of the participants agreed that the role of the CM was to ensure compliance and that everyone in the system must comply with policies and legislation. Their overall view was that principals and CM could only work within the policy framework and their assigned mandate. The participants gave the following responses:

We can only operate within our mandate; we need support and direction from [the] district. (CM1, DA1)

The problem is not in the school; it is in our system. You have to comply with many rules. Comply, comply, comply; it is all the CM worries about. (P2, DA2)

There is a lot of paperwork to be completed to become a technical school – policies, legislation and so forth. Who is going to assist me? The district director? The CM? (P6, DA2)

You can only operate of function within your mandate as principal. (P8, DA1)

... because we do not want to comply to their outrageous and unethical demands. I know it, and it feels that we are being punished for not complying with their demands. (P9, DA2)

One principal mentioned that he needed direction and support in compliance and added:

You can only operate within your level in the education system or what is available within policies or allowed by policies. At times, we as principals want to change things we cannot change. Because we are not the policymakers. Sometimes we know what can be done to change education in general or how to deal with education change. However, those decisions are not on our level; that's part of the line function of any democracy or organisation. (P4, DA1)

The above responses confirm that principals and CMs can only operate and function within their prescribed mandate as outlined in policies (DBE, 2005, 2013, 2015, 2018a; Department of Education, 2001, 2006, 2009; RSA, 1996a, 1998, 2005, 2007). Policies often limit CMs and principals in dealing with challenges, especially unforeseen challenges such as the COVID-19 pandemic that caused indifferent compliance challenges and exposed many shortcomings within the basic education system (McDonald, 2020). This confirms Deming's (1993) view that focusing too much on compliance may prevent creativity in effectively initiating or implementing change in an organisation.

5.7.4 Category 4: Professional development and training

The fourth category that emerged from the analysed data was “professional development and training” (see Figure 5-4, category 5.6.4). Most of the participants found the training and

development programmes on the IQMS and SA-SAMs systems to be too generic and not dealing with the specific challenges they were facing. Therefore, they are reluctant to participate in such training and development programmes, which resonates with the findings of De Clerq (2008) and Myende et al. (2020). A few participants stated that they preferred workshops that would help them to address the challenges they were facing. This is also the view and recommendation of scholars of professional development for education leaders and managers (e.g. Arar & Avidov-Ungar, 2020; Duncan et al., 2011; Hussain & Al Abri, 2015; Msila & Mtshali, 2011; Pashiardis & Brauckmann, 2009).

5.7.4.1 Subcategory: Lack of context-relevant training, development and opportunities

The first subcategory identified was “lack of context-relevant training, development and opportunities” (see Figure 5-4, subcategory 5.7.4.1). Myende et al. (2020) and Hussain and Al Abri (2015), in particular, emphasise that CMs and principals have to be trained and developed and that programmes for development must focus on the challenging contexts in which they perform their role and execute their responsibilities. In Deming’s (1993, 2018b) 13th principle, he emphasises the importance of vigorous professional and self-development of managers to empower people to adapt to and deal with organisational change. Lunenburg (2010) mentions the importance of training and development programmes when the leadership in an organisation is retrained in new processes or approaches of school-based leadership, which includes group dynamics, consensus building and collaborative styles of decision making.

Many of the participants stated that professional development, training and workshops relevant to the challenges they face were critically important for them to deal with education change and challenges. They concurred that most training and development programmes available were too generic and did not address their context challenges –

Many of these programme or initiatives are very generic. (CM2, DA1)

I do not attend any training because the training is not relevant to my challenges. (P6, DA2)

Training programmes are very generic. (CM2, DA1)

Many participants mentioned that there was no real intention of the district or the CM to provide any training or opportunities for training. The following responses were given:

No training is implemented. There is no initiative from the circuit manager to develop or train you. There is no initiative to help you train your staff. You do not think it will be possible for your CM to train you on things like principalship or how to manage a school. (P2, DA2)

I do not attend these workshops or training; they are generic and do not enable me to deal with education challenges. (P9, DA2)

The training available does not address my challenges. (P10, DA1)

Moreover, many participants gave their view on professional development and mentioned that development must be implemented on a continuous basis to assist principals in doing their job. Without development, principals will soon be left behind and will struggle to catch up with the expectations of CMs and districts. There is a lot of pressure within the system with regard to Grade 12 results. The government expects Grade 12 performance to improve, which substantiates Deming's 13th principle and reaffirms the importance of context-relevant training and development (see Section 3.3.6.13). All of the participants emphasised the use of technology and concurred that if principals and CM did not know how to utilise technology in today's changing education environment, they would surely be in serious trouble. They added that it was relevant to teachers as well. The transformation towards a hybrid or blended teaching and learning system or environment has forced people to be developed and trained in technology. A few participants concurred that without the utilisation of technology one would not be able to participate in the system or be active and effective in one's job –

Training must be aligned to current challenges in education. Professional development is critical to do things differently, like utilising technology and learning approaches. (P8, DA1)

I cannot see a principal to be [sic] effective in his role if he is not technology-literate. (P4, DA1)

From the above responses it is evident that there is a great need for professional development and training among school principals. However, all the participants concurred that the training must be relevant to their specific context and must provide them with the knowledge to deal with education change challenges. The above also resonates with the views of Deming (1993) and Evans et al. (2012) that only through development and education can leaders and managers in organisations widen, broaden and intensify their understanding of various concepts that add value and promote continuous improvement. The participants' responses also substantiate the findings of various scholars (e.g. Hussain & Al Abri, 2015; Ndlovu, 2018; Ono & Ferreira, 2010; Pashiardis & Brauckmann, 2009; Pitsoe & Maila, 2012; Platter, 2010; Santiago-Marullo, 2010). CMs play a central role in the professional development of principals (Ndlovu, 2018) and must provide training and development workshops for principals that are aligned with their challenging contexts.

5.7.5 Category 5: Support enactment during change

The fifth category identified was "support enactment during change" (see Figure 5-4, category 5.7.5). Van der Voort and Wood (2016) raise their concerns about the lack of support CMs provide to principals, especially to those of schools in challenging circumstances.

5.7.5.1 Subcategory: Insufficient circuit manager and district support during education change

The subcategory “insufficient CM and district support during education change” was identified (see Figure 5-4, subcategory 5.7.5.1). There was an overwhelming perception of participating principals of quintile 4 and 5 schools that their CMs had not made any significant difference in support provision in their leadership or management approaches of schools. A few principals stated that they viewed the CM as their direct supervisor, but nothing more, and they often had to guide the CM on what to do, for instance during the COVID-19 pandemic. There is a definite outcry from both CMs and principals that they are not sufficiently supported by the districts during education change. The participating principals elaborated as follows on the experience they had had over the years in terms of the support provided by the CM, especially during the previous two years when significant education changes had taken place:

I received support from the CM, although I believe there could have been better planning and support from [the] district to assist schools during the pandemic. (P1 DA1)

I can't really confirm that there was any significant change that his inputs made ... when you call for support, my CM would say he will coordinate with the curriculum unit at district office. There is minimal support; so, my teachers and I are doing our best. ... For example, the CM contribution in curriculum provision is minimal ... no support from CM in good-performing schools, and this is exactly where they must actually be active and vigilant and are needed. So, the significance of CM support is very important in basic education, but it is not happening as it should. (P2, DA2)

CM support? Nothing really changed before or after COVID; yet I needed help urgently. (P3, DA 1)

I received no help! (P6, DA2)

... CM provides no support, no commitment to assist. In my opinion, the CM is most probably not qualified or experienced to perform her duties. (P9, DA2)

However, many principals responded that they had received significant support from their CMs, especially in the past two years –

I want to emphasise that circuit manager support is very significant, especially to appoint staff. (P8, DA1)

The significance of my circuit manager is critical in education change. My CM will always support and assist where possible. (P6, DA2)

... CM assisted me to befriend the DDD dashboard process and system and explained how to use it. (P7, DA1)

During the past two years, the CM was at the door of the school with a concerted effort to monitor activities, address fears of COVID-19, polarised school to deal with rotational systems

[sic] ... the presence of [the] CM unit affirms in essence the whole teaching community and that schooling is a business that is run through teaching and learning. (P10, DA1)

The experiences that I had over the years from the circuit managers were good. (P11, DA2)

CM provided exceptional support to me and school, especially during COVID-19. (P12, DA2)

... no significant support problems; the CM is compassionate and understanding and communicates very well with me. (P13, DA2)

Although there was a common agreement that the CMs viewed CM support as important, as stated above, there were mixed responses as to the perceptions of the principals in terms of receiving support from their CMs during the past two years. It affirms the findings of Myende et al. (2020) and Bantwini and Moorosi (2018a) that CMs' support plays a major role in the optimal functionality of a school.

From the above responses, the perception emerges that some principals value the importance of CM support, while others carry on as they always have, without expecting any extraordinary support from the CM, even in challenging times such as during the COVID-19 pandemic that negatively affected the entire education system and the world. This perception echoes the findings of Knapp et al. (2010). From the analysis and the principals' responses, it is evident that the quality of CMs' support and the significance of their support depend on which CM provides the support and in which district or circuit the school is allocated.

5.8 DATA THAT EMERGED FROM THE FIELD NOTES

The interviews were scheduled to fit into timeframes that suited the participants' schedules. The virtual meetings were scheduled not to interfere with the daily activities of the schools. Prior to the interviews, the researcher briefed the participants on the interview schedule. He took at least five minutes before the interviews to ensure that the interviewees were comfortable and to address any technical issues or concerns. He found that his approach created trust between him and the participants, resulting in the participants being prepared and confident to reveal their honest and sincere opinions and perceptions, not hiding or distorting any information.

In some interviews, the researcher observed that the interviewees were hesitant to answer some questions, especially when probing questions were asked. However, as the interviews progressed, the participants were more open to answering questions. As the participants gained confidence, their honest perceptions were revealed. Several participants were dissatisfied about the irresponsible, careless manner in which CMs were appointed in the position. The assumption made by some participants was that some CMs did not have the necessary leadership or management experience of leading a school, which had a considerable impact on the way the CMs execute their role and responsibilities in supporting principals during education change. A

few participants did not hesitate to convey their dissatisfaction and annoyance with the support provision of the district and the CM.

Due to the online nature of the interviews, the researcher could view the participants' body language. In some interviews, he could sense through the body language of the participants that some of them were uncomfortable or had to take time to think before they answered specific questions, especially probing questions. He sensed that the participants did not want to create the impression that they were pointing out anyone or exposing people.

As the interviews were virtually conducted, it was difficult for the researcher to make notes of the surrounding environment. During the interviews, a few participants were interrupted by staff members during the session. However, in all of these cases, the staff members were instructed to leave the office immediately; consequently, it did not have any impact on the quality of the interview.

5.9 SUMMARY

The researcher followed an inductive process to analyse data and identify themes, categories, subcategories and codes from the transcriptions of the interviews and the field notes and according to the formulated research questions and predetermined objectives (see Sections 1.6.2 and 1.6.3). The first research question and objective regarding the current education system and structure in which CMs execute their role and responsibilities (see Section 5.4.1) were analysed according to the education district (see Figure 5-1). The CM support role and responsibilities in the basic school functionality of the school and support to the principal were analysed (see Figure 5-2). The principals' experience, expectations and needs with regard to CMs' support and what their needs were to enhance CMs' support during education change were determined (see Figures 5-3 and Section 5-6). Subsequently, the researcher determined the CMs' and principals' challenges during education change (Figure 5-4).

The aim of the next chapter is to formulate conclusions, present a support framework for CMs and provide answers to the research questions and objectives. Both Deming's (1993) and Lewin's (1951) theories were very prominent in the analysis of the data and served as lenses through which the researcher interpreted the data. Although not all of Deming's (1993) 14 principles were relevant to this study, principles 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 11, 13 and 14 were applicable. Lewin's (1951) theory outlines the importance of communication and the resources necessary to initiate change through the freeze, moving and refreeze phases and that people in an organisation must be supported throughout the three phases of the change model (Hussain et al., 2018). In Chapter 6,

the researcher will present a theoretical support framework for CMs to ensure effective and sustainable support to principals during education change.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The role of the CM in the district structure and system is strategically positioned to monitor schools, provide support, especially during education change, and ensure that principals and schools comply with policies and legislation. The CM's role and responsibilities alternate between leadership and management in the district structure. They lead principals and manage processes given to them by the district, the PED and the DBE (DBE, 2013; GDE, 2013). The DBE (2013) policy clearly indicates that CMs are located within the district organisational structure and are the direct point of report for the principal. They are often called *IDSOs* or *EDOs*, which at times causes confusion, as their role and responsibilities are to manage circuit offices and provide appropriate and relevant support to ensure sustainable school improvement (Bantwini & Moorosi, 2018b; Van der Voort & Wood, 2016). The execution of the CM's role and responsibilities during education change seems to be particularly challenging and extremely demanding, as resources and challenges differ according to specific contexts and the individual needs of each principal (Bantwini & Moorosi, 2018b; DBE, 2018; Mafuwane & Pitsoe, 2014; Myende et al., 2020; Van der Voort & Wood, 2016).

It is clear that not only principals but also CMs need preparation, training and development in dealing with education change (Bantwini & Moorosi, 2018b; Myende et al., 2020). In many respects, a lack of preparation, training and development can prevent CMs from executing their role and responsibilities in implementing sustainable change. Throughout the research, it was evident that for CMs to perform their designated role and execute their responsibilities, it is important for them to provide context-relevant support to principals who need continuous guidance, mentorship and context-specific training during education change. It was also clear from the literature and data analysis that principals did not receive relevant and adequate support, especially during education change. CMs and principals find it difficult to deal with not only the expectations of the district, the PED and the DBE but also the demands of other stakeholders, such as parents, the SGB, learners and teachers.

The researcher purposely wanted to determine how CMs could effectively execute their role and responsibilities to support principals during education change. The literature review (see Chapter 2), theoretical frameworks (see Chapter 3) and the data analysis and findings (see Chapter 5) enabled him to develop a support framework that can be implemented by CMs to ensure the

effective and sustainable execution of their role and responsibilities to support principals during education change. This chapter provides a synoptic overview of the research, presents a support framework, gives key recommendations and concludes the research.

In Chapter 1, the research was introduced and an orientation given of what to expect throughout the study. The chapter commenced with the background of the study (see Section 1.2) and then provided the reader with the research problem (see Section 1.3) and the rationale for the study (see Section 1.4). The researcher clearly defined the purpose of the research (see Section 1.5), which was accordance with the research questions and objectives (see Section 1.6). The main concepts were clarified (see Section 1.7), and the theoretical frameworks that underpinned the study were briefly indicated (see Section 1.8). The demarcation of the study was revealed (see Section 1.9), and then details regarding the particular research design and methodology (see Section 1.10) were given. The importance of ethical considerations was emphasised (see Section 1.11). The contribution of the study (see Section 1.12) was discussed, whereafter the chapter was concluded by a presentation of the chapter division (see Section 1.13).

Chapter 2 formed part of the theoretical framework. The researcher commenced this chapter with the background of the basic education system in South Africa (see Section 2.2) and gave detailed explanations of the various education departments, districts and circuits, as well as essential education policies and legislation that govern basic education. The CM came under the spotlight (see Section 2.3), and literature on national as well as international aspects regarding the CM was scrutinised. The role and responsibilities of the CM, the challenges CMs experience and specific perceptions pertaining to CMs were expanded on. The chapter was ended with the focus on the school principal (see Section 2.3) who is dependent on CM support during education change.

Chapter 3 was also part of the theoretical framework that underpinned the research. Therein the researcher elaborated on change (see Section 3.2) and especially education change and Fullan's six secrets of change. Two theoretical frameworks on organisational change were introduced, namely Deming's (1993) organisational change theory and 14 principles (see Section 3.3) and Lewin's (1951) three-step change model (see Section 3.4). The aim of Chapter 3 was to determine and illustrate the importance of incorporating appropriate theories and models to ensure effective and sustainable education change. The frameworks were applied in the support role and

responsibilities of the CM to enhance the provision of support to principals during education change.

Chapter 4 unpacked the research design and methodology employed for this research. Phenomenology as the philosophical underpinning was explained, and the interpretative paradigm enabled the researcher to observe the research phenomenon through the experiences of the participants (see Section 4.2). The researcher also expounded on the research design (see Section 4.3) and methodology (see Section 4.4) and gave a clear indication that he had followed a qualitative research approach and methods. The research site, population and purposive sampling that was employed to select appropriate participants (see Section 4.5) were described as well. In this chapter, the researcher clearly indicated how he gained access to the participants through independent district officials in order to use an interview guide (see Section 4.6) to conduct semi-structured interviews through a virtual conferencing platform. The role of the researcher in the study (see Section 4.7) was expounded and the importance of ensuring trustworthiness (see Section 4.8) was emphasised. The data analysis procedure (see Section 4.9) was presented and revealed that the use of ATLAS.ti enabled the researcher to analyse the data and identify relevant themes, categories and subcategories. The chapter was concluded with all the essential ethical aspects (see Section 4.10) that the researcher had considered throughout the research and a discussion of the limitations and delimitations of the study (see Section 4.11).

In Chapter 5, the researcher presented the data analysis and the findings of the interview questions that enabled him to answer the research questions. This chapter delineated the data analysis process (see Section 5.2) and focused on the particular method and steps the researcher had followed. The discussion of the findings (see Section 5.3) focused on the analysis and interpretations of themes and categories of the role and responsibilities of CM support to principals during education change. Large volumes of data were produced by the data collection process. The following six broad themes emerged (see Section 5.4): the CM in the education system and structure; CMs' understanding of support; CMs' understanding of their role; CMs' understanding of their responsibilities; principals' experience, expectations and needs; and challenges of CMs and principals during education change. Under each theme, specific categories and subcategories emerged that allowed the researcher to analyse the data in depth and provide extensive discussions on the data. The participants' responses were quoted verbatim to give credibility to what was analysed and explained according to relevant literature, field notes and the conceptual and theoretical frameworks of the study.

6.2 SYNOPTIC OF KEY FINDINGS

Chapter 5 presented an in-depth discussion, analysis and interpretation of the qualitative data collected from the participating CMs and principals through open-ended virtual interviews, with the purpose of answering the research questions (see Section 1.6). The interview questions were aligned with the research objectives, and the researcher's aim was to answer all the research questions regarding the role and responsibilities of the CM in the education system (see Creswell & Poth, 2017). Through the qualitative design of the research, as presented in Chapter 4, the researcher sought to analyse the interviewed data. Data were collected by means of open-ended virtual interviews with 17 participants in the Sedibeng East and West education districts in Gauteng, South Africa. Audio and video recordings were made during the semi-structured interviews, which were transcribed and coded using ATLAS.ti (see Creswell & Poth, 2017; Friese, 2019; Merriam & Grenier, 2019). The relevant answers from the participants were quoted verbatim by the researcher to provide truthful insights and perceptions of the participants' views of the phenomenon in order to make sense of their understanding of the role and responsibilities of the CM in supporting principals during education change (see Merriam & Grenier, 2019).

The research findings from the analysis and interpretations of the data according to the research questions (see Section 1.6) and themes (see Section 5.3-5.7) were presented in Chapter 5. Appropriate literature was reviewed in Chapters 2 and 3 and linked with the analysis, interpretations and findings in Chapter 5. The findings were from the following themes and related interview research questions, as summarised in Figure 6-1 below.

6.2.1 Theme: The circuit manager in the education system and structure

The first theme of the role and responsibilities of the CM was directly linked with the first secondary research question (see Section 1.6.3). The theme had one category, namely the "CM position in the circuit office".

6.2.1.1 Circuit manager position in the circuit office

Evident from the literature review is that the participants view the circuit office as the central information point from which schools get their information and where they do submissions to the district, the PED and the DBE. The circuit office is the management sub-unit of the district, and its main function is to provide support to principals and schools, to monitor processes and to report on the performance of the schools to the district (district management team and executive district management team), the PED and the DBE. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the circuit office played a central role when schools had to report on the health status of their learners and teachers (see Section 5.4.1.1). From the analysed data, a common understanding was reached on the

concept *circuit office* and where CMs execute their role and responsibilities in the education system and structure. A common understanding was reached among the participants of what the purpose and function of the circuit office are. Their understanding was that the circuit office is there to ensure that schools receive support from the district and that schools submit reports through the circuit offices to the district, PED and DBE. This support encapsulates many functions; however, the participants concurred that the circuit office provides administrative and resources support to quintile 1 to 5 schools in farm, rural, township and urban areas across the Vaal Triangle and the Heidelberg regions in Gauteng, South Africa. The conclusion made was that the circuit office is the link between schools and the district, the PED and the DBE. From the findings, it is evident that the CM is part of the management structure in the district, operates in middle management and is a member of the district management team and the executive district management team (see Section 5.4.1.2). The researcher sensed uncertainty among the participants when he referred to the IDSO as the CM. Their view was that they did not have circuit offices or manage an office and that the CM operated from the district office. The overwhelming view was that the term *circuit manager* refers to a title in the district structure and does not reflect what CMs are actually doing when executing their role and responsibilities in the education system.

6.3 CIRCUIT MANAGERS' UNDERSTANDING OF SUPPORT ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The second, third and fourth themes, “CMs’ understanding of support”, “CMs’ understanding of their role” and “CMs’ understanding of their responsibilities during education” (see Section 5.5), were analysed and discussed. These themes were directly linked with the second secondary research question (see Section 1.6.2) to determine how CMs experienced and understood their role and responsibilities in supporting principals during education change. The themes had three categories – “CM support”, “CM’s role” and “CM’s responsibilities” (see Section 5.5).

In the second theme, the participants had to respond to the interview questions of what their understanding was of the concept of CM support and to reach a common understanding of how they perceived and understood CM support in the basic education system (see Section 5.5.1). Although many participants had their own views about the term *support*, it was evident that they viewed CM support as direct support in all areas of the basic functionality of a school to provide basic education to learners.

6.3.1 Circuit manager support

The CMs' understanding of support entails support provision to principals and schools in the day-to-day functionality and management processes of the school, which include administrative, human and physical resources support, curriculum support and extra-curricular and school management support (see Section 5.5.1). Principals depend on the circuit office for information, administrative services and professional support during education change. CM support entails the coordination of the support and services provided by other sub-directorates in the district office or that of stakeholders involved in basic education. Furthermore, CMs have to ensure that schools are monitored and comply with policy. There was an overwhelming view that CM support was to manage education change in schools from a district and provincial department mandate and perspective. The CMs agreed that CM support was all about ensuring that schools are run properly and aligned with policy rules and regulations. There was an urgent concern among the participants that much was expected from them by the district and the PED with regard to enhancing school performance and improving quality education in schools. However, without the necessary provision of support in terms of resources from districts and PEDs, it is a difficult task to meet those expectations.

6.3.2 Circuit manager's role

The participants had to indicate what their understanding was of the CM's role they have to execute during education change. The theme was directly linked with the second secondary research question (see Section 1.6.2). From the analysis and interpretation, the following were findings on what the role of the CM was. These findings were based on the responses to the interview question of what their understanding and experience of the CM's role in the enactment of support to principals were. The findings revealed six roles of CMs, namely: clear direction on the CM's role and responsibilities; support, monitor and ensure compliance; influence and provide direction; administration and coordination; governance and compliance; and lastly, modelling and sharing good practices.

- **Clear direction on the CM's role and responsibilities:** CMs are often expected by the district, PED and DBE to take responsibility for matters that are beyond their mandate or job description (see Section 5.5.2.1). CMs find themselves spending a lot of time on these expectations and responsibilities that take much of their time when they are supposed to focus on their role and responsibilities as described by the DBE (2013) policy. CMs need clear direction what their role and responsibilities within the education system are.
- **Support, monitor and ensure compliance:** The CM support role is aligned with the nine key focus areas of whole-school evaluation (see Section 5.5.2.2). Their role is to report to

the district and the PED on the performance of schools in the nine key focus areas. The role involves monitoring all the processes of management of schools and ensuring that principals and schools comply with policies and legislation.

- **Influence and provide direction:** The CM's role as direct line manager of principals is to lead principals in developing a vision and mission aligned with the goals and objectives of the district and the PED (see Section 5.5.2.3). CMs influence how education change is implemented and managed in schools.
- **Administrative support and coordination:** The CM's support role is mostly activated through CMs' administrative responsibilities (see Section 5.5.2.4). CMs ensure that principals and schools adhere to the administrative obligations, expectations and requests of the district and the DBE and that principals submit their reports on time. Their administrative support function is to coordinate these administrative submissions to different sub-directorates or units within the district and the PED.
- **Governance and compliance:** Although ensuring governance and compliance is a minor role that CMs fulfil, their role is to ensure that the school environment is conducive to providing quality education to learners and that schools comply with all the regulations of the DBE as suitable institutions for teaching and learning (see Section 5.5.2.5). They ensure compliance in terms of the PED's whole-school evaluation process.
- **Modelling and sharing good practices:** The participants stated that CM role is to share good practices of schools in the nine key focus areas of whole-school development as it is very important during education change to support those schools that are performing poorly in certain focus areas (see Section 5.5.2.6). The participants emphasised that sharing good practices and using other school approaches which were similar to their education contexts has assisted them in dealing with education change.

As the supervisor of principals, CMs oversee administrative processes, monitor processes, ensure that schools comply with policies and legislation and influence school management processes. Although there was a sound understanding among the participants that they understood their role, there were mixed views on how effective CMs performed their role to support principals during education change (see Section 5.5.1.1 to 5.5.1.3). There was an overwhelming concern from the participants that their role and responsibilities to support principals during education change were often unclear (see Section Figure 5.2). In some instances, the CMs were very active in their administrative role, but the coordination of submissions from and to the districts and the PED was lacking. From the findings, there was a clear indication that CMs focused more on their administrative and compliance role than the provision of support to principals and schools during education change (see Section 5.5.2.4). It was evident that CMs had to ensure that the school was governed in compliance with the DBE

policies to ensure a conducive environment for teaching and learning; however, principals and schools lack the necessary resources to provide such a conducive environment, and the resources are very old or not available (see Section 5.5.2.5).

From the findings, it was also evident that the infrastructure in many schools was dilapidated and they did not even have the basic resources to establish a conducive environment for teaching and learning that would improve their education provision. Modelling and sharing good practices to assist principals in dealing with challenges and address the weak areas of performance of a school during evaluation will assist principals tremendously (see Section 5.5.2.6). It is important to understand that the role CMs perform informs the responsibilities they carry out, and the more they focus on their administrative and compliance role, the more their focus will only be on the submissions and compliance of their schools. The view of the participants was that they were often expected by the district and PED to take accountability and responsibility for duties that were beyond their mandate or job role. The CMs emphasised that spending time on such additional responsibilities had a direct impact on their support provision to principals and schools, as it took up a lot of their time while they should be focusing on their actual role. From the analysed data and interpretation, it was evident that CMs needed clear direction on their role and responsibilities from districts and PEDs.

6.3.3 Circuit manager's responsibilities

The participants had to respond to an interview question on their understanding and experience of the CM's responsibilities towards the provision of support to principals. They had to indicate what their understanding was of the responsibilities they had to execute to support principals during education change. Within the two districts, the participants had mixed views on what their responsibilities were; however, from the analysis and interpretation of the data, the following findings on what their responsibilities were (see Section Figure 5.2) could be summarised. CMs, like all employees, are expected and obliged to perform specific tasks and duties as per their job description. They are mainly expected to lead and oversee schools. The findings revealed the following seven core responsibilities: evaluation, profiling and re-profiling of schools; coordinating support and services; ensuring curriculum support and coordination of support; managing human and physical resources support; training and developing subordinates; implementing district and provincial plans for education change; responsibility for technical support; sharing accountability with principals on school performance and ensuring compliance.

- **Evaluation, profiling and re-profiling:** Schools are evaluated and profiled according to the nine key focus areas of whole-school evaluation and development. Weak areas of school performance are highlighted, and district and CM support is aligned with the

identified weak areas. As soon as improvements are made in the weak areas, the school is then re-profiled to identify where new or additional support is needed (see Section 5.5.3.1).

- **Coordinating support and services:** The CM is responsible for coordinating services and support from other sub-directorates in the district to the school. Also, the CM coordinates all the administrative submissions of schools to the district, the PED and the DBE (see Section 5.5.3.2).
- **Ensuring curriculum support and coordination of support:** The CM is responsible for ensuring that the national curriculum for basic education is implemented in schools and that schools comply with the predetermined curriculum and policies (see Section 5.5.3.4). Furthermore, the CM should coordinate curriculum support provision and services from the district to schools.
- **Managing human and physical resources support:** The CM has to manage the school resources for what they are attended to be used and then reports on these resources to the district and the PED (see Section 5.5.3.3). Moreover, the CM identifies where resources need maintenance and where new resources are depleted and cannot be used further.
- **Training and developing subordinates:** CMs have to prepare their own staff in their circuits, and specifically the principals they are responsible for, in their role and functions as leaders and managers of schools (see Section 5.5.3.5).
- **Implementing district and provincial plans for education change:** The CM is mandated by the district director and the MEC to implement district and provincial plans and strategies within schools (see Section 5.5.3.6).
- **Responsibility for technical support:** The CM is responsible for ensuring that principals and schools have the necessary information and communication technology equipment to connect online via the internet to the district and to submit reports to the CM, the PED and the DBE (see Section 5.5.3.3.2). CMs have to ensure that training is provided on the online SA-SAMS and DDD platforms.
- **Sharing accountability with principals and ensuring compliance:** Both the CM and the principal are accountable for the performance of the school and must ensure that the vision and mission of the district are implemented and aligned to enhance the quality and provision of education to learners (see Section 5.5.3.7). It is the responsibility of the CM and the principal to ensure that teachers and learners comply with policies and directives from the district and the PED.

Although these are the support responsibilities that CMs are accountable for, based on the participants' responses, there was no real consensus on what CMs are responsible for, especially

in well-performing schools in comparison to underperforming schools. The principals of well-performing schools felt that although CMs were responsible for executing these tasks, there was a lack of support in their execution of their responsibilities (see Section 5.5.3.7). From the analysed data and interpretations, the view of the principals of quintile 4 and 5 schools was that the CMs focused their responsibilities in terms of support to quintile 1, 2 and 3 schools and that they did not receive the same treatment or attention from their CMs during education change (see Section 5.5.1.2). However, the principals of quintile 1, 2 and 3 schools felt that quintile 4 and 5 schools had the necessary resources and that it was the responsibility of the CM and the district to close the gap that still existed between quintile 4 and 5 schools on the one hand and quintile 1, 2 and 3 schools on the other.

6.3.4 Experience, expectations and needs of principals

This theme was directly linked to the third secondary research question, which was to explore the experience, expectations and needs of principals pertaining to the support provided by CMs during education change (see Section 5.6). The principals' experience of CM support during education change was analysed and discussed. This theme was directly linked with the third research objective (see Section 1.6.2) to determine how CMs experienced CM support and what their expectations and needs during education change were. The theme had three categories, namely "principals' experience of CM support during education change", "principals' expectations during education change" and "principals' needs during education change" (see Section 5.5).

6.3.4.1 Principals' experience of circuit manager support during education change

The principals confirmed that CM support was needs-based support and was enacted through the data analysed on the evaluation of schools in the nine key focus areas of whole-school development and through the identified needs of principals and schools. From the CMs' perspective, they acknowledged that they could not visit schools only for the sake of visiting them. They confirmed that support provision must be carefully planned (see Sections 5.5.1.2 and 5.6.1.1.1). They added that they scheduled formal meetings with principals bi-weekly, quarterly, at the beginning of the year and when the need arose. Although the principals concurred that this was happening, there was an overwhelming response from them that CMs did not visit schools as regularly as they claimed they did, and when the principals called their CMs for assistance or support, there was a long delay before any action was taken (see Section 5.6.1.1.2). They also claimed that when a CM referred them to another unit for support, the CM often neglected to follow up or coordinate the support from other district units to support the principals and schools. Some principals also mentioned that CMs took up to one month to respond or simply never responded to their requests, especially when they asked for resources or the provision of

teachers. A few principals even claimed that some CMs did not have the knowledge or experience to effectively support them in their role because they did not have prior principalship experience and so they neither fully understood the dynamics of schools nor the challenges that principals faced during education change (see Section 5.6.1.1.3). Some principals claimed that as they were from well-performing schools, it seemed as if the CMs did not think they needed support, and therefore, they did not visit these schools regularly. However, there were principals who confirmed that their CM visited them regularly and responded to their needs and the challenges they faced during education change. From the data analysis, it was revealed that these principals were mostly from quintile 1, 2 and 3 schools. A few principals of quintile 5 schools also confirmed that when they contacted their CM, he or she would respond. From the analysis, it was clear that the district and specific CM responsible for their school had an influence on the principals' experience of CM support. Consequently, there was a clear difference between the principals' experience of CM support in the two districts.

6.3.4.2 Principals' expectations during education change

The participants' view on their expectations was that both the CM and the principal were accountable for the performance of the school and to provide an environment conducive to teaching and learning. Hence, there must be a mutual understanding of the challenges that schools face during education change (see Section 5.6.2.1). The participants' view was that if the CM and district did not understand their challenges, they would not be able to effectively support them during education change. From the analysed data, it was evident that CM support must be prioritised based on not just evaluation reports but also on the needs and the urgency of the challenges that principals and schools have to deal with during education change (see Section 5.6.2.2). The principals expected CMs, districts and the PED to be transparent on what is expected from them and provide clear direction on what is expected from them concerning submissions. They emphasised that the service and support provision from other sub-directorates in the system should be better coordinated by the CM (see Section 5.6.2.3).

6.3.4.3 Principals' needs during education change

The participants emphasised the importance of professional development and training during education change (see Section 5.6.3). The analysed data made it clear that the participants viewed professional development as critically important and playing a significant role during education change (see Section 5.6.3.1). The participants stated that they needed context-relevant training and development and just-in-time or on-the-job training to enable them to deal with the challenges of education change (see Section 5.6.3.1). They mentioned that the district and the CM should provide support in development and training and create more opportunities for

principals to attend these courses (see Section 5.6.3.2). Although a few participants confirmed that there were some courses available for development, they stated that those courses were very generic and not really applicable to their challenging contexts. They also emphasised that they needed to search on the SA-SAMS platform for opportunities for training, but due to their time constraints and workload, it was very difficult to attend those courses (see Section 5.6.3.3). The overwhelming concern of the participants was that it was difficult to attend courses, as they were overburdened with administrative responsibilities and had to meet the expectations of the district, the PED, the DBE, learners, teachers, parents and the surrounding community. The necessary time and space to attend these courses are not created for them. They mentioned that during education change, they urgently needed just-in-time training and refresher courses in administration, personnel, resources, financial and change management to help them to deal with education change and the challenges they faced. Furthermore, they said that they continuously needed administrative support in particular, as their administrative responsibilities had increased considerably, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. The principals agreed that the coordination of district and CM support must be improved, as it was not what it was expected to be (see Section 5.6.3.4). They emphasised that district leadership, and especially CMs' provision of support in school management processes, must be very strong to manage education change and support principals during such change. It was evident from the analysed data that CMs must be able to establish relationships built on trust and mutual respect by means of improving the rate of their visits to schools (see Section 5.6.3.5). These planned support visits must take into account the dynamics of schools, the challenges that principals face and their needs identified through continuous evaluation processes (see Section 5.6.3.6).

6.3.5 Challenges of circuit managers and principals during education change

The challenges of CMs and principals were directly linked to the fourth secondary research question (see Section 1.6.2) and were analysed and discussed to determine the challenges they face during education change (see Section 5.7). From the analysed data, it was evident that the role and responsibilities of the CM and the principal overlap in many ways and they are both held accountable for the management and performance of schools.

- **Overwhelming administrative workload:** From the analysed data, it was clear that the participants were overburdened by administrative responsibilities and the expectations of the districts and the PED they had to meet (see Section 5.7.1.1).
- **Shared accountability and responsibilities:** The principals expressed their view that they often felt that accountability and responsibilities were not shared between them and the CMs. They found it stressful and felt it was unfair, especially when the Grade 12 results had to be reported and explained to the districts and the PED (see Section 5.7.1.2).

- **Lack of human and physical resources:** The principals stated that the lack of human and physical resources to effectively manage their schools was a huge challenge, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic (see Section 5.7.2.1).
- **Facilitate curriculum implementation and coordinate support:** The participants emphasised that curriculum support and the coordination of support among sub-directorates within a district must improve, as alternative curriculum offerings such as online and blended learning, and the changes to the curriculum during the pandemic had become a great concern and challenge to deal with (see Section 5.7.2.2).
- **Lack of awareness and timeous feedback:** The participants regarded the communication between the district and schools as poor and a challenge, as the district education structures in the system neither created proper awareness of education changes nor did they provide timeous feedback on what had been submitted by schools or CMs (see Section 5.7.3.1). Both the principals and the CMs pointed out that the lack of awareness of the district and the PED regarding education change implemented was a huge challenge, and the direction and message they provided were often vague and unclear (see Section 5.7.2). They also emphasised that they needed prompt and timeous feedback from the district and the PED on their reports submitted through the SA-SAMS and DDD platforms (see Section 5.7.2.1).
- **Limitations in job-specific functions and predetermined mandate:** Although districts and PEDs expect CMs and principals to be accountable for the provision of education in schools and the performance of schools (see Section 5.7.3.2), CMs and principals often find it very difficult to operate within the specific mandate of their job, as they are limited by policies and legislation in finding creative and alternative ways to deal with education change and challenges (see Section 5.7.3.2).
- **Context-relevant training, development and opportunities:** The fact that there are limited opportunities for context-relevant training available for CMs and principals to deal with education change has become a huge challenge, they lack essential knowledge and skills to deal with education change (see Section 5.7.4.1). The participants declared that should context-relevant training not be provided to them, they would find it very difficult to deal with education change, currently and in the future (see Section 5.7.4.1).
- **Relationships and interconnectedness between CMs and principals during education change:** The participants stated their view that there must be a strong relationship between CMs and principals based on mutual understanding, trust and respect, as both of them are accountable for the management of schools and the provision of quality education to learners in a safe and conducive school environment (see Section 5.7.4.2).

- **Insufficient CM and district support during education change:** Some of the principals stated that they had a sound relationship with their CMs; however, communication challenges still prevailed, and there was a common view that the necessary interconnectedness between CMs and principals was lacking. The poor coordination of support, services and communication between schools and the district has become a serious challenge, as it has become more difficult during the COVID-19 pandemic to manage and implement curriculum changes in schools (see Section 5.7.5.1). Some principals stated their view that the support they received from both the CM and the district support was insufficient for them to deal with the challenges with regard to the pandemic in the education system. They emphasised that without continuous support from the district, they would not be able to deal with education change and challenges. Moreover, they would fall short in meeting the expectations of the district and not be able to perform their role and execute their responsibilities effectively (see Sections 5.7.1.1 to 5.7.5.1).

The findings of the study as discussed above enabled the researcher to develop a support framework for CMs to enhance their support to principals during education change.

6.4 SUPPORT FRAMEWORK FOR CIRCUIT MANAGERS TO SUPPORT PRINCIPALS DURING EDUCATION CHANGE

The purpose of this section is to elaborate on the support framework that can be implemented by CMs to ensure the effective and sustainable execution of their role and responsibilities to support principals during education change (see Section 1.6.2). Although districts and CMs provide support to schools, there is a great need that the support provided by CMs must be improved, planned, prioritised and executed not only to address the needs of principals and schools but also to enable principals to deal effectively with challenges during education change. Principals need resources and context-relevant training and development that will help them to address their needs and challenges during education change (Bantwini & Moorosi, 2018a; Van der Voort & Wood, 2016). It can be assumed that principals need different types of support and sustainable support from the CM and the district during education change (Deming, 1993; Hussain et al., 2018; Lewin, 1951).

The suggested support framework is based on the theoretical framework of Deming's (1993) and Lewin's (1951) theories. The two theorists present theories of organisational change and outline the importance of how people must be supported through organisational change processes for effective change. Deming (1993) presents 14 principles that organisational leadership and management must focus on for sustainable and effective organisational change. Lewin (1951) presents a three-step change model, where he suggests that an organisation must first be

unfrozen from its current state before change can be initiated. He emphasises the importance of continuous communication and support in all aspects to motivate people during the move towards new change. When the desired outcome for change has been met, the new state must be refrozen for effective and sustainable change. Figure 6-1 presents the proposed CM support framework.

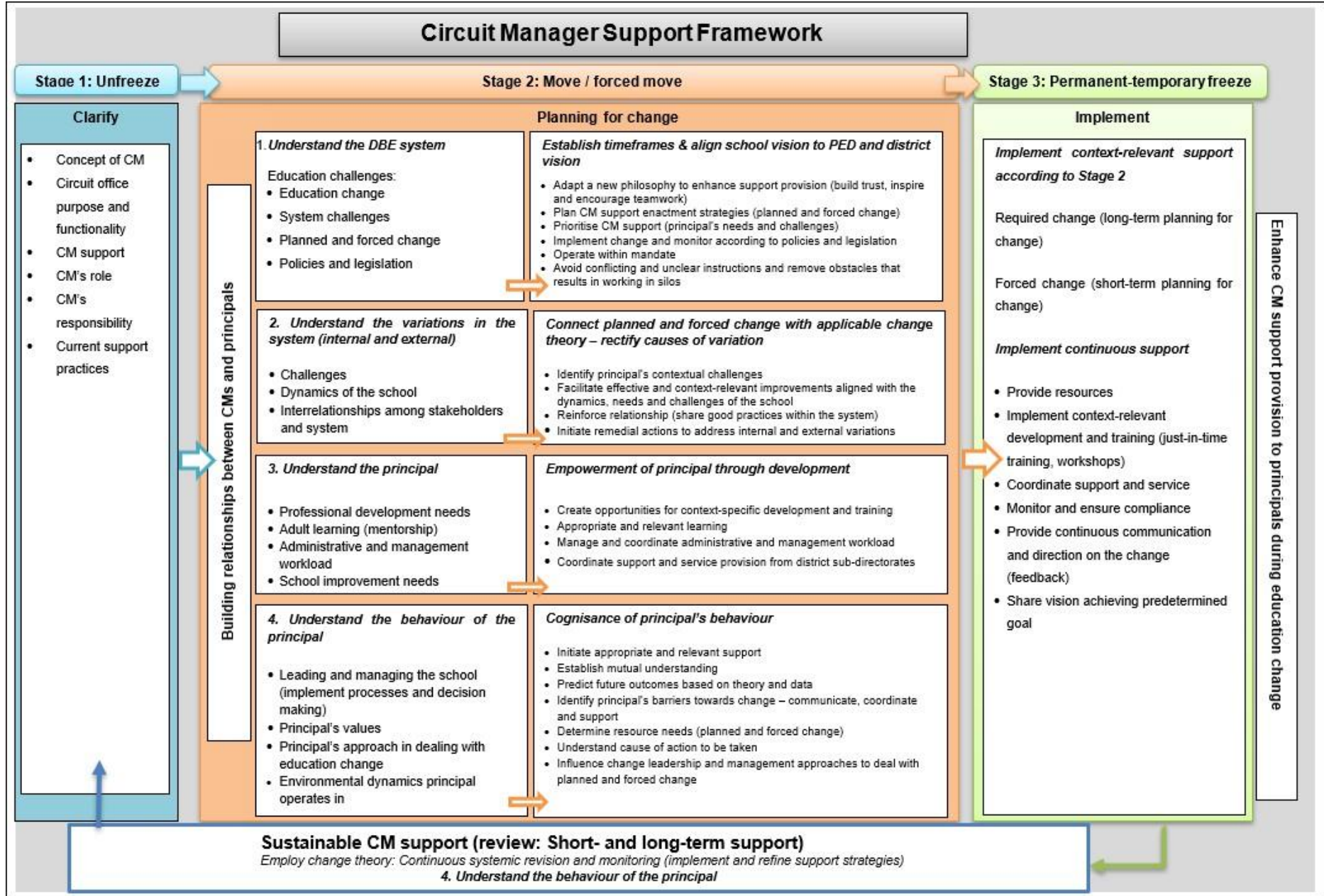


Figure 6-1: Circuit manager support framework for sustainable and improved support to principals during education

6.4.1 Stage 1: Unfreeze

CMs are responsible and accountable for supporting principals and schools in the administrative and management functionalities of the school. Therefore, these processes must be continuously monitored, revised and supported to provide quality education for learners. During the first stage, the following concepts to effectively support principals during education change need to be clarified and outlined:

- **Circuit manager (CM):** CMs in the Sedibeng East and West districts, as in many other districts in South Africa, are called *IDSOs*, *EDOs*, and so forth. Clarity must be provided on the term *circuit manager*, as they lead and manage schools in their circuit.
- **Circuit office:** The CM operates and functions from the district office of a district; therefore, clarity must be provided on the purpose and functionality of the circuit office.
- **CM support:** The expectations of the DBE, the PED and the district in terms of CM support must be clearly outlined through official communication structures and documentation.
- **CM's role:** The CM's role must be clearly demarcated in the district structures, and the context in which CMs have to perform their role during education change must be taken into consideration.
- **CM's responsibilities:** CMs' responsibilities and what is expected from them by the DBE, the PED and the district to execute their responsibilities must be clearly defined, taking into consideration the challenging context in which they function.
- **Current support practice:** The current role, responsibilities and support practices of CMs and districts must be revised to effectively support principals during education change.

When these concepts have been clarified and there is a mutual understanding of what is expected from the circuit office and the CM to support principals during education change, the CM can move to the second stage.

6.4.2 Stage 2: Move and forced move

Planning for education change is a critical stage during any organisational change process. During this stage, CMs and principals must be continuously informed of change and must be supported throughout the move processes.

6.4.2.1 Understand the DBE system and structure

CMs must have sound knowledge of the education changes initiated by the DBE. The PED and districts have to cascade the changes down to the CM to implement in schools. The CM should understand that these education changes may cause new challenges that have to be dealt with.

The CM's role is to start planning for support provision to principals and schools to deal with these challenges and determine how these challenges are affected by policies and legislation. Their role and responsibilities include the following:

- CMs must adopt a new philosophy to enhance their provision of support to principals by establishing relationships built on trust that would inspire people and encourage teamwork during change.
- CM support strategies and enactments must be carefully planned for education change and for change caused by external causes or factors such as the COVID-19 pandemic.
- CM support provision must be prioritised and aligned with the needs and the urgency of the challenges of principals and schools.
- The implementation of education change in schools must be continuously monitored according to policies and legislation.
- CMs should ensure that they and principals perform their roles and execute their responsibilities within their prescribed mandate.
- CMs should understand the DBE structure and system and the intended education changes. They should plan the support provision, attempt to avoid conflicting and unclear instructions and promote teamwork among all relevant stakeholders.

To enable the CM to provide effective and sustainable support, it is imperative that the CM understands the education system and the challenges caused by education change. These causes that need to be identified and addressed can be internal or external in nature.

6.4.2.2 Understand the variations in the system

CMs should understand the challenges caused by the internal and external forces that principals face in their specific contexts. They must understand the dynamics of each school in relation to the environment in which the school is located, the surrounding community, the teachers and learners and what resources the school has to provide education to learners. The following points apply to their understanding of the variations in the system:

- The CM must be able to identify the challenges principals experience in relation to the context in which they operate and function.
- The CM must be able to facilitate effective strategies and plans relevant to improvements that need to be made, aligned with the dynamics of the school.
- Throughout the process, the CM must strive towards reinforcing relationships among relevant stakeholders by means of sharing good practices within the system.

- The CM must initiate remedial action to address internal and external causes of variation identified during education change.

Understanding the system and the internal and external forces of variation will enable the CM to have a clearer view of how principals operate in their specific contexts.

6.4.2.3 Understand the principal

CMs can only provide effective support to a principal during education change if they understand the principal and how he or she leads and manages schools within his or her respective context. The CM has to understand the principal's professional development needs and how he or she adapts to different adult learning approaches. The CM must be aware of the administrative and management workload principals have to deal with during education change and clearly understand what the needs of a school are to improve the quality and provision of education to learners. Therefore, the CM must:

- create suitable opportunities for context-specific development and training for principals aligned with their challenging context;
- implement appropriate and relevant learning programmes aligned with the preferred adult learning choice or approach of the principal;
- assist principals in managing their administrative and management workload to create more time and space for them to deal with education challenges; and
- coordinate services and support from different sub-directorates to the school to support principals in dealing with context-relevant challenges.

When CMs understand the needs of principals, they can better understand why principals act and behave as they do in their leadership and management role and responsibilities.

6.4.2.4 Understand the behaviour of the principal

Understanding the behaviour of the principal is critically important for the CM to have an in-depth perspective and understanding of why the principal leads and manages the school in a particular way. A principal's values have a direct influence on how he or she leads and manages the school. By understanding the leadership and management role of the principal, the values of the principal and the environment in which the principal is leading and managing the school, the CM can:

- plan appropriate and relevant support to principals aligned with their context-relevant needs and challenges;

- relate better to context-relevant challenges and the support that is needed to deal with education change through the process of mutual understanding between the CM and the principal;
- predict future outcomes based on analysed data and theory;
- better identify principals' barriers towards change and improve communication and the coordination of support between schools and the district;
- determine the resource needs of principals and schools and plan accordingly for planned education change and forced education change;
- understand the course of action to be taken to effectively support principals in dealing with context-relevant education challenges; and
- influence principals' leadership and management approach through guidance, advice and mentorship to deal with planned and forced education change.

Understanding the DBE system, the variation in the system, principals' needs and the behaviour of principals in dealing with education change are the foundation of how the CM will plan support strategies and approaches to effectively support principals during education change.

6.4.3 Stage 3: Permanent-temporary freeze

During this stage, the CM starts to implement plans and strategies to achieve the desired long- and short-term outcomes to enable principals to deal with education change. CMs are informed by the four steps of understanding (see Section 6.4.2.1 to 6.4.2.4) in the move or forced move stage (see Section 6.4.2). The information gathered in these four steps will enable the CM to activate support enactment to principals. The following must be implemented by the CM to support principals in dealing with education change challenges:

- Provide context-relevant support to principals and schools through the information gathered in Stage 2.
- Provide the necessary resources to principals so that they can deal with the planned and forced education changes.
- Implement context-relevant training and development initiatives, activities and programmes to support principals according to the needs and the challenges identified in Stage 2 to reach the long- and short-term goals.
- Vigorously coordinate the support and services of sub-directorates and relevant stakeholders to principals and schools and ensure that feedback on these services is coordinated to the relevant stakeholders

- Throughout Stage 3, it is important that the CM monitors processes and ensures that the implemented plans and strategies and the schools comply with policies and legislation.
- A culture of communication must be established, and continuous communication between relevant stakeholders is critical from Stage 1 to Stage 3. Through continuous communication and feedback to principals, the CM provides support, guidance and direction to principals during education change.
- CMs and principals should continuously strive to achieve the shared vision and work towards reaching the predetermined goals.

The aim of Stage 3 is to enhance the support provided by CMs to principals during education change. As soon as the desired outcomes have been achieved, the new ways of support and enactment are then refrozen and maintained. The support processes are continuously reviewed and improved to ensure sustained provision of support by CMs. Throughout the three stages, the CM must have sound knowledge of organisational change theories such as Deming's (1993) change theory, his 14 principles for effective change and the three steps of Lewin's (1951) organisational change model. Throughout the CM support enactment process to provide principals with sustained support, the CM must employ the change theories and the proposed support processes of the framework to improve and sustain support to principals during education change.

6.5 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

There were some limitations in the study that need to be presented. Throughout any qualitative research, there are always some limitations that form part of the research activities (see Section 4.11). In many research studies, these limitations are out of the researcher's control and may have a direct effect on the results of the research (Creswell & Poth, 2017; Maxwell, 2012; Merriam & Grenier, 2019; Silverman, 2016). The limitations of this study are discussed below.

6.5.1 Theoretical limitations

In qualitative research, the methods used during the process of data collection and interpretation are very important. Due to the qualitative methodology chosen for this study, the researcher did not include any quantitative methods, which may have resulted in some limitations with regard to additional information that could have been gained if quantitative methods had been employed. The research was conducted only in two education districts in Gauteng, which resulted in the sample size being relevantly small; therefore, it would be difficult to generalise the results of the research. The research could have included the district directors and other HoDs of sub-directorates within the districts, as their sub-directorates provide service and support to schools.

For example, the human resources directorate could have been included, as they also have knowledge of the human and physical resources in schools and the policies that schools must comply with (DBE, 2005, 2012, 2013; Department of Education, 1998; RSA, 1996a, 1996b, 1996c, 1998, 2005). Also, curriculum HoDs could have been included, as their sub-directorate provides services and support to schools in relation to curriculum provision to different school phases and grades and they have experience and knowledge of the policies and legislation that schools must comply with (DBE, 2005, 2012, 2013). Their response would have made a significant contribution to the needs of principals and schools, as well as the coordination of support and services to schools during education change. The researcher chose an interpretive approach to analyse the data, which might have left some unanswered questions that could have been asked in the development of the CM support framework and the testing of Deming's (1993) organisational change theory and Lewin's (1951) organisational change model. Although most of Deming's (1993) principles were applicable to the development of the CM's support framework, there were only two principles that did not directly apply to the development of the CM support framework for sustainable support and support improvement to principals during education change.

6.5.2 The researcher's limitations

The researcher revealed his limitations during the research to design a framework to enhance sustainable support to principals during education change (see Creswell & Poth, 2017; Merriam & Grenier, 2019). His limitations were as follows:

- Although the researcher diligently prepared for the semi-structured virtual interviews, he could not fully prepare for any technical problems that could arise during the interviews regarding continuous connectivity with the interviewees. Internet connectivity was lost in two interviews; however, the researcher managed to reconnect with the interviewees and proceeded with the interviews.
- At times, the researcher was overeager to ask probing questions to change the direction of the responses of the interviewees and to keep to the point of the predetermined interview questions and answer the research objectives.
- In a few interviews, the researcher had to interrupt the interviewees when they had already answered the question and lost focus of the question that the researcher had originally asked, and even at times when probing questions were asked. After the first two interviews, the researcher's study leader advised the researcher to ask more relevant probing questions and indicated where the researcher could improve his interview techniques and approaches for the remaining 15 interviews.

- Following an interpretative approach in qualitative research, the researcher's bias cannot be fully prevented or ruled out, which also have an indirect effect on the data that were analysed. The researcher had ten years' experience as a teacher and serving as a member of the SMT and SGB and 12 years' experience working in the education faculty at the Vaal University of Technology in developing teacher qualifications. He did his utmost to remain neutral and unbiased. He focused on ensuring that he complied with the interview guide and also remained true to answer the secondary research questions and objectives.
- Although the country has 11 official languages, the second language of most of the participants was English, and therefore, the researcher often had to ensure that he clarified the interviewees' responses. He had to confirm that what the interviewees had responded were correct and true. English being their second language often caused the interviewees to linger long on answering a question just to ensure that they made their point. The interviewees often over-elaborated on a particular question just to ensure that they expressed their views and projected what they meant.
- In a few interviews, the researcher could sense that some of the interviewees were very cautious at the beginning when answering questions that might indicate who they were referring to. However, after a while, when they were more comfortable, all of them opened up and answered the questions truthfully and honestly. At the end of the interviews, the researcher concluded by asking the interviewees whether there was anything else they would like to elaborate on or whether they wanted to add to previous questions that they had answered. All of the interviewees confirmed that they were comfortable with their responses and did not want to add anything else. The researcher does not believe that any response of the interviewees was made to please him, as the participants seemed to be very honest and truthful and spoke with passion about their needs and challenges and their understanding of CM support.
- The researcher believes that the discussion that the independent district officials had with the participants during recruitment and the discussions the researcher had with the interviewees five minutes prior to the interviews eliminated any antagonism towards the research and the researcher. The researcher experienced some excitement among the interviewees that research was being conducted on CMs' provision of support to principals during education change.
- The researcher attempted to remain unbiased, although there were hints that a few participants might have been pointing the finger at others to remove the focus from them as that might have implicated their shortcomings in performing their role or responsibilities during education change.

Although there were some limitations in the study, the value of the study cannot be overemphasised.

6.5.3 The value of the study

This study makes a valuable contribution to CMs' provision of support to principals in schools during education change. The support framework may enable CMs to enhance their role and responsibilities that will empower principals to implement effective and sustainable education change. The CM's role and responsibilities are central to education change initiatives and the implementation of education change plans by the DBE, PEDs and districts to enhance education quality and the provision thereof in schools. Therefore, the support role and responsibilities of the CM to effectively support principals and schools in relation to the dynamics of the schools and considering the context in which these schools function in the Sedibeng West and East districts, Gauteng, are very important. The DBE and PEDs will also benefit from this study as many PEDs, districts, circuit offices, CMs, principals and schools across the country face similar challenges during education change. In addition, the DHET will also benefit, as they can assist districts, PEDs and the DBE to develop context-relevant professional development programmes and training to enable CM and principals to deal with and implement strategies for effective and sustainable education change. The study also resides under the niche research entity Edu-Lead of the North-West University, with its focus on education leadership and management. This entity will benefit from the fact that its database and its research capacity will be enriched by producing a new researcher.

6.5.4 Researcher's personal reflection

As a former teacher for ten years and serving on the SGB and the SMT for five years, the researcher had experience of the challenges that principals and schools faced during education change. He had insight into and experience of the support provided by districts and CMs to schools. Moreover, he had experience of the struggles that schools faced in acquiring the necessary resources to improve their provision of quality education to learners and to maintain the quality of education in the school. Principals rely heavily on the SMT for assistance and support in dealing with challenges, as they do not receive context-relevant support from the CMs to deal with education change. Since 2010, the researcher has been working at the Vaal University of Technology in the curriculum development department and gained insight into education programmes for teachers. He realised that there were limited professional development programmes for district officials and principals available to empower them to deal with education transformation. For the past six years, the researcher had the opportunity to work more closely with schools and principals, and so he began to gather more insight into the challenges that

principals and schools were facing. In 2017, the idea of gaining an understanding of CMs' provision of support to principals during education change was born, and the researcher began to embark on a journey of gaining an understanding of CMs' provision of support to schools during education transformation in different challenging contexts. In 2018, the researcher enrolled for a PhD at the North-West University to pursue the topic of CMs' provision of support to principals. In 2019, the title "The role and responsibilities of the circuit manager to support principals during education change" was registered after considerable reading and reviewing of literature on education change had been done by the researcher. Throughout the study, the researcher came to realise the importance of CMs' support and how CMs performed their role and executed their responsibilities to support principals and schools during education change. He also realised the importance of the CM position in the district structure and system, as they are seen as change agents in schools. It was evident that CMs were the voice of the principals in district meetings and within sub-directorates. The researcher realised that the role and responsibilities of the CM in supporting principals during education change could not be ignored, as they are the closest point of contact between principals and the district. Principals rely on and are very dependent on CMs' support in dealing with education challenges during education change. The researcher realised that CM support must be well planned and managed. CMs' provision of support must be aligned with the challenging contexts in which principals operate during education change.

CMs must ensure that they plan their support according to the needs of principals and the challenges they face in relation to the context in which they lead and manage schools. CMs have to devise plans and strategies to effectively support principals, sustain support and improve the provision of support for principals during education change. The CM support framework will also inspire new and existing CMs in other districts to improve their support to principals and will assist them in sustaining and improving their provision of support to principals during education change. Moreover, CMs must take responsibility for and action towards their self-development in becoming lifelong learners.

At the beginning of this study, the researcher was a complete novice in qualitative research and learnt the hard way and intensively about qualitative research and the methods and applications used. He also learnt a lot about the phenomenon of organisational change and organisational change theories. He feels that throughout the process, he has personally and professionally grown in the field of education leadership and management with the focus on the provision of support during education change.

6.5.5 Recommendations for future research in relation to this study

The researcher employed a pure qualitative research approach in this study by means of virtual interviews. Although the qualitative study provided an in-depth, detailed understanding of the phenomenon of the role and responsibilities of the CM to support principals during education change, the researcher needs to mention that a quantitative approach would have enhanced the findings. Quantitative research may provide a different insight into the phenomenon that the qualitative approach may have left out. By using a quantitative approach, one would also be able to test the different variables, interconnections and relationships between people and the elements that make up an organisation. The sample size was limited by the researcher's requirements (see Section 1.10.4), and therefore, a larger sample size can be used across multiple districts and provinces of South Africa to have a generalisation of the research findings.

6.5.5.1 Recommendation on the national level

A comparison was done between first-world countries and a few African countries. However, the researcher proposes that research should be done internationally within developing countries in order to motivate district officials and especially education superintendents and inspectors who are in similar positions to that of the CM in the South African basic education context to provide effective, sustainable and improved support to principals during education change.

6.5.5.2 Recommendation on the provincial level

The researcher proposes that similar research should be conducted in the eight other provinces of South Africa. As the world is continuously changing at a rapid rate as a result of economic, cultural, social and political influences that have a direct influence on the education system of a country, education change will be a continuous occurrence, and therefore, new challenges within the context in which schools function will arise.

6.5.5.3 Recommendation on the district level

The researcher proposes that the CM support framework should be tested in a longitudinal study in the remaining 13 GED districts in Gauteng for applicability and consistency. This should be done to draw more insight and evidence into the proposed support framework for CMs to support principals during education change in the GED structure, which will also result in a larger sample size. Conducting research in other districts will help the districts to get a clearer understanding of CM support in the GED and will also assist in their providing schools with the support they need.

6.5.5.4 Recommendation on school level

Although only principals of secondary schools were selected for this study, the researcher proposes that primary school principals, deputy principals and members of the SMT should be included in future studies. By including principals of primary schools, the researcher would be able to compare the challenges that principals of secondary and primary schools face and their different needs during education change. This information will inform and enrich the support provided by CMs to principals and schools during education change.

6.6 CONCLUSION

The aim of this research was to design a framework that could be implemented by CMs to ensure the effective and sustainable execution of their role and responsibilities to support principals during education change. The research objectives were to explore and describe the basic education system and structure in which CMs execute their role and responsibilities. In addition, the researcher attempted to determine how CMs experienced and understood their role and responsibilities in supporting principals during education change. Furthermore, the researcher's research objective was to explore the experience, expectations and needs of school principals pertaining to support provided by CMs during education change. He also aimed to identify the challenges that CMs and principals perceived during education change.

To enable the researcher to achieve these research objectives, a qualitative research design and methodology were employed. Two CMs each in the Sedibeng East and West education districts and seven secondary school principals from Sedibeng West and six from Sedibeng East representing quintile 1 to 5 schools were selected and interviewed. The selection criteria enabled the researcher to recruit participants who had sound experience in their respective roles as education leaders and managers and had sound knowledge of the phenomenon under investigation in order to obtain their perspectives on the researched phenomenon. Strict ethical principles were applied and adhered to throughout the research.

The study found that CMs' provision of support to principals during education change and context-relevant training and development of principals to deal with education challenges during education change were lacking in many schools. There was an outcry from the participants that more opportunities for professional development must be created by districts and CMs. Furthermore, the findings suggested that CM support must be planned according to and aligned with the needs of principals and the contextual challenges they face during education change. These plans and strategies must be developed and implemented by CMs to enable principals to deal with planned and forced education changes such as the COVID-19 pandemic. To reach the

short-term and long-term goals and objectives for education change, CMs must, therefore, continuously provide context-relevant support to principals and monitor schools' compliance with policies and legislation. A communication culture must be established between CMs and principals based on trust. It should be ensured that principals receive timeous feedback on initiated or implemented education change. To ensure that principals are continuously supported during education change, CMs have to improve the coordination of the support and services of sub-directorates in the district to principals. For effective and sustainable CM support to principals, these processes of planning support, implementing support and managing education change for planned and forced education change must be continuously reviewed to ensure that CMs' provision of support to principals during education change is improved. Based on the research objectives and findings, the researcher proposed a support framework for CMs to support school principals. The framework presented a well-planned, coordinated management approach for effective, sustainable and improved CM support to principals during education change.

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7.1 APPENDIX A: ETHICAL APPROVAL AND NORTH WEST UNIVERSITY CLEARANCE LETTER



Faculty Education:
Research & Innovation - M&D
Administration

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To Whom It May Concern

RE: Student name: Mr. ~~CMvA~~ Steyn;

Student number: 12665398 (PhD – Education Management and Leadership)

I hereby confirm that the research proposal of the above-mentioned student was approved by the Edu-Lead Scientific Committee meeting on 08 March 2019.

- Ethical Risk Level: Low risk (Submit to Edu-REC)

The Research title was referred to the Research and Innovation committee and approved on the 11 November 2019. Changes were made to the title and approved on 12 August 2021 as follows:

The role and responsibilities of Circuit Managers to support principals during education change

Should you have further enquiries in this regard, you are welcome to contact Ms ~~Ronelle~~ van Staden at 018 285 2101 or by email at Ronelle.vanStaden@nwu.ac.za, alternatively you may contact Prof J ~~Heystek~~ at 018 289 4762 or by email at Jan.Heystek@nwu.ac.za.

Yours sincerely

Prof J ~~Heystek~~

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Email: rkosinathi.machine@nwu.ac.za

ETHICS APPROVAL LETTER OF STUDY

Based on approval by the Faculty of Education Research Ethics Committee (EduREC) on 30 September 2021, this committee hereby approves your study as indicated below. This implies that the North-West University Senate Committee for Research Ethics (NWU-SCRE) grants its permission that, provided the special conditions specified below are met and pending any other authorisation that may be necessary, the study may be initiated, using the ethics number below.

Study title: The role and responsibilities of Circuit Managers to support principals during education change			
Study Leader/Supervisor (Principal Investigator)/Researcher: Dr M Fuller			
Student / Team: CMvA Steyn (PhD student – 12665388)			
Ethics number:	N	W	U
	-	0	1
	0	1	6
	-	2	1
	-	A	2
	Institution		Status
	Study Number		Year
Status: S = Submission; R = Re-Submission; P = Provisional Authorisation; A = Authorisation			
Application Type: Single study			
Commencement date: 30 September 2021	Risk:	Low	
Expiry date: 30 September 2022			
Approval of the study is initially provided for a year, after which continuation of the study is dependent on receipt and review of the annual (or as otherwise stipulated) monitoring report and the concomitant issuing of a letter of continuation.			

Special in process conditions of the research for approval (if applicable):

General conditions: While this ethics approval is subject to all declarations, undertakings and agreements incorporated and signed in the application form, the following general terms and conditions will apply: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The study leader/supervisor/principal investigator/researcher must report in the prescribed format to the EduREC:<ul style="list-style-type: none">- annually (or as otherwise requested) on the monitoring of the study, whereby a letter of continuation will be provided, and upon completion of the study; and- without any delay in case of any adverse event or incident (or any matter that interrupts sound ethical principles) during the course of the study.• The approval applies strictly to the proposal as stipulated in the application form. Should any amendments to the proposal be deemed necessary during the course of the study, the study leader/researcher must apply for approval of these amendments at the EduREC, prior to implementation. Should there be any deviations from the study proposal without the necessary approval of such amendments, the ethics approval is immediately and automatically forfeited.• Annually a number of studies may be randomly selected for an external audit.• The date of approval indicates the first date that the study may be started.• In the interest of ethical responsibility, the NWU-SCRE and EduREC reserves the right to:<ul style="list-style-type: none">- request access to any information or data at any time during the course or after completion of the study;

- to ask further questions, seek additional information, require further modification or monitor the conduct of your research or the informed consent process;
- withdraw or postpone approval if:
 - any unethical principles or practices of the study are revealed or suspected;
 - it becomes apparent that any relevant information was withheld from the EduREC or that information has been false or misrepresented;
 - submission of the annual (or otherwise stipulated) monitoring report, the required amendments, or reporting of adverse events or incidents was not done in a timely manner and accurately; and / or
 - new institutional rules, national legislation or international conventions deem it necessary.

The EduREC would like to remain at your service as scientist and researcher, and wishes you well with your study. Please do not hesitate to contact the EduREC or the NWU-SCRE for any further enquiries or requests for assistance.

Yours sincerely



Prof JAK Olivier
Chairperson NWU Faculty of Education Research Ethics Committee

Original details: (22351930) C:\Users\22351930\Desktop\ETHICS APPROVAL LETTER OF STUDY.docx
8 November 2018

Current details: (22351930) M:\05616533\Monitoring and Reporting Cluster\EthicalCertificates\Templates\Research Ethics Approval Letters\1.5.4.1 EG-REC Ethical Approval Letter.docx
5 December 2018

File reference: 61.5.4.2

7.2 APPENDIX B: PERMISSION LETTER TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE GAUTENG DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND MEMBER OF EXECUTIVE COUNCIL CONSENT



Private Bag X6001, Potchefstroom
South Africa 2520

Tel: 018 299-1111/2222
Web: <http://www.nwu.ac.za>

Faculty of Education

EDULEAD Research Niche

Dr M. Fuller

Tel. 018 285 2070
Molly.Fuller@nwu.ac.za

(Recipient name)
(Recipient address)
(Recipient address)
(Recipient address)

DATE

PERMISSION LETTER: GAUTENG PROVINCIAL EDUCATION DEPARTMENT (MEMBER OF EXECUTIVE COUNCIL)

I herewith wish to request your permission for the Circuit Managers and principals to participate in this research, which involves gathering data for the purpose, to determine how Circuit Managers can effectively execute their role and responsibilities to support principals during education change. Prior to granting permission, please acquaint yourself with the information below.

The details of the research are as follows:

TITLE OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT:

The role and responsibilities of Circuit Managers to support principals during education change

ETHICS APPLICATION NUMBER

NWU 01016-21-A2

PROJECT SUPERVISOR: Dr Molly Fuller

ADDRESS: Building B11, Room G10

Faculty of Education

North-West University

Potchefstroom campus, 2531

CONTACT NUMBER: 018 285 2070 / 0824558552

MEMBER OF PROJECT TEAM PhD-Student: Mr. CMvA Steyn

CONTACT NUMBER: 072 603 6393

FACULTY OF EDUCATION RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

Contact person: Ms. Erna Greyling, E-mail: Erna.Greyling@nwu.ac.za, Tel. (018) 299 4656

This study has been approved by the Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Education of the North-West University and will be conducted according to the ethical guidelines of this committee. Permission was also obtained from the provincial Gauteng Education Department of Basic Education.

What is this research about?

The aim of the study

To determine how Circuit Managers can effectively execute their role and responsibilities to support principals during education change.

The objective of the study is derived from the aim

- To **explore and describe** the basic education system and structure in which the Circuit Managers execute their role and responsibilities
- To **determine** how Circuit Managers experience and understand their role and responsibilities to support principals
- To **explore** the experiences, expectations and needs of school principals pertaining to support provided by Circuit Managers

- To **identify** the challenges that Circuit Managers and principals perceive when dealing with education change
- To **design** a framework that can be implemented by Circuit Managers to ensure effective and sustainable execution of their role and responsibilities to support principals during education change.

Participants

The participants will include:

- Sedibeng West and East districts and schools
- Two (2) Circuit Managers from each district with at least 2 years' experience in their role and responsibilities
- Thirteen (13) secondary school principals of with at least 5 years' experience as principal.

What is expected of the participants?

All selected, willing participants will be expected to participate in semi-structured interviews that will last a maximum of an hour.

All participants will participate on a voluntary basis. If any participant at any stage feels that they do not want to continue to participate (even after the data was collected), they are free to withdraw from the study without any penalisation or prejudice of any sort.

Benefits to the participants

There are no direct financial or other benefits for participants in this research study. However, the participants will help us to gain a better understanding on how Circuit Manager can effectively execute their role and responsibilities to support principals during education change, which in turn could inform and guide future policies advising Circuit Manager on their specific roles and responsibilities regarding the enactment of support to principals during education change.

Risks involved for participants

Apart for the time that participants will have to sacrifice in participating in the individual interviews (outside school hours), we as researchers foresee no physical, mental, psychological or any other risks for any participants participating in this research.

Confidentiality and protection of identity

The information collected from participants through the personal interview will remain confidential and will only be used for research purposes. The identity of participants who take part in the individual, semi-structured interviews will also remain confidential and will at no stage be revealed.

All collected electronic data will be stored on a password protected personal laptop and printed hard copies will be filed under pseudo names and locked in a safe and will be destroyed in 5 years.

Dissemination of findings

The findings of the research will be made available to the participating Circuit Managers, principals and your offices on request after the study has been completed. The data may be used for another research paper in the future. The participants will be asked to give consent to use the data again.

DECLARATION BY DIRECTOR FOR GAUTENG EDUCATION DEPARTMENT:

By signing below, I agree to give permission for the research to take place with the identified participants in the study entitled:

The role and responsibilities of Circuit Managers to support principals during education change

I declare that:

- I have read this information and consent form and understand what is expected of the participants in the research.
- I have had a chance to ask questions to the researcher and all my questions have been adequately answered.
- I understand that taking part in this study is voluntary and participants will not be pressurised to take part.
- Participants may choose to leave the study at any time and will not be penalised or prejudiced in any way.
- Participants may be asked to leave the research process before it is completed, if the researcher feels it is in their best interests, or if they do not follow the research procedures, as agreed to.

Signed at (place) _____ on (date) ____ / ____ /20 ____

Signature of Director



GAUTENG PROVINCE

Department: Education
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

8/4/4/1/2

GDE RESEARCH APPROVAL LETTER

Date:	26 October 2021
Validity of Research Approval:	2021/330
Name of Researcher:	Steyn CMvA
Address of Researcher:	30 O'Kulis Street S.E. 2 Vanderbijlpark
Telephone Number:	0726036393
Email address:	steyn1023@gmail.com / chriss@vut.ac.za
Research Topic:	The role and responsibilities of Circuit Managers to support principals during education change.
Type of qualification	PhD
Number and type of schools:	13 Secondary Schools
Districts/HO	Sedibeng East and Sedibeng West

Re: Approval in Respect of Request to Conduct Research

This letter serves to indicate that approval is hereby granted to the above-mentioned researcher to proceed with research in respect of the study indicated above. The onus rests with the researcher to negotiate appropriate and relevant time schedules with the school/s and/or offices involved to conduct the research. A separate copy of this letter must be presented to both the School (both Principal and SGB) and the District/Head Office Senior Manager confirming that permission has been granted for the research to be conducted.

The following conditions apply to GDE research. The researcher may proceed with the above study subject to the conditions listed below being met. Approval may be withdrawn should any of the conditions listed below be flouted:

1. Letter that would indicate that the said researcher/s has/have been granted permission from the Gauteng Department of Education to conduct the research study.

1

Making education a societal priority

Office of the Director: Education Research and Knowledge Management

7th Floor, 17 Simmonds Street, Johannesburg, 2001

Tel: (011) 355 0488


Email: Faith.Tshabalala@gauteng.gov.za

Website: www.education.gpg.gov.za

1. Letter that would indicate that the said researcher/s has/have been granted permission from the Gauteng Department of Education to conduct the research study.
2. The District/Head Office Senior Manager/s must be approached separately, and in writing, for permission to involve District/Head Office Officials in the project.
3. **Because of COVID 19 pandemic researchers can ONLY collect data online, telephonically or may make arrangements for Zoom with the school Principal. Requests for such arrangements should be submitted to the GDE Education Research and Knowledge Management directorate. The approval letter will then indicate the type of arrangements that have been made with the school.**
4. **The Researchers are advised to make arrangements with the schools via Fax, email or telephonically with the Principal.**
5. A copy of this letter must be forwarded to the school principal and the chairperson of the School Governing Body (SGB) that would indicate that the researcher/s have been granted permission from the Gauteng Department of Education to conduct the research study.
6. A letter / document that outline the purpose of the research and the anticipated outcomes of such research must be made available to the principals, SGBs and District/Head Office Senior Managers of the schools and districts/offices concerned, respectively.
7. The Researcher will make every effort obtain the goodwill and co-operation of all the GDE officials, principals, and chairpersons of the SGBs, teachers and learners involved. Persons who offer their co-operation will not receive additional remuneration from the Department while those that opt not to participate will not be penalised in any way.
8. Research may only be conducted after school hours so that the normal school programme is not interrupted. The Principal (if at a school) and/or Director (if at a district/head office) must be consulted about an appropriate time when the researcher/s may carry out their research at the sites that they manage.
9. Research may only commence from the second week of February and must be concluded before the beginning of the last quarter of the academic year. If incomplete, an amended Research Approval letter may be requested to conduct research in the following year.
10. Items 6 and 7 will not apply to any research effort being undertaken on behalf of the GDE. Such research will have been commissioned and be paid for by the Gauteng Department of Education.
11. It is the researcher's responsibility to obtain written parental consent of all learners that are expected to participate in the study.
12. The researcher is responsible for supplying and utilising his/her own research resources, such as stationery, photocopies, transport, faxes and telephones and should not depend on the goodwill of the institutions and/or the offices visited for supplying such resources.
13. The names of the GDE officials, schools, principals, parents, teachers and learners that participate in the study may not appear in the research report without the written consent of each of these individuals and/or organisations.
14. On completion of the study the researcher/s must supply the Director: Knowledge Management & Research with one Hard Cover bound and an electronic copy of the research.
15. The researcher may be expected to provide short presentations on the purpose, findings and recommendations of his/her research to both GDE officials and the schools concerned.
16. Should the researcher have been involved with research at a school and/or a district/head office level, the Director concerned must also be supplied with a brief summary of the purpose, findings and recommendations of the research study.

The Gauteng Department of Education wishes you well in this important undertaking and looks forward to examining the findings of your research study.

Kind regards



Mr Gumani Mukatuni

Acting CES: Education Research and Knowledge Management

DATE: 26/10/2021

2

Making education a societal priority

Office of the Director: Education Research and Knowledge Management

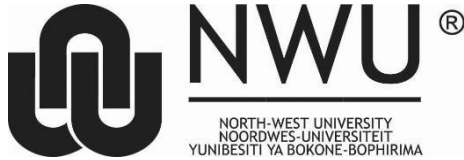
7th Floor, 17 Simmonds Street, Johannesburg, 2001

Tel: (011) 355 0488

Email: Faith.Tshabalala@gauteng.gov.za

Website: www.education.gpg.gov.za

7.3 APPENDIX C: PERMISSION LETTER - DISTRICT DIRECTORS SEDIBENG EAST AND WEST DISTRICTS AND DISTRICT DIRECTOR'S CONSENT



Private Bag X6001, Potchefstroom
South Africa 2520

Tel: 018 299-1111/2222
Web: <http://www.nwu.ac.za>

Faculty of Education

EDULEAD Research Niche

Dr M. Fuller
Tel. 018 285 2070
Molly.Fuller@nwu.ac.za

(Recipient name)
(Recipient address)
(Recipient address)
(Recipient address)

DATE

PERMISSION LETTER: DISTRICT DIRECTOR

I herewith wish to request your permission for the Circuit Managers and principals to participate in this research, which involves gathering data for the purpose, to determine how Circuit Managers can effectively execute their role and responsibilities to support principals during education change. Prior to granting permission, please acquaint yourself with the information below.

The details of the research are as follows:

TITLE OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT:

The role and responsibilities of Circuit Managers to support principals during education change

ETHICS APPLICATION NUMBER

NWU 01016-21-A2

GDE [8/4/4/12] 2021/330

PROJECT SUPERVISOR: Dr Molly Fuller

ADDRESS: Building B11, Room G10

Faculty of Education

North-West University

Potchefstroom campus, 2531

CONTACT NUMBER: 018 285 2070 / 0824558552

MEMBER OF PROJECT TEAM PhD-Student: Mr. CMvA Steyn

CONTACT NUMBER: 072 603 6393

FACULTY OF EDUCATION RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

Contact person: Ms. Erna Greyling, E-mail: Erna.Greyling@nwu.ac.za, Tel. (018) 299 4656

This study has been approved by the Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Education of the North-West University and will be conducted according to the ethical guidelines of this committee. Permission was also obtained from the provincial Gauteng Education Department of Basic Education.

What is this research about?

The aim of the study

To determine how Circuit Managers can effectively execute their role and responsibilities to support principals during education change.

The objective of the study is derived from the aim

- To **explore and describe** the basic education system and structure in which the Circuit Managers execute their role and responsibilities
- To **determine** how Circuit Managers experience and understand their role and responsibilities to support principals
- To **explore** the experiences, expectations and needs of school principals pertaining to support provided by Circuit Managers
- To **identify** the challenges that Circuit Managers and principals perceive when dealing with education change

- To **design** a framework that can be implemented by Circuit Managers to ensure effective and sustainable execution of their role and responsibilities to support principals during education change.

Participants

The participants will include:

- Sedibeng West and East districts and schools
- two (2) Circuit Managers from each district with at least 2 years' experience in their role and responsibilities
- Thirteen (13) secondary school principals of with at least 5 years' experience as principal.

What is expected of the participants?

All selected, willing participants will be expected to participate in semi-structured interviews that will last a maximum of an hour.

All participants will participate on a voluntary basis. If any participant at any stage feels that they do not want to continue to participate (even after the data was collected), they are free to withdraw from the study without any penalisation or prejudice of any sort.

Benefits to the participants

There are no direct financial or other benefits for participants in this research study. However, the participants will help us to gain a better understanding on how Circuit Manager can effectively execute their role and responsibilities to support principals during education change, which in turn could inform and guide future policies advising Circuit Manager on their specific roles and responsibilities regarding the enactment of support to principals during education change.

Risks involved for participants

Apart for the time that participants will have to sacrifice in participating in the individual interviews (outside school hours), we as researchers foresee no physical, mental, psychological or any other risks for any participants participating in this research.

Confidentiality and protection of identity

The information collected from participants through the personal interview will remain confidential and will only be used for research purposes. The identity of participants who take part in the individual, semi-structured interviews will also remain confidential and will at no stage be revealed. All collected electronic data will be stored on a password protected personal laptop and printed hard copies will be filed under pseudo names and locked in a safe and will be destroyed in 5 years.

Dissemination of findings

The findings of the research will be made available to the participating Circuit Managers, principals and your offices on request after the study has been completed. The data may be used for another research paper in the future. The participants will be asked to give consent to use the data again.

DECLARATION BY DIRECTOR FOR GAUTENG EDUCATION DEPARTMENT:

By signing below, I agree to give permission for the research to take place with the identified participants in the study entitled:

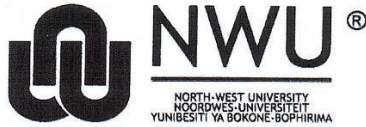
The role and responsibilities of Circuit Managers to support principals during education change

I declare that:

- I have read this information and consent form and understand what is expected of the participants in the research.
- I have had a chance to ask questions to the researcher and all my questions have been adequately answered.
- I understand that taking part in this study is voluntary and participants will not be pressurised to take part.
- Participants may choose to leave the study at any time and will not be penalised or prejudiced in any way.
- Participants may be asked to leave the research process before it is completed, if the researcher feels it is in their best interests, or if they do not follow the research procedures, as agreed to.

Signed at (place) _____ on (date) ____/____/20____

Signature of Director



Private Bag X6001, Potchefstroom
South Africa 2520

Tel: 018 299-1111/2222
Web: <http://www.nwu.ac.za>

Faculty of Education

EDULEAD Research Niche

Dr M. Fuller
Tel. 018 285 2070
Molly.Fuller@nwu.ac.za

(Recipient name) *Mr BP Metsing*
(Recipient address) *Directorate: Sedibeng*
(Recipient address) *East District*
(Recipient address) *Verreuging*
1930

DATE *11/11/2021*

PERMISSION LETTER: DISTRICT DIRECTOR

I herewith wish to request your permission for the Circuit Managers and principals to participate in this research, which involves gathering data for the purpose, to determine how Circuit Managers can effectively execute their role and responsibilities to support principals during education change. Prior to granting permission, please acquaint yourself with the information below.

The details of the research are as follows:

TITLE OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT:

The role and responsibilities of Circuit Managers to support principals during education change

ETHICS APPLICATION NUMBER

NWU 01016-21-A2

GDE [8/4/4/12] 2021/330

PROJECT SUPERVISOR: Dr Molly Fuller

ADDRESS: Building B11, Room G10

Faculty of Education

North-West University

Potchefstroom campus, 2531

CONTACT NUMBER: 018 285 2070 / 0824558552

MEMBER OF PROJECT TEAM PhD-Student: Mr CMvA Steyn

CONTACT NUMBER: 072 603 6393

FACULTY OF EDUCATION RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

Contact person: Ms Erna Greyling, E-mail: Erna.Greyling@nwu.ac.za, Tel. (018) 299 4656

This study has been approved by the Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Education of the North-West University and will be conducted according to the ethical guidelines of this committee. Permission was also obtained from the provincial Gauteng Education Department of Basic Education.

What is this research about?

The aim of the study

To determine how Circuit Managers can effectively execute their role and responsibilities to support principals during education change.

The objective of the study is derived from the aim

- To **explore and describe** the basic education system and structure in which the Circuit Managers execute their role and responsibilities
- To **determine** how Circuit Managers experience and understand their role and responsibilities to support principals
- To **explore** the experiences, expectations and needs of school principals pertaining to support provided by Circuit Managers
- To **identify** the barriers and enablers that Circuit Managers and principals perceive when dealing with education change
- To **design** a framework that can be implemented by Circuit Managers to ensure effective and sustainable execution of their role and responsibilities to support principals during education change.

Participants

The participants will include:

- Sedibeng West and East districts and schools
- two (2) Circuit Managers from each district with at least 2 years' experience in their role and responsibilities
- thirteen (13) secondary school principals of with at least 5 years' experience as principal.

What is expected of the participants?

All selected, willing participants will be expected to participate in semi-structured interviews that will last a maximum of an hour.

All participants will participate on a voluntary basis. If any participant at any stage feels that they do not want to continue to participate (even after the data was collected), they are free to withdraw from the study without any penalisation or prejudice of any sort.

Benefits to the participants

There are no direct financial or other benefits for participants in this research study. However, the participants will help us to gain a better understanding on how Circuit Manager can effectively execute their role and responsibilities to support principals during education change, which in turn could inform and guide future policies advising Circuit Manager on their specific roles and responsibilities regarding the enactment of support to principals during education change.

Risks involved for participants

Apart for the time that participants will have to sacrifice in participating in the individual interviews (outside school hours), we as researchers foresee no physical, mental, psychological or any other risks for any participants participating in this research.

Confidentiality and protection of identity

The information collected from participants through the personal interview will remain confidential and will only be used for research purposes. The identity of participants who take part in the individual, semi-structured interviews will also remain confidential and will at no stage be revealed. All collected electronic data will be stored on a password protected personal laptop and printed hard copies will be filed under pseudo names and locked in a safe and will be destroyed in 5 years.

Dissemination of findings

The findings of the research will be made available to the participating Circuit Managers, principals and your offices on request after the study has been completed. The data may be used for another research paper in the future. The participants will be asked to give consent to use the data again.

DECLARATION BY DIRECTOR FOR GAUTENG EDUCATION DEPARTMENT:

By signing below, I B.P. Metsing agree to give permission for the research to take place with the identified participants in the study entitled:

The role and responsibilities of Circuit Managers to support principals during education change

I declare that:

- I have read this information and consent form and understand what is expected of the participants in the research.
- I have had a chance to ask questions to the researcher and all my questions have been adequately answered.
- I understand that taking part in this study is voluntary and participants will not be pressurised to take part.
- Participants may choose to leave the study at any time and will not be penalised or prejudiced in any way.
- Participants may be asked to leave the research process before it is completed, if the researcher feels it is in their best interests, or if they do not follow the research procedures, as agreed to.

Signed at (place) Vereeniging on (date) 11/11/2021


Signature of Director



GAUTENG PROVINCE

EDUCATION
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Enquiries: Ms. M.A Mosia
Sub-Directorate: ISSP- Policy and Planning
Tel: (016) 594 92 81
Cell: 066 487 2663
Ref: ISSP- P & P

TO : PRINCIPALS OF ALL HIGH SCHOOLS IN SW DISTRICT

FROM : DISTRICT DIRECTOR: T.I MASEKO

DATE : 10 NOVEMBER 2021

RE : PERMISSION TO ALLOW THE RESERCHER TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN SW DISTRICT


Dear Colleagues

This letter serves to confirm that Chris Steyn is a final PhD student at North West University in Leadership and Management. He has been granted the approval by Head office to conduct research at Sedibeng West District Circuit Management Sub directorate.

Therefore, permission is hereby granted for him to conduct research project in SW District, Circuit Management Sub directorate on the topic: **The role and responsibility of Circuit Managers to support Principals during the Education change.**

However Kindly note that prior arrangements must be done to avoid the disruptions of officials in their daily plans, all arrangements must be done through the office of the Director.

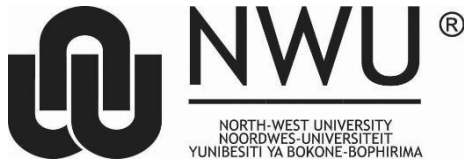
Regards.



Mr T.I Maseko
Acting District Director

Date: 10-11-2021

7.4 APPENDIX D: CIRCUIT MANAGER PERMISSION LETTER



Private Bag X6001, Potchefstroom
South Africa 2520

Tel: 018 299-1111/2222

Web: <http://www.nwu.ac.za>

Faculty of Education

EDULEAD Research Niche

Dr M. Fuller

Tel. 018 285 2070

Molly.Fuller@nwu.ac.za

(Recipient name)

(Recipient address)

(Recipient address)

(Recipient address)

DATE

PERMISSION LETTER: RESEARCH PARTICIPANT

I herewith wish to request your permission for the principal to participate in this research, which involves gathering data for the purpose, to determine how Circuit Managers can effectively execute their role and responsibilities to support principals during education change. Prior to granting permission, please acquaint yourself with the information below.

The details of the research are as follows:

TITLE OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT:

The role and responsibilities of Circuit Managers to support principals during education change

ETHICS APPLICATION NUMBER

NWU 01016-21-A2

GDE [8/4/4/12] 2021/330

PROJECT SUPERVISOR: Dr Molly Fuller

ADDRESS: Building B11, Room G10

Faculty of Education

North-West University

Potchefstroom campus, 2531

CONTACT NUMBER: 018 285 2070 / 0824558552

MEMBER OF PROJECT TEAM PhD-Student: Mr. CMvA Steyn

CONTACT NUMBER: 072 603 6393

FACULTY OF EDUCATION RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

Contact person: Ms. Erna Greyling, E-mail: Erna.Greyling@nwu.ac.za, Tel. (018) 299 4656

This study has been approved by the Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Education of the North-West University and will be conducted according to the ethical guidelines of this committee. Permission was also obtained from the provincial Gauteng Education Department of Basic Education.

What is this research about?

The aim of the study

To determine how Circuit Managers can effectively execute their role and responsibilities to support principals during education change.

The objective of the study is derived from the aim

- To **explore and describe** the basic education system and structure in which the Circuit Managers execute their role and responsibilities
- To **determine** how Circuit Managers experience and understand their role and responsibilities to support principals
- To **explore** the experiences, expectations and needs of school principals pertaining to support provided by Circuit Managers
- To **identify** the challenges that Circuit Managers and principals perceive when dealing with education change
- To **design** a framework that can be implemented by Circuit Managers to ensure effective and sustainable execution of their role and responsibilities to support principals during education change

Participants

The participants will include:

- Sedibeng West and East districts and schools
- two (2) Circuit Managers from each district with at least 2 years' experience in their role and responsibilities
- Thirteen (13) secondary school principals of with at least 5 years' experience as principal.

What is expected of the participants?

All selected, willing participants will be expected to participate in semi-structured interviews that will last a maximum of an hour.

All participants will participate on a voluntary basis. If any participant at any stage feels that they do not want to continue to participate (even after the data was collected), they are free to withdraw from the study without any penalisation or prejudice of any sort.

Benefits to the participants

There are no direct financial or other benefits for participants in this research study. However, the participants will help us to gain a better understanding on how Circuit Managers can effectively execute their role and responsibilities to support principals during education change, which in turn could inform and guide future policies advising Circuit Managers on their specific roles and responsibilities regarding the enactment of support to principals during education change.

Risks involved for participants

Apart for the time that participants will have to sacrifice in participating in the individual interviews (outside school hours), we as researchers foresee no physical, mental, psychological or any other risks for any participants participating in this research.

Confidentiality and protection of identity

The information collected from participants through the personal interview will remain confidential and will only be used for research purposes. The identity of participants who take part in the individual, semi-structured interviews will also remain confidential and will at no stage be revealed. All collected electronic data will be stored on a password protected personal laptop and printed hard copies will be filed under pseudo names and locked in a safe and will be destroyed in 5 years.

Dissemination of findings

The findings of the research will be made available to the participating Circuit Managers, principals and your offices on request after the study has been completed. The data may be used for another research paper in the future. The participants will be asked to give consent to use the data again.

DECLARATION BY PRINCIPAL:

By signing below, I agree to give permission for the research to take place with the identified participants in the study entitled:

The role and responsibilities of Circuit Managers to support principals during education change

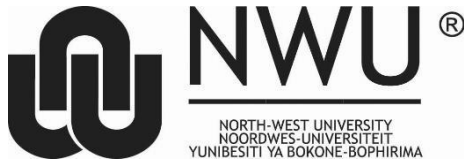
I declare that:

- I have read this information and consent form and understand what is expected of the participants in the research.
- I have had a chance to ask questions to the researcher and all my questions have been adequately answered.
- I understand that taking part in this study is voluntary and participants will not be pressurised to take part.
- Participants may choose to leave the study at any time and will not be penalised or prejudiced in any way.
- Participants may be asked to leave the research process before it is completed, if the researcher feels it is in their best interests, or if they do not follow the research procedures, as agreed to.

Signed at (place) _____ on (date) ____ / ____ /20____

Signature of Circuit Manager

7.5 APPENDIX E: CIRCUIT MANAGER PERMISSION LETTER



Private Bag X6001, Potchefstroom
South Africa 2520

Tel: 018 299-1111/2222

Web: <http://www.nwu.ac.za>

Faculty of Education

EDULEAD Research Niche

Dr M. Fuller

Tel. 018 285 2070

Molly.Fuller@nwu.ac.za

(Recipient name)

(Recipient address)

(Recipient address)

(Recipient address)

DATE

PERMISSION LETTER: SCHOOL PRINCIPAL

I herewith wish to request your permission for the principal to participate in this research, which involves gathering data for the purpose, to determine how Circuit Managers can effectively execute their role and responsibilities to support principals during education change. Prior to granting permission, please acquaint yourself with the information below.

The details of the research are as follows:

TITLE OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT:

The role and responsibilities of Circuit Managers to support principals during education change

ETHICS APPLICATION NUMBER

NWU 01016-21-A2

GDE [8/4/4/12] 2021/330

PROJECT SUPERVISOR: Dr Molly Fuller

ADDRESS: Building B11, Room G10

Faculty of Education

North-West University

Potchefstroom campus, 2531

CONTACT NUMBER: 018 285 2070 / 0824558552

MEMBER OF PROJECT TEAM PhD-Student: Mr. CMvA Steyn

CONTACT NUMBER: 072 603 6393

FACULTY OF EDUCATION RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

Contact person: Ms. Erna Greyling, E-mail: Erna.Greyling@nwu.ac.za, Tel. (018) 299 4656

This study has been approved by the Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Education of the North-West University and will be conducted according to the ethical guidelines of this committee. Permission was also obtained from the provincial Gauteng Education Department of Basic Education.

What is this research about?

The aim of the study

To determine how Circuit Managers can effectively execute their role and responsibilities to support principals during education change.

The objective of the study is derived from the aim

- To **explore and describe** the basic education system and structure in which the Circuit Managers execute their role and responsibilities
- To **determine** how Circuit Managers experience and understand their role and responsibilities to support principals
- To **explore** the experiences, expectations and needs of school principals pertaining to support provided by Circuit Managers
- To **identify** the challenges that Circuit Managers and principals perceive when dealing with education change
- To **design** a framework that can be implemented by Circuit Managers to ensure effective and sustainable execution of their role and responsibilities to support principals during education change

Participants

The participants will include:

- Sedibeng West and East districts and schools
- two (2) Circuit Managers from each district with at least 2 years' experience in their role and responsibilities
- Thirteen (13) secondary school principals of with at least 5 years' experience as principal.

What is expected of the participants?

All selected, willing participants will be expected to participate in semi-structured interviews that will last a maximum of an hour.

All participants will participate on a voluntary basis. If any participant at any stage feels that they do not want to continue to participate (even after the data was collected), they are free to withdraw

Benefits to the participants

There are no direct financial or other benefits for participants in this research study. However, the participants will help us to gain a better understanding on how Circuit Managers can effectively execute their role and responsibilities to support principals during education change, which in turn could inform and guide future policies advising Circuit Managers on their specific roles and responsibilities regarding the enactment of support to principals during education change.

Risks involved for participants

Apart for the time that participants will have to sacrifice in participating in the individual interviews (outside school hours), we as researchers foresee no physical, mental, psychological or any other risks for any participants participating in this research.

Confidentiality and protection of identity

The information collected from participants through the personal interview will remain confidential and will only be used for research purposes. The identity of participants who take part in the individual, semi-structured interviews will also remain confidential and will at no stage be revealed. All collected electronic data will be stored on a password protected personal laptop and printed hard copies will be filed under pseudo names and locked in a safe and will be destroyed in 5 years.

Dissemination of findings

The findings of the research will be made available to the participating Circuit Managers, principals and your offices on request after the study has been completed. The data may be used

for another research paper in the future. The participants will be asked to give consent to use the data again.

DECLARATION BY PRINCIPAL:

By signing below, I agree to give permission for the research to take place with the identified participants in the study entitled:

The role and responsibilities of Circuit Managers to support principals during education change

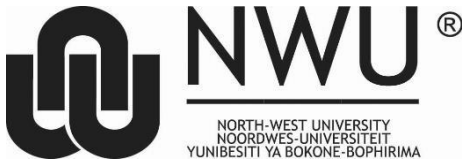
I declare that:

- I have read this information and consent form and understand what is expected of the participants in the research.
- I have had a chance to ask questions to the researcher and all my questions have been adequately answered.
- I understand that taking part in this study is voluntary and participants will not be pressurised to take part.
- Participants may choose to leave the study at any time and will not be penalised or prejudiced in any way.
- Participants may be asked to leave the research process before it is completed, if the researcher feels it is in their best interests, or if they do not follow the research procedures, as agreed to.

Signed at (place) _____ on (date) ____ / ____ /20____

Signature of School Principal

7.6 APPENDIX F: GOODWILL PERMISSION LETTER: SCHOOL GOVERNING BODY



(Recipient name)

(Recipient address)

(Recipient address)

(Recipient address)

Private Bag X6001, Potchefstroom
South Africa 2520

Tel: 018 299-1111/2222

Web: <http://www.nwu.ac.za>

Faculty of Education

EDULEAD Research Niche

Dr M. Fuller

Tel. 018 285 2070

Molly.Fuller@nwu.ac.za

DATE

GOODWILL PERMISSION LETTER: SCHOOL GOVERNING BODY

I herewith wish to request your permission for school principals to participate in this research, which involves gathering data for the purpose, to determine how Circuit Managers can effectively execute their role and responsibilities to support principals during education change. Prior to granting permission, please acquaint yourself with the information below.

The details of the research are as follows:

TITLE OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT:

The role and responsibilities of Circuit Managers to support principals during education change

ETHICS APPLICATION NUMBER

NWU 01016-21-A2

GDE [8/4/4/12] 2021/330

PROJECT SUPERVISOR: Dr Molly Fuller

ADDRESS: Building B11, Room G10

Faculty of Education

North-West University

Potchefstroom campus, 2531

CONTACT NUMBER: 018 285 2070 / 0824558552

MEMBER OF PROJECT TEAM PhD-Student: Mr. CMvA Steyn

CONTACT NUMBER: 072 603 6393

FACULTY OF EDUCATION RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

Contact person: Ms. Erna Greyling, E-mail: Erna.Greyling@nwu.ac.za, Tel. (018) 299 4656

This study has been approved by the Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Education of the North-West University and will be conducted according to the ethical guidelines of this committee. Permission was also obtained from the provincial Department of Basic Education, District Director and School Governing Body.

What is this research about?

The aim of the study

To determine how Circuit Managers can effectively execute their role and responsibilities to support principals during education change.

The objective of the study is derived from the aim

- To **explore and describe** the basic education system and structure in which the Circuit Managers execute their role and responsibilities
- To **determine** how Circuit Managers experience and understand their role and responsibilities to support principals
- To **explore** the experiences, expectations and needs of school principals pertaining to support provided by Circuit Managers
- To **identify** the challenges that Circuit Managers and principals perceive when dealing with education change
- To **design** a framework that can be implemented by Circuit Managers to ensure effective and sustainable execution of their role and responsibilities to support principals during education change

Participants

The participants will include:

- Sedibeng West and East districts and schools

- two (2) Circuit Managers from each district with at least 2 years' experience in their role and responsibilities
- Thirteen (13) secondary school principals of with at least 5 years' experience as principal.

What is expected of participants?

All selected, willing participants will be expected to participate in individual semi-structured interviews that will last a maximum of an hour.

All participants will participate on a voluntary basis. If any participant at any stage feels that they do not want to continue to participate (even after the data was collected), they are free to withdraw from the study without any penalisation or prejudice of any sort.

Benefits to the participant

There are no direct financial or other benefits for participants in this research study. However, the participants will help us to gain a better understanding of how Circuit Manager can effectively execute their role and responsibilities to support principals during education change. The indirect benefit of this research study is that certain stakeholders such as DBE, CM and principals can learn from the findings and recommendations from the study and inform future policies, explicitly describing the role and responsibilities of CM. A framework to enhance the CM's support provision to principals in dealing with education change can be applied by the above-mentioned stakeholders.

Risks involved for participants

Apart for the time that participants will have to sacrifice in participating in the individual interviews, we as researchers foresee no physical, mental, psychological or any other risks for any participants participating in this research.

Confidentiality and protection of identity

The information collected from participants through the individual interview will remain confidential and will only be used for research purposes. The identity of participants who take part in the individual interviews will also remain confidential and will at no stage be revealed. All collected electronic data will be stored on a password protected personal laptop and printed hard copies will be filed under pseudo names and locked in a safe and will be destroyed after 5 years.

Dissemination of findings

The findings of the research will be made available to the participating school and district on their request after the study has been completed. The data may be used for another research paper in the future. The participants will be asked to give consent to use the data again.

If you have any further questions or enquiries regarding your participation in this research, please contact the researchers for more information.

DECLARATION BY SGB CHAIR

By signing below, I agree to give permission for the research to take place with the identified participants in the study entitled:

The role and responsibilities of Circuit Managers to support principals during education change

I declare that:

- I have read this information and consent form and understand what is expected of the participants in the research.
- I have had a chance to ask questions to the researcher and all my questions have been adequately answered.
- I understand that taking part in this study is voluntary and participants will not be pressurised to take part.
- Participants may choose to leave the study at any time and will not be penalised or prejudiced in any way.
- Participants may be asked to leave the research process before it is completed, if the researcher feels it is in their best interests, or if they do not follow the research procedures, as agreed to.

Signed at (place) _____ on (date) ____ / ____ /20 ____

Signature of SGB CHAIR:

7.7 APPENDIX G: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

e- Interview schedule

Good morning/afternoon Dr, Mr. Mrs.

Thank you for taking the time to participate in the e-interview.

Introduction of researcher:

As you already know my name is Chris Steyn. I am a Manager in the department Programme Design and Programme Accreditation at the Vaal University of Technology, Vanderbijlpark, Gauteng

I am currently enrolled as an Educational Management and Leadership PhD student at the North West University, Potchefstroom Campus. I intend to collect data for my research study regarding Circuit Managers support to principals during education change. Through this research I aim to determine how Circuit Managers can effectively execute their role and responsibilities to support principals during education change.

I commit myself to the professional code of ethics for researchers which, amongst other aspects, include the following:

- The participation of all research participants is strictly voluntarily. Participants may withdraw from the research at any time, without any consequences.
- **The anonymity and confidentiality of the research participants are protected and guaranteed.**
- Upon completion, the findings of the research will be made available.
- Permission will be obtained for the interview to be recorded in order to transcribe it later.
- A signed consent form will be obtained concerning all the ethical issues.

If you as participant is satisfied with the above information and ethical issues, can we please proceed with the interview?

Any questions you might have before we start?

Short Overview:

The issue of educational transformation and quality basic education in South Africa has been the focus of both academic and political debates. Following the democratic elections of 1994, education democratisation has been formalized and the division of the South African Education into two separate departments (DoE and DHET) led to the redistribution and extension of power, specifically in the DBE system, districts and local school governing bodies and the removal of centralised control over certain aspects of educational decision-making.

I am certain that you will agree that:

The role of education district management, in this case, circuit managers (CM)s are central to the success of schools as they are mandated to work collaboratively with school principals, giving guidance, information, administrative services and professional support.

This study investigates the role and responsibilities of Circuit Managers as change agents to support principals during education change in the Sedibeng East and West education districts.

Are you comfortable and ready?

May we commence?

Start recording!

Name of Interviewee:

Date:

Length of Interview:

Interviewer: Thank you for making the time for this interview

Participant:

Interviewer: You did receive the documents that was send to you by the gatekeeper. You did sign the consent form. I just want to confirm that we are recording the conversation and for confidentiality purpose it will not be seen by anybody else. If anything, that will be shared, it will just be in the final research report that will be shared.

Participant:

Interviewer: If you are comfortable we can proceed

Participant:

Semi-structured interview questions

Interviewer: The interview will follow a semi-structured format and any additional questions may be added through the interview process, in order to clarify certain aspects. **Please feel free to ask me to rephrase a question if you do not understand or it is unclear and you need a clearer explanation.**

SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

For the purpose of the data collection please state your:

- Name and Surname?
- At which school are you a **principal**?
- How many years' experience do you have as **principal**?
- Under which district does your school fall?
- What is the quantile classification of your school?

Questions: Principal

1. Explain where you as principal fit into the current education system and organisational structure.
2. What is your understanding of the concept "Circuit Manager support"? (A common understanding of the meaning of CM support will be reached)
3. What is the significance of CM support and how is CM support enacted?
4. Elaborate on the experience you have had over the years in the support given by the CM and especially during the last two years where significant education changes took place.
5. What is your understanding and experience of the role and responsibilities of the CM towards the support given to you as principal? (Ensure to determine role and responsibilities)
6. What challenges (inhibitors or enablers) do you have to act out your role and responsibilities as principal?
7. What is your understanding of professional development and elaborate on the significance thereof towards supporting you as principal during education change?

8. What is your experience regarding professional development opportunities towards the enactment of support provision by CM?
9. What factors/aspects/needs should the CM consider in providing the required support to principal's especially during education change?
10. Is there any other comment you would like to share on the role and responsibilities of Circuit Managers to support you as principal during education change?

Thank you for participating in the research.

Circuit Managers

Semi-structured interview questions

The interview will follow a semi-structured format and any additional questions may be added through the interview process, in order to clarify certain aspects. **Please feel free to ask me to rephrase a question if you do not understand or it is unclear and you need a clearer explanation.**

For the purpose of the data collection please state your:

- Name and Surname?
- How many years have you been in your role as **CM**?
- In which district?

Questions: CM

1. Explain where you as Circuit Manager fit into the current education system and organisational structure.
2. What is your understanding of the concept "Circuit Manager support"? (A common understanding of the meaning of CM support will be reached)
3. What is the significance of CM support and how is CM support enacted in your district?
4. Elaborate on the experience you have had over the years in your support to principals and especially during the last two years where significant education changes took place.
5. What is your understanding and experience of the role and responsibilities of the CM towards the enactment of support to principals? (Ensure to determine role and responsibilities)

6. What challenges (inhibitors or enablers) do you have to act out your role and responsibilities as Circuit Manager?
7. What is your understanding of professional development and elaborate on the significance thereof towards fulfilling your role and responsibilities as CM?
8. What is your experience regarding professional development opportunities towards the enactment of support provision by district leadership (circuits manager(s) and district officials)?
9. What factors/aspects/needs should be considered in professional development to enhance the enactment of CM support especially during education change?
10. Is there any other comment you would like to share on the role and responsibilities of Circuit Managers to support principals during education change?

Thank you for participating in the research.

7.8 APPENDIX H: CODING EXAMPLE

Question 5:

What is your understanding and experience of the role and responsibility of a circuit manager towards the support given to you as a principal?

Interviewee:

Yes, I think that is a very valid question. Firstly, the [redacted]. Although, the CM must ensure that schools are managed well. They are in fact responsible for the schools when it comes to management. CM are responsible to look at the SGB functionality of the school, of which the principal is a bona fide member at all times. But, especially to make sure the principal implemented what is happening or expected from the district, provincial or national departments for example the development of a vision and mission as well as strategies to ensure the school remains factional.

[redacted]

CM that polices a principal

CM responsibilities

- To ensure the school is managed well
- Ensure functionality of the SGB
- Ensure principal implement vision, mission and strategies
- To guide and protect the principal

CM are there in a supportive capacity in a supportive and monitoring role

Principal responsibilities

Development of a vision and mission as well as strategies to ensure the school remains factional

CM support

Enhance innovative actions taken by principal, SMT and SGB

Open minded and supportive when principals have challenges

'But despite that, CMs must not create the impression that they are policing you'.

The CMs are there in a supportive capacity in a supportive and monitoring role. The CM's responsibility is to guide you as a principal and in some way, also protect you as a principal.

What is very important, the CM must enhance innovative actions from the principal, SMT and SGB and support you in that sense.

And they must be open minded and supportive in general and especially in challenging times. And if something works at a school within the broader guidelines and framework of policy, they must give you the green light to operate.

And luckily for me this is the way it has been since I have been a principal at this school. The CM knows that my school is a well performing school and therefore just need their support.

9...

9-9 Yes, I thi...
 CM Leader and Manager

Establish goals

9...
 CM Leader and Manager

Establish goals

9...
 CM (R&R) support monitor

9...
 CM Leader and Manager

Establish goals

9...
 Needs based support enactme...

9-58...
 CM (R&R) support monitor

Field notes (Example)

Question 5	Body language:	Question answered?	Yes	No
5. What is your understanding and experience of the role and responsibilities of the CM towards the support given to you as principal? (Ensure to determine role and responsibilities)	<p>CM is responsible for school functionality through the line function. CM is part of the policy makers but never from the position of the school. Principal not policed or bullied by CM. SGB functions at school, implements what is decided and enhances innovative actions of principal. CM provides general support to principal and gives green light to innovations of principal, support with implementation and operation. You cannot be a good CM if you do not have experience and perspective as a principal and what it means and takes to manage a school.</p> <p>CM that polices a principal</p> <p>CM responsibilities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To ensure the school is managed well Ensure functionality of the SGB Ensure principal implement vision, mission and strategies To guide and protect the principal <p>CM are there in a supportive capacity in a supportive and monitoring role</p> <p>Principal responsibilities</p> <p>Development of a vision and mission as well as strategies to ensure the school remains factional</p> <p>CM support</p> <p>Enhance innovative actions taken by principal, SMT and SGB</p> <p>Open minded and supportive when principals have challenges.</p> <p>CM prior principalship experience</p> <p>It is very important that they have gained experience within the schooling system</p> <p>It is an advantage</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understanding school challenges Understanding principal's challenges and responsibilities Know the school, community and teachers Socio-economic status of parents and community Better understanding of the dynamics of the school <p>CM role and responsibilities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To many people in the system that does not understand schooling and their challenges Too many policymakers that does not understand the challenges and needs of CMs and principals <p>The CM role and responsibilities are closely aligned to that of the principal and therefore he needs prior principalship experience.</p>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

9-29 5. What is you...
 CM (R&R) leader and manager

Establish goals

9...
 CM (R&R) support monitor

9...
 CM Leader and Manager

Establish goals

9...
 CM (R&R) support monitor

9...
 CM Leader and Manager

Establish goals

9-148 CM ...
 Manage processes

Manage school & resources

9...
 Needs based support enactme...

9...
 Prior experience and compete...

9...
 Mutual understanding of educ...

9...
 Mutual understanding of educ...

9...
 Mutual understanding of educ...

9-3...
 CM (R&R) leader and manager

Prior experience and compete...

7.9 APPENDIX I: PLAGARISM REPORT

TURNITIN REPORT



Potchefstroom
South Africa
2520
Tel: 018 299 4590
Molly.Fuller@nwu.ac.za

27 March 2022

To whom it may concern

Thesis submitted for the degree *Doctor Philosophy* in Education Leadership and Management at the North-West University.

CMvA Steyn: 12665398

Title: The role and responsibilities of circuit managers to support principals during education change

The thesis was submitted in the Turnitin program (Turnitin Submission ID: 1793819337) and as supervisor I am satisfied with the level of similarities. It is at an acceptable level taking into consideration that the researcher referred to numerous official policies and legislation as well as systems and structures within South Africa education. The current similarities are predominantly similar words or concepts which cannot be changed otherwise the meaning will be changed as well as similarities in similar document specifically at other universities which is more administrative than academic similarities. The researcher ensured that credit was given to the relevant sources.

The following was indicated in the report that was submitted on 27 March 2022:

SIMILARITY INDEX	INTERNET SOURCES	PUBLICATIONS	STUDENT PAPERS
20%	19%	5%	9%

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Dr MP Fuller', is written over a light grey scribbled background.

Dr MP Fuller