



Teacher perceptions on the role of departmental heads in their professional development

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DECLARATION

I, Funani Brayon Mabala, declare that this dissertation is the result of my own research. I further declare that this research has not in its entirety or in part been submitted to another university.

I further declare that all information used and quoted has been duly acknowledged by complete reference.



25 November 2024

Signature

Date

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This work is dedicated to all those who stood by me, and I hope it serves as a reflection of the dedication and support I have received.

ABSTRACT

This study investigates secondary school teachers' perceptions regarding the role of departmental heads (DHs) in their professional development, with a specific focus on schools in the Kenneth Kaunda District of the North-West Province, South Africa. Departmental heads are instrumental in fostering effective teaching within their departments by guiding and supporting teachers' development. However, the extent to which teachers perceive DHs as effective in this role remains unclear, particularly concerning the responsibilities as outlined in the Personnel Administrative Measures (PAM) document. Understanding these perceptions is essential as DHs' leadership significantly impacts teaching quality and, ultimately, learner outcomes.

Employing a qualitative research approach, this study collected data through semi-structured interviews with twelve teachers, selected from secondary schools in the Kenneth Kaunda District. This method allowed for an in-depth exploration of teachers' experiences and viewpoints on the support they receive from DHs.

The findings of this study provided valuable insights into both the strengths and areas for improvement in the professional development support provided by DHs. By shedding light on teachers' perspectives, this study offered practical recommendations that can help school administrators and DHs enhance professional development initiatives. These insights have the potential to foster a more supportive environment for teacher development; thereby contributing to improved teaching practices and improved performance.

Key terms: Departmental head, performance management, teacher, QMS, DAS, development programme, CPTD, professional development

OPSOMMING

Hierdie studie ondersoek die persepsies van sekondêre skool onderwysers rondom die rol van Departementshoofde (DH) in hulle professionele ontwikkeling met 'n spesifieke fokus op skole in die Kenneth Kaunda Distrik van die Noordwes Provinsie, Suid-Afrika. Departementshoofde is krities in die vesting van effektiewe onderwys in hulle departemente deur onderwysers se ontwikkeling te lei en ondersteun. Nietemin, die mate waartoe onderwysers DH as effektief beskou in hierdie verband is steeds onduidelik, veral met betrekking tot die verantwoordelikhede soos dit uiteengesit is in die Personeel Administratiewe Maatreëls (PAM) dokument. Om hierdie persepsies te verstaan is belangrik omdat DH se leierskap die kwaliteit van onderwys en dus die leerling uitkomstes drasties beïnvloed.

Hierdie studies al inligting insamel deur 'n kwalitatiewe navorsings benadering te volg in die vorm van semi-gestruktureerde onderhoude met twaalf onderwysers wat gekies is vanuit sekondêre skole in die Kenneth Kaunda Destrik. Hierdie metode maak 'n deeglike ondersoek van onderwysers se ervaringe en sieninge rakende die ondersteuning wat hulle ontvang van DH af moontlik.

Die bevindinge van hierdie navorsing bied waardevolle insig rondom die sterk punte asook die areas waarin verbeter kan word rakende die professionele ontwikkelings ondersteuning wat deur DH verskaf word. Deur die perspektiewe van onderwysers ten toon te stel het hierdie navorsing praktiese voorstelle gemaak wat skool-administrateurs en Departementshoofde kan help om professionele ontwikkelings inisiatiewe te loods. Hierdie kennis het die potensiaal om 'n meer ondersteunende omgewing vir onderwysers se ontwikkeling te vestig, en daardeur die uitvoering van hulle take te verbeter.

Sleutelterme: Departementshoof, Prestasie Bestuur, KBS, Ontwikkelingsbeoordelingstelsel, Onderwyser, Ontwikkelings Program, Professionele Ontwikkeling.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS/ ACRONYMS

CDE	Centre for Development and Enterprise
CPD	Continuous Professional Development
CPTD	Continuous Professional Teachers Development
DAS	Development Appraisal System
DBE	Department of Basic Education
DH	Departmental head
ELRC	Education and Labour Relations Council
HCT	Human Capital Theory
HEI	Higher Education Institution
HOD	Head of Department
IQMS	Integrated Quality Management System
NWDoE	North West Department of Education
NWU	North-West University
PAM	Personnel Administrative Measures
PD	Professional Development
PL1 Teacher	Post-level 1 teacher
PLC	Professional Learning Community
PM	Performance Management
QMS	Quality Management System

SACE	South African Council of Educators
SGB	School Governing Body
SMT	School Management Team
WSE	Whole School Evaluation
WTA	Whole Teacher Approach

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CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The improvement of teacher knowledge, teaching and learner learning is dependent on the continuous engagement in professional learning activities by teachers (Akiba & Liang, 2014:99). In concurrence with Akiba and Liang (2014:99), Ajani (2020:291) states that the continuous development of teachers can contribute to improved teacher performance in the classroom, leading to improved learner performance.

The purpose of this study is to explore the role of departmental heads (DHs) in the professional development of teachers. Given the opinion of Akiba and Liang (2014:99) and Ajani (2020:291), teacher development programmes do play a key role in improving teacher performance.

1.2 BACKGROUND OF STUDY

As a country with a young democracy, South Africa had to overcome the legacy of apartheid, specifically with regard to the education system. According to Msila (2014:339), the effects of apartheid appear distinctly in previously disadvantaged schools where the quality of education is the lowest. Coetzee (2019:1) contends that teacher professionalism constructed during apartheid has added notably to the division in the education system in South Africa. The appraisal system in the past was inspectorial, hierarchical, bureaucratic and authoritarian (Mpungose & Ngwenya, 2014:76; Geldenhuys & Oosthuizen, 2015:204).

Buthelezi et al. (2021:18074) argue that teachers were poorly trained and exposed to sub-standard levels of subject content and in venues that were not conducive to learning. According to De Clercq and Phiri (2013:77), teacher development remains important in the quest to improve schooling. In terms of Subsection 3.4.1 of the personnel administrative measures (2016:28), hereafter referred to as (PAM), “teachers are responsible for their participation in agreed school/teacher appraisal processes to regularly review professional practice to improve teaching, learning and management”.

The dawn of democracy saw the introduction of a performance management process that would address the quality of teaching and learning and assess the performance of teachers. This saw the introduction of the development appraisal system (DAS) in 1998 under Resolution 4 of 1998 by the Education and Labour Relations Council (ELRC). Queen-Mary and Mtapuri (2014:1) note that the DAS was implemented to evaluate individual teachers to identify their strengths and weaknesses and formulate an individualised development plan.

The DAS was discontinued and replaced by the whole school evaluation (WSE) system, which was established in 2001 by the ELRC due to a failure to implement the DAS system successfully at schools. Tachie and Mancotywa (2021:2) note that the DAS neglected the holistic functioning of schools. According to the Department of Education (2002:1), the policy on WSE was designed to improve the overall quality of education in schools. This system, however, was denounced by teacher unions and was replaced by the performance measurement system (PM).

The performance measurement (PM) system was agreed upon on 10 April 2003 under Resolution 1 of 2003 by the ELRC. This evaluation system aimed to serve as the foundation for salary progression and other benefits based on a predetermined performance level that is fair and objective and to improve the overall standard of teaching (ELRC, 2003:1). According to Mpungose and Ngwenya (2014:77), the PM was used to evaluate individual teacher performances as per the job description to qualify for a promotion or salary increase. Due to the duplication of structures and evaluation processes of the above-mentioned systems, the Integrated Quality Management System (IQMS) was established in 2003.

According to Christie (2012:706), the DAS, PMS and WSE were brought together to form the IQMS in 2003 under Resolution 8 of 2008. To achieve efficiency and coordination, these programmes were implemented in an integrated manner to improve and monitor teacher performance (Mamabolo, Malatji & Mphahlele, 2022:1). In terms of the IQMS document, the purpose of the IQMS system was to identify the needs of teachers, promote accountability and evaluate teacher performance (Gina, 2014). Queen-Mary and Mtapuri (2014:2) contend that the IQMS was developed to assist teachers in identifying

their shortcomings and to undergo personal development to improve teaching and learning.

Heystek (2015:1) accedes to the above and notes that the IQMS process was established to assist teachers and the school management teams in measuring their achievements. However, it is the view of Heystek (2015:2) that the IQMS system does not have any disciplinary processes to hold teachers accountable for the quality of their performance or any developmental actions. Subsequently, the ELRC was tasked with the responsibility of streamlining and rebranding the IQMS system to the quality management system (QMS) due to its shortcomings as noted by Matshiu (2017:35).

The QMS system has been collectively defined as a performance management system designed to evaluate the performance of teachers to achieve outstanding school performance (DBE, 2022:2). This system was implemented in January 2022 under Resolution 2 of 2020. In terms of the ELRC (2022:8), the aim of the QMS is, “to establish competence levels in teachers, improve accountability, create a basis for salary progression and specify procedures to assess teachers”.

1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT AND RATIONALE

Teacher development is an increasingly prominent issue in assessing learner and school performance. According to Subsection 3.3.2 of the PAM (2016:36), the DH is responsible for “participating in agreed school or teacher appraisal processes to regularly review their professional practice with the aim at improving teaching and learning”.

As noted by Heystek (2015:1), the Department of Basic Education (DBE) places accountability for the academic performance of schools on the principal whereas the PAM (2016:36) notes, under Subsection 3.2.3, that the DH is responsible for “coordinating evaluation, assessments, written assignments etc of all the subjects in the department”. This study contends that DHs must fulfil their roles as noted in the PAM document as an official duty and responsibility under Subsections 3.2.4.1 and 3.2.4.2 to provide and coordinate guidance on approaches to the subject, syllabus and evaluation in their field.

Section 2 of the PAM (2016:36) states that the DH is responsible for teaching, the effective functioning of the department and organising relevant extra-curricular activities to ensure that the subject, phase and education of learners are promoted in a proper

manner. This is substantiated by Mthiyane et al. (2019:57) who argue that the role of the DH is intricately linked to teaching and learning. According to Mampane (2018:189), DHs are former teachers who have been promoted to a supervisory position. Tapala et al. (2022:817) concur and note that, typically, the DH represents the activities of their respective department.

According to Heystek and Terhoven (2015:629), adult learning concepts guide the development of new skills, knowledge and values. Scholars such as Pitsoe and Maila (2012:1) affirm that the National Senior Certificate necessitates learning new skills and information and using a wide range of teaching methodologies by teachers to allow learners to develop their own knowledge. This can be achieved through professional teacher development.

De Clerq and Shalem (2014:130) note that development programmes should focus on teaching skills to improve the learning experience. Concurring, scholars such as Buthelezi et al. (2021:18075) note that professional development that specifically focuses on the subject content could help teachers improve their subject-teaching skills and provide opportunities for them to experience and collaboratively explore new ways to teach concepts.

Buthelezi et al. (2021:18076) state that it is important that DHs have a positive attitude towards professional development programmes. The introduction of the continuous professional teachers development (CPTD) system was envisioned to get teachers to continuously work towards improving their subject knowledge and teaching skills. In terms of SACE (2013:5), the CPTD was founded to assist teachers in organising and focusing their professional development for maximum benefit and recognition.

Researchers such as Mokhele and Jita (2014:2) are of the view that excellent continuous professional development is intimately linked to practically every modern initiative to improve education. Noting the above, the ELRC (2021) contends that the QMS – similarly to the CPTD – seeks to enhance teacher efficiency, effectiveness and good performance. According to SACE (2013:5), teachers must accumulate 150 professional development points in a three-year cycle. This can be done through workshops and short courses.

These workshops and short courses can prove beneficial as researchers such as Bernadine (2019:130) suggest that teacher development is important as the quality of teachers directly influences learners' performance. Du Plessis and Eberlein (2018:3) contend that DHs can make substantial contributions to the development of teachers in their departments. In terms of Section 4.4(d) in the PAM (2016:36), "DHs are responsible for providing and coordinating guidance to teachers on the latest ideas on approaches to the subject, method, techniques and effectively conveying these to the teachers."

According to Gardner and Bussin (2020:1), performance management is an essential tool for effective organisational management. Page (2014:167) notes that performance management can be seen to prioritise the needs of the learners along with professional development by maximising the quality of teaching and learning and addressing any shortcomings.

In noting the above, there is limited literature on implementing performance management by DHs to improve teacher performance. The purpose of this study is to explore teachers' perceptions of the role of DHs in their professional development. The researcher of this study took an interest in this area of research due to the gap in the literature on teachers' perceptions of the role of DHs in their professional development as stipulated in the PAM.

As department leaders, DHs are responsible for ensuring that their department is performing well. Jita and Mokhele (2014:2) contend that most educational changes aim to boost teacher performance and learner learning.

According to Mthiyane et al. (2019:57), development programmes are crucial for increasing teachers' abilities to improve learning outcomes and learners' performance. Subsequently, the researcher of this study seeks to determine how teachers perceive the role of DHs in their professional development and identify what DHs can do to assist teachers in their professional development. This study aims to determine teachers' perceptions of the role DHs play in their professional development.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTION

This study is based on the following research question:

What are the roles of DHs in the implementation of teacher development programmes for improved performance?

The main research question is supported by the following sub questions:

- i. What role do DHs play in the professional development of teachers?
- ii. How do teachers perceive the role of DHs in their professional development?
- iii. What can DHs do to assist teachers in their professional development?

1.5 RESEARCH PURPOSE

The purpose of this study is to determine the perceptions of teachers on the role of DHs in their professional development.

1.6 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The research aim is supplemented by the following research objectives:

- i. To determine the role DHs play in the professional development of teachers.
- ii. To determine how teachers perceive the role DHs play in their professional development.
- iii. To identify what DHs can do to assist teachers in their professional development.

1.7 CONCEPT CLARIFICATION

The following is a brief clarification of concepts that will be focussed on in this study. A detailed discussion of the concepts will follow in Chapter 2.

1.7.1 Departmental heads

Departmental heads, or DHs, as they are commonly known, form part of the school management team (SMT) as curriculum leaders and oversee the teachers within their phase or subject group. In terms of Subsection 3.2.5.1 of the PAM (2016:37), the role of the DH includes “to control the work of teachers and learners in the department”. In their study, Tapala et al. (2022:818) emphasise this statement and note that, as part of their curriculum leadership position, the DH is also responsible for the monitoring and regulating teachers’ and students’ work. Subsection 3.3.2 of the PAM (2016:37) document states that the DH is responsible for their “participation in agreed

school/teacher appraisal processes to regularly review their professional practice to improve teaching, learning and management". This is noted in a study by Buthelezi et al. (2021:18074) who postulate that DHs have the crucial responsibility of empowering teachers to reach professional maturity. Subsection 3.2.4 of the PAM (2016:36) document indicates that DHs are responsible for providing and coordinating guidance. Scholars, such as Alviz (2019:20453), opine that DHs play a vital role in terms of influencing the teachers in a specific subject area to act and aim high for school improvement. According to Subsection 3.2.1 of the PAM (2016:36), part of the role of the DH is "to be in charge of a subject, learning area or phase". Alviz (2019:20453) notes that DHs are responsible for the progress of their subject and their contribution to the overall adjustment of the school improvement plan. Masoge and Pilane (2014:3) suggest that the DH is also responsible for meeting with their teachers to discuss teaching goals as noted under Subsection 3.2.2 of the PAM document (2016:36), which states, "to jointly develop the policy for that department". However, in all this, DHs are still teachers who also need to ensure their learners do well. Subsection 3.1.1 of the PAM document (2016:36) notes that DHs need to engage in class teaching as per the workload of the relevant post level and the needs of the school. Tapala (2019:1) opines the most challenging function for the DH is to be the curriculum leader. Tapala (2019:1) further emphasises that the role of the DH in curriculum leadership is to promote and optimise academic work outputs as well as learner-social outcomes through enhanced classroom practice.

1.7.2 Teacher focused professional development

Teacher development is an important aspect of ensuring equal and quality education. Professional development is essential for quality education to be achieved (Bernadine, 2019:129). The launch of the South African Council of Educators, hereafter referred to as SACE, in September 1995 was the initial step in introducing professional development for teachers. In terms of Buthelezi et al. (2021:18074-18075), the democratic government of South Africa put in place policies to motivate teachers to undergo professional development. According to the SACE position paper of 2011, in November 1997, SACE resolved to extend its responsibilities from registration and discipline and included professional development (2011:6). In terms of SACE, teachers need to accumulate 150 professional development points in a three-year cycle. These points can be earned through teacher-initiated, school-initiated and externally-initiated activities. These

activities will be elaborated on in the next chapter. According to Ajani (2020:60), teachers participate in a variety of professional development activities that aim to improve classroom methods. Accordingly, Heystek and Terhoven (2015:626) assert that development activities are one way for teachers to improve their performance and that of their learners. Geldenhuys and Oosthuizen (2015:203) concur and propose that teachers need to keep learning to remain effective in the classroom. Researchers such as James, Bansilal, Webb et al. (2015:149) argue that the enhancement of skills of the majority of teachers is warranted as they did not receive sufficient training for the profession during apartheid. De Clercq and Shalem (2014:130) assert that, to be effective, development programmes need to focus on teaching methods that will improve the learners' learning. According to Ajani (2018:1), teachers need to undergo development on a regular basis to teach effectively. Macheng (2016:285) maintains that professional development is needed for teachers to acquire the necessary skills and knowledge to use in the classroom. The above statement is reinforced by Ajani (2018:1) who insists that, for quality education to be realised, maintained and effective, it is essential that teachers receive exposure to development activities. According to Ajani (2020:60-61), a singular approach to professional development activities does not address the professional needs of individual teachers as the approach brings together teachers with different subject backgrounds to present common knowledge and skills in the same way. Scholars such as Bautista and Ortega-Ruiz (2015:245) postulate that excellent development programmes are moulded on the existing knowledge of teachers and are in line with the requirements of the curriculum and the delivery thereof. Designing professional development activities according to teachers' classroom needs is critical to curriculum delivery (Ajani, 2020:62).

1.7.3 Performance management

In the views of Haines and St-Onge (2012:1159), performance management engages managers in an ongoing process in which they are expected to get involved in performance planning, coaching, assessment and review. In some instances, performance management is likened to managerialism. Scholars such as Masoge and Pilane (2014:5) note that performance management varies from managerialism in that it is people-centred and tries to develop teachers to make them more effective and efficient. Furthermore, Masoge and Pilane (2014:2) claim that, in education, performance

management is a component of accountability systems in which teachers are assisted by their supervisors in meeting the standards of teaching and learning required of them. This role can be fulfilled by the DH as it has been noted in the PAM under Subsection 3.3.2 as a responsibility of the DH. In contrast, performance management is carried out continuously in the school to develop teachers and it is not linked to remuneration or incentives (Masoge & Pilane, 2014:6).

1.7.4 Professional development

Professional development is viewed by SACE as a need for teachers to continuously renew, update and widen their knowledge (SACE, 2013:4). This view is upheld by Kennedy (2016:945) who notes that the notion that professional development can promote improved teaching and learning is widely accepted. Meesuk et al. (2021:31) share similar sentiments and state that teacher professional development is a continuous process. According to Demonte (2013:1), there is a consensus that most professional development opportunities are sporadic and do not add substantial value to improving teaching, thus influencing teaching and learning. Bernadine (2018:130) notes that the quality of teachers influences the quality of performance by the learners.

1.8 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Grant and Onsanloo (2014:12) define a theoretical framework as the foundation underpinning the rationale, problem statement, purpose, significance and research questions of a study. Essentially, it constructs the framework from which all knowledge for the study is derived. Theoretical perspectives relevant to this study include the social learning theory, transformational learning theory, communities of practice theory, professional learning communities theory, sociocultural theory, whole teacher approach and human capital theory, among others. However, the most suitable theories for this study are the human capital theory and the whole teacher approach theory. According to Tan (2014:412), human capital theory, rooted in the neoclassical school of thought in economics, posits that individuals invest in education and training with the expectation of higher future income. This concept will elucidate how departmental heads can support teachers in their professional development. Regarding the whole teacher approach, Chen and McCray (2012:8) highlight that this framework emphasises fostering all aspects of a teacher's growth, including attitudes, knowledge and practice. This theory will inform the

researchers' discourse on teacher professional development. As such, these identified theories will guide the study in addressing the developmental needs of departmental heads to effectively support teachers in their professional growth. Moreover, these theories will bolster the rationale of the study and fortify the researchers' argument on the phenomenon under investigation.

1.9 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

In this section, the researcher will focus on how the study was conducted. The research paradigm, which refers to the lens through which the study is viewed, the approach and design that was employed in answering the research question as well as the population and sample that were used for gathering the data needed to answer the research question will be the focus. As a result, the researcher will demonstrate the methods and tactics that were used to gather, analyse and evaluate the data that was acquired.

Finally, the researcher will report on how and when trustworthiness was addressed in the study. Ethical aspects of the study will be highlighted to show how the researcher secured elements of informed consent, anonymity and participant confidentiality.

1.9.1 Research approach

A research approach, as defined by Du Preez et al. (2020:26), is a description of how a study will be carried out, including how data will be obtained and from whom. Within research, three research methodologies are employed to perform a study: quantitative, qualitative and mixed-method research approaches. Each of these approaches is guided by a set of aspects. To address the study topic, the researcher employed a phenomenological research approach. In terms of Eddles-Hirsch (2015:251), phenomenological research seeks to encapsulate the essence of lived experiences.

1.9.2 Research design

Akhtar (2016:68) defines a research design as a research structure that holds the many components of a study together. It provides direction for a study and outlines the proposed study's tasks. The researcher has decided to utilise a phenomenological research design for this study. A phenomenological design, according to Du Preez et al.

(2020:28), undertakes to find the essence of human experiences unique to the participants.

One of the traits of phenomenological research is that the issue being examined is not defined by accepted truth but rather by attempting to understand how participants make sense of their actual experiences (Eddles-Hirsch, 2015:252). The researcher intends to investigate teacher perceptions of the role of departmental heads in their professional development – as stated in this study.

1.9.3 Research paradigm

According to Rehman and Alharthi (2016:51), a paradigm refers to a belief system and theoretical framework that helps people make sense of and interpret the world in which they live. Kivunja and Kuyini (2017:27) mention that a research paradigm comprises four components that support people's fundamental assumptions, ideas, norms and values. According to Rahi (2017:1), four paradigms are used in research: positivism, interpretivism, advocacy and pragmatism.

Given that this study seeks to understand teachers' perceptions of the role of DHs in their professional development, this study will be based on interpretivism, which, as Rehman and Alharthi (2016:53) point out, rejects the premise that there is just one testable reality that exists apart from human senses. According to Nieuwenhuis (2019:66-69), interpretivism emphasises people's ability to establish meaning and encourages individual subjective interpretations of societal issues and their understanding of them. Given the study's goal, the researcher has pursued this ontological belief concerning the nature of reality. According to Kivunja and Kuyini (2017:33), interpretivism tries to interpret and grasp the meanings that people ascribe to a given phenomenon.

The interpretivism paradigm will guide the research in determining the subjective perceptions that teachers have of the role of the DH in their professional development. Alharahsheh and Pius (2020:42) agree with Nieuwenhuis (2019:69) that interpretivism assumes that reality can differ based on individual differences and that it is subjective. Furthermore, this study sought to determine how teachers perceive the role DHs play in their professional development and identify what DHs can do to assist teachers in their professional development. According to Alharahsheh and Pius (2020:41), interpretivism

examines distinctions such as cultures and situations in the creation of various social realities.

The interpretivism paradigm, in conjunction with the ontological premise, will aid in determining the individual perceptions teachers hold with regard to the role of DHs in their professional development by offering the participants' subjective stances. To support the interpretivism paradigm as the preferable and acceptable research paradigm, a relevant research strategy was implemented. This paradigm will be elaborated on in Chapter 3.

1.9.4 Population and sampling

1.9.4.1 Population

In research, a population refers to the target population that is being studied (Majid, 2018:3) and can be defined in terms of various characteristics, including age, gender, occupation and location, among others. Creswell (2017) contends that a research population refers to the group of individuals or objects that a researcher is interested in studying. The population targeted for this study was experienced teachers within the Kenneth Kaunda District of the North-West Province, South Africa. The population of this study consists of a sample of teachers who will take part in the planned study, which will be discussed below.

1.9.4.2 Sampling

According to Nieuwenhuis (2019:93), qualitative research employs purposive sampling, primarily due to its flexibility and ability to allow researchers to choose the sort of participant to partake in the study. Acharya et al. (2013:330) state that a sample is a subset of the population chosen to represent the larger population. This set of volunteers is crucial in representing the larger population in a study. Convenient sampling was used as the researcher's sampling technique for this study.

According to Andrade (2021:86), a convenience sample is characterised as one that can be derived from an origin that is conveniently located and accessible. Scholars such as Omair (2014:142) characterise sampling as a subset of the total population that is of interest to the study topic. This sample was chosen with care because they will be able

to provide rich information and an in-depth understanding of their perspectives on how they perceive the role of DHs in their professional development.

The sample consisted of twelve teachers from three different schools in Quintiles 1-3. As part of the target population, four teachers from high-performing schools, four teachers from average-performing schools and four teachers from underperforming schools were chosen from Quintiles 1-3, respectively. The selection of schools based on performance was grounded on the performance of their preceding Grade 12 class with regard to the pass rate achieved. A school that has between an 80 -100% pass average is considered high-performing; 60-79% is considered average-performing and schools below a 60% pass average are considered underperforming in terms of this study. The objective for selecting schools based on performance is to ensure that varied performing schools are represented in the study.

1.9.5 Data collection

This research will use a qualitative data collection method, which is appropriate for answering the research questions formulated for this research. Barrett and Twycross (2018:63) state that data used in qualitative research must be comprehensive, rich and subtle for themes to emerge after a rigorous analysis. This ensures that the research question is answered in a credible manner.

The data for this study were gathered through interviews. According to Kolb (2012:83), interviews allow the researcher to obtain insight into the viewpoints of others. According to Gill et al. (2008:291), three forms of research interviews can be employed in data collection: structured, semi-structured and unstructured. The researcher conducted semi-structured interviews because they allow for flexibility while including crucial questions that aid in outlining the regions to be examined.

A semi-structured interview also permits the interviewee to contribute their point of view to the debate, which is essentially the goal of qualitative research. Interviews, as mentioned by Stuckey (2013:58), allow the interviewee to provide their opinion on a topic. Moreover, semi-structured interviews are the preferred approach for data collection because they focus largely on the research topic to ensure that the researcher gathers

data that can be analysed appropriately, using an appropriate data analysis methodology, to answer the research question.

1.9.6 Data analysis

Data analysis is simply the process of converting the gathered data into meaningful information (Taherdoost, 2020:1). As a result, the researcher has decided to employ a phenomenological data analysis. In terms of Nieuwenhuis (2019:119), phenomenological data analysis emphasises an individual's lived experience and how they make sense of it.

1.9.7 Ethical considerations

Ethics in research is critical since it involves the participants who are directly participating in the study. Arifi (2018:30a) observes that when in-person interviews are conducted with vulnerable individuals, ethical considerations become considerably more important. This is because participants may experience stress, which can be damaging to the participant.

During this study, informed consent was ensured through the distribution of written consent documents, outlining basic elements of written consent, such as an explanation of the study, including the purpose of the research and the participants' right to withdraw from the study at any time, to name a few. The participants signed the written consent document, which is being kept safe.

In terms of anonymity, Saunders et al. (2015:617) argue that it is a type of confidentiality because it deals with keeping participants' identities hidden. The researcher maintained anonymity by using aliases to conceal the identities of the participants. According to Bos (2020:154), confidentiality is defined as an understanding between a researcher and a participant that ensures the careful management of personal and private information.

In this study, the researcher ensured confidentiality by following certain limits, such as notifying participants of the objective of the research, who has access to the data and providing participants with an opportunity to examine the collected data and correct any inaccuracies (Bos, 2020:153).

1.10 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study is crucial because it seeks to identify and comprehend teachers' perceptions of the role of DHs in their professional development. The study attempted to shed light on the role of DHs in the professional development of teachers to advance teaching quality. Being aware of the perceptions teachers hold can assist in the clarification of the role DHs play and the identification of where they may come short.

The study will also aid in the improvement of collaboration and coordination between DHs and teachers. A better comprehension of how teachers perceive the role of DHs in the professional development of teachers can assist in the development of more successful collaboration and coordination techniques for the DH. This can lead to the establishment of a more cohesive and successful subject department or phase team.

Ultimately, the study will help to enhance the educational system. Teachers have an important role in moulding our society's future, and any effort to improve their performance is essential. A greater understanding of teachers' perceptions of the role of DHs in their professional development can promote the establishment of activities and programmes that can improve the overall quality of education.

In conclusion, this study is significant because it provides valuable insights into teachers' perceptions of the role DHs play in the professional development of teachers. The study's findings can be used to create more effective educational activities and programmes that can improve the quality of teaching, collaboration and coordination in the educational system.

1.11 CHAPTER OUTLINE

The purpose of this chapter is to provide an overview of the study. The chapter focused on the background and rationale that prompted the study. The research questions, research design and ethical considerations are further features that briefly describe the execution of the study.

Chapter 2 provides an in-depth discussion and examination of the scholarly literature on the perceptions teachers hold of the role of DHs in their professional development. Following that, Chapter 3 will focus on components of research designs and methodology,

the research paradigm, sampling methods, data collection and data analysis and will address the study's ethical aspects. In Chapter 4, the researcher will elaborate on the data gathered from the research questions. Finally, Chapter 5 will conclude the study through the presentation of the gathered and analysed data and provide recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

In the context of South Africa's education sector, where teacher development is a critical challenge, understanding teachers' perceptions regarding the role of departmental heads (DHs) in their professional development (PD) is essential. Despite limited research in this area, scholars like De Clercq and Phiri (2013:77) underscore the pivotal role of teacher development in enhancing teaching and learning outcomes in South African schools. Thus, this study explores teachers' perspectives on how DHs contribute to their PD.

Chapter 1 of this study lays the groundwork by providing a comprehensive overview of the research background and rationale. It introduces the research question, outlines the research design and discusses ethical considerations crucial to the study. Building on this foundation, Chapter 2 seeks to deepen the understanding of key concepts such as departmental heads, teacher development, performance management and personal development and to outline how they intersect to shape teachers' professional growth.

Furthermore, the chapter explores the organisational frameworks, such as the South African Council of Educators (SACE), established to drive teacher development initiatives. Reviewing existing literature, the researcher aims to articulate the theoretical underpinnings and conceptual framework guiding this study. This exploration sheds light on the multifaceted nature of teacher development and underscores the significance of DHs in this process.

To comprehend the role of DHs in fostering teacher development, it is imperative to outline the responsibilities and functions associated with this position. Therefore, the ensuing discussion comprehensively examines the departmental head's role, drawing insights from both local and international perspectives. This integrated approach sets the stage for a subtle analysis of the interplay between DHs and teacher professional development within the South African educational context.

2.2 DEPARTMENTAL HEADS

The departmental head (DH) title varies across the globe, reflecting diverse educational structures. In South Africa, this position, once termed head of department (HOD),

designates a teacher who is part of the school management team (SMT) and plays a leadership role within the school (Ogina, 2017:225). In New Zealand, DHs are known by various titles, such as learning area leader, subject head and faculty leader (Basset, 2016:97). Similarly, in Australia, DHs function as subject coordinators and year-level coordinators, often referred to as middle leaders (Lipscombe, De Nobile, Tindall-Ford & Grice, 2020:8).

In the United States, DHs are commonly called middle managers (Paranosic & Riveros, 2017:434). Contrastingly, in Iceland, the terms special duties teachers or assistant principals are used, highlighting the additional management responsibilities alongside their teaching duties (Larusdottir & O'Connor, 2017:424). Despite these varied titles, there is a shared understanding of the DH role: they are teachers who also perform administrative functions, leading a team of teachers while continuing to teach within their departments (Maingi, 2015:16).

Positioned at the middle level of the school's hierarchy, DHs serve as a bridge between senior management and teachers, promoting quality teaching and learning (Shaked & Schechter, 2019:412; Malatji et al., 2022:18676). Harris et al. (2019:259) emphasise the pivotal role of DHs in driving positive change and improvement within schools. Tapala et al. (2022:817) posit that the DH is the face of their departments' activities.

The primary distinction between DHs and teachers that are not part of the SMT lies in their organisational responsibilities while the key difference from senior management is that DHs maintain a teaching load (Gurr & Nicholas, 2023:7). In addition to supporting teachers and senior management, DHs contribute to the operational efficiency of the school. As evidenced in the outlook by Harris et al. (2019:259), the DH position has a positive impact on the senior management as well as the teachers whom it serves.

Lipscombe et al. (2023:2) emphasise that DHs serve as a buffer between senior management and teachers, managing conflicts and promoting a cohesive school environment. This intermediary role helps the top tier of the SMT to stay informed about the challenges and successes at the classroom level, enabling more informed decision-making. This comprehensive understanding of DHs sets the stage for examining how teachers perceive the role of DHs in their professional development and overall school

improvement. The subsequent section will explore the specific roles and responsibilities of DHs in schools.

2.2.1 Roles and responsibilities of DHs in schools

The roles of DHs within schools are notably diverse as evidenced by perspectives from various scholarly contributions. Choong (2018:37) highlights the multifaceted nature of their responsibilities, which encompass instructional leadership, supervision, administration and subject specialisation. This perspective finds significance in the work of Brandmo et al. (2021:412) who underscore the dual nature of the DH role, combining administrative duties with teaching responsibilities.

Building on this foundation, De Nobile (2018:398) further expands on the DH role, asserting that it extends to assuming administrative duties crucial for the maintenance, development and improvement of the school. Dumakude (2022:16) echoes these sentiments too, identifying instructional leadership, timetabling, mediation and facilitating communication between the school management team (SMT) and teachers as integral aspects of the DH's official mandate.

However, Makoelle et al. (2023:47) present a contrasting viewpoint, emphasising the contextual variability of the DH's function across national boundaries. For instance, Eritrea et al. (2021:2) emphasise the pivotal role of DHs in enhancing teaching and learning outcomes, indicating a localised influence on educational development.

Similarly, Lipscombe et al. (2021:271) observe a distinct role for DHs in Australia, acting as intermediaries between principals and teachers. This intermediary function, as noted by Malinga et al. (2021:269), positions DHs as representatives of both teachers and the SMT, advocating for their respective interests in various decision-making forums.

In South Africa, the personnel administrative measures (PAM) document defines the DH's responsibility as to promote effective teaching and learning within their department (PAM, 2016:38). Nkadimeng and Thaba-Nkadimene (2020:40) stress the role of mentorship in achieving this goal, emphasising the DH's duty to support teachers in delivering effective instruction.

Furthermore, PAM (2016:38) underscores the DH's duty to oversee departmental functioning and organise extracurricular activities conducive to promoting educational objectives. These activities, as noted by Ghavifekir and Ibrahim (2014:46), serve as avenues for professional development, fostering growth among teachers.

Aligned with this perspective, Mpisane (2015:6) emphasises the DH's role in monitoring curriculum and supervising teaching practices; thereby enhancing both teacher professionalism and learner learning experiences. Jaca (2021:243) further underscores the evolving nature of the DH role, emphasising the increasing demand for leadership and management within educational contexts, including teacher development.

In essence, Mampane (2017:146) underscores the DH's role as a teacher leader, tasked with teaching, supervising and providing leadership across various educational domains. This holistic perspective underscores the pivotal role DHs play in shaping the educational landscape, necessitating an in-depth understanding of their instructional leadership, personnel management and administrative and communication roles. To expand on the role of the DH, this study will go into detail on the instructional leadership, personnel management and administrative and communication roles of the DH as contained in the PAM document for the South African context.

2.2.1.1 Instructional leadership role

Tapala et al. (2021:5) assert the essential roles of DHs in the schooling system, particularly in curriculum and instructional leadership. Ng (2019:3) defines instructional leadership as activities closely tied to teaching and learning, including classroom observations, a perspective aligned with Leithwood's (2016:122) assertion that improving teaching and learning requires instructional leadership. Departmental heads, according to Leithwood (2016), play a pivotal role in facilitating continuous development and enhancing the quality of education.

Building upon this notion, Mthiyane et al. (2015:170) emphasise that DHs are primarily positioned as supervisors of teaching and learning. Kalane and Rambuda (2022:197) further accentuate this viewpoint, noting the increasing recognition of the management of teaching and learning as a key responsibility of DHs. Teacher supervision, as highlighted by (Barasa et al., 2022:2), ensures the delivery of the curriculum in a high-quality manner.

The importance of DHs in influencing the educational environment and promoting learner achievement is highlighted by this multidimensional approach. Researchers such as Kelly and Salisbury (2013:290) underline DHs' unique position to enhance instructional effectiveness due to their proximity to the school's mission, policies and the daily realities of teachers and learners. Lipscombe et al. (2023:271) echo this perspective by highlighting the DHs' potential to spearhead positive change in teaching and learning, owing to their proximity to the classroom.

Additionally, Lipscombe et al. (2023) sentiments recognise that DHs are well-positioned to drive improvement in teaching and learning, making them central figures in the educational process. Malinga et al. (2021:268) endorse this view, suggesting that DHs typically possess an understanding of subjects and the development of school-based assessment tasks that are crucial for maintaining effective teaching and learning.

The PAM document further outlines the role of the DH as both a teacher and instructional leader. Subsection 3.1.1 (PAM, 2022:38) states that DHs are responsible for engaging in class teaching based on workload and school needs. This obligation is reiterated in Subsection 3.1.2 of the PAM, emphasising DHs' role as class teachers, when necessary, although time constraints significantly impact their ability to fulfil both teaching and administrative duties.

Khubeka (2022:25) highlights the expectation for DHs to spend most of their week on teaching, allocating only a small portion for administrative tasks. However, this allocation does not always reflect the reality of the DH's workload. Despite these challenges, DHs are expected to strike a balance between administrative responsibilities and instructional leadership to enhance learner performance.

Kalane and Rambuda (2022:197) affirm the belief that how DHs manage teaching and learning directly influences learner performance, emphasising the need for competent management and leadership in promoting effective outcomes. As instructional leaders, DHs are expected to demonstrate superior instructional and pedagogical knowledge, setting and maintaining lofty standards within their departments while providing support and guidance to teachers through human capital management and professional development opportunities.

This view is emphasised by Akram (2022:513) who aver that DHs provide support and guide teachers through human capital management and professional development. Tang et al. (2022:516) stress the importance of DHs' instructional leadership in improving learner outcomes, acknowledging the impact of the school environment on their role. The instructional leadership of DHs is perceived to positively influence teachers' effectiveness, enhancing their practices and skills (Ahmad & Hamid, 2021:519).

As instructional leaders, DHs understand that learner success hinges on effective teaching and a supportive school environment (Yasmeen & Tobawal, 2023:553). These insights highlight the profound impact of instructional leadership on learner success. Effective instructional leadership not only enhances teaching and learning experiences but also provides opportunities for teachers to acquire new skills, fostering a conducive learning environment, which is a crucial activity that DHs continually engage in.

The foregoing perspective is in line with the notion of Jacobson et al. (2020:44) who argue that instructional leaders can help develop and nurture skills in teachers by providing them with continuous opportunities for professional learning and collaboration. Kilag and Sasan (2023:63) emphasise that instructional leadership focuses on improving teaching and learning through curriculum development, teacher support, and teaching methods and strategies.

Recognising the importance of DHs in providing support and guidance through human capital management, the next section delves into personnel management as a crucial role for DHs.

2.2.1.2 Personnel management role

Personnel management within an educational context – as articulated by Nonye et al. (2019:391), encompasses the systematic process of ensuring that all human elements within an organisation, including schools, are appropriately recruited, selected, compensated and provided with conducive working conditions to enhance their productivity and contribute to achieving organisational objectives. Translated into a school environment, this involves equipping teachers with the necessary skills, knowledge and resources to enhance learner outcomes and foster effective teaching and learning practices.

In fulfilling the role of a DH, there is an inherent expectation to both manage and lead a team of teachers – as asserted by Mampane (2017:146). While distinct, both management and leadership are crucial for influencing and collaborating with others toward common goals. De Nobile and Riden (2016:24) emphasise the DH's role in personnel management, which includes monitoring and evaluating teachers' performance with a focus on competency and quality.

Further expanding on the responsibilities of DHs, Mampane (2017:147) suggests that coordinating intervention strategies within the department is essential for ensuring quality teaching and learning. Koh (2018:46) adds that personnel management tasks for DHs encompass activities such as staff induction, monitoring teaching practices and promoting professional development opportunities. Research by Mahlangu (2023:2041) underscores the importance of DHs dedicating time to monitoring and coaching teachers, emphasising their role as leaders of learning.

Building on this perspective, Tapala (2019:61) argues that DHs are responsible for ensuring that teachers maintain their competence levels to fulfil departmental and institutional goals effectively. This perspective resonates with the insights of Muluka et al. (2016:79), who emphasise the necessity for DHs to consistently encourage innovation among their teachers.

Similarly, Ghavifekr and Ibrahim (2014:46) previously noted that teachers rely on DHs for support in addressing issues encountered during teaching and learning processes – a sentiment echoed by Xia et al. (2022:544), who emphasise the importance of personnel management policies in supporting quality teaching. Inevitably, it can be acknowledged that the involvement of DHs in personnel management is indispensable in fostering the professional growth of teachers.

However, it is noteworthy that studies have indicated a challenge wherein DHs struggle to balance their numerous responsibilities due to time constraints adequately. Malinga et al. (2021:269) underscore findings indicating that some DHs face challenges in finding time to effectively lead and influence teachers within their departments. Moreover, the study highlights a tendency among DHs to serve as intermediaries, conveying teachers' needs to the principal and the SMT rather than directly engaging with and supporting teachers in their professional growth (Malinga et al. 2021:269-270).

Considering this, it is crucial to recognise the broader school environment as a factor shaping the time allocation for DH responsibilities. The number of DHs at the school and the allocation of responsibilities should be factored into this argument. Notwithstanding, De Nobile and Ridden (2014:24) assert that DHs can leverage personnel management to propose training initiatives aimed at enhancing teaching skills and deepening content knowledge among staff.

Similarly, Tapala (2021:4) suggests that DHs must also deal with the emotional and personal development of teachers, coupled with their professional development. This perspective highlights the vital role played by DHs in nurturing the holistic and ongoing development of the teachers they lead.

Despite this obstacle, the pivotal role of DHs in guiding teacher development remains essential.

The preceding section highlights the integral connection between personnel management and administrative duties within the DH's role. A discussion on administrative duties of the DH follows below.

2.2.1.3 Administrative role of the DH

The administrative role of DHs, as outlined by De Nobile and Ridden (2014:23), aims to achieve the efficient allocation of time and resources within educational institutions. Tapala et al. (2021:772) support the perspective that the DH functions as a manager, overseeing both personnel and resources. Consequently, it is within the DH's purview to manage departmental resources, including the inventory of teaching and learning materials.

Koh (2018:46) further elaborates on this, emphasising the need for DHs to address resourcing issues, record-keeping and paperwork, which may not always align directly with the learning process. This balancing act between administrative responsibilities, instructional leadership and teaching load, as noted by various scholars, significantly impacts a school's overall effectiveness. However, it comes with the territory and the DH is expected to carry all that out as per position demands.

Basset (2016:99) underscores the importance of DHs being afforded the space to execute their administrative duties in a manner that supports teaching and learning. However, Lambert (2023:3) highlights a common challenge: DHs often find themselves burdened with both teaching responsibilities and administrative tasks that would typically be delegated to other staff members. When the delegation is done correctly, it can alleviate workloads and equally afford professional development opportunities for teachers. Conversely, Mashapa (2019:39) argues that the administrative duties of DHs encompass critical functions such as results analysis and teacher performance evaluation.

In addition to these responsibilities, DHs are also tasked with scheduling and attending professional development sessions, curriculum development, policy implementation and staff management (Dumakude, 2022:19). Dumakude (2022:15) emphasises the DH's position within the administrative teacher chain of command, highlighting their strategic importance in school operations. This strategic involvement is further emphasised by Myende and Bhengu (2015:633), who assert that DHs must actively participate in the school's strategic concerns as stakeholders.

While the personnel administrative measures (PAM) outlines certain administrative duties for DHs, which includes planning and managing the departmental budget, timetabling and subject work schemes, Muriuki et al. (2020:151) shed light on additional responsibilities such as equipment maintenance, repair and inventory control within their departments. These administrative tasks are inherent to the role of DHs and are essential for the smooth functioning of subject areas, grades, phases and departments.

As noted, planning and managing the departmental budget is integral to the DH's role. Allocating funds for teacher development initiatives is a crucial aspect of this responsibility as it directly impacts the growth of both teachers and learners. Through thoughtful planning and allocation, DHs can facilitate the professional development of teachers, leading to improved teacher performance and enhanced learning outcomes. By covering the costs of these initiatives, DHs ensure that teachers have access to valuable resources, fostering a culture of continuous improvement within the department. In summary, DHs play a multifaceted role that encompasses administrative duties crucial for effective school management. This involves balancing various responsibilities while

actively contributing to the strategic direction of the institution. To gain a better understanding of communication as a role of the DH, an in-depth discussion follows.

2.2.1.4 Communication role

Effective communication within a school setting is paramount as it involves the exchange of messages between individuals, emphasising its interactive and bilateral nature (Brinia et al., 2022:2). Musheke and Phiri (2021:659) underscore its significance in fostering collaboration and influencing organisational performance within educational institutions. Researchers such as Sartika and Surtrariadi (2023:3269) maintain that communication in schools involves people in various positions with their respective responsibilities. Khumalo and van Jaarsveld (2022:78) highlight communication's role in articulating a vision clearly and building networks, aligning with Tapala's (2019:72) emphasis on the DH's role as an agent of change through communication networks with teachers, facilitating their development.

In accordance with this understanding, the PAM document assigns a significant responsibility to DHs in maintaining communication within the school. Subsection 3.5.1 of the PAM underscores the importance of cooperation and communication among colleagues to uphold teaching standards, facilitate learner progress and enhance administrative efficiency. Such collaboration is essential for the collective success of the department and the school. Furthermore, Subsection 3.5.3 of the PAM mandates DHs to organise parental meetings to discuss learner progress and behaviour, ensuring ongoing communication between the school and parents while aiding in identifying intervention strategies for academically at-risk learners. DHs serve as crucial intermediaries in the communication chain within the school, acting as liaisons between senior management and teachers (Maingi, 2015:18; Leithwood, 2016:126). This two-way communication ensures that the voices and needs of teachers are effectively conveyed to school leadership, contributing to inclusive decision-making processes.

Building on this role, Kalane and Rambuda (2022:198) affirm that DHs bridge the gap between the senior management team (SMT) and teachers, aligning departmental objectives with the school's overarching goals. In terms of teacher development, communication from the DH is essential. Subsection 3.5.1 of the PAM notes that the DH needs to communicate effectively to ensure the quality standard of teaching and learning.

According to Sartika and Surtriyadi (2023:3271), effective communication is essential to enhance teacher performance. This is in line with the notion held by Ayeni and Akinola (2020:95) who argue that regular communication on departmental or subject goals has a positive influence on teacher competency. Similarly, communication fosters an environment for strengthened collaboration (Ayeni & Akinola, 2020:95). In the instance when communication is not present or effectively executed, the complete opposite is likely to transpire.

According to Herdiana et al. (2021:783), poor communication in a school can give birth to an apathetic attitude. Consequently, exploring the DH's role in teacher development becomes imperative, recognising their pivotal contribution to fostering a culture of continuous growth and improvement within the school community. Ogunlade and Ekere (2017:73) emphasise the vital role of DH's communication in enhancing teacher effectiveness. Thus, it is necessary to identify the role the DH plays in teacher development – as outlined in the following illustrative analysis.

2.2.1.5 Teacher development role

The role of a DH within the educational context encompasses various responsibilities, with a primary focus on facilitating teacher development to enhance the quality of teaching and learning. Research by De Nobile and Ridden (2014:24) underscores the criticality of teacher development in the DH's mandate, emphasising its pivotal role in improving teachers' teaching capacities. Similarly, scholars like Christiansen and Bertram (2019:78) advocate for equipping teachers with requisite knowledge, skills and values, positing DHs as central figures in guiding teachers toward acquiring essential pedagogical competencies.

DHs wield considerable influence over the professional trajectories of teachers within their departments – as noted by Leithman (2016:123) and supported by Mashapa (2019:27). This underscores the DH's imperative role in fostering a culture of continuous professional growth among teachers. However, despite this recognised significance, Golding (2017:10) highlights a prevalent oversight among some DHs regarding the full extent of their impact on teacher development.

Within the framework of professional administration measures (PAM, 2016), the DH is explicitly tasked with providing guidance to inexperienced teachers (PAM, 2016:38), emphasising their role as instructional leaders responsible for nurturing the development of their colleagues. Buthelezi et al. (2021:18075) reiterate this perspective, emphasising the DH's responsibility to create avenues for professional growth within the school setting.

Nonetheless, there appears to be a disconnect between the expected role of DHs in teacher development and the recognition thereof by senior management – as indicated by Golding (2017:9). This lack of clarity often translates into inadequate training for DHs to effectively support teacher development initiatives – as sustained by Du Plessis and Eberlein (2017:11). Training for DHs, akin to that provided for teachers, is crucial in enhancing their capacity to facilitate professional growth effectively.

The PAM framework reinforces the necessity for DHs to engage in continuous professional development activities, such as departmental committees and seminars (PAM, 2016:40). Active participation in such endeavours ensures that DHs remain abreast of educational advancements, thereby strengthening their effectiveness in guiding and developing teachers in their departments.

Furthermore, Du Plessis (2016:114) posits that DHs must possess up-to-date knowledge of the curriculum and demonstrate expertise in teaching to command authority among their teaching staff. This aligns with the expectation that DHs must lead by example, embodying the pedagogical standards they advocate for among their colleagues.

The overarching goal of teacher development – as articulated by De Nobile (2014:7) – is to cultivate teachers who are proficient and competent in their craft. This underscores the paramount importance of investing in teacher development initiatives to ensure teachers possess the requisite competencies to deliver quality education and positively impact learner outcomes.

The role of the DH in spearheading teacher development initiatives remains integral to the continuous improvement of teaching and learning within educational institutions. The following section elaborates on the concept of professional development.

2.3 CONCEPTUALISING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Nguyen (2019:33) defines professional development as processes and activities intended to enhance a person's professional knowledge, abilities, perspective and attitude. This viewpoint is supported by Chikari et al. (2015:26), who contend that professional development is crucial for gaining new skills and information to improve job performance. Their outlook briefly addresses the research question of understanding the role of the departmental head (DH) in teacher development for improved performance.

Researchers such as Avidov-Ungar (2016:55) hold that professional development is a purposeful process meant to fill in knowledge or skill deficiencies. Parsons (2022) further emphasises the value of developing new skills through job training and continuous education. Additionally, Parsons (2022) underscores the importance of refining existing skills, aligning with Kennedy's (2016:945) view of professional development as an intentional process to enhance skills and knowledge. Together, these perspectives highlight the comprehensive nature of professional development, encompassing both the acquisition of new competencies and the refinement of existing ones.

Transitioning to the specific context of teacher development, both in South Africa and globally, warrants exploration. This research will delve into professional development in schools to understand its impact on teacher performance and how DHs can contribute to this process. By outlining the pivotal role of professional development in enhancing teacher effectiveness, the researcher of this study aims to shed light on the strategies and mechanisms through which DHs can support and facilitate the professional growth of teachers.

2.3.1 Teacher-focused professional development

According to Faizuddin et al. (2022:1) professional development (PD) amongst teachers is widely acknowledged as a critical factor in enhancing both institutional and learner performance. This notion stems from the outlook held by Gumbo (2020:59), who argues that the process not only improves teacher competence but also fosters a collaborative and adaptive institutional culture. This aligns with the need for knowledgeable and skilful teachers to deliver quality teaching.

Researchers such as Tsoetsi and Mahlomaholo (2015:45) assert that teachers' professional development (PD) is the cornerstone of quality teaching and learning, forming the foundation of an effective education system. This sentiment is echoed by Kennedy (2016:945), who emphasises the consensus that professional development leads to improvements in teaching – a view supported by Borg (2018:200).

Ajibade and Bertram (2020:103) further advocate for proactive teaching approaches, suggesting that teachers should surpass the recommendations set by the education system through continuous self-improvement. With changes in national curricula, aimed at meeting global needs, it becomes imperative for teachers to be equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge to successfully implement these changes (Elemayehu, 2021:2).

Indeed, teacher development has been a focal point for educational reform initiatives with research consistently showing its positive impact on learner outcomes (Ajibade & Bertram, 2020:104; Elliot, 2015:108). Nhlumayo (2022:104) and Opfer and Pedder (2011:376) emphasise the significant role of teachers' professional development in improving teaching and learning outcomes, aligning with the overarching goal of enhancing learner performance.

Mukan et al. (2019:107) and Tapala (2023:139) underscore the necessity of efficient and relevant PD in improving learner learning outcomes and overall educational outcomes. Thus, the importance of teachers' professional development in fostering effective teaching practices and enhancing the educational experience for learners is paramount. To gain a better understanding of this phenomenon, a comparative discussion on the context of teacher PD internationally and in South Africa is discussed below.

2.3.1.1 International context of teacher PD

Understanding teacher professional development (PD) requires an exploration of its diverse interpretations across different countries and regions. Geldenhuys and Oosthuizen (2015:205) emphasise this variation, attributing it to factors such as the availability of time, types of PD programmes and the underlying motivations for engaging in PD. In Spain and New Jersey, for instance, PD is perceived as a continuous and ongoing process, promoting the idea of teachers as lifelong learners (Bautista & Ortega-

Ruiz, 2015:243; Singh, 2011:1619). Conversely, in Israel, PD is often initiated by educational authorities with the goal of enhancing teaching quality, often led by school principals with expert guidance (Avidov-Ungar, 2016:656).

This landscape of PD initiatives, whether instituted by authorities or integrated into job requirements, underscores the influence of national policies on teacher development (Geldenuys & Oosthuizen, 2015:205). Policy mandates, such as those observed in Ethiopia's workshop-based training approach (Elemayehu, 2021:2) or Hong Kong's emphasis on professional learning communities (PLCs) (Chow, 2013:35; Nguyen Boeren, Maitra, & Cabus, 2024:91), reflect a commitment to improving educational standards through structured PD interventions. However, variations exist even within countries; for instance, while Norway adopts a blend of formal and informal PD interactions (Ballangrud & Nilsen, 2021:691), the United Kingdom, Poland and Spain tie PD to license renewal, career progression and salary incentives (Bernadine, 2019:132).

Australia and Kenya also prioritise PD, with an emphasis on lifelong learning and adapting to evolving curricula (Mukan et al., 2019:107; Wambugu et al. 2019:77). Despite these differences, the overarching goal remains consistent: to enhance teachers' skills and knowledge, thereby improving student outcomes (Wolhuter et al., 2022:121). Moreover, PD is recognised as a means for teachers to expand their career horizons (Wolhuter et al., 2022:121), reinforcing its importance beyond immediate classroom impact.

In South Africa, the finer details of teacher PD mirror this global spectrum, balancing national policies, educational priorities and professional aspirations. Considering this, the following section will elaborate on teacher PD in South Africa.

2.3.1.2 South African context of teacher PD

In South Africa, changes to the curriculum occur frequently, reflecting the ongoing global trend of educational evolution (Van der Merwe-Muller & Dasoo, 2021:1; Geldenuys & Oosthuizen, 2015:203). Teachers face the challenge of adapting to these changes – akin to professional development (PD). Adu et al. (2023:546) argue that the inherent challenges and inequities in the South African education system necessitate prioritising professional development. This emphasis aims to empower teachers to enhance their expertise, improve learner performance and foster a more effective school environment.

Singh and Mukeredzi (2024:4) underscore the pivotal role of teachers in post-apartheid transformation, echoing Harsha and Newman's (2021:1) assertion that teacher participation in professional development is crucial for adapting to educational and curricular changes and enhancing school efficiency. This sentiment is echoed by Nakidien et al. (2022:49), who advocate for continuous professional teacher development (CPTD) to keep teachers abreast of curricular changes mandated by the South African Council of Educators (SACE, 2013), which requires teachers to accumulate at least 150 CPTD points over a three-year cycle (SACE, 2013:5). Unfortunately, Khumalo (2022:52) found that this requirement does not necessarily ensure the professional development of teachers. Bernadine (2019:129) characterises CPTD as a programme supporting teachers' professional growth, which, despite its complexity, is identified by Van der Merwe and Dasoo (2021:1) to upskill and acquire the necessary content knowledge to meet evolving subject and learner needs. Moreover, CPTD can address various developmental needs of teachers (Van der Merwe-Muller & Dasoo, 2021:2), aligning with SACE's emphasis on aiding teachers in planning and prioritising their PD for optimal benefit and recognition (SACE, 2013:5). According to Adu et al. (2023:542, 544), CPTD is not only essential for enhancing the quality of education but also plays a pivotal role in promoting social justice, asserting its significance in both improving educational standards and enhancing teacher effectiveness. Despite this, Makoa and Segalo (2023:55) argue that the teacher-to-learner ratio significantly impacts teacher professional development. Accordingly, Ajani (2023:493) notes that there is a wide array of PD programmes for teachers to choose from, ranging from teacher-initiated to externally initiated activities. This flexibility aligns with Nhlumayo's (2022:105) perspective that teachers should engage in events or programmes initiated by themselves, their schools or other stakeholders. However, these available opportunities are not particularly sufficient (Ajani, 2023:497). Eggert et al. (2018:402) argue that professional development comprises various guided learning experiences designed to enhance teachers' acquisition of knowledge, skills and attitudes, aimed at enhancing teaching effectiveness. The following section will delve into detail on how PD programmes are presented and outline how they can impact the professional development of teachers.

2.3.1.3 How teacher development programmes are presented

Professional development (PD) stands as a crucial component of the teaching profession in South Africa – as highlighted by Ajani (2023:496). Teachers actively participate in a variety of courses and workshops throughout their careers. The SACE (2011:20) underscores the importance of diverse PD formats, ranging from workshops to full qualifications offered by higher education institutions. Geldenhuys and Oosthuizen (2015:204) further emphasise the extensive range of teacher development initiatives in the country, including conferences, workshops, in-service training and formal tertiary qualifications. In line with Ajani and Govender's assertions (2019:13146), in-service-specific development programmes aim to enhance teaching and learning practices, improving learner performance. These initiatives align with the overarching goals of PD, which seek to equip teachers with the necessary skills to navigate evolving educational landscapes effectively. Adu et al. (2023:545) define in-service training as professional development initiatives offered to teachers during their tenure in schools, encompassing workshops, seminars and various short-term training opportunities. Building on this perspective, Ajani (2023:496) argues that professional development extends beyond structured programmes, encompassing self-directed learning, mentorship and continuous education. Such activities aim to strengthen existing strengths, acquire new skills and gain fresh perspectives, enabling professionals to remain relevant amidst industry dynamics. Mentoring and coaching programmes pair teachers with experienced colleagues who provide guidance and support as they navigate the challenges of teaching. These programmes, whether formal or informal, can take place within a school or district (Adu et al., 2023:545). Ajani's study (2022:38) further clarifies that teachers engage in a range of PD activities to refine their teaching skills. To comprehensively understand the multifaceted PD environment, it is essential to differentiate between teacher-initiated, institution-initiated and externally initiated PD activities.

2.3.1.3.1 Teacher-initiated PD activities

Teacher-initiated activities, as emphasised by Govender (2015:487), entail teachers taking accountability for their own professional development, extending to the information they acquire, the methods they employ, the learning environments they engage with and the peers they collaborate with. This comprehensive ownership aligns perfectly with the

concept of learning-through-self, as described by Govender (2015:490), involving autonomy for personal growth and development, identifying resources for learning independently and taking personal responsibility for initiating one's developmental journey. Simegn (2014:1109) further reinforces this notion, suggesting that teachers must recognise their professional development needs, devise strategies for improvement and collaborate with the school to implement these strategies effectively. Thus, school-initiated development activities complement the teacher's proactive approach to professional growth, forming a cohesive framework for continuous improvement within the educational context. Instances of PD activities initiated by teachers include attending webinars and educational conferences. Researchers such as Nzarirwehi and Atuhumuze (2019:22) postulate that these events introduce teachers to new developments in education. According to Perkasa and Surono (2022:200), webinars afford attendees personal interaction with presenters to ask questions on the information presented while providing access to the presented information through a web-based archive. The idea behind these activities is to improve one's teaching abilities, broaden subject and pedagogy knowledge and enhance the learning experience. This aligns with the perspective held by Perkasa and Surono (2022:200), who note that the PD of teachers has a positive impact on learner learning and an enhanced understanding of the curricula. However, Ajani (2022:494) argues that standardised PD does not adequately address the individualised needs of teachers due to its one-size-fits-all approach, which overlooks the diverse subject backgrounds and unique requirements of each teacher. Noting this, below follows a discussion on school-initiated development activities.

2.3.1.3.2 School-initiated PD activities

Ajani (2023:494) underscores the Department of Basic Education's (DBE) responsibility to ensure teachers undergo diverse and sufficient professional development to enhance classroom practice. School-initiated professional development (PD) programmes offer a valuable avenue for achieving this goal. These activities, conducted within the school premises and organised by the school itself (Ajani, 2022:38), encompass a range of initiatives such as mentorship, departmental meetings and internal workshops aimed at bolstering teachers' teaching strategies (Du Plessis & Eberlein, 2017:12). Of these, subject and departmental meetings foster collaboration, information exchange and skill refinement among teachers – as underscored by Du Plessis and Eberlein (2017:12).

Spearheaded by the DH, school-initiated activities are informed by their theoretical and practical expertise, highlighting their pivotal role as mentors (Lipscombe et al. 2020:1064). Mentorship, crucial for maintaining teaching quality, is emphasised by Govender (2015:490), with mentoring programmes recognised as effective tools by Makananesa and Sepeng (2022:261). Mqadi (2023:74) asserts that mentoring in teacher development guides mentees to enhance skills, knowledge and teaching attitudes to ensure the delivery of quality education. These programmes, whether formal or informal, offer personalised guidance, offer constructive feedback and motivation to teachers (Adu et al. 2023:545). Makafane (2022:8) argues that mentoring involves pairing an experienced teacher with a novice to provide guidance and encouragement, a perspective echoed by Mqadi (2023:74), who emphasises mentoring's role in driving changes in pedagogical approaches through guidance, support and teaching on improving classroom practices. Consequently, mentored teachers experience an enhancement in their teaching quality and effectiveness in the classroom. While internal PD activities are crucial, participation in external PD activities can complement these initiatives, leading to mutual benefits and enriching the overall learning environment (Lipscombe et al. 2020:1074). The following section speaks on externally initiated PD activities.

2.3.1.3.3 Externally initiated PD activities

In the realm of teacher development, external or off-site PD initiatives are commonly employed, often arranged by entities such as teacher unions, education departments or higher education institutions. The SACE (2015) identifies externally led PD activities, such as workshops, short courses and online programmes, which receive endorsement from stakeholders like the Department of Basic Education (DBE), teacher unions and higher education institutions (HEIs). Researchers such as Andersson et al. (2022:2) note that external institutions offer PD programmes and activities as commercial products. These activities – typically occurring beyond the confines of teachers' school premises and are usually coordinated by the Department of Education – include workshops, symposiums and conferences, serving as platforms for teachers to exchange best practices, acquire new strategies and expand their networks (Govender, 2015:487). Conferences and workshops foster collaboration among teachers on regional or national scales, providing opportunities to learn new teaching strategies and network with other educators (Adu et

al., 2023:545). According to Rimmer and Floyd (2020:2), conferences serve as a conventional measure of engagement within a discipline, demonstrating individuals' dedication to their profession and its broader community. Online courses provide teachers with the flexibility to learn at their own pace and delve into a multitude of subjects, including crucial topics like classroom management and technology integration (Adu et al., 2023:545). This flexibility is paramount, allowing teachers to tailor their learning experiences to fit their busy schedules and specific professional development needs. Moreover, tertiary qualifications serve as vehicles for augmenting existing professional skills (Geldenhuys & Oosthuizen, 2015:204). However, Ajani (2023:498) recommends in a study that professional development initiatives should focus on the content taught in the classroom, challenging subjects and the expectations for learners in their exams. Through structured curricula and specialised coursework, tertiary education enables teachers to deepen their understanding, refine their teaching methods and stay abreast of innovative practices in education. The constructive collaboration between online courses and tertiary qualifications provides teachers with a comprehensive toolkit for continuous growth and advancement in their careers. By harnessing the flexibility of online learning and the rigour of tertiary education, teachers can cultivate a dynamic skill set that enriches not only their own professional development but also enhances the quality of education they provide to their learners. Noting these activities that can be employed for teacher development, the following section sheds light on development and appraisal systems and the role they play in teacher development.

2.3.2 Teacher development and appraisal systems

The value of appraisal systems, as highlighted by Nadeem et al. (2019:195), cannot be dismissed. Originating in the mid-1950s, these systems initially focused on personality-based approaches, which were widely utilised – as noted by Mkhonza et al. (2020:231). Performance management is crucial for quality teaching and learning, serving as a tool to monitor teacher development programmes. Despite its significance, Masoge and Pilane (2014:3) argue that there is a lack of research on performance management, particularly concerning teacher appraisal. This discussion delves into performance management and appraisal systems in education, referencing both South African practices and global standards while emphasising the role of DHs in managing teacher performance.

2.3.2.1 International context of teacher development and appraisal systems

Performance management is widely recognised as a crucial element in fostering quality teaching and learning, as well as enhancing PD (Dal Corso et al., 2019:1). When coupled with an operational appraisal system, performance management can yield positive outcomes. Dal Corso et al. (2019:2) argue that a well-structured appraisal system can positively influence the PD of teachers. This sentiment is echoed by researchers such as Nkoma and Shoshore (2023:423), who emphasise that the developmental aspects of performance management and appraisal systems incorporate career development and professional learning, thereby aligning with the views of Elliot (2015:111), who stresses the importance of impartiality between assessing performance and aiding PD.

However, amidst these positive perspectives, concerns about the effectiveness of performance appraisals persist. Asiago and Gathii (2014:2) highlight a lack of consensus between school management and teachers regarding the efficacy of performance appraisals. Demissie (2015:287) suggests that appraisal systems are used to influence teacher performance through administrative decisions and feedback. This diversity of viewpoints underscores the complexity of the evaluation process and reveals differing understandings among stakeholders.

In some contexts, such as in Kenya, the primary focus of teacher appraisal has been on inspection rather than fostering continuous improvement (Kagama & Irungu, 2018:93). Traditional instruments of teacher appraisals are increasingly being employed for accountability purposes rather than solely for developmental feedback (Smith & Kubacka, 2017:3). This shift indicates a broader trend wherein teacher appraisal systems are used to hold teachers accountable for their performance.

In Pakistan's education sector, the absence of a unified appraisal system, particularly in private schools, impedes teachers' ability to recognise and address their strengths, weaknesses and obstacles (Agha et al. 2020:34). This lack of uniformity leads to varied approaches to teacher appraisal across distinct types of schools, further complicating the evaluation process.

In contrast, in Australia, mechanisms such as PD planning, performance and development processes and feedback mechanisms empower DHs to influence teaching

quality and drive changes in the classroom (Queensland Department of Education, 2023:20). This recognition underscores the pivotal role of DHs in conducting evaluations and providing constructive feedback to teachers, aiming for improved learner performance.

Together, these perspectives paint a multifaceted picture of teacher appraisal and performance management, highlighting the diverse challenges and opportunities inherent in these processes across different educational contexts.

2.3.2.2 South African context of teacher development and appraisal systems

South Africa has witnessed numerous transformations in its education sector's performance management and appraisal systems since the advent of democracy. This shift became imperative due to the glaring performance gap between schools in urban areas and those in townships. Bertram and Mxenge (2023:607) observed that the government's historical categorisation of schools by race fostered an unequal working environment and strained the relationship between teachers and authority. Initially, education quality assurance relied heavily on school inspections – as noted by Mbatha (2017:11). However, these inspections were criticised for their harsh and non-developmental approach. Geldenhuys and Oosthuizen (2015:204) further elaborate that the pre-1994 appraisal system in South Africa was characterised by its inspectorate, bureaucratic and authoritarian nature, focusing primarily on teacher compliance rather than professional development. Contrary to the inspectorate system's shortcomings, researchers such as Mkhonza et al. (2020:231) emphasise the role of performance appraisal in employee development. They assert that effective appraisals should identify both strengths and weaknesses, facilitating growth and improvement. This perspective starkly contrasts with the earlier views presented by Mbatha (2017:1) and Geldenhuys and Oosthuizen (2015:204) regarding the nature and purpose of performance evaluation in South Africa's education system.

Below follows a discussion on the various appraisal systems used in South Africa since the dawn of democracy and the new education dispensation.

2.3.2.2.1 Development Appraisal System

The developmental appraisal system (DAS) emerged during the dawn of democracy in South Africa, introduced in 1998 as a detached appraisal approach (Nass, 2017:24). It was negotiated by teacher unions and the Department of Education, aiming for redress, and fostering teachers' accountability for their own development (De Clercq & Phiri, 2013:77). The system primarily focused on evaluating teachers' strengths and weaknesses to facilitate both personal and professional growth (Tachie & Mancotywa, 2021:2). Nhlamuyo (2022:106) underscores this objective, emphasising the assessment of individual teachers to design tailored development programmes. Nhlapo and Mahosho (2023:180) further assert that the DAS aimed to enhance teacher competency transparently through appraisal and professional development initiatives. However, despite its objectives, the DAS operated independently, lacking integration with other educational policies (Whitley, 2016:31). This disjointed approach resulted in a failure to address the holistic functioning of schools, leading to its replacement by the whole school evaluation (WSE) system due to poor implementation (Tachie & Mancotywa, 2021:2).

2.3.2.2.2 Performance Measurement and Development System

In 2003, Nass (2017:26) noted the inception of performance measurement (PM) as a pivotal motivational strategy. Its endorsement under Resolution 1 of 2003 by the ELRC on April 10, 2003, marked a significant milestone. The primary aim, as highlighted by Nhlamuyo (2022:106), was to evaluate performance with a view toward salary progression, confirmation of appointments and various other forms of rewards. However, the landscape evolved with the replication of the DAS and WSE, paving the way for the establishment of the Integrated quality management system (IQMS). This transition heralded a comprehensive framework that integrated various aspects of performance evaluation seamlessly.

2.3.2.2.3 Integrated Quality Management System

The IQMS was established in 2003 under Resolution 8 by the Education Labour Relations Council (ELRC) (Mamabolo et al. 2022:1). Initially conceived to foster professional development among teachers, according to Nhlamuyo (2022:106), it was also seen by Tachie and Mancotywa (2021:1) to enhance teacher productivity. However, its

implementation in schools did not occur until 2005, aimed at bolstering continuous professional development (CPD) for teachers (Mchunu & Steyn, 2017:9314).

Tachie and Mancoytwa (2021:2) highlight the IQMS's integration of components from previous systems like the DAS, WSE and PM, to uplift and assess the education system. According to Mamabolo et al. (2022:1) and Queen-Mary and Mtapuri (2014:2), the IQMS aimed to evaluate teacher performance, monitor school effectiveness, promote accountability and support growth and development among teachers. It was also designed to help teachers identify weaknesses and engage in personal development, improving the teaching and learning culture in schools (Queen-Mary & Mtapuri, 2014:2).

Similarly, Segoe (2014:724) underscores the IQMS's focus on performance review to pinpoint strengths and weaknesses, provide information to enhance service quality, demonstrate accountability and encourage personal and professional development. Professional development and fostering a culture of continuous improvement are recurring themes within the IQMS policy (Pylman, 2014:419).

Bobo (2015:257) further elaborates on the IQMS's objective, emphasising its role in identifying teacher and school needs, supporting ongoing growth, promoting accountability and monitoring overall school efficacy. However, Mkhonza et al. (2020:230) discovered issues with teacher performance appraisal under the IQMS system, indicating shortcomings that hindered its effectiveness.

In contrast, Mamabolo et al. (2022:1) argue that the IQMS can enhance teacher quality if implemented effectively, diverging from the findings of Mkhonza et al. (2020). Despite its potential benefits, the IQMS eventually gave way to the quality management system (QMS) through a process of streamlining and rebranding due to its identified shortcomings, including a lack of disciplinary processes to hold teachers accountable for performance quality or to facilitate developmental actions (Heystek, 2015:2).

2.3.2.2.4 Quality Management System

The QMS is a structured framework designed to uphold and achieve defined quality standards and objectives within an organisation (Leoung & Safruddin, 2022:1). Implemented in January 2022 under Resolution 2 of 2020 by the Department of Basic Education (DBE), the QMS serves as a performance management system for school-

based teachers, replacing the insufficient and compliance-focused IQMS (Tachie & Mancotywa, 2021:2). Recognising the challenges posed by the IQMS, the QMS aims to maximise human resources, prevent duplication, enhance accountability and strengthen quality management initiatives (ELRC, 2022:7).

Central to the QMS is its role in appraising teacher performance through classroom observations and record-keeping, aligning evaluations with job descriptions (ELRC, 2022:7). While intended to improve the overall quality of education (Diez et al., 2018:1), the QMS has been criticised for lacking a development component (CDE, 2015:8), with some teachers perceiving it as a witch hunt (Shongwe & Mutambara, 2023:273). Nonetheless, researchers argue that it identifies areas of challenge for teachers, emphasising the role of school management teams (SMT) in its implementation (Pelser, 2023:153).

The SMT bear the responsibility of ensuring consistent application and verifying appraisal processes (CDE, 2015:8; ELRC, 2022:9). However, despite its aim to support continuous growth and enhance accountability (Nhlapo & Mohosho, 2023:180), the QMS has been found to focus more on performance appraisal than on teacher development (Nhlapo & Mohosho, 2023:184), with teachers often motivated more by incentives than genuine improvement (Nhlapo & Mohosho, 2023:190). Thus, while the QMS represents a shift from the IQMS, recent research suggests ongoing challenges in its implementation.

2.3.2.2.5 Whole school evaluation

The whole school evaluation (WSE), introduced in 2001, aimed to revolutionise the inspectorate system by measuring school performance alongside teaching and learning quality (Whitley, 2016:31; Nhlamuyo, 2022:106). Its primary goal was to assess a school's alignment with national objectives, providing a comprehensive picture of its current performance (Department of Education, 2001:10). Before WSE, there was no established system for evaluating entire schools (Whitley, 2016:32). According to Section 2.3.1 (a) of the national policy on whole-school evaluation (2001:11), the core mission of schools is to enhance the educational achievements of all learners. The WSE aimed to gauge a school's value addition to learners' prior knowledge, understanding and skills (Department of Education, 2001:11). The evaluation criteria covered various aspects, including school functionality, leadership, governance, learner achievement and

infrastructure (National Policy on Whole-School Evaluation, 2001:13). Contrary to being judgmental, the WSE aimed to be supportive and developmental (Whitley, 2016:32). However, the WSE was eventually replaced by the performance measurement (PM) appraisal system following criticism from teacher unions (Whitley, 2016:32).

2.3.3 The effect of PD on teacher performance

Professional development (PD) is a cornerstone in the career trajectory of teachers, serving as a pivotal force in shaping their growth and effectiveness (Martin et al., 2019:179). It is a continuous journey that begins with initial teacher training and extends into ongoing learning opportunities (Kempen & Steyn, 2017:157). The essence of effective PD lies not only in acquiring new skills but also in adapting personal beliefs and teaching methods to align with best practices, contributing significantly to the overall effectiveness of the education system (Buthelezi et al., 2021:18075).

Central to effective professional development is its focus on teaching methods aimed at enhancing learners' learning experiences (De Clercq & Shalem, 2014:130). By improving teaching methodologies, professional development seeks to elevate teacher performance and subsequently enhance the quality of education (De Clercq & Shalem, 2014:130). This continual improvement loop is crucial for keeping teachers relevant and effective amidst evolving educational landscapes (Mizell, 2010:10).

In the broader societal context, teachers are recognised as architects of future citizens who are equipped with the skills to drive economic progress (Ayodele, 2018:160). Given the dynamic nature of education, teachers must remain engaged in continuous learning to maintain effectiveness in the classroom (Geldenhuys & Oosthuizen, 2015:203). Research suggests that participation in PD activities correlates with improved teaching and learner performance (Alemayehu, 2021:2; Teerasak et al., 2021:2).

In the era of the fourth industrial revolution (4IR), the alignment of teaching practices with global needs becomes imperative (Ajani & Govender, 2019:13147). As Ajani and Govender (2019) further underscore, the quality of teachers directly impacts the quality of education accessible to learners, thereby influencing a country's development trajectory (Ajani & Govender, 2019:13146). This necessitates more than just the passive

receipt of materials; teachers must actively engage in professional development to keep pace with evolving demands (Adjibade & Bertram, 2020:106).

Teacher development is not only about acquiring subject knowledge but also about honing reasoning and problem-solving skills essential for effective teaching and learning (Ayodele, 2018:159). Indeed, teachers are invaluable resources for both schools and nations (Ajani & Govender, 2019:13146). Their participation in professional development stems not only from the desire to improve but also from a commitment to nurturing better learning experiences for their learners (Nguyen, 2019:33).

The link between teacher PD activities and school improvement is well established (Nhlapho & Mohosho, 2023:177). It is not just individual teachers who benefit; the entire school community stands to gain from the professional growth of its teachers (Nhlapho & Mohosho, 2023:179). Improved subject knowledge and skills among teachers translate directly into enhanced performance (Nhlapho & Mohosho, 2023:184).

Recognition and benefits tied to participation in professional development underscore its importance (SACE, 2013:5). Teachers are not just distributors of knowledge but facilitators of deep and meaningful learning experiences (Bautista & Ortega-Ruiz, 2015:242). This inclusive approach acknowledges the diverse needs of learners and underscores the vital role of teachers in nurturing holistic development.

In acknowledging the significance of professional development, initiatives such as the Teacher Development Summit of 2009 have advocated for a separation between evaluations for rewards and those for professional development (PAM, 2016:312). By prioritising professional growth over incentives, this approach underscores the pivotal role of ongoing development in ensuring high-quality teaching and learning experiences for all learners.

2.4 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Kivunja (2018:46) defines a theoretical framework as a structured synthesis of concepts and theories drawn from existing literature, serving as a foundational structure for analysing and interpreting collected data. Adom et al. (2018:438) assert that a theoretical framework forms the focal point of research, intimately linked to the research problem at hand.

In this study, the theoretical underpinnings rest on the human capital theory (HCT) and the whole teacher approach (WTA), aiming to clarify the significance of professional development for teachers and the pivotal role of departmental heads (DHs) as resource managers within schools. The human capital theory (HCT), as characterised by Tan (2014:412), posits that education is an investment that enhances individual productivity.

This perspective is strengthened by Wuttaphan (2017:242), who underscores the efficacy of the HCT in improving performance. The HCT underscores the importance of investing in human capital to drive productivity and growth. In the educational realm, these principles resonate with literature, emphasising teacher development for improved teaching and learning outcomes.

Researchers such as Buthelezi et al. (2021:16016) highlight how insufficient teacher professional development adversely affects learner performance, underscoring the profound impact of effective teaching on learning outcomes. The HCT, therefore, underscores the importance of learning for improved performance and advocates for ongoing investment in teacher development to yield enhanced educational outcomes.

The WTA, as described by Chen and McCray (2012:9), embodies a holistic perspective on teacher development, acknowledging the multifaceted nature of effective teaching. The WTA prioritises the comprehensive growth of teachers, encompassing aspects such as teacher well-being, personal growth and interpersonal skills in their professional development journey.

Aligned with the HCT, the WTA recognises teachers as invaluable assets whose development is pivotal for achieving educational objectives. By nurturing the holistic development of teachers through effective development programmes, as posited by Darling-Hammond et al. (2017:1), DHs can enhance learner performance and foster a culture of continuous improvement.

Integrating the HCT and the WTA provides DHs with a robust framework to facilitate the professional growth of teachers. By investing in teacher development and creating a supportive environment that nurtures their overall well-being, DHs can cultivate a dynamic team dedicated to achieving educational excellence. This combined theoretical approach

equips DHs with a comprehensive framework to foster a culture of continuous learning and elevate learner performance within the school community.

2.5 CONCLUSION

This chapter delved into the foundational concepts that underpin the study, drawing from a thorough review of existing literature. Key concepts such as departmental heads (DHs), professional development and teacher performance were meticulously explored. Notably, the role of DHs was extensively examined, particularly in their involvement in the professional development of teachers – as indicated by the study’s title. The researcher orderly integrated and expanded upon both local and international perspectives, highlighting both differences and similarities in professional development, teacher development and appraisal systems. Throughout the literature, a recurring emphasis emerged on the crucial link between teacher development and learner performance, underscoring the paramount importance of ongoing teacher growth.

CHAPTER 3 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, existing research to build a theoretical framework for this study was consulted. This chapter examines the research design and methodology chosen for this study and explains how it addresses the research question. Furthermore, the various steps of the research process, including the sampling process, data collection and data analysis method will be discussed. In conclusion, the chapter will address issues of trustworthiness of the research and ethical considerations and how they were maintained throughout the study. The following section discusses the philosophical approach of this study.

3.2 RESEARCH PARADIGM

According to Kivunja and Kuyini (2017:26), a research paradigm is the philosophical orientation through which a researcher perceives the world. This stance aligns with the views of Rehman and Alharthi (2016:51), who describe a paradigm as a belief system guiding our understanding of reality. In this study, an interpretivist paradigm served as the guiding framework. The interpretivist paradigm was chosen as it focuses on understanding the complexities of society and avoids making broad generalisations – as noted by Junjie and Yingxin (2022:12). Moreover, this paradigm was chosen as it will assist in determining the various perspectives held by teachers on the role of the DH in their professional development. Pham (2018:3) argues that there are numerous ways to interpret a single event rather than a single, quantifiable reality. In examining how teachers view the role of DHs in their professional development, the study explored the idea that reality is personal and can change depending on who you ask. This matches the view of Alharahsheh and Pius (2020:42) about interpretivism: reality is subjective and varies based on individual perspectives. As such, this study provided varying responses to answer the main research question on the roles of DHs in the implementation of teacher development programmes for improved performance.

3.3 RESEARCH APPROACH

There are diverse ways to examine and explain a study and its findings based on using numbers as a measure, a descriptive style or a mixture of both. These three research approaches are quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods and are commonly used by researchers in various research studies. This study employed a qualitative approach. According to Hammarberg et al. (2016:499), qualitative research explores experiences, meanings and perspectives. Mohajan (2018:24) concurs, stating that the primary objective of qualitative research is to reveal how people understand and give meaning to their experiences. It delves into the individualised perceptions people have of their experiences. The qualitative approach was chosen for this study because it deeply examines people's lived experiences – as noted by Bengtsson (2016:8). This method helped determine teachers' perceptions of the role of DHs in their professional development. According to Bazen et al. (2021:241), qualitative research seeks to understand the shared values, attitudes and beliefs across communities or groups. Similarly, Muzari et al. (2022:15) claim that the main objective of qualitative research is to explore various interpretations, meanings and processes that affect social dynamics and interactions. It is for these reasons that the qualitative approach is applicable to this study. This approach ensured that the perceptions of teachers on the role of DHs in their professional development were determined. It allowed for the probing of participants to share their beliefs on the role of the DH in their professional development and to gain a better understanding of their perspective on what the DH can do to assist them in their professional development. The following section speaks to the research design followed to determine the perceptions of teachers on the role of DHs in their professional development.

3.4 RESEARCH DESIGN

Abutabenjeh and Jaradat (2018:238) refer to a research design as a roadmap that defines the research process to answer the research question. Khanday and Khanam (2023:367) highlight that a research design serves as a framework to examine a certain phenomenon. To better understand the individualised lived experiences of the participants, a phenomenological approach was employed for this study. This design allowed me to determine the participants' thoughts and behaviours within a common

experience – as suggested by Worthington (2013). This design is applicable to this study as it allowed the role DHs play in the professional development of teachers to be determined and to identify what DHs can do to assist teachers in their professional development. Moreover, this design ensured that the perceptions of teachers on the role of DHs in their professional development could be determined. The following section delves into the population of the study and the sampling strategy that was employed.

3.5 POPULATION AND SAMPLING STRATEGY

3.5.1 Population

According to Ahmad et al. (2023:20), a population in research refers to a group of individuals that share common characteristics that fall within the scope of the study. The population for this study were teachers in the Kenneth Kaunda District of the North-West Province, South Africa.

3.5.2 Sampling

Mesa et al. (2015:327) define sampling as the process of selecting participants from a targeted group. Turner (2020:8) emphasises that sampling involves choosing a subset of the population for a study. For this study, convenience sampling was used, which involves selecting participants who are easily accessible and readily available (Obilor, 2023:4). The sample consisted of teachers who were not in any management position in their respective schools. This group was chosen to provide valuable insights into their perceptions of the role of DHs in their professional development. These teachers are well-placed within the school structure to offer perspectives on what DHs can do to assist teachers in their professional development. The sample included teachers from high-performing, average-performing and underperforming secondary schools in Quintiles 1-3. High-performing schools for this study were defined as those with a pass rate of 80-100 per cent, average-performing schools had a pass rate of 60-79 per cent and underperforming schools had a pass rate below 60 per cent. This classification ensured that schools with varying performance levels were represented in the study. To ensure diverse viewpoints on the role of DHs in teacher development, twelve teachers were carefully selected: four from high-performing schools, four from average-performing schools and four from underperforming schools. To recruit participants, an administrative

assistant from each school was enlisted to act as an independent recruiter. The researcher of this study sought approval from the principals and school governing bodies (SGBs) of four secondary schools in Quintiles 1, 2 and 3, respectively. During staff meetings, the independent recruiter explained the study's purpose and invited teachers who were not part of the SMT to participate. Participants were given an informed consent letter to sign, which explained the study's objective and expectations. The following section will discuss the data collection process.

3.6 DATA COLLECTION

Mazhar et al. (2021:6) define data collection as a process of acquiring information on a phenomenon for analysis to answer a research question. According to Kabir (2016:202), the aim of data collection is to gather evidence that can credibly answer a research question. Researchers such as Yildiz (2020:17) highlight three primary forms of qualitative data collection methods: interviews, observation and document analysis. In this study, face-to-face semi-structured interviews were used, which were recorded, transcribed and analysed. This method of data collection was chosen to encourage the participants to freely express their perceptions on the role of the DH in their professional development while observing their physical and emotional reactions while answering the posed questions. This method was employed due to its conversational nature, which allowed the researcher to gain insight into their views. The participants were able to express themselves concerning the DH's involvement in their professional development, allowing for rich data to be gathered. The semi-structured interviews also provided valuable individualised insights of the participants on the role DHs play in their professional development – a view held by McGrath et al. (2019:1002). Additionally, the flexibility and authenticity of semi-structured interviews expand the range of perspectives, as argued by Alshenqeeti (2014:40), which allowed for the perceptions of teachers on the role of DHs in their professional development to be determined. This method of data collection is adaptative, which ensures that a researcher can probe for authentic data about participants' lived experiences with the phenomenon under study (Kallio et al. 2016:2955). The interviews took place in an empty classroom on the school premises, between the researcher and the participant. Each participant underwent one semi-structured face-to-face individual interview, lasting 45 to 60 minutes. The subsequent

section elaborates on the data analysis method employed to answer the research question.

3.7 DATA ANALYSIS

According to Noble and Smith (2014:2), data analysis is the process of putting together collected data in a meaningful manner that remains transparent and represents the views of the participant. For this study, a phenomenological data analysis strategy supported by hermeneutics was employed. This method was employed due to its focus on understanding the lived experiences of participants – as argued by Nieuwenhuis (2019:119). Hermeneutics benefits this study as it is concerned with the interpretation and understanding of meanings held by participants of a phenomenon. This approach involves identifying recurrent themes to arrange, analyse and present the experiences of participants. For this study, detailed transcriptions of recorded semi-structured interviews were created, followed by coding, categorising and thematically organising the retrieved data. According to Berthet et al. (2023:80), coding reduces large volumes of data to a manageable quantity and assists in the interpretation of data by revealing themes and patterns. By identifying similar responses and recurring words related to the research questions, themes and subthemes were developed. Organising the data into these categories allowed for the creation of a rich description of the responses, which accurately captures the essence of participants' perceptions. The themes were colour-coded to differentiate ideas related to the study's objectives. The trustworthiness of the study is discussed in the following section.

3.8 TRUSTWORTHINESS

Trustworthiness is essential in research. According to Nieuwenhuis (2019:143), while reliability and validity are key measures in quantitative research, trustworthiness is the critical test of data analysis, findings and conclusions in a qualitative study. Rose and Johnson (2020:435) emphasise that several elements must be seamlessly integrated to enhance a study's credibility. These elements include a solid epistemological understanding, thorough engagement with existing literature, appropriate theoretical positioning, diverse data collection techniques, rigorous analytical procedures and the connection of empirical material to broader theories and discourses. The following section will address how the credibility of this study was maintained through these principles.

3.8.1 Credibility

Forero et al. (2018:3) highlight the importance of credibility in ensuring that study findings are both truthful and trustworthy. This viewpoint is consistent with Cope's (2014:89) argument that describing the researchers' experience and validating findings with participants enhances credibility. Similarly, Stenfors et al. (2020:598) believe that a study's credibility is obvious when its research question is consistently linked with its findings. For this study, credibility was ensured through participant validation. Participant validation refers to the presentation of preliminary data to the participants to validate the interpretation of their views (Lindheim, 2022:226). The transcribed interviews were shared with the respective participants for their approval of the interpretation noted in the transcription. The participants were also requested to confirm the accuracy of the field notes and clarify any information that may have been misinterpreted.

3.8.2 Transferability

According to Nieuwenhuis (2019:144), transferability allows readers to link components of research to their own experiences. According to Drisko (2024:2), it suggests the way a study's findings and concepts may be applied to different persons, places and eras. For this study, transferability was ensured by determining the objectives of the study and generating answers to the research questions. The content and conclusions of this study are intended to apply to a wide range of scientific disciplines.

3.8.3 Dependability

Researchers such as Ahmed (2024:2) note that dependability concerns itself with the methodological documentation that details the research process. According to Forero et al. (2018:3), the purpose of dependability is to ensure the findings of the qualitative inquiry are repeatable if the inquiry occurred within the same cohort of participants, coders and context. Dependability was ensured by documenting the research procedure and keeping and maintaining an audit trail to limit bias by presenting the data as provided by the participant. This would allow potential future readers to identify the process that was followed in analysing the data and how the interpretations were formulated.

3.8.4 Confirmability

According to Cope (2014:89), confirmability refers to the detailed documenting of the process by which conclusions are reached, ensuring that the findings are based on the collected data. This notion is emphasised further by Stenfors et al. (2020:598), who state that confirmability requires the researcher to indicate how findings are generated by citing individuals and offering thorough details. Different strategies were used to ensure confirmability, including maintaining field notes, recordings and transcripts, doing participant validation and holding debriefing meetings with the study supervisor to verify that the obtained data were correctly interpreted. Throughout the study, the researcher was aware of his position as the researcher, and regular discussions with the study supervisor helped minimise bias as much as possible. By referring to the reviewed literature and quotes from the participants, the researcher could highlight the views expressed by the participants and allowed the reader to make sense of the views shared by the participants.

3.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethics in research is critical. Stutchbury and Fox (2009:489) argue that research involving interaction with individuals will have an element of ethics that tends to be complicated. Researchers such as Dooly et al. (2017:351) concur, noting that qualitative research within the educational context raises issues of ethics due to its nature of involving human subjects as participants.

Considering the nature of this study, the sensitivity and rights of the participants had to be ensured. Ethical clearance, as provided by the North-West University's (NWU) Faculty of Education Research Ethics Committee, was obtained. Following stipulated guidelines, consent from the District Director of the North-West Department of Education (NWDoE) to conduct interviews with teachers at identified schools in the Kenneth Kaunda District was obtained (Addendum E).

Furthermore, contact was made with the identified schools' principals to request permission to conduct interviews with the teachers at the schools. A permission letter to the SGB was also sent to the principal to share with the SGB for permission to conduct interviews on the school's premises (Addendum C). The participants that were identified

by the independent researcher were subsequently provided with an information letter that outlined the nature of the study, noting the purpose of the study, the role of the participants and the way data would be collected.

An informed letter of consent was shared with the participants to sign and permit participation in the study (Addendum A). Participants were informed of the privacy and confidentiality of all obtained data, as well as the identities of their respective schools. All participants were informed of the ethical considerations and guaranteed that their comments and views would be protected and treated with full anonymity. To do this, the participants' identities are not published in the study but are referred to as Participant T1A1, T2B2, etc.

Moreover, the schools were assigned coded names (A, B, C, etc.). Despite the mentioned precautionary measures, the participants were informed that the study was conducted solely for academic purposes and that they had the right to withdraw at any time throughout the study.

3.10 CONCLUSION

This chapter elaborates on the research design and methodology for this study, which was introduced in Chapter One. The researcher outlined the philosophical orientation guiding this study and discussed aspects of sampling, data collection and analysis. Furthermore, measures adopted to ensure trustworthiness were outlined. The following chapter will present, interpret and discuss the collected data.

CHAPTER 4 DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter provided a detailed overview of the research design and methodology used in this study. It explained the research paradigm that underpins the study along with a discussion on the research approach and design to clarify the rationale behind the selected strategies. Additionally, the chapter addressed the population and sampling methods employed. Ethical considerations and strategies to ensure trustworthiness were also discussed. This chapter will present the data collected from participants through semi-structured interviews, focusing on answering the research questions. It is noteworthy that this study only sought to determine the perceptions of teachers; thus, no interviews were conducted with DHs, deputy principals or principals.

4.2 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Derived from the problem statement, below are the main research question and sub-research questions.

4.2.1 Main research question

What are the roles of DHs in the implementation of teacher development programmes for improved performance?

4.2.2 Sub-research question

- i. What role do DHs play in the professional development of teachers?
- ii. How do teachers perceive the role of DHs in their professional development?
- iii. What can DHs do to assist teachers in their professional development?

4.3 PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to determine the perceptions of teachers on the role of DHs in their professional development.

The research objectives of this study were:

- i. To determine the role DHs play in the professional development of teachers.

- ii. To determine how teachers perceive the role DHs play in their professional development.
- iii. To identify what DHs can do to assist teachers in their professional development.

To help the reader align the analysed data with the study's focus, the main research question, sub-questions, purpose and objectives are reintroduced. Revisiting these elements clearly connects the data presented with the study to teachers' perceptions of the DH's role in their professional development, ensuring that the study's objectives are effectively addressed.

4.3.1 Data analysis and interpretation process

The purpose of this study was to determine the perceptions of teachers on the role of DHs in their professional development. The objectives that supplement this purpose were to determine the role DHs play in the professional development of teachers, to determine how teachers perceive the role DHs play in their professional development and to identify what DHs can do to assist teachers in their professional development.

Accordingly, data were collected through semi-structured interviews from secondary school teachers within Quintiles 1-3 that are not part of the SMT to determine these perceptions and to better understand the role of the DH in the professional development of teachers. These interviews were electronically recorded for transcription and analysis purposes. DHs, principals and deputy principals were not considered for this study.

The recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim, ensuring that the collected data remained authentic to the participant. This was followed by coding, categorising and thematically organising the data in a table format to identify similar responses and to create rich descriptions of the responses, ultimately capturing the essence of the participants' experiences. The study included twelve post-level one teachers from schools in Quintiles 1-3 within the Kenneth Kaunda District.

From the three quintiles, two teachers from underperforming, average-performing and high-performing schools were interviewed, respectively. To ensure confidentiality, all participant identities were changed to a code name as noted in the ethical considerations.

The following section elaborates on the participants of the study and the identified themes during the analysis process.

Participant profile

Table 4-1: Participant codes

Pseudonym	Description
T1A1	Teacher 1 from a top-performing Quintile 1 school
T1A2	Teacher 1 from a top-performing Quintile 2 school
T1A3	Teacher 1 from a top-performing Quintile 3 school
T1B1	Teacher 1 from an average-performing Quintile 1 school
T1B2	Teacher 1 from an average-performing Quintile 2 school
T2A1	Teacher 2 from a top-performing Quintile 1 school
T2A2	Teacher 2 from a top-performing Quintile 2 school
T2B1	Teacher 2 from an average-performing Quintile 1 school
T2B3	Teacher 1 from an average-performing Quintile 3 school
T3A3	Teacher 3 from a top-performing Quintile 3 school

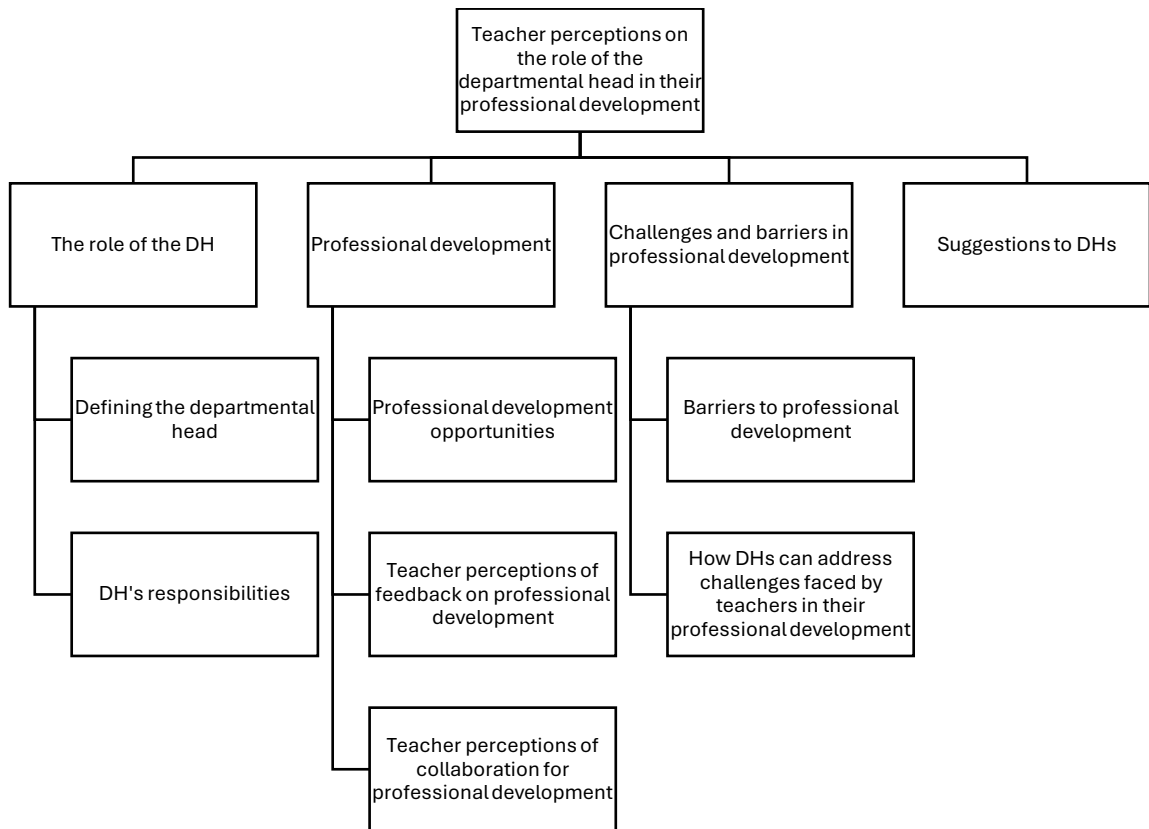


Figure 4-1: Emerging themes

4.3.2 Theme 1: The Role of the DH

Existing literature proposes that the role of the DH is dual in nature, comprising elements of teaching and administrative work. This theme delves into teacher perceptions of the role of the DH. To better understand teachers' perceptions, this theme was further divided into sub-themes to accentuate these perceptions.

4.3.2.1 Sub-theme 1: Defining the Departmental Head

This sub-theme emerged from the interview question: “How would you define a departmental head?” It is further tied to sub-question one of this study and linked to the concept of departmental head in the study’s title. The responses to this interview question presented a variety of definitions of the DH, with some describing the DH as a specialist teacher, manager and leader who oversees and manages a team of teachers.

For instance, Participant T1A2 views the DH as a leader, stating:

I can say it's more like a leader. It's leading young teachers or senior teachers, maybe. They are leading us to do the correct things and also to ensure that we are doing everything according to the policy.

This perspective suggests that DHs need strong leadership qualities to integrate both novice and experienced teachers. Given the diverse age groups and generational differences in schools, DHs must foster an environment where teachers can learn from one another. As held by Tapala et al. (2021:5), instructional leadership is an essential role of the DH. Participant T3B1 has suggested that:

So, the disadvantage of what we experience um, is that our departmental heads are experienced teachers who still use old teaching methods. So, because we come with fresher ideas and approaches, it is difficult because now there's a barrier between us in terms of how we create our lessons and how we approach our children. So, for me, a departmental head should be an innovative and very proactive person, like a lifelong teacher. A person that would be able to sit and say, how about we try this method? Or should also be able to come and show you how to approach something.

The participant expressed concern that experienced DHs frequently use old-fashioned teaching methods, which could discourage novice teachers who bring new ideas and creative approaches. According to Mthiyane et al. (2015:170), DHs serve as supervisors of teaching and learning, guiding teaching practices. As the face of their departments, DHs are required to inspire teachers and establish a collaborative culture. However, when they demonstrate a lack of proactive teaching leadership, they may unknowingly impede the development of a dynamic teaching and learning environment.

Alternatively, Participant T1B2 views the DH more as a manager, emphasising administrative and organisational responsibilities over instructional leadership. They note:

A departmental head is someone who's supposed to manage a department and should have knowledge in different areas related to various subjects. But most importantly, management skills are essential because, in most cases, teachers only qualify to teach a couple of subjects whereas a department may cover many more.

This perspective highlights the importance of managerial skills in the DH's role, suggesting that effective departmental management requires broad subject knowledge and the ability to coordinate various aspects of the department. While the previous participant advocates for innovative instructional leadership to support new teaching methods, Participant T1B2 underscores the necessity of firm management to oversee diverse subject areas and meet departmental goals.

This view aligns with DiGirolamo and Tkach's (2019:196) argument that managers focus on achieving goals and meeting deadlines. To balance encouraging teachers to deliver high-quality teaching with ensuring departmental goals are met, often at the sacrifice of educational quality, DHs must be capable managers. This highlights the complexity of their job. Overseeing subjects outside of their areas of expertise makes this balancing act even more difficult for DHs to deliver effective subject-specific leadership.

For example, Participant T2A1 noted that their DH, a specialist in Life Sciences, also oversees subjects like Agricultural Science and Physical Science: areas where they lack in-depth knowledge:

My departmental head is a Life Science major. So, on my side, things are easier because she can share relevant information. But in subjects like Physical Science and Agricultural Science, she's struggling to keep up because she didn't specialise in those areas. For me, there's a positive impact since we share the same subject, and when we discuss, we 'speak the same language'. She knows what's expected, and so do I. It makes things smoother, unlike for the others.

This viewpoint emphasises the challenges that DHs experience when managing subjects outside of their expertise, which can limit their ability to effectively support teachers and lead to content delivery difficulties across the department. As Kalane and Rambuda (2022:197) noted, the management of teaching and learning directly influences learner performance. These findings underscore the subtle demands placed on DHs as both leaders and managers, requiring them to navigate responsibilities that demand a strategic and motivational approach alongside practical, goal-oriented management.

The subsequent sub-theme elaborates on teachers' perceptions of the DH's responsibilities.

4.3.2.2 Sub-theme 2: DH's responsibilities

Providing guidance and support to teachers is crucial for achieving quality teaching and learning. Such guidance and support can relate to coaching, mentoring or providing resources to ensure that effective teaching and learning occurs. According to De Nobile and Riden (2016:24), DHs are responsible for ensuring competency and quality through monitoring and evaluation. Participants emphasised these factors as essential responsibilities of the DH in ensuring the delivery of quality education.

When asked about the role of the departmental head in their professional development, the participants provided varying responses. For instance, Participant T2A2 said, "In terms of the professional development, I think there should be more developing you to be a professional teacher, a change agent, a teacher that is there to inspire..."

Participant T2A2 emphasised the need for DHs to play a more active role in teachers' professional development. This viewpoint is consistent with the PAM, which states that the DH should mentor novice teachers (PAM, 2016:38). This perspective also contends that developing a sense of purpose and leadership in teaching methods should be a part of professional development in addition to skill development.

Similarly, Participant T2B1 highlights the DH's role in fostering their development, particularly in terms of administrative responsibilities, stating, "I'd say developing me, you know, as an administrator, for example..."

This viewpoint emphasises the DH's multifaceted influence on professional development, which includes both teaching and administrative abilities. When considered collectively, these perspectives highlight the teachers' intention for DHs to offer holistic development opportunities that improve their administrative and teaching performance. This response addresses the second sub-research question and the interview question: How would you describe the department head's role in your professional development?

Adding to the previous perspectives, Participant T2B3 views the role of the DH in professional development as providing essential support to teachers, stating, "So, your role as a DH is actually to support the educator with whatever support that they may need..."

This perspective highlights the DH's responsibility to meet teachers' needs, fostering an environment conducive to growth. It aligns with Buthelezi et al. (2021:18075), who emphasise that DHs should create avenues for professional development within the school, ensuring teachers have access to resources and support that enhance their practice. Together, these insights underscore the DH's role as both a mentor and a facilitator of ongoing growth and learning for educators.

Other participants also shared a common perspective on the support they receive from the DH, arguing that DHs need to provide continuous support to teachers (T3B1 and T2A1). Participant T3B1 articulated this view, stating, "Their role, one, is to support me in delivering curriculum."

According to this viewpoint, DHs should actively help teachers understand the requirements of the curriculum, provide guidance on teaching methods and make sure that resources are available for effective teaching. Ghavifekir and Ibrahim (2014:46) assert that DHs play a critical role in providing teachers with assistance in addressing problems pertaining to teaching and learning. By providing ongoing assistance, DHs contribute to the development of an environment in which teachers feel prepared to provide excellent teaching and achieve positive learner outcomes.

It further highlights the view shared by Du Plessis (2016:114) who argued that DHs must have up-to-date knowledge of the curriculum and demonstrate expertise in their teaching. The issue, however, comes in when a DH oversees subjects in which they are not

specialists. Three of the eleven participants noted that their DHs are not specialists in their subjects, which creates difficulty in acquiring assistance on lesson and content delivery. For instance, Participant T1B2 notes the following, “My departmental head doesn’t as, um, as a life sciences teacher, and I’m currently teaching physical sciences. So, she’s not, um, that knowledgeable with physical sciences.”

This view emphasises the difficulty for DHs to supervise subjects for which they are not content-specifically qualified, which limits their ability to provide teachers with the full support they need. Christiansen and Bertram (2019:78) contend that DHs are essential in providing teachers with the tools and information they need, creating an environment of collaboration that improves both individual teaching methods and departmental performance as a whole.

In line with this, Participants T2B1, T2A2 and T1A2 who emphasised that guidance is an essential responsibility of the DH, helping teachers navigate their professional journeys. This aligns with the requirements outlined in the PAM document, which specifies that DHs must provide guidance to teachers (PAM, 2016:38). Participant T2A2 specifically highlighted the DH’s role in guiding teachers through the assessment creation process, noting, “...to guide you when you are setting the question paper, to show you what must be there in the question paper, what must not be in the question paper and what to avoid.”

This underscores the DH’s responsibility to ensure that exam papers align with curriculum standards and assessment policies. By providing direction on what content to include or exclude, DHs assist teachers in designing fair and comprehensive assessments that accurately measure learner learning. This guidance helps prevent common pitfalls such as including irrelevant material, biased questions or inappropriate difficulty levels. Ultimately, the DH’s support in this area enhances the quality of assessments and contributes to more effective teaching and learning outcomes.

The following theme explores how teachers perceive professional development.

4.3.3 Theme 2: Professional Development

Avidov-Ungar (2016:55) noted that professional development is a structured process that seeks to address shortcomings. In this theme, participant perceptions will be shared on

the role DHs play in their professional development and how their participation in professional development impacts their teaching practice. This theme is linked to sub-question one of this study. From this theme, two sub-themes emerged.

4.3.3.1 Sub-theme 1: Professional development opportunities

This sub-theme expounds on the perspectives provided by the participants on the professional development opportunities. As suggested by Chikari et al. (2015:26), professional development is integral to advancing one's skills and knowledge. This sub-theme addresses Questions 7 and 8 of the interview schedule. The participants provided varied responses relating to the DHs' facilitation of professional development opportunities.

In response to the interview question: what kind of professional development opportunities has your departmental head encouraged you to participate in? Participant T1A3 noted the following, "...there's one which was the ICT training thing where now they were providing certificates... Yeah, I had to attend that due to his recommendation. So, there are such opportunities."

Participant T1A3 shared that their departmental head encouraged them to participate in an ICT training programme, which offered certification. This recommendation provided an opportunity for professional development, equipping the participant with valuable skills in educational technology. Being a mathematics teacher, this participant gained valuable skills that enhanced their capabilities in digital literacy. This opportunity reflects the outlook of Kennedy (2016:945) who views professional development as an intentional process to enhance skills.

As opposed to Participant T1A3, Participant T2B3 noted that they are not encouraged to participate in any professional development opportunities by the DH. In response, the participant stated, "Not necessarily. Those are basically organised by the department, and it's mandatory for you to go."

Participant T2B3 expressed that their DH only facilitates attendance at mandatory professional development sessions organised by the department rather than offering additional opportunities. This aligns with Ajani's (2023:496) view that effective

professional development should go beyond structured programmes to include mentorship and other initiatives that support teachers in delivering quality teaching and learning.

Such initiatives could include teacher workshops, which Adu et al. (2023:545) identify as a form of in-service training that supports teachers' professional development. Participant T3A3 acknowledged that workshops are offered by the department but noted a gap in recent attendance, "Yeah, workshops are there. Catered by the department. But the last time I went to a workshop, I think it was two years back. Yeah. There are workshops. It's been a while back. Yeah."

This response suggests that, while workshops are available, they may not be consistently or frequently provided. The absence of recent workshops highlights a potential need for more regular opportunities to support ongoing professional growth and keep teachers updated with current practices. The growing trend highlighted the dependence on externally initiated professional development initiatives. Below are some of the views shared by participants.

"...she has actually encouraged me to take part in some programme..." (T1B2)

"Yes. Um, we, um, I have went to, to the, the, the content training that she has recommended." (T2A1)

It's only the workshops that we normally have. And those ones are for everyone.

As a teacher, you are bound to go and attend workshops. And then the workshops are mainly based on the sub-content. It's not about the professional development as a teacher. (T2A2)

These responses indicate a pattern of reliance on externally initiated professional development initiatives, typically organised by the department. This reliance reflects a limited proactive role from DHs in creating school-initiated opportunities for teacher growth. While such external programmes, like workshops and content training, are beneficial, they seem to be infrequent and often only address subject-specific content rather than holistic professional growth.

Considering school-initiated initiatives, Ajani (2022:38) suggests that departmental meetings, and mentorship programmes, can be created as forms of professional development. Makananesa and Sepeng (2022:261) maintain that mentoring programmes are the most effective tools in school-initiated professional development initiatives. Participant T2A2 aligns with the views of Makananesa and Sepeng stating, “So, I will have my mentor, and then they will always develop me on a regular basis.”

Participant T2A2’s appreciation of their mentor as someone who contributes to their development signifies the important role that mentors play in developing fellow teachers. Along with mentorship, departmental meetings are a convenient manner to provide professional development to teachers. Du Plessis and Eberlein (2017:12) endorse the use of departmental meetings as areas for collaboration and information change that can contribute to the refinement of skills amongst teachers.

However, from the responses derived, it seems as though these meetings do not address professional development. Below are some responses from Participant T2B1, “We usually have subject meetings and also departmental meetings like every term we’ll meet as a department just to analyse results come up with strategies for how to improve the results and then subject meeting.”

This response highlights the nature of departmental meetings as an area of regrouping and fostering collaborative teaching. The discussion on strategies on the way forward by the teachers suggests that the environment promotes information change focused on teaching strategy. In contrast to this view, Participant T3B1 states that, “...because we do hold departmental meetings, but we would only do it for admin.”

Participant T3B1’s response reveals that the primary focus of departmental meetings in their school is handling administrative tasks such as analysing results. This response indicates how departmental meetings at this school solely address departmental administrative tasks more than creating an environment where collaborative teaching can take place. Although it may be regarded as an ideal platform to foster development on school level, departmental meetings tend not to allow for it due to the administrative work that needs to be addressed.

The following sub-theme examines the feedback teachers receive on their professional development.

4.3.3.2 Sub-theme 2: Teacher perceptions on the role of feedback in their professional development

Martin et al. (2019:179) maintain that the professional development of teachers contributes significantly to the growth and improvement of teachers. Similarly, the provision of feedback is a fundamental component of professional development as it informs teachers about their performance and guides them on how to improve. Responding to sub-research question one, this sub-theme delves into the perceptions teachers have on the feedback they receive from their DH in their professional development.

In response to: How often does your departmental head provide you with feedback on your professional development to improve your teaching practice? The participants provided varied responses to the feedback they received from their DH. For instance, Participant T1A1 states, “Yeah. Every once in a while, she comes and then she checks the, the, the scripts.”

The participant reveals that the feedback on their teaching is based on the learners’ scripts reflecting on the activities they do. This sort of feedback does not speak directly to the teachers’ teaching but rather measures the teacher by the productivity of the learner and how often the teacher marks the scripts.

In quite a complete contrast, Participants T2B3 and T1B1 reveal that they receive feedback on their teaching from their DH regularly.

We do it every day. There’s something that is called IQMS. It’s no longer IQMS, it’s QMS now. So, it is done, I think it’s done twice, for mid-year and it’s done also for final. That’s where now they can make a visit to the class so that they can observe your teaching and everything and make remarks on that. (T2B3)

Participant T2B3's response indicates the use of the appraisal system QMS, which the DH employs and conducts classroom observations to appraise the teacher. It is during these sessions that teaching-specific feedback is provided. In addition to Participant T2B3, Participant T1B1 noted that they have daily conversations which act as feedback sessions with their DH as they share some of the classes: "Yeah, you know, that, the feedback is actually on our daily conversations, because, um, um, in a case where we are teaching the same classes."

This viewpoint suggests that the teacher and DH exchange information on a daily basis regarding the learners as they may be teaching the same group. In a sense, this could be considered a form of mentorship, which, according to Govender (2015:490), is vital to maintaining teaching quality. Contrastingly, Participant T3A3 experiences feedback differently. They note:

...it's not a direct feedback. Yeah. It's indirect. You just see if you say, I don't want to teach this grade anymore, then the person will be like, no, we still need you in this grade. But the feedback is not direct and written or given out on a regular basis. It's something like that. It's just comments... (T3A3)

This participant expressed their frustration with the lack of feedback received. They note that the feedback they are provided is not constructive and does not improve them as it is not direct. From this perception, it can be understood that there is a generalisation that takes place when feedback is provided, noting the last part of the participants' response of "It's just comments".

According to De Clerq and Shalem (2104:130), the focus on teaching methods and strategies is the centre of effective professional development. A common trend that surfaced during interviews was the use of classroom observations as a form of development aimed at providing teachers with insights on what they could improve. For instance, Participant T2B3 noted the following:

If they see that your performance is not well and they are trying to engage with the learners to check what could be the problem, by the end of the day, they need

to come to class. Even subject advisors can come to class. They just let you know, on a Monday, I'm coming. Yes, prepare your lesson, I'll be there. I'm just there to observe and they leave.

This perspective indicates how classroom observations can be used to ensure that teachers are being effective in their classroom, especially when the performance is below standard. As a method to ensure quality teaching and enhancing teaching, classroom observations are essential to address issues of poor learner performance. On a different wavelength, participant T3A3 notes: "You get a report with your marks there and the recommendations."

This participant noted that they are provided with a report indicating marks and recommendations on how they should improve. This form of feedback can be beneficial as it indicates the exact areas for improvement required from the teacher and provides them with examples of how to improve in the form of recommendations. Participant T2A1 shares the above sentiments and noted:

Yeah. She can just tell you, um, on this day I'm going to come visit your class and then she would sit there and then she would give you feedback on how was the lesson or how can you improve, all those things.

Participant T2A1's views reflect on those shared by Participant T3A3, noting that they receive feedback from their DH after the observed lesson and then provides them with suggestions on how to improve their teaching. Providing an alternate outlook, Participant T1B2 noted that they receive feedback that also makes suggestions on the way they manage the classroom:

Yeah. To start with, um, how is Lena so and so doing? Uh, they are good. Um, and then she'll tell me, but in my class, I give them this type of activity; I encourage them to do this. So, um, you, you could, that would be an advice. You could also do that. You could also, and after the class visit, she does give feedback to say,

okay, um, um, your, your class was well managed. Um, and the lesson was good.

Yeah. She does give feedback and advice as well. (T1B2)

The participant's response describes the feedback they received, especially on practical advice on classroom management. This form of feedback is essential, especially in the school quintiles that were part of this study as the classes are typically condensed with up to fifty learners to one teacher. Guidance on managing such populated classrooms contributes to the effective delivery of lessons. As Nhlapho and Mohosho (2023:177) suggest, teacher professional development and school improvement are interconnected, emphasising the contribution of supportive feedback to enhanced teaching and learning.

The next sub-theme delves into the value of collaboration and access to resources in teacher professional development.

4.3.3.3 Sub-theme 3: Teacher perception on collaboration as a tool for professional development

According to De Clercq and Shalem (2014:130), the focus on teaching methods is central to effective teacher development. The improvement of teaching methods has a direct influence on learner performance. The beauty of collaboration as a contributor to professional development is that there is an exchange in ideas and strategies.

Participant T2A1 shares their views, noting that collaboration between teachers and co-teaching is highly promoted:

...if you share a grade If you share grade someone will do lesson plans. And then someone will do the packaging for the activities. And then if, if one teacher maybe has an extra class on a Saturday, and then you cannot make it. So basically, we co-teach. Okay, we do that a lot, all the time. It's not, um, a, yeah, this is my class, don't teach my learners. No, because we understand at the end of the day, the memorandum is the same. These learners have to pass. It's not about who's teaching whose class. So, co-teaching is influenced and very effective.

Participant T2A1 describes a collaborative teaching approach where teachers share responsibilities, such as lesson planning, activity preparation and step-in for one another when needed, even on weekends. This co-teaching model fosters a team-oriented mindset where teachers support each other to ensure continuity and quality in teaching. This collaborative approach emphasises learner outcomes over individual teacher achievements. By focusing on collective responsibility, the school reinforces its goal of improving teaching and learning through teamwork, ultimately benefiting both teachers and learners.

Participant T3A3 provides a contrasting view to the above of their experience in collaboration at their school:

The departmental head, um, they don't do that much in making sure that we work together. They leave the responsibility onto us. So, most of the time it will be you and then just trying to make that relationship with other colleagues so that you can work as a group. But most of the time they are isolated from that issue, yeah.

This response reflects the school's approach to collaboration as a form of professional development. According to the participant, collaboration is not prioritised by the DH, leaving the responsibility of collaborative teaching to the teachers themselves. The participant suggests that, rather than actively fostering a collaborative environment, the DH remains detached from efforts to encourage teamwork.

Teacher collaboration is an easy way to ensure professional development takes place in the school as teachers can learn from one another. One can posit that mentoring can be derived from teacher collaboration as novice teachers can learn from more experienced teachers. Mqadi (2023:74) suggests that mentoring creates an environment for guidance, skill and knowledge enhancement and enhanced teaching attitudes.

Aligning with Mqadi's suggestion, Participant T1A1 noted that collaboration is embraced at their school due to the number of learners:

Yeah, co-teaching is a must here because we have a very big school. So, you cannot take up, maybe the grade, I teach Grade 9 English, I cannot take up all the classes on my own. I have to have, but it's very challenging because my teaching cannot be, my way of teaching cannot be your way of teaching. So, we clash. Somewhere somehow, but we find ways to make it work.

This response acknowledges the necessity of co-teaching in a large school where managing all classes alone would be impossible. The participant noted the challenges that arise from differing teaching styles, which can sometimes lead to clashes. However, despite these differences, teachers work together to ensure that all learners receive equal access to quality teaching and learning. This highlights a commitment to collaboration and adaptability.

In some cases, collaboration and co-teaching do not even take place within the school's confines. Consider Participant T3B1 who does not limit collaboration to their department. This is what they shared:

Because my co-teaching isn't only in my school. There's Facebook, there's a page on Facebook, people share material there, I get material from them. I have friends in other schools, they are in different groups, they share with me, I share with them. There's YouTube by Google, I talk to teachers, so it's not necessarily him saying, yeah.

The participant acknowledges that, while collaboration and co-teaching occur within their school, they also actively seek resources and support beyond the school environment. They engage with teachers from other schools and access valuable materials through platforms like Facebook and YouTube as well as through personal networks. This approach broadens their access to diverse teaching resources and ideas, demonstrating that professional collaboration is not limited to their immediate school setting but extends to a wider community of educators.

Addressing the third research question: “What can DHs do to assist teachers in their professional development?” this sub-theme discussed the role DHs play in fostering a collaborative environment. The findings underscore the value of co-teaching as a collaborative approach that not only strengthens professional relationships among teachers but also enhances the quality of teaching and learning, ultimately contributing to improved outcomes.

4.3.4 Theme 3: Challenges and barriers in professional development

This theme discusses the challenges and barriers teachers face in their professional development. Bautista and Ortega-Luiz (2015:242) note that teachers are facilitators of meaningful learning. However, they are often faced with barriers in their quest for professional development to enhance the learning experience of learners. Stemming from interview question thirteen, this theme links to sub-research question three and addresses the concept of professional development in the study’s title. From this theme, two sub-themes emerged.

4.3.4.1 Sub-theme 1: Barriers to professional development

There are several challenges and barriers that teachers experience in terms of their professional development. These challenges impede significantly teachers’ development and their ability to enhance teaching and learning. As Tsoetsi and Mahlomaholo (2015:45) suggest, professional development is the foundation of quality teaching and learning. When teachers experience challenges and barriers to such, the delivery of quality teaching and learning is adversely impacted.

Participants T1A1, T1B2 and T3A3, for instance, noted that the lack of resources and problematic learners impede significantly their development as they are unable to identify areas of development. This is what T1A1 noted, “Lack of resources. Challenges with learners. There are some learners that, you know, you cannot deal with. Like, you cannot manage. So, those are the challenges, and no one wants to assist with those.”

Yeah, it’s, it’s lack of resources, um, lack of resources, lack of textbooks, material, um, yeah, technology. We cannot use technology as much as we want to

because lack of resources, lack of resources. Our facilities are not up to standard.

Yeah, so. (T1B2)

Participant T3A3 noted, “For example, we would not have toner for a particular period of time and then we can't make copies. It's difficult to teach when you don't have notes for your learners.”

In similar vein, Participant T1A3 notes that, “I think for me it would be having to deal with unbothered kids. Like, it gets so frustrating to have to work with people who show no interest.”

These responses reveal a sense of reluctance among teachers toward professional development as they feel hindered by external challenges. Participant T1A1 highlights the lack of resources as a significant barrier to growth as it prevents them from offering students the optimal teaching and learning experience. Similarly, Participant T1A3, for instance, noted the frustration of working with disengaged learners, which makes teaching more difficult and limits opportunities for personal improvement. These perspectives suggest that poor learner engagement and lack of resources impact teacher development.

Participant T2A1 proposes that demotivation is a significant challenge, particularly when a teacher seeks to put themselves up for promotion:

Um, if it's not content, it is purely on, maybe wanting to, to, to get a promotional post, maybe to become a DH, to become a deputy principal. It's just a bit hard with the... I'm going to be honest with you. Um, the unions are not really doing their job. If you're not, most of the time, if you're not active in your union, a chance has become very slim for you to get a promotional post.

This outlook suggests that teachers may feel demotivated to advance their skills as career progression often seems tied to union involvement rather than performance or learner success. Participant T2B1 noted that, without active participation in unions, securing a promotional position, such as becoming a DH or deputy principal, becomes difficult. This

perception can diminish motivation for professional development, posing a significant challenge.

Offering a different outlook, Participant T2B1 suggested that the lack of regular and continuous development opportunities, lack of time and finances are a challenge: “Um, I would say maybe we need workshops continuously. Just to continue to revive, you know, content knowledge. Um, professional development in, in terms of the career.”

So, uh, you see, maybe also finances to be able to fund studies too. Yeah. Grow and develop, you know, academically which can assist that or assist development professionally as well... I think maybe finances time. Yes, we don't have time. I think that's why I've also been nervous about doing my honours. Yeah, just scared of time management. (T2B1)

This participant highlights key barriers that directly impact their ability to deepen their content knowledge, such as ongoing workshops. Furthermore, they express the financial burden that comes with seeking to pursue further formal qualifications as a significant challenge coupled with the limited amount of time to be able to balance their teaching responsibilities and further studies. These challenges highlight the need for structured, accessible support to make professional development more feasible for teachers.

The next sub-theme discusses how DHs can address the challenges teachers face in their professional development.

4.3.4.2 Sub-theme 2: How DHs can address challenges faced by teachers in their professional development

Departmental heads play a crucial role in the development of teachers. According to Leithman (2016:123), DHs play an important role in the growth of teachers in their departments. As such, they need to ensure that teachers have all the resources and support they need and address any challenges that they face in their professional growth journey. This sub-theme elaborates on the views shared by participants on how DHs can address the challenges they face in their professional development.

Responding to Question 13 of the interview schedule on how the DH can address their challenges, Participant T2A2 noted the following:

I feel like the departmental head should encourage teamwork. By teamwork, a competition is good. It can be good competition if it's done in the right way. They should encourage teamwork, and then they should encourage these old teachers to also advise us when we come to them.

This participant accepts that professional jealousy is a challenge at their school where more experienced teachers are unwilling to assist novice teachers. They argue that teamwork would contribute significantly to addressing the challenges they face. Participant T3B1 suggested on their end that DHs should be open to employing new strategies outside of the departmental prescripts:

I think as a departmental head, one could solely expose themselves. You know, expose themselves to recent materials. Because it's not only those textbooks that we can access. There are just a lot of worksheets even online. There are a lot of, you know, revision pegs online that we can access. So, I think it's just them just going beyond what is just given to us from the department.

This outlook suggests that DHs should consider adopting and advocating for alternate teaching resources to better support teachers. This proactive approach would allow DHs to support teachers more effectively, providing them with diverse tools and ideas that address curriculum needs while fostering a culture of continuous learning. In addition, Participant T1B2 proposes that DHs could consider outsourcing to address challenges of access to resources:

Um, the thing about a public school is uh outsourcing is always a solution because yeah, outsourcing is always a solution. Collaborating with the university or looking for any other opportunity, um, where we can get help besides the school, because the school is always a matter of the school doesn't have money.

The school cannot afford to. So yeah. Yes. But to be honest, there are things, for example, for my experiment in term one, I needed benzene banners, and the principal did, the departmental head did... negotiate with the principal about to buy them and he did buy them. It's not it's not always that It's just that some things are way too expensive.

This perspective presents an example of when the teacher experienced an issue in their presentation of a lesson. The lack of resources, although for teaching purposes, also exposes the teacher to the areas in which they need development. Participant T1B2's experience highlights their dedication to providing their learners with the best learning experience and a proposal on how the DH can address their challenges.

In the case of Participant T1A2, they have been provided with strategies for improving themselves and developing further as a teacher but have found it to not be fruitful. Here are their views: "I think I have to improve myself because he tried but some strategies, I feel like they are not working for me. They are not working..."

This response indicates that, while the DH has offered guidance, the participant struggles to apply these approaches effectively in their own classroom. This suggests a need for more tailored support as strategies that work for experienced teachers may not be as beneficial for those still developing their classroom management skills.

There are diverse ways in which DHs can address the challenges teachers face. The easiest is to listen and support teachers in identifying their shortcomings and implementing strategies that can assist them in their professional growth. The subsequent theme delves into the suggestions and recommendations by teachers to DHs on teacher development.

4.3.5 Theme 4: Suggestions to DHs

According to Lipscombe et al. (2023:2), DHs serve as a buffer between teachers and the school management, and they create a supportive school environment. The recommendations made by teachers regarding strategies DHs can use to assist teachers

in their professional development are explored in this theme. Furthermore, it addresses sub-research question three of this study, which asks, “What can DHs do to assist teachers in their professional development?”

In response to the interview question, “What suggestions can you share for DHs to assist teachers in their professional development?”, the participants provided varied responses. Below are the responses to this interview question:

Um... always trying to understand, always trying to understand the challenges that teachers face. And teachers face per subject and try to have a management style that accommodates everyone according to, um, to their particular subjects because subjects, different subjects don't have tasks that are similar tasks administers at the same time. Um, so understanding that differently for different subjects will just help the DHs to, um, to develop the teachers professionally, independently, so not as a group. (T1B2)

Participant T3B1 noted, “One, I think if they could get to understand different teachers differently.”

I think as a DH, a person should also be very knowledgeable about the subject that they are teaching. So, when that is the case, then it's much easier and better for them to, you know, encourage all the teachers and develop them, you know, content wise. So, yeah, to be more knowledgeable. (T2B1)

I think it's a support um, supporting their teachers not bringing them down. Um, allowing them to, to grow in their subject and don't focus on what the teacher cannot do rather help them improve in things that they cannot do... (T2A1)

Participant T1A3 stated, “They can provide feedback to us, like proper feedback. (T1A3)

Number one don't be emotional. Don't be emotional. This is a professional environment. Let's keep it at that. The support that you are supposed to give is to be professional. And be professional after that. You don't need to engage other members about what you have observed from me. (T2B3)

I think departmental heads need to do more of one on ones. Yeah. Maybe he or she must call me in and ask me, Are you okay? Are you coping? What do you need? You understand? So that I can share. How are you feeling? The classes that you have, assigned to, are they okay? Like, I think it would make a, a lot of difference. (T1A1)

The participants collectively highlight several key qualities and actions they believe DHs should embrace to effectively support teachers' professional development. Participant T1B2 emphasises the importance of DHs understanding the unique challenges teachers face in different subjects, suggesting that a more individualised approach – rather than a one-size-fits-all method – would help teachers grow independently. Similarly, Participant T3B1 suggested that DHs should strive to understand each teacher's individual needs, reinforcing the call for tailored support.

To effectively assist teachers with content development, DHs should have an in-depth knowledge of their subject area – according to Participant T2B1. Similarly, Participant T2A1 emphasised that rather than concentrating only on teachers' shortcomings, DHs should help them strengthen their areas of weakness. Another recommendation that emerged was to give constructive criticism; Participant T1A3 mentioned that DHs provide “proper feedback” to support teacher development. Furthermore, Participant T2B3 advised DHs to maintain their professionalism by avoiding gossip and emotional outbursts in favour of providing helpful, private advice.

In highlighting the importance of the DH and teacher having a personal relationship, this response is consistent with Participant T1B2s. According to this participant, a one-on-one

interaction can promote an environment where a teacher feels heard and recognised, which can improve their performance in the classroom.

4.4 SUMMARY

This chapter provided a thorough analysis of the collected data. The findings were organised around four main themes and several sub-themes that emerged, providing insight into the role of DHs in teachers' professional development, teachers' experiences and perceptions of their growth, challenges encountered and recommendations to DHs for improvement. The following chapter will give a summary of this study, followed by a discussion of the findings as presented above. The chapter will also offer practical recommendations for DHs, school leadership and policymakers to enhance teacher professional development support. Additionally, areas for future research will be suggested and a reflection on the study's contribution to the field of educational leadership and professional development will be made.

CHAPTER 5 SUMMARY, FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter focused on the data analysis process, providing an overview of the process followed. The collected data were transcribed, coded and categorised into themes and subthemes following recurring patterns and responses from the participants. These themes revealed teachers' perceptions on the role of DHs in their professional development. This chapter will give a summary of the previous chapters, report on the findings of the study, address the limitations of the study and make recommendations for future research.

5.2 OVERVIEW OF STUDY

5.2.1 Chapter 1

Chapter One served as the foundation of the study. It defined the research problem, providing the rationale behind the study. The research question, purpose and objectives that guided this study were outlined. Additionally, the scope of limitations, significance of the study and a chapter outline were all addressed in this chapter, establishing the upcoming chapters and providing an overview of the study structure.

5.2.2 Chapter 2

Chapter two of this study served as a comprehensive overview of existing research related to this study's problem. The researcher was able to critically evaluate prior studies and justify the need for this study, noting the gaps in the existing body of knowledge. Foundational concepts that underpin this study were discussed with the role of the DH in the professional development of teachers extensively examined to address the research questions. The emergence of the critical link between teacher development and learner performance during the literature review emphasised the need for this study. Lastly, this chapter addressed the theoretical framework that served as the foundational structure for analysing and interpreting the collected data.

5.2.3 Chapter 3

Chapter three of this study focused on the research design and methodology. The researcher elaborated on the philosophical orientation that guided this study, the approach and design that were implemented and the population and sample that participated in the study. A descriptive discussion on how the data were going to be collected and analysed was also addressed. Lastly, the researcher elaborated on elements of trustworthiness to ensure the credibility of the study and measures to ensure ethical considerations such as informed consent and the protection of the collected data were discussed.

5.2.4 Chapter 4

Chapter four of this study dealt with the analysis and interpretation of the collected data. In this chapter, the researcher introduced the data analysis process, which was discussed in chapter three, that was employed as well as how the data were interpreted. The collected data were systematically displayed through coding, categorising and thematic organisation. Tables and figures were used to display the participant portfolio and the organisation of the identified themes. Ultimately, the researcher reported on the findings from the collected data, which had been digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim. During this process, the researcher remained objective and factual, ensuring there was no bias.

5.2.5 Chapter 5

Chapter five serves as the concluding chapter of the study, offering a summary of the key findings from the preceding chapters. This chapter validates the findings derived from data collection and analysis, cross-referencing them to existing literature. Additionally, this chapter provides thoughtful recommendations, pinpointing specific areas where future research could build on the current findings to address emerging gaps or improve methodologies.

5.3 DISCUSSION OF STUDY FINDINGS

This study sought to determine teachers' perceptions of the role of the departmental head in their professional development. The findings of this study are presented below and are based on the key themes that emerged from the analysis process. These themes were linked to sub-research questions that were derived from the main research question and substantiated by existing literature.

5.3.1 Findings related to the sub-research questions

5.3.1.1 Role of DHs in the professional development of teachers

Departmental heads (DHs) play a pivotal role in school operations, occupying a multifaceted position that requires them to lead in both teaching and learning. They are responsible for ensuring quality in teaching practices, which enhances the learning experience for learners. Additionally, DHs oversee a team of teachers that often includes subjects beyond their areas of expertise, adding complexity to their leadership role.

Considering this, teachers were asked to give their understanding of what role DHs play in their professional development. Providing varied responses, these are the key findings:

5.3.1.1.1 Leadership in teaching and learning

According to the literature, DHs must take responsibility for the success of their department and demonstrate good leadership in both teaching and learning. It is expected of them to assist teachers in their work by providing direction and ensuring that curriculum delivery meets quality requirements. This includes supporting the development of assessments, offering teaching resources and assisting teachers to align lesson plans with curriculum objectives. By observing classes and offering constructive criticism, DHs can assist teachers in improving their strategies, which will ultimately improve learner outcomes. The study found that teachers concur with the literature and acknowledge the DH as a leader in teaching and learning. The participants suggested that they expect the DH to provide them with guidance on lesson planning, teaching methods and ensuring the curriculum is being followed. Furthermore, the teachers noted that DHs should play an active role in developing teachers to become better in their teaching practice by

providing them with teaching resources and creating opportunities to develop their teaching skills.

5.3.1.1.2 Managerial duties

Literature has noted that the DH has managerial duties that they need to fulfil. These duties relate to their administrative tasks, which include assessing teachers, monitoring learner scripts, moderation of assessments and the management of their teaching staff. Additionally, DHs are sometimes tasked with coordinating timetables and ensuring there are enough resources for effective teaching and learning. The study revealed that teachers view DHs as managers who guide teaching practices, mentor novice teachers and foster a collaborative culture within departments. Accordingly, teachers also noted DHs to be managers who ensure that the department is functioning well and that the teachers have the resources they require to teach effectively.

5.3.1.2 Professional development

Professional development is important for ensuring quality teaching and learning. The literature emphasises that DHs should actively guide teachers' professional development by identifying areas of improvement and advising on strategies to address these gaps. This study highlighted mixed responses from participants on the DHs' role, noting both strengths and areas for improvement. Teachers noted that DHs could foster an environment of continuous learning and professional development by introducing mentorship, facilitating access to development opportunities and advocating for resources such as classroom technology, teaching notes and wall charts. However, the level of support differs. Some teachers only attend required departmental workshops while others are encouraged to participate in specialised programmes such as ICT training. This inconsistency suggests that the promotion of developmental opportunities beyond basic requirements is not done, potentially limiting teachers' skill development. Considering feedback on teaching practices, teachers noted varied responses. While some noted that they receive structured feedback through the QMS appraisal system, others experience limited feedback that lacks constructive guidance. This inconsistency contributes to teachers' inability to continuously improve their teaching methods. In terms of development opportunities, the findings suggest that professional development is

externally driven with few school-initiated programmes. This indicates that DHs may not be fully making use of resources at their disposal, such as mentorship, which could address school-specific challenges. Although limited, mentorship is regarded as an effective school-based professional development tool, especially when DHs actively encourage it. Teachers with mentors value these opportunities, suggesting mentorship programmes could enhance school-based professional development. Along with mentorship, teachers noted that collaboration is valuable, but the support from the DH is inconsistent. Some teachers report structured collaborative practices while others rely on self-initiated efforts or turn to digital communities and online networks for ideas and materials. While DHs are essential to teachers' professional development, greater consistency and proactive support could improve outcomes, ultimately contributing to improved teaching and learning.

5.3.1.3 Challenges and barriers in professional development

This study revealed several challenges and barriers that teachers experience in their professional development. Bautista and Ortega-Luiz (2015:242) emphasise teachers as facilitators of meaningful learning, but factors such as resource constraints, challenging learner behaviour and demotivation related to career progression create significant barriers. These are some of the noted challenges that teachers face in their professional development. The issue of limited resources was a constant in the responses to challenges that the teachers faced. This includes a shortage of textbooks, the unavailability of essential teaching materials such as experiment equipment and the lack of technology to deliver quality teaching. These resources are fundamental to assisting teachers in identifying their shortcomings and for the DH to propose developmental opportunities for the teachers to be able to use them in their teaching. Some teachers noted dissatisfaction with DHs who use out-of-date teaching methods in their feedback on teaching practices, resulting in a gap between experienced and novice teachers. Teachers feel that DHs should embrace new teaching methods to ensure that there is uniformity in their department. Limited time and a lack of funds were also identified as factors that significantly hinder teachers' professional development. Teachers who wish to obtain advanced formal qualifications noted that the lack of time and finances often stop them from furthering their studies. Similarly, these teachers mentioned that they cannot attend workshops due to the additional classes they need to teach to ensure they

cover the entire curriculum. The inconsistent availability of developmental opportunities, such as refresher courses to maintain and deepen content knowledge, was noted as a significant problem. The role of DHs is pivotal in addressing these challenges, from fostering teamwork and mentorship to innovating resource solutions. Structured and accessible support from DHs can make professional development more feasible and meaningful for teachers, ultimately enhancing the quality of school education.

5.3.1.4 Suggestions to DHs

Several findings emerged on how teachers perceive the DHs' role in their professional development with some dotting the DH as a leader of teaching and learning who is responsible for ensuring the delivery of quality teaching and learning. Responding to sub-research question three, teachers provided varied suggestions on how DHs can assist teachers in their professional development. The teachers proposed that DHs should incorporate an individualised supportive approach that recognises teachers as unique individuals with unique challenges. They further noted that DHs need to maintain in-depth knowledge of the subjects they oversee as that allows them to provide meaningful feedback and guidance. Noting feedback, teachers emphasised the need for constructive feedback that gives them guidance on what to improve. This could be incorporated with the one-on-one suggestion that stressed the need for DHs to make time to understand individual teacher challenges so that they can better assist them. Essentially, the DH plays an important role in teacher development and by creating an environment that is professional, supportive and conducive to teacher growth. By applying strategies focused on individualised support, subject-specific guidance, constructive feedback and regular personal engagement, DHs are likely to foster an environment of continuous growth and effectively assist teachers in their professional development.

5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study and the reviewed literature, the researcher has identified the following recommendations:

5.4.1 Supportive leadership in teaching and learning

As leaders in education, DHs are essential in helping teachers by offering them support and direction. By prioritising involvement in teaching techniques, DHs can create an environment that promotes growth. This approach ensures that educational objectives are regularly achieved. Constructive feedback after a class observation is a crucial component of supportive leadership. Departmental heads can provide teachers with specific feedback by observing classes, which helps them improve their teaching strategies and pinpoint areas that need work. In addition to improving teaching strategies, this feedback enhances student performance. Furthermore, DHs should establish a cooperative and encouraging environment where teachers can share teaching methods and gain knowledge from one another. This can be achieved by establishing a culture that values growth and collaboration.

5.4.2 Subject knowledge and content expertise

To provide teachers with meaningful support, DHs must be current on pedagogy and subject matter. As subject matter specialists, DHs need to be prepared to continuously learn new things and broaden their expertise in addition to having an extensive understanding of their subject matter. Given their subject-specific knowledge, DHs can provide reliable information, insightful evaluation and useful guidance that improves teacher methods of teaching and material delivery. As a result of this, DHs should take part in workshops and professional development courses that are relevant to their field of expertise. For example, exposure to new classroom engagement technologies or new evaluation methods can assist DHs in guiding teachers to adopt more effective teaching practices. Furthermore, DHs may assist teachers in linking their lesson plans with curriculum changes, which will eventually improve the performance of students. DHs that actively seek professional development not only provide immediate assistance but also act as role models for their teams. By showcasing their dedication to continual learning, they inspire teachers to pursue professional growth opportunities and maintain excellent teaching standards. The department's culture of ongoing development is fostered by this shared commitment. The DH's experience serves as a foundation for efficient departmental leadership, fostering a culture that encourages and supports teachers in

developing their professional skills. Consequently, this improves the overall standard of teaching in the school, which directly leads to a more engaging learning experience.

5.4.3 Promote collaboration and mentorship.

Teacher development can be achieved through teacher collaboration and mentorship initiatives. These are impactful ways to ensure that teachers develop while they work. This can be achieved by the DH creating a culture that advances collaboration and mentorship. This approach contributes significantly to the effectiveness of teachers while ensuring teaching quality within the department. The study and literature highlighted that departmental meetings, internal workshops and professional learning communities can all contribute positively to creating a collaborative environment. These opportunities create an environment where teachers can engage in discussions on teaching and learning strategies that they can implement in the classroom. Mentorship is another form of professional development initiative that DHs can implement in their schools. The pairing up of novice and experienced teachers can contribute significantly to the advancement of learner and teacher performance. In terms of novice teachers, mentorship presents an opportunity to learn classroom techniques, assessment strategies and problem-solving skills from more experienced colleagues. This form of development allows novice teachers to become more confident in their teaching practices. This is also the case for more experienced teachers. They can learn new strategies that align with the needs of the learners in their classroom. Teaching strategies that were used in the early 2000s may not necessarily be effective for the current learner. This presents an opportunity for these teachers to refine their skills and be able to teach the learner in the way they are most comfortable with. As such, it is the responsibility of the DH to facilitate mentorship relationships by identifying teachers with valuable expertise and tasking them to impart their knowledge to others. Furthermore, the value of mentorships assists DHs in addressing the individual developmental needs of teachers, offering a tailored approach to address the specific challenges each teacher faces. The success of such a programme reflects positively on the DH as they create a supportive departmental culture that embraces lifelong learning and elevate the quality of teaching in the department and the school.

5.4.4 Adopt Individualised support strategies

The value of individualised support strategies cannot be overstated. The DH should be able to identify individual teacher needs and develop support strategies tailored for that teacher. The point of departure for such is regular one-on-one meetings. This approach embraces the importance of personalised guidance and support to allow the teacher to reach their full potential. Additionally, such meetings can address challenges that teachers are facing for which the DH can gain insight, offer constructive feedback and provide targeted support that aligns with the developmental needs of the teacher. In essence, individualised support empowers teachers to take ownership of their development and feel motivated, and it also promotes self-confidence. Effective constructive feedback can be beneficial to the development of teachers as it addresses the teachers' shortcomings and provides them with workable strategies to improve their teaching practices. It is recommended that DHs should conduct regular class observations to be able to identify areas that need improvement and subsequently provide teachers with implementable strategies to improve.

5.4.5 Address barriers to professional development

It is recommended that DHs address challenges and barriers to professional development experienced by teachers where feasibly possible. Practical challenges such as limited time and resources are factors that DHs can assist with. As leaders of their department DHs play an important role in creating a supportive environment that fosters continuous development. An effective approach is school-initiated development initiatives that address the needs of the teacher in relation to the school. These sessions can be highly effective as they can focus solely on the needs of the school and address the daily challenges that teachers face. For instance, classroom management could be offered to assist novice teachers with tried and tested discipline management methods. Similarly, experienced teachers could be assisted with newer strategies to teach concepts in a way learners grasp more easily. These sessions ensure that teachers are exposed to developmental sessions.

5.5 STUDY LIMITATIONS

This study was limited to Quintile 1-3 schools in the Kenneth Kaunda District of the North-West Province in South Africa. The study only sought the perceptions of teachers on the role of departmental heads in their professional development. It excluded the perceptions of principals, deputy principals and DHs on the professional development of teachers. As such, their perceptions of the role of DHs in teacher professional development were not considered. Recruitment of participants posed a challenge due to the period when the data were collected. The sample size of twelve participants was not reached. Furthermore, based on the criteria, there were no schools that matched the criteria for underperforming schools. Thus, no participants were interviewed. However, saturation was reached from the eleven participants who took part in the study. Furthermore, the participants of the study are English second language users, which created a language barrier in answering some of the interview questions. The questions were simplified and in areas where the question was unclear, the researcher clarified it for the participant to be able to provide their perception.

5.6 CONCLUSION

This study sought to determine the perceptions of teachers on the role of the DH in their professional development. The findings reveal that teachers had a negative perception of the DH's involvement in their development, with some reporting little or no support. In addition, teachers' willingness to engage in professional development was frequently affected by a lack of resources and practical challenges.

The study suggests that, as essential elements of professional development, DHs should foster an environment that supports lifelong learning and collaboration. It is recommended that a personalised approach be employed to meet the specific challenges that each teacher faces. DHs themselves would also gain from professional development opportunities that improve their ability to assist the teachers under their supervision. Moreover, DHs should promote mentorship as a way for their teachers to develop professionally and as a commitment to their personal development.

By adopting these strategies, DHs can create a supportive and growth-oriented culture within their departments, ultimately enhancing teaching quality and improving educational outcomes.

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ADDENDUMS

ADDENDUM A: PARTICIPANT INFORMATION AND CONSENT FORM



Research Interview PL 1 Teacher
Dr Kenneth Kaunda Education District

Private Bag X6001, Potchefstroom
South Africa 2520

Tel: 018 299-1111/2222
Web: <http://www.nwu.ac.za>

Faculty of Education

Edu-Lead Research Entity

Tel: 018 285 2084
Email: Tshepo.Tapala@nwu.ac.za

Date:

Dear Sir/ Madam

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION AND CONSENT FORM

I herewith wish to request your consent to participate in this research, which involves an interview of approximately 45 to 60 minutes with the researcher. Before you give consent, please acquaint yourself with the information below.

The details of the research are as follows:

TITLE OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT: Teacher perceptions on the role of departmental heads in their professional development.

ETHICS APPLICATION NUMBER

NWU-00315-24-A2

PROJECT SUPERVISOR: DR TT Tapala

CO-SUPERVISOR: Not applicable

ADDRESS: North-West University, Potchefstroom Campus, Building B11, Office G45,
Potchefstroom, 2520

CONTACT NUMBER: 018 285 2084

MEMBER OF PROJECT TEAM MEd-Student: Funani Brayen Mabala

ADDRESS: 92 Molen Street, Bult, Potchefstroom, 2531

CONTACT NUMBER: 076 781 9007

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 asked from the provincial Department of Basic Education/other relevant body (please describe) as well as the school principal (if relevant).

What is this research about?

The aims of this research are:

- To determine the role DHs play in the professional development of teachers.
- To determine how teachers perceive the role DHs play in their professional development.
- To identify what DHs can do to assist teachers in their professional development.

Participants

- The participants for this study are teachers that are not part of the SMT.

What is expected of you as participant?

As a participant, you will be required to take part in a 45 to 60 minutes face-to-face interview that will be recorded using an electronic audio device and later transcribed for analysis. You will be expected to respond truthfully to the posed questions.

Benefits to you as participant

The direct benefits for the participant is that they will have an opportunity to share their perspective on the involvement of DHs in the professional development of teachers. The indirect benefits of this study to the participant are that the findings of this study, which will stem from their truthful responses to the posed questions, will contribute to the understanding of the role of the DH in the professional development of teachers within the education system at large.

Risks involved for participants

There are no physical risks to associated to this study to you as a participant. The only foreseeable discomfort may be the inconvenience to you of offering your time to participate in the interviews. There may be minor psychological discomfort which you may experience

such as frustration due to time lost during the interview. There will be no economic risks as you will be interviewed at your school thus no travel will be required. To ensure no legal risks with leaking of confidential information, the researcher will transcribe the recorded interviews and will also sign an agreement not to disclose the contents of the interviews. During the analysis process, the researcher will use codes to refer to you and your school to avoid links and reference that could be made. All the data that the researcher stores electronically will be anonymised, encrypted and password-protected known only to the researcher. Upon completion of this study, the data will be stored electronically by the researcher and the principal researcher on cloud for a period of 5 years.

Confidentiality and protection of identity

Your identity will not be made known during or after the research process. Everything will remain confidential, and your identity will be protected throughout the research process. The data will be disseminated anonymously. Pseudonyms will be used to store and discuss the information provided.

Dissemination of findings

The findings will be disseminated by means of research articles that can contribute to the existing body of knowledge on role of DHs on their professional development and will be shared with you upon completion of the study.

If you have any further questions or enquiries regarding your participation in this research, please contact the researchers for more information at 076 781 9007 or via email at funani.mabala@nwu.ac.za.

Yours sincerely



FB Mabala

MEd Candidate, North-West University

Student no: 25737406

DECLARATION BY PARTICIPANT:

By signing below, I agree to take part in a research study entitled:


Teacher perceptions on the role of departmental heads in their professional development.

I declare that:

- I have read this information and consent form and understand what is expected of me 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 I have not been pressurised to take part.
- I may choose to leave the study at any time and will not be penalised or prejudiced in any way.
- I may be asked to leave the research process before it has finished, if the researcher feels it is in my best interests, or if I do not follow the research procedures, as agreed to.

Signed at (place) _____ on (date) _____ / _____ /20_____

Signature of participant



Researcher

ADDENDUM B: PRINCIPALS PERMISSION LETTER



The School Principal
Dr Kenneth Kaunda Education District

Private Bag X6001, Potchefstroom
South Africa 2520

Tel: 018 299-1111/2222
Web: <http://www.nwu.ac.za>

Faculty of Education

Edu-Lead Research Entity

Tel: 018 285 2084
Email: Tshepo.Tapala@nwu.ac.za

Date:

Dear Sir/ Madam

PERMISSION LETTER: SCHOOL PRINCIPAL

I herewith wish to request your permission for four teachers who are not part of the SMT to participate in this research, which involves an interview of approximately 45 to 60 minutes with the researcher. Before granting permission, please acquaint yourself with the information below.

The details of the research are as follows:

TITLE OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT:

Teacher perceptions on the role of departmental heads in their professional development.

ETHICS APPLICATION NUMBER

NWU-00315-24-A2

PROJECT SUPERVISOR: Dr TT Tapala

ADDRESS: North-West University, Potchefstroom Campus, Building B11, Office G45,
Potchefstroom, 2520

CONTACT NUMBER: 018 285 2084

MEMBER OF PROJECT TEAM MEd-Student: Funani Brayan Mabala

ADDRESS: 92 Molen Street, Bult, Potchefstroom, 2531

CONTACT NUMBER: 076 781 9007

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/other relevant body.

What is this research about?

The aims of this research are:

- To determine the role DHs play in the professional development of teachers.
- To determine how teachers perceive the role DHs play in their professional development.
- To identify what DHs can do to assist teachers in their professional development.

Participants

The participants for this study are experienced PL1 teachers who are not part of the SMT.

What is expected of the participants?

The participant will be required to take part in a 45 to 60-minute face-to-face interview that will be recorded using an electronic audio device and later transcribed for analysis. The participant will further be expected to respond truthfully to the posed questions.

Benefits to the participants

The direct benefit for the participants is that they have an opportunity to share their perspectives on the involvement of DHs in the professional development of teachers. The indirect benefits to the participant are that the findings of the study will contribute to the understanding of the role of the DH in the professional development of teachers within the education system at large which will be derived from their responses.

Risks involved for participants

There are no physical risks to the participants associated with this study. The only foreseeable discomfort may be the inconvenience to the teacher to offer their time to participate in the interviews. There may be minor psychological discomfort which the participant may experience such as frustration due to time lost during the interview. There will be no economic risks as the participant will be interviewed at their school thus no travel

will be required from the participant. To ensure no legal risks with the leaking of confidential information, the researcher will transcribe the recorded interviews and will also sign an agreement not to disclose the contents of the interviews. During the analysis process, the researcher will use codes to refer to participants and schools to avoid links and references that could be made to the participants. All the data that the researcher stores electronically will be encrypted and password-protected known only to the researcher. Upon completion of this study, the data will be stored electronically by the principal researcher on the cloud for 5 years.

Confidentiality and protection of identity


No participant's identity will be made known during the research process. Everything will remain confidential, and the identity of each participant will be protected throughout the research process. The data will be disseminated anonymously. Pseudonyms will be used to store and discuss the information provided.

Dissemination of findings

The results will be disseminated in the form of a summary of the research and through published articles.

If you have any further questions or enquiries regarding your participation in this research, please contact the researchers for more information at 076 781 9007 or via email at funani.mabala@nwu.ac.za.

Yours sincerely



FB Mabala

MEd Candidate, North-West University

Student no: 25737406

DECLARATION BY PRINCIPAL/OTHER RELEVANT PERSON:

By signing below, I agree to give permission for the research to take place with the identified participants in the study entitled:

[Enter title here]

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/Relevant person

ADDENDUM C: GOODWILL PERMISSION LETTER



Dr Kenneth Kaunda Education District
The School Governing Body

Private Bag X8001, Potchefstroom
South Africa 2520

Tel: 018 299-1111/2222
Web: <http://www.nwu.ac.za>

Faculty of Education

Edu-Lead Research Entity

Tel: 018 285 2084
Email: Tshepo.Tapala@nwu.ac.za

Date:

Dear Sir/ Madam

GOODWILL PERMISSION: SCHOOL GOVERNING BODY

I herewith wish to request your permission for four teachers that are not part of the SMT to participate in this research, which involves an interview of approximately 45 to 60 minutes with the researcher. Prior to granting permission, please acquaint yourself with the information below.

The details of the research are as follows:

TITLE OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT: Teacher perceptions on the role of departmental heads in their professional development.

ETHICS APPLICATION NUMBER

NWU-00315-24-A2

PROJECT SUPERVISOR: Dr TT Tapala

ADDRESS: North-West University, Potchefstroom Campus, Building B11, Office G45, Potchefstroom, 2520

CONTACT NUMBER: 018 285 2084

MEMBER OF PROJECT TEAM MEd-Student: Funani Brayon Mabala

ADDRESS: 92 Molen Street, Bult, Potchefstroom, 2520

CONTACT NUMBER: 076 781 9007

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.

What is this research about?

The aims of this research are:

- To determine the role DHs play in the professional development of teachers.
- To determine how teachers perceive the role DHs play in their professional development.
- To identify what DHs can do to assist teachers in their professional development.

Participants

The participants for this study are experienced PL1 teachers who are not part of the SMT.

What is expected of the participants?

The participant will be required to take part in a 45 to 60-minute face-to-face interview that will be recorded using an electronic audio device and later transcribed for analysis. The participant will further be expected to respond truthfully to the posed questions.

Benefits to the participants

The direct benefit for the participant is that they have an opportunity to share their perspectives on the involvement of DHs in the professional development of teachers. The indirect benefits to the participant are that the findings of the study will contribute to the understanding of the role of the DH in the professional development of teachers within the education system at large which will be derived from their responses.

Risks involved for participants

There are no physical risks to the participants associated to this study. The only foreseeable discomfort may be the inconvenience to the teacher to offer their time to participate in the interviews. There may be minor psychological discomfort which the participant may experience such as frustration due to time lost during the interview. There will be no economic risks as the participant will be interviewed at their school thus no travel will be required from the participant. To ensure no legal risks with leaking of confidential

information, the researcher will transcribe the recorded interviews and will also sign an agreement not to disclose the contents of the interviews. During the analysis process, the researcher will use codes to refer to participants and schools to avoid links and reference that could be made to the participants. All the data that the researcher stores electronically will be encrypted and password-protected known only to the researcher. Upon completion of this study, the data will be stored electronically by the principal researcher on cloud for a period of 5 years.

Confidentiality and protection of identity


No participant's identity will be made known during the research process. Everything will remain confidential, and the identity of each participant will be protected throughout the research process. The data will be disseminated anonymously. Pseudonyms will be used to store and discuss the information provided.

Dissemination of findings

The results will be disseminated in the form of a summary of the research and through published articles.

If you have any further questions or enquiries regarding your participation in this research, please contact the researchers for more information at 076 781 9007 or via email at funani.mabala@nwu.ac.za.

Yours sincerely



FB Mabala

MEd Candidate, North-West University

Student no: 25737406

DECLARATION BY SGB CHAIRPERSON/RELEVANT RESPONSIBLE PERSON:

By signing below, I agree to give permission for the research to take place with the identified participants in the study entitled:

Teacher perceptions on the role of departmental heads in their professional development.

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 Chairperson/Relevant responsible person

_____ 4

ADDENDUM D: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE



Private Bag X8001, Potchefstroom
South Africa 2520

Tel: 018 299-1111/2222
Web: <http://www.nwu.ac.za>

Faculty of Education

Edu-Lead Research Entity

Tel: 018 285 2084
Email: Tshepo.Tapala@nwu.ac.za

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

TITLE OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT:

Teacher perceptions on the role of departmental heads in their professional development.

Section A: Introduction

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 asked from the respective Provincial Departments of Basic Education, school governing bodies as well as the school principal.

My name is Mr Funani Mabala. I am working as a Marketer in the division of Marketing and Student Recruitment at North-West University, Potchefstroom Campus. I am currently undertaking this study at the same university.

Through this study, I aim:

- ✓ to determine the role departmental heads play in the professional development of teachers.
- ✓ to determine how teachers perceive the role DHs play in their professional development.
- ✓ to identify what DHs can do to assist teacher in their professional development.

I commit myself to the professional code of ethics for researchers which, amongst other aspects, include the following:

- ✓ The participation of all research participation is strictly voluntarily and may at any time withdraw from the research without any consequences.
- ✓ The anonymity and confidentiality of the research participants are protected and guaranteed.

- ✓ Upon completion, the findings of the study will be made available to participants and interested parties.
- ✓ I also ask your permission for this interview to be recorded in order to transcribe it later.
- ✓ I also refer you to the consent form that you signed concerning all the ethical issues.

If you are satisfied with the above information and ethical issues, can we please proceed with the interview?

Section B: Interview Schedule

1. In terms of the following range, what is your age?
(Below 30, 31-35, 36-40, 41-45, 56-50, 51-55, 56-60, above 60)
2. How long have you been a teacher?
3. What qualification do you have?
 - a. Are you considering obtaining any further qualifications?
4. Based on the schools Gr12 results from last year, in what category does your school fall in?
(High performing 80-100%, average-performing 60-79%, underperforming below 60%)
 - a. Why do you think your school falls within this category?
5. What general roles do DHs play in schools?
6. What is your understanding of the concept of professional development (PD)?
7. In your understanding, what is the role of your departmental head in your professional development?
8. Can you provide examples of how your departmental head has supported your professional development?
 - a) Kindly explain your response
9. What kind of professional development opportunities has your departmental head facilitated or encouraged you to participate in?
 - a. Who was the service provider?
10. How often does your departmental head provide you with feedback on your professional development to improve your teaching practice?
 - a) How do you perceive this feedback?
11. In what ways does your departmental head foster collaboration among teachers within the department for professional development?
12. How does your departmental head ensure that you have access to the necessary resources for your professional development?
13. What challenges or barriers have you encountered in your professional development that you feel your departmental head could address?
 - a. How can the departmental head address these challenges?
14. Overall, how effective do you think your departmental head is in contributing to your professional development?
15. What suggestions can you share for DHs to assist teachers in their professional development?

ADDENDUM E: NWPG RESEARCH APPROVAL LETTER



education

Department:
Education
North West Provincial Government
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Gerona Building, Mmabatho
First Floor, East Wing,
Private Bag X2044,
Mmabatho 2735
Tel.: (018) 385-3429/33
e-mail: spedu@nwpg.gov.za

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT-GENERAL

Equities: Cr 7, Phosabatho Tel: 318 384 3371/3433

TO: Dr T.T. Tapala and Mr Funani Brayen Mabala
Researcher: Faculty of Education: Education Management and Leadership

FROM: Mr M.V. Seshibe
Acting Superintendent – General

SUBJECT: Permission to Conduct Research: Dr T.T. Tapala and Mr Funani Brayen Mabala

Permission is hereby granted to you, Dr T.T. Tapala and Mr Funani Brayen Mabala to conduct research in the Department, subject to the following conditions

- Collection of data be accompanied by approval letter signed by the HOD
- The relevant principals of the schools and educators be consulted with approval letter signed by the HOD.
- The administration of data gathering instruments shall be ethical as determined within the University and the Departmentally approved requirements.
- Participation in the project will be voluntary
- The principles of informed consent and confidentiality will be observed in strictest terms
- The findings of your research should be made available to the North West Department of Education upon request as when progress would have been made.
- The Department of Education reserves the right to monitor the project implementation process.
- The Final Report of the research will be made available to the Department as soon as project comes to an end.

Best wishes

MR M.V. SESHIBE
ACTING SUPERINTENDENT-GENERAL

DATE



Let's Grow North West Together



ADDENDUM F: PROOF OF ETHICS TRAINING



FACULTY OF EDUCATION
Private Bag X6001, Potchefstroom campus
North-west University, Potchefstroom
South Africa 2520

Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Education

(EduREC):

Prof CP van der Vyver

Tel: 018 299 4587

Email: Cp.VanDerVyver@nwu.ac.za

Higher Degrees Administrator:

Ms Ema Greyling

Tel: 018 299 4656

Email: Ema.Greyling@nwu.ac.za

24 May 2023

PROOF OF ATTENDANCE AND ASSESSMENT

Dear Funani Mabala (25737406)

This letter certifies that the abovementioned individual attended a one-day online workshop on 15 April 2023 and completed an online assessment on:

Research Ethics for Education

The workshop was presented by *Prof CP van der Vyver*, Chairperson of the Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Education and *Dr Marinda Neethling*, member of the Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Education.

As proof of ethics training and assessment, this letter of attendance is valid for three years and expires on 15 April 2026.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'CP van der Vyver', is written over a light blue horizontal line.

Prof CP van der Vyver

Chair: EduREC

Faculty of Education

North-West University

File reference: 0.4

ADDENDUM G: ETHICAL APPROVAL LETTER



Private Bag X1290, Potchefstroom
South Africa 2520

Tel: 018 299-1111/2222
Fax: 018 299-4910
Web: <http://www.nwu.ac.za>

Senate Committee for Research Ethics
Tel: 016 103 4440
Email: Fezile.Mseleni@nwu.ac.za

ETHICS APPROVAL LETTER OF STUDY

Based on approval by the Education Sciences Research Ethics Committee (EduREC) on 22 August 2024, the Education Sciences Research Ethics Committee hereby approves your application 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: Teacher perceptions on the role of departmental heads in their professional development																															
Study Leader/Supervisor (Principal Investigator)/Researcher: Dr TT Tapala																															
Student / Team: Mr FB Mabala (MEd student - 25737406)																															
Ethics number:	<table border="1"><tr><td>N</td><td>W</td><td>U</td><td>-</td><td>0</td><td>0</td><td>3</td><td>1</td><td>5</td><td>-</td><td>2</td><td>4</td><td>-</td><td>A</td><td>2</td></tr><tr><td colspan="3">Institution</td><td colspan="5">Study Number</td><td colspan="2">Year</td><td colspan="5">Status</td></tr></table>	N	W	U	-	0	0	3	1	5	-	2	4	-	A	2	Institution			Study Number					Year		Status				
N	W	U	-	0	0	3	1	5	-	2	4	-	A	2																	
Institution			Study Number					Year		Status																					
<u>Status:</u> S = Submission; R = Re-Submission; P = Provisional Authorisation; A = Authorisation																															
Application Type: Single study	Risk: <table border="1"><tr><td>Low Risk</td></tr></table>	Low Risk																													
Low Risk																															
Commencement date: 22/08/2024																															
Expiry date: 22/08/2025																															
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):

<p>General conditions:</p> <p><i>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:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The study leader/supervisor (principle investigator)/researcher must report in the prescribed format to the ES-REC:<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 ES-REC, 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-SCRC and ES-REC 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;

ADDENDUM H: EDITORS LETTER

WESSEL KRUGER	Editor and Proofreader Research consultant PhD Art et Scien.
Mooibraai Winburg PO Box 145 9420	CONTACT ☎ 083 3788 394 ✉ Wessel Kruger ✉ wessel@sipc.co.za

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Herewith I, **Wessel Johannes Kruger**, declare that I am a qualified, certified language practitioner and that I have edited the following document for language and writing errors:

Teacher perceptions on the role of departmental heads in their professional development

for: **Funani Mabala**

All changes and suggestions were indicated via track changes (in MS Word) for the author to verify. I take no responsibility in the instance of authors disregarding such changes and suggestions, for plagiarised copy or for factually incorrect statements. **The document remains the final responsibility of the author.**

Best regards
Wessel Kruger

ADDENDUM I: TURNITIN REPORT SUMMARY

25737406:Teacher_perceptions_on_the_role_of_departmen...
_FINAL_TEMPLATE-Mabala_11_November_UPDATED.pdf

ORIGINALITY REPORT

13% SIMILARITY INDEX	11% INTERNET SOURCES	9% PUBLICATIONS	2% STUDENT PAPERS
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