



**UNIVERSITY OF  
KWAZULU-NATAL**

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**INYUVESI  
YAKWAZULU-NATALI**

**SCHOOL OF EDUCATION**

**LEADERSHIP FOR QUALITY TEACHING AND LEARNING: PERSPECTIVES OF  
DEPARTMENTAL HEADS IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN PINETOWN  
DISTRICT**

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**A dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of  
Master in Education in the Discipline Educational Leadership Management and Policy**

**College of Humanities, School of Education**



**Edgewood Campus**

**July 2022**

## **Declaration of originality**

I, Hlengiwe Teresa Dumakude, declare that this research report, Leadership for quality in teaching and learning: Perspectives of Departmental Heads in secondary schools in [the] Pinetown District, abides by the rules

- (i) The research reported in this dissertation, except where otherwise indicated is my original work.
- (ii) This dissertation has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university.
- (iii) This dissertation does not contain other persons' data, pictures, graphs, or other information, unless specifically acknowledged as being sourced from other persons.
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Date 29/07/2022

Hlengiwe Teresa Dumakude

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Supervisor's statement

This dissertation is submitted with my approval.



13 August 2022

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date\_\_\_\_\_

Supervisor: Dr B.N.C.K Mkhize

## Ethical Clearance Approval



27 May 2021

Mrs Hlengiwe Teresa Dumakude (981206976)  
School Of Education  
Edgewood Campus

Dear Mrs Dumakude,

**Protocol reference number:** HSSREC/00002716/2021

**Project title:** Leadership for quality teaching and learning: perspectives of Departmental Heads in secondary schools in Pinetown District

**Degree:** Masters

### Approval Notification – Expedited Application

This letter serves to notify you that your application received on 22 April 2021 in connection with the above, was reviewed by the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC) and the protocol has been granted **FULL APPROVAL**.

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment/modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number. **PLEASE NOTE:** Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

This approval is valid until 27 May 2022.

To ensure uninterrupted approval of this study beyond the approval expiry date, a progress report must be submitted to the Research Office on the appropriate form 2 - 3 months before the expiry date. A close-out report to be submitted when study is finished.

All research conducted during the COVID-19 period must adhere to the national and UKZN guidelines.

HSSREC is registered with the South African National Research Ethics Council (REC-040414-040).

Yours sincerely,

Professor Dipane Hlalele (Chair)

/dd

### Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

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## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this study to my late parents Mr Wilbard Zakhe and Landeni Ellen Maphumulo, for being a positive influence in my life. I love you mom and dad.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I would like to convey my gratitude to the following people for playing an important role in my journey towards completion of this study:

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My participants for their availability and contribution in making this study a success. Thank you so much for agreeing to be part of this study. Again, thank you for sharing your good experiences with me. In addition to research, I have learnt a lot from you.

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I thank my colleagues for always encouraging me to soldier on with this study.

Without them this would not have been possible.

## **ABSTRACT**

The purpose of the study was to explore secondary schools' departmental heads' perspectives about leadership for quality teaching and learning. The study explored perspectives of four Departmental Heads' (DHs') leadership for quality teaching and learning at two secondary schools in Pinetown District, KwaZulu-Natal. The study intended to explore how Departmental Heads understand leadership for quality teaching and learning at the secondary schools. Added to this, the study intended to understand how Departmental Heads translate their understanding of leadership practices for quality in teaching and learning into practice. The study was located appropriately within the interpretivist paradigm that advocates changes in societal and educational structures and aims at practicality. Besides, the case study as a research method was used to understand the perspectives of the participants for the study. I generated data for the study using interviews. Interviews were conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic and strict adherence to the Covid-19 health protocol was ensured. The data were analysed using the thematic method of analysis. The study found that Departmental Heads understanding of leadership for quality in teaching and learning included, supporting pedagogical and methodological skills of teachers, reporting progress and challenges of the department for improved quality in teaching and learning, and professional staff development. The study also found that Departmental Heads leadership practices for quality in teaching and learning included curriculum planning and evaluation, selection and placement of students to programmes, observation of teaching and learning, and assessment of subjects. Added to this, the study also found that, Departmental Heads encountered challenges in quality teaching and learning which included, inadequate material resources, and poor time management. However, they were able to surmount some of these challenges they encountered through their leadership practices to enhance quality teaching and learning at the secondary schools in Pinetown District of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa.

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## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY**

#### **1.1. Introduction**

Departmental Heads (DHs) are crucial to the success of any educational institution around the world, and South Africa is no exception to this reality. Commenting on the importance of quality education, Javadi (2015, p.16) maintains, "the quality of citizens is determined by the quality of the educational system, and the quality of education is determined by the combined efforts of planners, educators, and administrators." The research reported in this dissertation focuses on the significant responsibilities that the Departmental Heads undertake in providing high-quality education in their respective departments and schools. The study explores the leadership roles of Departmental Heads (DHs) in ensuring quality in teaching and learning in secondary schools in the Mafukuzela Gandhi Circuit, Pinetown District. Departmental Heads (DHs) in South Africa are responsible for monitoring, leading, training, and managing staff, as well as, for providing assistance and guidance to other educators in terms of curriculum delivery (Javid, 2015). This is the first chapter which introduces the study. The chapter gives a background to the study, the presentation of the problem statement, the rationale, and the significance of the study are all discussed in this chapter. The study's aims and key questions are also presented. The chapter concludes with a discussion of essential concepts and the study's outline; the conclusion puts the chapter to a close.

#### **1.2. Background to the study**

Numerous studies such as Kaushik and Walsh (2019), Bouckaert and Kools, (2018), Grootenboer (2018), have been conducted on the role of Departmental Heads (DHs) as leaders of learning. They all concur that Departmental Heads should be driving supervision of teaching and learning in schools. The above researchers also point out that DHs' primary responsibility is to lead the learning process. The DHs' responsibilities include, among other things, teaching students, supervising educators, and ensuring that educators adhere to the Department of Basic Education's National Education Policy (2016). DHs must make sure that students' work is marked on time and that they receive feedback. The DHs' role is to oversee the work of educators and learners in their departments, according to the

Republic of South Africa Employment of Educators Act 76 (1998) (EEA) (Republic of South Africa). DHs also have less instructional time than post-secondary educators, according to the Act. According to Grootenboer (2018), DHs appear to be more focused on the teaching part. This reduces management's ability to monitor and control work while also requiring them to supervise teaching and learning. In addition, DHs are supposed to watch educators in the classroom. DHs work under critical situations where they must justify directives from individuals in positions of higher power (Bouckaert & Kools, 2018). Basset (2012) acknowledges that the leadership role of DHs is very imperative and challenging and if it is not done correctly, it compromises the quality of teaching and learning.

### **1.3 Statement of the problem**

In secondary schools, effectiveness of teaching and learning rests on the competency of the Department Heads to encourage, manage and sustain educators (Fullan, 2015). Similar opinions are conveyed by Friedman (2011), who maintains that Departmental Heads (DHs) must direct, maintain, excite and heighten education and concentrate on measures of instruction that produce a high level of intelligence. Bambie (2012) express the view that schools have Departmental Heads whose duty it is to lead the departments. Even though schools have Departmental Heads, performance in some secondary schools is still very poor. Many Departmental Heads (DHs) in schools claim to practise leadership for quality. It is important to interrogate those leadership practices using a critical frame. The degree to which effective learning is attained converts the standard against which the quality of leadership is to be arbitrated (Department of Education, 2016). Facts on exactly how DHs manage teaching and learning is therefore limited, hence, the expertise of the DHs to master their role is thought-provoking. Similarly, we do not know what drives their leadership practices, and this study can assist in that regard. This study sought to explore different meanings that DHs hold about leadership for quality in teaching and learning in secondary schools.

### **1.4 Rationale for the study**

As a Departmental Head for the past sixteen years, one of my duties was to direct, develop and influence educators and learners to see to it that teaching and learning is taking place in the school. I was not convinced that this was done sufficiently. My view is that comprehending that for the school

to do well in teaching and learning educators must be supervised and developed. In ensuring that teaching and learning is operational, DHs have to be answerable for certifying that educators are professionally developed. If the school is doing well, the principal gets all the credits, forgetting that DHs were behind the accomplishment of teaching and learning (Bush et al., 2010). These scholars further contend that the performance of students is the outcome of strong leadership of the DHs who are responsible for managing teaching and learning. The reality is that the DHs work closer with the teachers consequently, the DHs must be the catalysts in managing teaching and learning (Bambi, 2012). Having declared this, the drive is to comprehend the translation of DHs' understanding of leadership for quality teaching and learning into practice.

Having been in the teaching fraternity for the past twenty-nine years, I have identified the Department Heads as influential in determining whether the school was known as a successful school or an underperforming one. Departmental Heads of schools as instructional leaders in establishing professional learning shared ideas and developed educators in schools and encouraged networking among them. DHs were able to create environment that stimulated interests of learners to learn. DHs as leaders of departments had a vision that was biased towards improved learners' performance. The continued decline in learners' performances in schools implied a failure or a lack of understanding of the roles that the DHs had to play in schools to be successful. It would be of interest to me to find out if my informal observations were backed up by empirical evidence. Hence, my interest in this topic.

As a product of apartheid education system, I had an understanding that superintendent education managers were working closely with schools hence, educators were in most of the time sufficiently prepared for their classes since superintendent education managers were visiting schools without any prior notices. The Minister of Education encouraged district officials to support schools to improve learners' academic performances. As a result, the focal point of district planning was on improved learners' outcomes and effective delivery of learner educator support materials to schools, and effective utilisation of available educators. Learners' achievement was the focus of the government which schools' DHs remained responsible for it. Consequently, my rationale also stems from a need to explore the perspectives of other DHs to further understand their leadership role and how it impacts the quality of teaching and learning in South Africa.

## **1.5 Objectives**

The objectives of this study are:

- To explore the Departmental Heads' understandings of leadership for quality teaching and learning.
- To explore the Departmental Heads' leadership practices for quality teaching and learning at the secondary schools.
- To understand the challenges encountered by departmental heads' leadership for quality teaching and learning at the secondary.

## **1.6. Critical Questions**

1. What are Departmental Heads understanding of leadership for quality teaching and learning at the secondary schools?
2. What are Departmental Heads understanding of leadership practices for quality teaching and learning at the secondary schools?
3. How do departmental heads address the challenges encountered for quality teaching and learning?

## **1.7 Significance of the study**

The findings of this study could be valuable to all Departmental Heads who operate in comparable situations and are responsible for supervising post-level-one teachers. Several studies on Departmental Heads instructional leadership have been undertaken both locally and globally (Basset, 2012; Anderson & Nixon, 2010; Mthiyane, Bhengu, & Bayeni, 2014). In many South African schools, it has been noted that DHs spend the majority of their time doing administrative work rather than supervising teaching and learning (Manaseh, 2016). The study is significant because it examines the DHS' involvement in secondary school teaching and learning and how their role enhances quality in teaching and learning.



## **1.8 Clarification of key concepts**

There are five concepts that are pertinent to this topic and these are; Leadership, Quality, Quality education, Departmental Heads and Instructional leadership, and they are briefly discussed below.

### **1.8.1 Leadership**

Like many concepts, leadership is one of those concepts where various scholars define it differently. For some, leadership entails leading individuals to a selected point or goal (Manaseh, 2016) Friedman (2011) defines leadership as a process of influence that results in the achievement of desired outcomes. Leadership is the engine that propels inspiration, motivation, support, and guidance in the right direction, helping people to achieve their maximum potential (Javadi et al., 2017). Leadership is also defined as a relationship between two or more members of a group in which the entire situation or incident is structured or restructured, including - but not limited to - the members' perspectives and expectations (Malinga, 2016). Leadership also entails motivating others, resolving conflicts, and interacting with subordinates (Botha, 2013).

### **1.8.2 Quality**

The term 'quality' is one of the most difficult concepts to define, especially because what constitutes quality usually differ from one group of people to the next (Bunting, 2003). For some scholars, quality constitutes efficiency, relevance, and something more (meaning to journey a little further than efficiency and relevance (Hawes & Stephens, 2001). Hawes and Stephens also argue that quality is the end product of a worthwhile critique or discussion and relies upon knowledge (ideas, statistics) of the status quo. Quality is the extent to which a product or service successfully serves the purposes of the user during usage (Hoyle, 2007).

### **1.8.3 Quality education**

A quality education is defined as one that is pedagogically and developmentally sound and prepares students to be active and productive members of society (Bunting, 2003). Javadi (2015, p.16) maintains, "the quality of citizens is determined by the quality of the educational system, and the quality of education is determined by the combined efforts of planners, educators, and administrators.

### **1.8.4 Departmental Heads (DHs)**

This concept refers to school-based educators employed under the Employment of Educators Act 76 of 1998 (Republic of South Africa, 1998), who work at post-level two and are also responsible for curriculum management. DHs are also known as middle managers and curriculum coordinators in various countries, according to Leithwood and Jantzi (1999). DHs are members of the School Management Team (SMT) in South Africa, and they are the first in line of the SMT. They monitor and supervise curriculum delivery on a daily basis to guarantee that students receive a high-quality education (Bambi, 2012).

### **1.8.5 Instructional leadership**

There is no one way in which instructional leadership, different scholars describe it in different ways. For instance, Jenkins (2009) views Instructional leadership to be efforts that are intended to engender collaboration among members of the staff in discussing issues relating to teaching and learning and taking responsibility of their duties. Mestry and Pillay (2013) refer to Instructional Leadership as leadership that harnesses teaching and learning which leads to effective curriculum management. The focal point for instructional leadership is primarily to co-ordinate, supervise and control curriculum implementation and instruction in schools (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985).

## **1.9 Delimitations of the study**

This study was piloted and carried out at two secondary schools on Departmental Heads in KwaZulu-Natal, Inanda in the Pinetown District. The focus of the study was on Departmental Heads. One school is a Quintile One and the other one Quintile Three. I conducted the study with an emphasis on the interaction inside school leadership which enlighten the leadership practices in the schools.

## **1.10. Outline of the study**

The research study consists of five chapters. The layout for each chapter is presented.

### **Chapter One**

The first chapter serves as an introduction to the research. It begins by presenting the study by offering background information about the subject, followed by the justification and the problem statement. The study's objective and significance are then discussed. It then goes on to explain the significance of the study, as well as the aims and key questions, before concluding with summary of chapter.

### **Chapter Two**

The chapter discusses the literature review on the role of secondary school Departmental Heads as leaders of learning, as well as the conceptualisation of learning. It discusses some studies related to instructional leadership theory and distributed leadership as relevant theories underpinning the study.

### **Chapter Three**

The chapter provides a detailed discussion of the research design and methodology that was utilised in conducting the study. Issues of research paradigm that was adopted and the research approach used are discussed. Other critical issues such as methods of data generation; data analysis, ethical issues, limitations, and issues of trustworthiness of the study are discussed.

### **Chapter Four**

This chapter presents and discusses data that was generated through individual interviews. It deals with the analysis and interpretation of data generated.

## Chapter Five

This is the final chapter which presents the conclusions drawn from the findings that are presented in the previous chapter. Recommendations based on the conclusions are made. However, before conclusions are presented, the chapter begins with the presentation of the summary of the study.

### **1.11 Chapter summary**

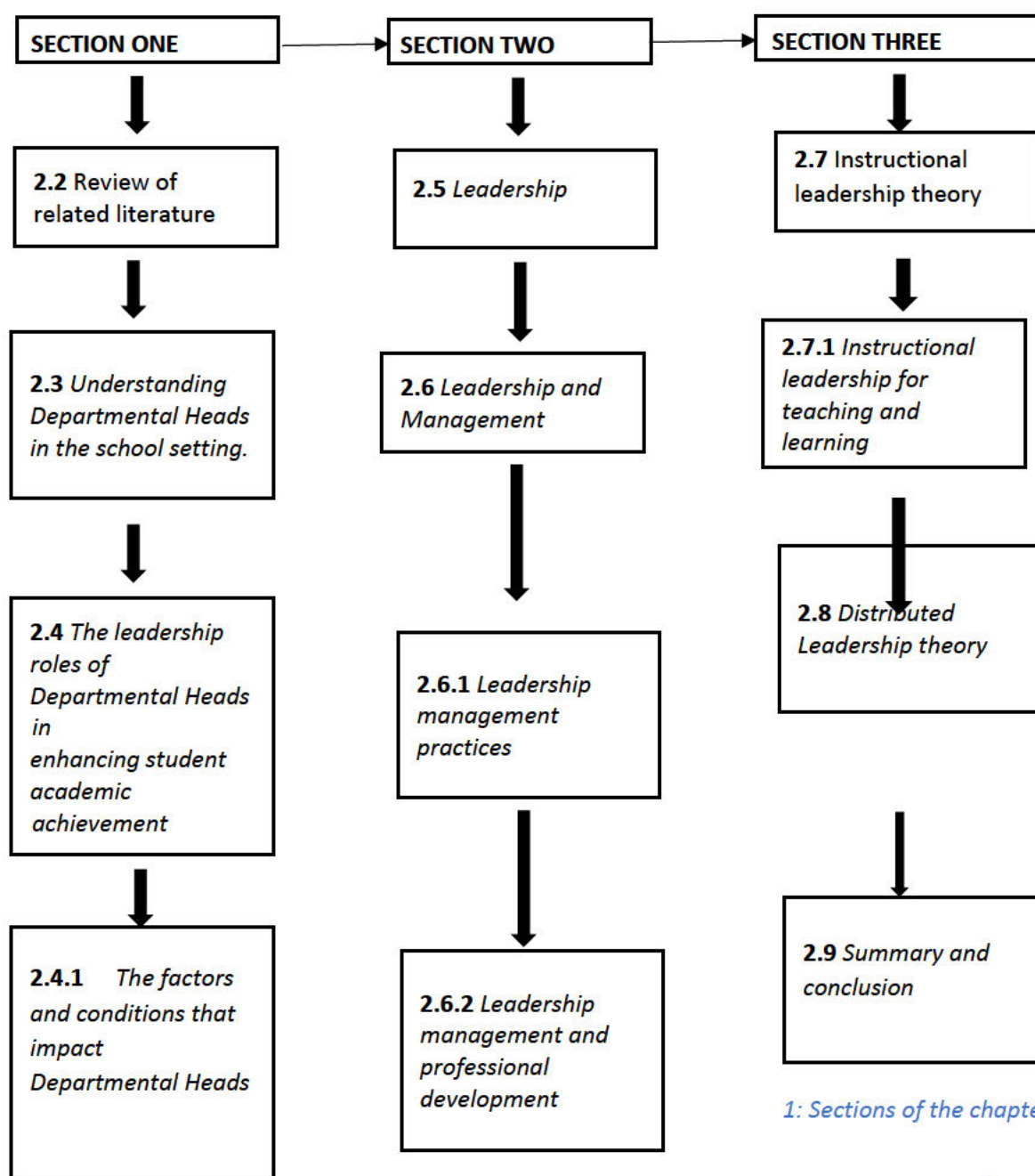
This chapter orientates the study, namely the leadership for quality teaching and learning in secondary schools. It provided the background and rationale for the study. More importantly, the aims and objectives of the study were explained. The key questions which guided the study and clarification of key concepts were provided in this chapter.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

#### 2.1 Introduction

The previous chapter presented a brief introduction that covered the study's background, statement of the problem, critical questions, the rationale and motivation for the research, study location, and clarification of key concepts. This chapter gives an overview of the literature as well as a theoretical framework. The chapter shall be discussed under the following sections as presented in the figure below.



1: Sections of the chapter

## **SECTION ONE**

### **2.2 Review of related literature**

The review of relevant literature in this section will cover both international and national literature that connects to a larger understanding of my research work and how the literature enhances my contribution. The chapter highlights the trends and issues in leadership management, particularly as they pertain to the Department Heads, and interrogates accounts of different researchers' perspectives. As a result, this chapter begins with a review of related literature before moving on to the theoretical framework. The review of related literature is organised around two primary themes: leadership management and Departmental Heads, and leadership and management. The conceptual framework follows the review of literature and consists two concepts: instructional leadership theory and distributed leadership theory.

### **2.3 Understanding Departmental Heads (DHs) in the school context**

Departmental Heads (DHs) are school-based educators employed under the EEA Act 76 of 1998, (Republic of South Africa, 1998), who work at post-level two and are responsible for curriculum management in addition to teaching. According to Leithwood and Jantzi (2017), DHs are also known as middle managers and curriculum coordinators in various countries. DHs are members of the School Management Team (SMT) in South Africa, and they are the first in line of the SMT. They monitor and supervise curriculum delivery daily to guarantee that students receive a high-quality education (Bambi, 2012). Stronge, Xu, and Leeper (2018, p.58) share similar views as those of Leithwood and Jantzi (2017), and add that "the essential managerial role of the Departmental Head has evolved to incorporate a leadership role to improve student learning." Commenting on the evolution of the role of DHs, Leithwood, Louis, Wahlstrom and Anderson (2010, p.3) argue that "one of the most important elements that influences student accomplishment in educational institutions is leadership". While good leadership in educational institutions is universally acknowledged, little is known about which specific leadership responsibilities are most likely to promote instruction and student achievement (Bush, 2018; Leithwood & Louis, 2015).

Even though Departmental Heads in secondary schools have existed since schools were divided into subject-specific departments, nothing has been published substantially about their experiences as noted by Moore (2007). As middle administrators in secondary school organisations, Departmental Heads are necessary and effective in a variety of areas of school and departmental structure. First and foremost, they serve as key leaders in the school and serve as liaisons between administration and departments (Moore, 2007). They play a crucial role in the administrative-teacher chain of command. "Departmental Heads emerge as 'middle managers,' with financial, curricular, and personal responsibility," writes Siskin (1991, p. 153). A Departmental Head's leadership can have an indirect effect on school improvement and student achievement (Muijs & Harris, 2017). However, there is a gap in the literature regarding their impact on teaching and learning as a result of their leadership role. A lack of attention has also been paid to role ambiguity, pressure, and bewilderment (Mthiyane, Bhengu & Bayeni, 2014).

Research on Departmental Heads shows that the role lacks both a clear definition (Ogina, 2017) and a clear job description. A wide range of leadership roles makes it a difficult subject to research. Nonetheless, two critical questions offered in Chapter One will drive the investigation of secondary school Departmental Heads' perspectives. It's critical to keep in mind that each secondary school department, as well as each institution, will be unique. In favour of a diverse school and department culture, Rowe and Guerrero (2016) argue that schools and departments will differ significantly due to two variables. The impact of contextual elements on schools and departments, such as teacher background and beliefs, policy, pupils, school size, money, and parental support, is the first point of focus. The second point of concern is internal school characteristics including the administrator's leadership style, ethos, goals, and vision, professional working relationships and structure, decision-making, communication, monitoring, and assessment. Furthermore, Departmental Heads must deal with teacher aversion to change as well as highly autonomous professionals who resist collaborative efforts (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2013). All these factors contribute to the complexity and ambiguity of the Departmental Head's job in the context of secondary schools.

According to Ormerod (2006), Departmental Heads have two primary responsibilities: leading and managing. Many Departmental Heads take on leadership roles to help or support their colleagues to further their own education (Melville & Wallace, 2019), and to increase student learning (Northouse, 2016). Merriam and Tisdell (2016) consider the function of Departmental Head as requiring an

educator to continue learning. While the leadership elements of their job are crucial, they conceal the true nature of the position and its obligations. Their job entails people and resource management, and it is sometimes overburdened with less important, more mundane activities that frustrate and stress out even the most effective Departmental Heads (Malinga, 2016).

The advancement of the Departmental Head's position has not kept pace with the needs of their surroundings, despite the advancement of the concept of teacher leadership. Since its inception in the early twentieth century, the function has remained mostly bureaucratic and managerial, resulting in frustrations and isolation (Schmidt, 2020). The job description includes budget management, ordering supplies, timetabling, mediating between numerous parties, presenting information, and working as a liaison between management and instructors. These administrative responsibilities consume a large portion of the Departmental Heads' limited release time (Kaushik & Walsh, 2019). Despite the tensions that come with managing and leading, Departmental Heads have developed into important teacher leaders in their schools (Heng & Marsh, 2009).

The old concept of the Departmental Head, according to Pounder (2016), is out of date and has to be replaced with a more effective teacher leadership paradigm that can represent the process of change in instructional practices and curricular activities. Muijs and Harris (2016), for example, underline the necessity of distributed leadership and the transition to the establishment of a shared culture, shared values, and a unifying vision across the entire school. They also recommended that teacher leaders benefit from strong leadership, clear roles, trust, and an emphasis on collaboration and professional growth (Muijs & Harris, 2017).

## **2.4 The leadership roles of Departmental Heads in enhancing student academic achievement**

In the past few years, various scholars have established a link between leadership in the schools generally, and that of DHs in particular, and enhanced learner academic outcomes (Bambi, 2012). Departmental Heads are in charge of a wide variety of responsibilities. The discussion is separated into three categories for the purposes of this literature review: leadership, management, and collaborative activities. The types of work that Departmental Heads do are obviously intertwined. Some decisions are made solely on an individual basis, while others are made in a group setting. However, there is a



disparity in the literature when it comes to the time spent on administrative chores, which fall under the category of management labour, and the time spent on leadership tasks. If we are to better grasp the nature of the Departmental Head's leadership function, we need more information about this gap. According to one perspective, the main responsibility of department heads is to enhance the capability of the people with whom they work and to foster self-evaluation (Francis, 2017). "As an organizational term implying broad-based, skilful engagement in the activity of leadership that leads to sustained school development," (Lambert, 2015, p.38). As a result, different types of Departmental Heads' work generate varied levels of capacity building in their colleagues. Mentoring and joint efforts are two examples. However, the reality of the job implies that a considerable amount of time is spent on administrative tasks, diminishing important time spent with colleagues and students.

### **Leadership work**

Leadership work is defined as work that needs the Departmental Head to lead a group of people. According to Grootenboer (2018), department heads are well-known professionals who serve as role models for their department's employees and colleagues. Brown and Rutherford (1998) elaborate on the concept of the Departmental Head as a leading professional by emphasizing the teaching, learning, and achievement of the department and its students. Departmental Heads must be up to date on curricular changes and must be more than just good teachers. As curriculum or instructional leaders, they are expected to exert influence in the department and school (Gabriel, 2015). The Departmental Head serves as a change agent in secondary schools. Departmental Heads are critical for including teams and departments in innovations and policies that result in changes in teaching and learning; yet, due to the huge size of schools and the arrangement of schools into subject specific groupings, this can be difficult (Hannay & Denby, 2014).

Mayers and Zepeda (2018, p. 49) argue that the Departmental Heads can lead change "provided they are empowered to be more than simple gofers attending to administrative detail." Departmental Heads, in addition to establishing a sense of belonging in the department, improve teacher capacity and encourage self-evaluation, which improves staff and student performance (Busher & Harris, 2019; Francis, 2017). Even if there is no evidence that subject leaders are implementing any changes at the school level, Departmental Heads must understand the nature of change (Hannay & Denby, 2014) and be able to conceive "broader school management policies and how they can affect their department,

even if there is no evidence that subject leaders are implementing any changes at the school level" (Poultney, 2017, p. 10). This discussion suggests that there are many ways in which DHs can exercise leadership for the betterment of their departments and schools.

Departmental Heads can lead in a variety of ways and employ a variety of techniques. Holding regular departmental meeting is just one amongst many strategies (Gabriel, 2015). The frequency of these departmental meetings varies by department, but they are mandatory in many instances around the world (Albashiry, Voogt, & Pieters, 2016). When new initiatives, policies, or issues affecting the department arise, meetings are called on a monthly or "as-needed" basis. Departmental meetings can be issue-focused and focus on school policy, or they can be goal-driven and incorporate staff development and group learning (Adey, 2000). Teachers are also shielded from a myriad of information that fall into their laps as a result of school, district, and ministry policy by Departmental Heads. Leading involves writing and designing curriculum (Adduci et al., 2019), mentoring and coaching new and struggling teachers, and displaying creative, effective teaching strategies and processes (Gabriel, 2015). Leading internal and external committees, as well as providing professional development to colleagues, are all characteristics of leadership.

Departmental Heads also serve as a link between groups of people, bridging or brokering information. They are the route of communication between senior staff and teachers, and they clarify school and district policies for classroom instructors (Busher & Harris, 2019; Glover et al., 2018). These examples of responsibilities are simply a handful of the types of leadership activities that departmental heads engage in (Glover et al., 2018). A more distributed style of leadership structure is required for Departmental Heads to have an impact on the entire school. The framework that most easily facilitates teacher leadership is distributed leadership, which is currently an extensively debated kind of leadership (Harris, Leithwood, Day, Sammons & Hopkins, 2017; York-Barr & Duke, 2014). Departmental Heads, on the other hand, must be empowered and given the opportunity to participate in whole-school decision-making for it to be completely implemented (Brown, Rutherford, et al., 2020). The next step is for Departmental Heads to take an active role in school-wide decision-making. According to Brown, Boyle and Boyle (2019, p.328) there is sufficient evidence from the study based on their research of Departmental Heads in the UK. to contend that middle managers are increasingly seeking a greater say in decision about the school., and that they want a more distributed form of leadership in their schools. If distributed leadership in schools is to become even more prominent, teachers, Departmental Heads, and administrators will need to rethink their roles and take on

responsibilities beyond their traditional responsibilities to improve the overall school (Mayrowetz, Murphy, Seashore, Louis & Smylie, 2017). When Departmental Heads actively participate in a school with distributed leadership, they will have to exercise their leadership potential, which stems from their department and extends to the entire school.

## **Management work**

In management, tasks that the Departmental Head completes on his or her own, with little or no help from colleagues, are widespread. Friedman (2011) researched the function of middle managers and the types of jobs they completed in the mid-1980s. They observed that most of the tasks they did were done alone, and that they spent much of their time on routine administration and crisis management, leaving little time for strategic thinking. These individual tasks or administrative responsibilities include managing and assigning department resources, such as ordering consumable items such as overhead sheets, pens, and pencils, as well as other supplies such as textbooks, printers and computers (Busher & Harris, 2019; Gabriel, 2015). There were no "explicit ties to teacher leadership" in the sorts of independent work identified in the literature (Gabriel, 2015). This is an issue that needs to be investigated more.

Departmental Heads in the United Kingdom, according to Glover and Miller (2019), spend a significant amount of time on administrative and management responsibilities. When an issue with computers in their classrooms or offices emerges, Departmental Heads are increasingly being asked to handle their own equipment. Managing staff absences, timetabling, curriculum planning, producing teaching resources, and attending professional development sessions are all examples of administrative duties. Departmental Heads are occasionally tasked with evaluating teachers or teacher candidates, though it should be noted that in Ontario, teacher evaluations are no longer under the purview of Departmental Heads. Turner (2003) also claims that Departmental Heads in the United Kingdom must achieve administration and government performance standards while simultaneously teaching their own classes. This is becoming more apparent in Ontario, where Departmental Heads are feeling more pressure to enhance student achievement on standardised test scores. These administrative responsibilities occupy a significant amount of time, diverting Departmental Heads' focus away from their leadership positions and collaborative efforts. According to Schmidt's (2020) study, some Department Heads expressed frustration that their roles were managerial, bureaucratic, and isolated

and they "expressed disappointment, disillusionment, and frustration upon discovering that their headship positions were filled with "paperwork" and "meetings"-work that was "not with the kids" (p. 832).

## **Work with colleagues**

Collaborative work refers to tasks that the Departmental Head completes with colleagues. This may require facilitation, but it is not a task for which the Departmental Head takes direct command. Teacher leadership require collegiality, cooperation, and coherence (MacTavish & Kolb, 2006). Instructors who receive specific and appropriate professional development geared toward higher quality teaching boost student performance in addition to these collaborative aspects. Aubrey Hopkins and James (2017) emphasise the importance of establishing a collaborative culture in their research on topic leaders in Wales, and this is repeated throughout the research. According to Fitzgerald and Gunter (2016), collaborative, collegial, and supportive environments will aid in the formation of a community of leaders and learners, which will contribute to school improvement and teacher development (Brown, Rutherford et al., 2018).

In Hannay and Ross's (1997) study in Ontario, collaborative effort was critical to reforming secondary schools. Furthermore, Aubrey-Hopkins and James (2017) asserted that cultivating a collaborative culture through the establishment of common norms, expectations, and routines is crucial for influencing other teachers and working toward student performance. Much of the work that department heads do within the department is collaborative in nature. This endeavour can be seen in the use of formal and informal communication, joint decision-making, policy creation, and the development and sharing of best practices. Working together as a community to achieve curricular goals resulted in a department's organizational strength. (Melville & Wallace, 2017). Collaboratively developing departmental policies establishes clear expectations and guarantees consistently high standards of practice within the department (Aubrey-Hopkins & James, 2017). Simple administrative chores such as ordering new and appropriate books for certain grades, or more sophisticated ones, such as arranging professional development opportunities for a group of instructors, may be undertaken by teams.

Departmental Heads may be asked to work together with management on hiring new teachers and adopting school-wide policy (Bambi, 2012). Departmental Heads can use a variety of strategies to

improve collaboration among colleagues. Cross-departmental collaboration is also possible. One principal's collaborative effort highlighted in Siskin's (2017) research encouraged staff to join in cross-curricular endeavours by supporting those identified as heading in the "correct" direction by creating committees, granting release time, rearranging meetings, and staff development. According to Brown, et al., (2000), interdepartmental teamwork is also advantageous. Hannay and Ross (2019) discovered that the departmental middle management was unable to execute policy objectives that required cross-departmental collaboration. According to Francis (2017), middle school leaders have little time to collaborate with other schools, share, and observe. Furthermore, according to Siskin (1995), multidisciplinary work frequently fails due to the drive of departmentalisation.

#### **2.4.1 The factors and conditions that impact Departmental Heads**

Departmental heads work in a range of environments and under varying conditions. The working atmosphere will be diverse because each institution is unique. Every job comes with its own set of challenges. According to Adey (2000) there are four specific variables that play a part in establishing this diversity. These are topic epistemology; departmental membership; the Subject Leader's individual competence and expertise; and the notion of teaching underpinning the Subject Leader's practice. My presentation is confined to two categories impacting the context and the role to simplify the categorisation of the literature surrounding the topic of elements that impact the Departmental Head's leadership function. External factors are examined first. The administration's leadership styles, the Departmental Head's emphasis on his or her work, the school and department culture, access to the resources and the provision of release time are all examples of these.

Second, the internal conditions that affect Departmental Heads' work are explored, including information on the Departmental Head's personal abilities and limitations, as well as the effects of role confusion, conflict, and ambiguity. Administration Leadership Approaches One of the most important factors influencing Departmental Heads' ability to lead is the leadership style of the school's administrative team. Much of the Departmental Head's responsibilities will be set by this method. The Departmental Head should expect to play a role that extends beyond the department's boundaries when an administrator uses a distributive leadership style. If alternative leadership methods are used, though, their function may be more traditional. According to Albashiry, Voogt and Pieters (2016), the Departmental Head in Welsh schools is influenced by the head teacher and senior management team.

As a result of their own excessive workload, administrators may delegate responsibility to their Departmental Heads. Rather than controlling individuals to compensate for their overloaded work expectations, administrators should focus on "facilitating others' knowledge, talents, and expertise" (Brown, Boyle et al., 2000, p. 9). Departmental Heads were more effective when administrators decided to clearly identify and link Departmental Heads' responsibilities to people, not simply tasks (Francis, 2017), as well as give clear job descriptions (Mayers & Zepeda, 2012). Administrators must also acknowledge the accomplishments of Departmental Heads. Recognition can take the shape of a perceived prestige, incentive pay or policymaking access (Glover et al., 2018). The leadership strategy has an impact on not just the Departmental Head's leadership function, but also the entire school culture.

### **Focus of Departmental Heads' Work**

The work's concentration differs widely from one Departmental Head to the next, as well as from one institution to the next (Basset & Robson, 2017). Work focus directs attention to the goal of their efforts. Departmental Heads can work on projects that benefit the entire school, the department, an individual, themselves, or any combination of the above (Bouckaert, & Kools, 2018). As a result, the subject-specific Departmental Head's function is still uncertain and unclear. A departmental headship can come in a variety of shapes and sizes. They are usually subject specialised, such as the head of Mathematics or English, as previously indicated. They can, however, focus on a cross-curricular or school-wide aim. Head of Assessment and Evaluation, Literacy Lead Teacher, are examples of similar positions (Basset, 2012). Departmental Heads who are responsible for a whole grade of pupils or pastoral headships such as Head of Guidance are also possible. Departmental Heads are increasingly being tasked with tasks that require a whole-school approach (Cohen & Morrisone, 2011). Departmental Heads take on additional responsibilities outside of their typical department area of duty to contribute to entire school decision-making as distributed leadership becomes more popular in schools. Data analysis of standardised test scores or the establishment of whole school policy are examples of whole school decision-making (Bambi, 2012).

Brown, Rutherford, et al. (2020) studied whether Departmental Heads see their management job as including the entire school, rather than just their department, and whether they have meaningful access

to decision-making across the board. They realized that a single person or a small group of senior executives can no longer make decisions on their own. Bennett (2009), for example, stated that principals will be unable to make any changes without the assistance of middle managers (DHs). Brown and Rutherford (2018) suggest that Departmental Heads are crucial to the creation of effective departments and, as a result, successful schools. Departmental heads have generally focused on their particular areas of responsibility, such as subject-specific departments, and this is still the case. They could complete tasks that assist set departmental policies on late students, missed assignments, and other issues that teachers confront on a daily basis (Gabriel, 2015). Alternatively, the responsibilities could be delegated to a single departmental instructor. Department heads may be working one-on-one with new teachers to develop their skills or with struggling teachers to improve their skills, such as mentoring and coaching. Department heads should also focus their efforts on students and parents by arranging meetings with colleagues to address issues (Glover & Miller, 2019).

Finally, Departmental Heads' attention may be drawn to themselves. Departmental Heads need time alone to think about challenges, reflect, plan projects, create their own teachings, and strategise their moves in the educational political atmosphere (Christie, Butler, & Patton, 2007). Subject-specific Departmental Heads concentrate on their departments' teaching and learning activities. They look at a range of data and academic results and make decisions based on that information; yet, for certain Departmental Heads who need to grasp data and how to evaluate it, this can be a struggle (Turner, 2013). They create departmental handbooks and set departmental objectives (Anderson & Nixon, 2010). Unfortunately, subject-specific foci may clash with departments that are cross-curricular or pastoral in nature.

### **School and department culture**

The Departmental Head's capacity to lead and drive the school and department towards enhanced teaching and learning can be influenced by the school and department's culture. School culture, according to Mayrowetz et al. (2017), is both a key to reform and a hindrance to it. To progress toward change and improvement, an entire school culture of learning is required. According to Basset (2012), departmental organisation comprises four basic elements. The first parameter is the department's structural organisational configuration, which looks at how the departments are arranged and how

responsibilities are distributed. The degree of social cohesion and collegiality inside the department is the second measure. Next, a department's standing or respect is important since it determines where the department sits in the school hierarchy. Finally, power and how it pervades the previous three factors, as well as what constitutes power in social contexts, is the final parameter. The discussion of the power imbalance between leaders and followers, as well as the techniques that leaders employ, as well as formal authority and informal influence, are all included in this final point (Basset, 2012). The varied limitations and intricacies of each department can have an impact on a departmental head's capacity to lead when dealing with a group of teachers. Departmental Heads will have a difficult time enacting change if their department is loosely organised, has low social cohesiveness and collegiality, is a lower rank department, and has a weak power structure.

### **Departmental structures**

Departmental structures differ from school structures in the same way as school structures do. Bouckaert and Kool (2018) distinguish between the various types of departmental structures and discussed the consequences for departmental leadership. It is obvious from their discussion and Cohen, Manion and Morrison's (2011) research that the departmental organisation is made up of many different aspects. First and foremost, it is critical to recognise that the subject being taught has an impact on the management of department (Turner, 2016). However, despite this initial overall concept, departmental organisation must work around a variety of issues. Fleming (2014) argues that like school structures, Departmental Heads could build flatter structures in which leadership is more widely shared while generating greater ownership of change and, as a result, a more devoted team in the department. Turner (2016) and Poultney (2017) reinforce this argument by emphasising the significance of democratic and evenly distributed leadership, as well as collaboration and support. Effective departments were studied by Friedman (2011), while ineffective departments were studied by Fullan (2015). Both emphasise the significance of departmental policies. Departmental policies, for instance, should be designed collectively but should reflect whole-school policies while also allowing for some flexibility for teacher autonomy. Departmental documentation in the form of a complete departmental handbook is a quality-of-education and standards-raising project (Gurr & Drysdale, 2012).



According to Francis (2007) and Gabriel (2005), departmental handbooks give a framework and set of expectations for not just the Departmental Head but also the teachers within the department. Furthermore, efficient departmental structures necessitate good communication via meetings, memos, bulletins, bulletin boards, email, dispersed material, and informal chat (Francis, 2007). Collegiality, involving parents as partners, emphasizing on student achievement (Gurr & Drysdale, 2012), focusing on students, teaching, and learning (Harris, 1998), and sharing best practices are all critical. According to Glover and Miller (1999), a focus on teaching and learning leads to increased leadership activities. Another aspect of departmental structure is decision-making. Departmental decision-making is advantageous for two reasons; (a) higher levels of participation and commitment to outcomes; and (b) a wider range of experience inputted (Aubrey-Hopkins & James, 2002). As a result, when moving toward a change, this engages instructors and brings together a diversity of ideas, ensuring that all voices in the department are heard. However, according to Brown, Boyle, et al. (2020), some teachers are hesitant to participate in decision-making processes and are resentful of the time commitment since they believe they have little effect.

### **Access to resources**

The availability of sufficient resources is critical to the success of a thriving department; nevertheless, resource availability differs every department. Resources come in a multitude of forms, the most valuable of which are time and materials. Time is always touted as being important, but it is in short supply for Department Heads to succeed (Brown & Rutherford, 2018; Glover & Miller, 2019; Muijs & Harris, 2017). Some Department Heads simply teach a limited or partial schedule, while others are solely accountable for their department and do not teach, and yet others teach a full schedule while also juggling other tasks. As the job of the Departmental Head changes, so do the obligations of the Departmental Head. The responsibilities of a Department Head have grown beyond his or her academic area to cover initiatives across the entire school, putting a major burden on his or her time (Glover & Miller, 2015). Department heads occasionally cite books, consumables, and technology resources as essential (Gabriel, 2015). Departmental Heads and teachers equally value the physical structure of the school and department, as well as an equitable distribution of space. As departments increase or decline in size, their physical location within the school is adjusted in many institutions. This can have an impact on instructors' attitudes toward their jobs and departments, as well as their feelings of efficacy. Alternatively, a department can stay put in one place, resulting in a lack of cross-curricular contact

among professors. Kaushik and Walsh (2019) observed the tension that arose because of a "we versus them" mind-set that pervaded several schools and departments, resulting in a challenging work environment and a negative school culture. In addition, Francis (2017) emphasises the importance of Departmental Heads' credibility and confidence among the colleagues. If there is trust, a Departmental Head can manage teachers' needs while also negotiating with them about their conditions, teaching schedules, locations and resource availability, allowing for a balance between whole-school needs. When there are philosophical disagreements and attitudes about education, difficulties will develop (Francis, 2007). A competent Departmental Head is one who can navigate the difficult terrain of equitable resource allocation within their department while maintaining a sense of collegiality and remaining focused on the school's goals and vision (Basset, 2012). In the next section, my discussion focuses on the two concepts, leadership and management, as well as instructional leadership, and these collectively, influence quality inputs that ultimately improve teaching and learning.

## **2.5 Leadership and management**

The discussion of leadership and management begins with a separated presentation of the two concepts, leadership and management. This is not to suggest that they are separate; however, in fact, the two are inextricably linked, but clearly distinguishable (Bush, 2019).

### **2.5.1 Leadership**

The South African government has passed progressive legislation to increase education quality and equity since 1994, when democratic dispensation was established in the country. This was a result of South Africa's apartheid history. Two key legislations have given school administrators more power. Departmental Heads or school principals are responsible for professional leadership and management in growing conditions for enhanced teaching and learning. These provisions are captured in Section 16(3) of the South African Schools Act, No. 84 of 1996 (Republic of South Africa, 1996), and Section 4 (2) of the Employment of Educators Act, No. 76 of 1998 (Republic of South Africa, 1998).

Although the notion of leadership is broad and varied, three elements are critical. Leadership, according to Malinga (2016, p.3), is "a process in which one person exerts intentional influence over

others to direct, shape, and facilitate activities and relationships in a group or organization.” Leadership is becoming more closely tied with values, as personal and professional principles are expected to take precedence (Mampane, 2017). Third, leadership is frequently related with an organisation’s realistic, credible, and optimistic vision (De Villeiers & Pretorius, 2010). There are three managerial approaches, according to Clarke (2009), to assure the school's operational effectiveness. To begin, planning and budgeting includes establishing the systems, policies, processes, and timelines that will ensure efficiency. It also entails assessing the physical, financial, and human resource needs of the school (Clarke, 2009). Second, by organising, staffing, and delegating, all stakeholders are aware of what is expected of them. Third, precise procedures for monitoring work progress and completion should be implemented in schools (Clarke, 2009).

Leadership is defined in this study as the procedures by which Departmental Heads (DHs) influence various stakeholders, such as teachers, students and the community, in order to fulfil the school's vision of improving learning outcomes and school improvement. Management comprises making use of organisational resources (both human and material) in order to attain goals. Although these terms are not used interchangeably in this study, I consider leadership to be a subset of management.

### **2.5.2 Management**

Words like efficiency, planning, paperwork, procedures, rules, policies, programmes, control, and consistency come to mind when we think of management (Van Deventer & Kruger, 2007, p. 141). Management, according to Stoner and Freeman (1992), is planning, organising, leading, and managing the work of the organisation’s members while utilising all available resources to achieve the organisation’s desired goals. Management may also be defined as the process of achieving an organisation’s goals through the coordinated use of resources. This procedure necessitates the development of human resources (Pather, 1995).

Van [der] Westhuizen (1990) defines management as "a sort of work that involves a variety of manageable educational duties, carried out by personnel whose authority is to promote education and training" (p.34). It is an important part of any educational programme, but the main purpose is to promote effective teaching and learning schools. Management should not be reserved for a select few, but, it is an activity in which all members of educational institutions participate (DoE, 1999).

## **2.6 Instructional leadership**

The instructional leadership idea, according to Southworth (2002, p.79), is "particularly concerned with teaching and learning, including teacher professional learning and student growth." Instructional leaders create a school vision that includes high standards for teachers and students (Barth, 1990; Hallinger & Murphy, 1985). The goal is to increase learning outcomes through high-quality teaching and learning (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985; Rhodes & Brandreth, 2010).

Instructional leadership is by no means a novel concept. According to Hallinger (2009), instructional leadership has been a topic of discussion in education since the early 1980s. During the 1990s, it was replaced by transformational leadership and School-Based Management (SBM). The concept, on the other hand, became fashionable at the turn of the twenty-first century. According to Hallinger (2009), the accountability movement shifted the emphasis of attention to learning outcomes and school development. For instance, Elmore (2000) established the phrase instructional leadership to emphasise instructional approaches in order to improve learner accomplishment results (Rhodes & Brundrett, 2010).

### **2.6.1 Instructional leadership practices**

The first instructional leadership practice to consider is identifying the school's mission (Van Deventer & Kruger, 2009). This area is divided into two parts, namely, establishing the school's aims and communicating them. Initially, principals collaborate with staff to create goals that are colourful, quantitative and time-based, with a primary focus on learner achievement outcomes. Following that, school principals communicate these objectives to all important stakeholders to gain their support (Hallinger & Murphy, 2015).

Educational programmes are managed in the second domain. The focus here is on the curriculum management and pedagogical practices of principals. It includes directing and evaluating the educational programme, coordinating the curriculum, and monitoring learner development (Van Deventer & Kruger, 2019). School leaders, according to Hallinger and Murphy (1985), are responsible for encouraging, managing, and monitoring instructional methods in schools. As a result, principals must have the necessary teaching skills as well as a commitment to the school's overall improvement.

Hallinger (2019) maintains that the sheer magnitude of the task requires distributed leadership, as the principal cannot go it alone.

The third domain is concerned with fostering a positive school climate. This includes things like preserving instructional time, fostering staff professional development, DHs having a visible school presence, maintaining high standards, rewarding teachers, and rewarding students (Hallinger & Murphy, 2015; Hallinger, 2015). This dimension encompasses features such as teacher professional development, continuous learning, and Professional Learning Communities, and it has a broad scope and goal (Hallinger, 2015). Finally, in order to foster excellence in their schools, DHs must model the desired values and concepts. In this study, instructional leadership practices refer to the practical or concrete steps that Departmental Heads enact to enhance the quality of teaching and learning.

## **2.7 Conceptual framework**

The conceptual framework for this study is made up of two concepts. The concepts instructional leadership and distributed leadership are used to describe these concepts, and these are discussed below.

### **2.7.1 Instructional Leadership theory**

Sheppard (1996) distinguishes between two styles of instructional leadership, one narrow and the other broad. In the narrower meaning, instructional leadership can be defined as behaviors that are directly related to teaching and learning, such as completing classroom observations (Sheppard, 1996). In the 1980s, this was a popular manner of approaching instructional leadership, and it was largely used in small, low-income urban elementary schools (Hallinger, 2003; Meyer & Macmillan, 2001). The broad concept of instructional leadership encompasses all leadership behaviors that have an indirect impact on student learning, such as school culture and timetabling practices. These could be considered leadership qualities that have an impact on the quality of curriculum and education provided to students. This conception of leadership recognises that DHs as instructional leaders, have a positive impact on students' learning, but that this impact is mediated (Goldring & Greenfield, 2002; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000; Southworth, 2002). Hallinger and Murphy created a comprehensive model of instructional leadership (1985, 1986). The instructional leadership construct, according to this

prevailing model, has three major dimensions, namely, defining the school's mission, administering the instructional programme and promoting a positive school-learning climate. These dimensions are divided into ten instructional leadership functions, which are as follows: (1) framing the school's goals; (2) communicating the school's goals; (3) curriculum coordination; (4) supervising and evaluating instruction; (5) student progress monitoring; (6) instructional time protection; (7) providing incentives for teachers; (8) providing incentives for learning; (9) promoting professional development; and (10) maintaining high visibility.

The first two tasks, identifying the school's mission and framing and expressing the school's goals, are merged into the first broad dimension. The departmental head's involvement in defining and articulating a clear school vision with a focus on better student learning is highlighted in these two leadership practices. This dimension was created to highlight the principal's responsibility for collectively developing a suitable context-based vision, ensuring that all school stakeholders are aware of the vision and ensuring that teaching and learning procedures are aligned with the vision.

The second component is made up of three leadership tasks: supervising and evaluating education, curriculum coordination, and monitoring student progress. This component necessitates the involvement of the principal in supervising, monitoring, and evaluating school-based instruction and curriculum activities. Principals' functions are recognized as critical leadership responsibilities in the current paradigm.

Protecting instructional time, fostering professional development, maintaining high visibility, giving rewards for instructors, and offering incentives for learning are all part of the third dimension. This dimension has a greater reach and goal than the two previous dimensions. This dimension's leadership functions are thought to be very influential principals' practices. This component emphasises the necessity of establishing and maintaining a school atmosphere that encourages teachers' professional development while also supporting teaching and learning activities.

Among the existing instructional leadership models, the model provided above is thought to be the most thoroughly evaluated (Leithwood et al., 1999; South worth, 2002). Until 2005, this model had

been used in over 110 empirical research (Hallinger, 2005). Although several different models of instructional leadership have been presented (Andrews & Soder, 1987; Glickman, 1985; Robinson et al., 2007), they all recognised three primary features that are like those established by Hallinger and Murphy (1985, 1986). According to current research, instructional leadership does not necessitate the principal being a model or exemplary teacher, but DHs must be able to create the organisational conditions necessary to build pedagogical capacity, expand opportunities for innovation, supply and allocate resources, provide instructional direction, and support to teachers, and enable teachers to assume in charge of their classrooms. Moreover, related literature indicates that schools where quality teaching and learning was strong, were characterised by instructional leadership, developed school mission and goals, coordinated and monitored curriculum, promoted a climate for learning and motivation. As a professional teacher in one of the secondary schools and also as an emerging researcher, I believe that instructional leadership is a relevant theory for this study because of the focus of the study.

## **2.8 Instructional leadership and school effectiveness**

There is strong evidence that a strong instructional leader is an important component of a successful school (Edmonds, 1979; Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Purkey & Smith, 1983). "The principal [and Department Heads] is the key to a good school," according to Barth (1990). Page 64 The educational program's excellence is determined by the school principal and the DHs' coordinated efforts. They are the primary reason why instructors develop—or are stifled in their careers. The most powerful component in determining school climate is the involvement of the principal and Departmental Heads. Therefore, the connection between good leadership and a good school can be seen in the words by Barth (1990) when he said "I'll show you a good principal if you show me a good school" (p.64). The school effectiveness research reinforces these statements as substantiated in the review below.

Coleman (1966) and Jencks (1972) concluded that a student's socioeconomic circumstances and family background were critical in determining his or her academic success, whereas school attributes had little to no effect on student achievement. This negative vision of education failed to explain why some low-income schools were reaching high levels of achievement. Educators and other educational experts believe that the school and its high-quality inputs had an impact on students' ability to reach high levels of achievement (Bouckaert, & Kools, 2018., Cohen, Manion & Morrisome, 2011). This

hypothesis sparked school effectiveness research with the goal of determining which elements under the school's control contributed to high student accomplishment independent of socioeconomic status or family background. Coleman (1966) and Jencks (1972) findings are clearly opposed by Weber's (1971) studies of four effective inner-city schools. In recent times, scholars such as Buckaert & Kools (2018), Basset and Robson (2017) have also shared similar views about the hypothesis.

Weber (1987) describes an effective school as one that can educate both the impoverished and the middle-class children. On standardised norm-referenced assessments, all four schools scored higher than the national average. His findings identified seven factors that were critical to the schools' effectiveness; these were strong leadership, with the principal having a significant influence in setting the tone of the school; high expectations for students; an orderly and quiet environment; an emphasis on reading skills and phonic awareness; frequent skill evaluation to guide instruction, additional reading personnel, and individualisation. These findings were later duplicated by Brookover and Lezotte (1977).

In a study conducted by Brookover and Lezotte (1977) in the Michigan state, United States of America, some schools were observed and interviewed to differentiate between effective and ineffective schools. The results of the studied schools showed that the effective schools; emphasised obtaining specified reading and mathematics goals and objectives; they held the belief that all students could learn regardless of factors outside of the school's control; they set high academic expectations for all students; they had higher levels of efficacy in teaching the basic reading and mathematics skills; they directed more time to the acquisition of reading and mathematics; they embraced the school and state accountability assessment programs, and had a principal that exhibited behaviours of an instructional leader. He was more assertive, provided an orderly and serious atmosphere, and assessed the school's progress toward academic goals. These results showed that there were considerable differences between schools that succeeded, despite socioeconomic or family background factors.

### **2.8.1 Instructional Leadership and Teaching & Learning**

Teachers' perceptions of the school's DH qualities that influence classroom instruction have found that instructional leadership behaviors have a positive impact on classroom instruction (Blasé & Blasé, 1999a, 1999b, 1998; Chrispeels, 1992; Larson-Knight, 2000; Sheppard, 1996). When instructional leaders monitor and provide feedback on the teaching and learning process, Blasé and Blasé (1998, 1999a) discovered that teacher reflection and reflectively informed instructional behavior increased,



as did the variety of teaching strategies, the response to student diversity, and the preparation and planning of lessons. Teachers also reported an increase in motivation, happiness, confidence, and a sense of security.

Teachers and classroom practices were negatively affected by the DHs or Teacher-leaders who did not monitor and provide feedback on the teaching and learning process (Blasé & Blasé, 1998). Teachers who worked with non-instructional leaders felt abandoned, frustrated and ineffective, and also experienced a lack of trust and respect for the principal, motivation and self-efficacy. Leaders who engaged in behaviours such as informing staff about current trends and issues, encouraging attendance at workshops, seminars, and conferences, building a culture of collaboration and learning, promoting coaching, using inquiry to drive staff development, setting professional growth goals with teachers, and providing resources, in particular, foster teacher innovation in the use of a variety of methods, materials and resources (Basset and Robson, 2017). As a result, greater student accomplishment is more likely (Blasé & Blasé, 1998; Sheppard, 1996).

According to Locke and Latham (1990), goal setting is an excellent technique to boost motivation and performance. These scholars believe that goals raise attention to the work at hand, increase efforts spent on goal-relevant tasks, promote persistence in achieving the goal and increase the development of methods to attain the objective (Locke & Latham, 1990). Even in loosely tied organisations like public schools, this is true. According to Bookbinder (1992), instructional leaders' frequent communication of school goals increases accountability, a sense of personal ownership, and instructional improvements. Organisational frameworks that guide the school toward a single focus are provided by principals or DHs who develop and communicate shared goals with teachers. This widespread attention on academic press has an impact on teachers' classroom actions, resulting in more effective schools (Blasé & Blasé, 1998, 1999a; Bookbinder, 1992; Smith & Piele, 1997). All the scholars discussed in this section have presented a clear case for instructional leadership practices to influence positive climate in the schools, classrooms and in the teachers' behaviours. Although most of the sources I have cited in the paragraphs above are dated, current scholarship on instructional leadership indicate similar qualities (Albashiry, Voogt, & Pieters, 2016, Bassett & Robson, 2017).

## **2.9 Distributed leadership theory and student learning outcomes**

The link between distributed leadership and student learning outcomes is a widely contested subject. Attempting to comprehend this link, according to some writers, is futile. They believe that finding for

unambiguous practice standards by looking for normative links between specific leadership distribution patterns and student performance outcomes is dubious (Anderson et al., 2009, p.135). Others argue that decentralizing leadership is only beneficial if the quality of leadership activities helps instructors "provide more effective education to their students" (Timperley, 2009, p.220). In light of these viewpoints, Robinson (2008) and Harris (2008) suggest that any investigation into the relationship between distributed leadership and student learning outcomes will only be desired and achievable if the leadership literature is more intimately linked to the educational literature. It is proposed that integrating leadership practices research to learning practices will help us answer the question of whether and how different patterns or configurations of distributed leadership contribute to student learning outcomes.

A number of studies have previously looked into the relationship between distributed leadership and learning outcomes. When it comes to highlighting what we know about distributed leadership and student learning outcomes, two studies in particular are an excellent place to start. The first and second investigations, conducted by Leithwood and Jantzi (2000) in Canada and Silins and Mulford (2002) in Tasmania, respectively, focus on this link as part of a larger empirical investigation. Giving teachers a larger share of leadership responsibilities promotes teacher effectiveness and student engagement, according to the findings of the Leithwood and Jantzi (2000) study. They also point out that, if home family context is taken into consideration, teacher leadership has a much bigger impact on student engagement than administration leadership. Silins and Mulford's (2002) research has also confirmed the essential processes by which more distributed forms of leadership improve student learning outcomes. Their research found that when leadership sources are distributed throughout the school community and teachers are empowered in areas that matter to them, student results are more likely to improve.

Other, smaller-scale studies have also discovered a correlation between decentralised leadership and better student learning outcomes. Researchers established a link between teacher involvement in decision-making and student motivation and self-efficacy in an English study of teacher leadership (Harris & Muijs, 2004). The link between teacher involvement in school decision-making and a variety of student outcomes was investigated in this study. These findings show that distributed leadership and student engagement are mutually beneficial. Teacher and student morale rose as a result of teachers feeling more involved and active in school decision-making. The "Distributed Leadership Study" (Spillane et al., 2001) is without a doubt the most comprehensive study on distributed leadership in schools to date.

Through an in-depth research of leadership practice, a four-year longitudinal study, supported by the National Science Foundation and the Spencer Foundation, aimed to make the "black box" of leadership practice more transparent. The study's primary premise is that distributed leadership is best understood as distributed practice that spans the social and situational contexts of the school. The work of instructional improvement involved numerous leaders, according to this study, which focused on 13 elementary schools in Chicago. It also underlined how knowing the interplay between diverse leaders is critical to understanding leadership practice. The school, rather than the individual leader, appears to be the most relevant unit for thinking about the development of leadership skills, according to this study. It was also mentioned that intervening to improve school leadership may not be best accomplished by focusing on a single official leader, but rather by influencing the practices of several leaders. This is important in this study as the work of the Departmental Heads (DHs) is a product of distributed leadership through the principal.

## **2.10 Chapter summary**

This chapter has sketched out the review of related literature and the theoretical framework that underpinned the study. In the first section there was a review of literature surrounding the Departmental Heads, the roles of DHs in enhancing academic achievement; and the role of the second section of the review looked at leadership management, instructional leadership practices of DHs. Thereafter the conceptual framework, made up of instructional leadership theory and the distributed leadership theory was presented. These concepts framed my understanding of DHs perspectives of quality teaching and learning in secondary schools. The next chapter will focus on the research design and methodology of the study.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

In the previous chapter, the review of literature is presented, and the concepts of Departmental Heads (DHs) and their role in teaching and learning in schools discussed. The chapter discussed among other things the conceptual frameworks for the study and concluded with a chapter summary. In this chapter, attention is paid to addressing the research methodologies that have been selected to enable me to obtain data from the sampled participants. As a result, the research methodology seeks to direct the researcher by acting as a navigator, allowing the researcher to arrive at his or her intended destination. The foundation of research is a philosophical assumption about what constitutes genuine research and which research methodologies are appropriate for a particular study. The philosophical assumptions that support this research study as well as the design methodologies are discussed in this chapter. The suitable research paradigm, research technique, data generation method, and data analysis method for the study's aims are explained. Lastly, the discussion captured the trustworthiness, ethical issues and limitations.

#### **3.2 Research paradigm**

Prior to embarking on the study, it is important for the researcher to choose the research paradigm within which the study is located. A paradigm, according to Barbie (2001), is the basic model or frame of reference that is utilized to organize observation and reasoning. As a result, it will not provide solutions to critical questions, but it may aid in the search for them. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2000), paradigms are human constructs that identify where the researcher is coming from in order to generate meaning from data. There are numerous different paradigms, but there are four main ones: positivist, post-positivist, interpretative parading, and critical paradigms. For purposes of this study, I will limit my discussion to interpretive paradigm because it is the one that underpins this study.

Paradigms are lenses through which researchers understand the context of the phenomena under study and as such they are neither right nor wrong as methods of observation (Babbie, 2013). I have located this study within the interpretive paradigm. Interpretivism aims to understand the participants' lives and experiences from their own perspectives (Cohen & Manion, 1994). A researcher who operates in the interpretivist paradigm will depend on the subjects' views of the phenomenon being studied (Creswell, 2009). For this reason, the interpretive paradigm was the most suitable paradigm for me to locate my study in because the study sought to elicit the views of the DHs about their own understanding quality teaching and learning and their role in that process.

### **3.3. Research approach**

This study employs a qualitative research approach. The goal of this qualitative study was to learn about the leadership roles of Department Heads in secondary schools in terms of effective teaching and learning. According to Parahoo (2014), qualitative research tries to investigate human behaviour, experience, and motivation. The ability to portray the thoughts and perspectives of participants, as well as the emphasis on hearing their voices, distinguishes a qualitative method (Yin, 2011). The qualitative research method was used for this study because I wanted to learn about the management experiences of SMT members' Department Heads and their understanding of leadership for quality in their school. Qualitative research, like other research methods, has advantages and limitations.

According to Ganong and Coleman (2014), one benefit of employing a qualitative research approach is that it can answer issues about leadership roles between people and entities. Qualitative research, they argue, produces comprehensive descriptions of processes from the perspectives of participants, making it suited for investigating lived experiences. Qualitative research comprises research methodologies that allow participants' voices to be heard and allow marginalized people to express themselves and bring value to the data gathered from their experiences (Ganong & Coleman, 2014). The advantage of employing a qualitative approach as a method for interested researchers, according to Ganong and Coleman (2014), is that it allows them to observe, hear, and interact with the participants and their viewpoints.

This study's shortcomings were identified through the use of qualitative research methods. Because the data findings cannot be generalized to the larger population, the size of the selected sample was a limiting factor. Despite the small sample size, the amount of data collected was substantial, making analysis difficult. For example, the interviews were transcribed verbatim, which was time consuming and exhausting; nonetheless, it was done meticulously, which proved difficult in and of itself. Although transcription takes time, it provides a clear picture of what happened during the interview and aids in understanding the participants' feelings about the subject as well as their thought process.

### **3.4. Research design**

The case study design is employed to gain an in-depth understanding of a situation and meaning for those involved. A “case” may refer to an individual, an event, a social activity, group, organisation or institution (Rowe, & Guerrero, 2016). It could be a descriptive, explanatory or exploratory form of research inquiry. For the purposes of this research, using DHs as participants who are directed by the leadership at the school, and how the leadership style impact on teaching and learning, will render the study genuine (Henning, 2004). Furthermore, direct conversation with selected participants in their environment, provides a hands-on first-hand experience. However, Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2011) argue that it was inappropriate to conceptualise case study as a method, methodology or research design. Researchers, such as Merriam and Tisdell (2016), believe that because results are intrinsically bound research cannot be conducted successfully using a case-study. The data was collected through interviews with the DHs, naturally occurring data. The researchers as ethnographers spent quite some time in the school premises to monitor the monitoring and the teaching and learning as a whole. The interviews were carried out with four DHs.

### **3.5 Sampling**

According to Daniel (2012), sampling is the process of selecting a subsection to be included in a study. In qualitative research, sampling is frequently done with a specific goal in mind. According to Emmel and Kenney (2013), qualitative sampling is used to gain a deeper understanding of people's experiences. Qualitative research employs a variety of sample techniques, including convenient, purposive, and snowballing sampling. Purposive sampling differs from random sampling in that it is

utilized when the researcher has certain criteria in mind when selecting participants; it is non-random and the researcher sets the criteria for defining participation. (Etikan, Alkassim & Abubakar, 2016).

Purposive sampling, according to Setia (2016), is a method used by researchers to pick participants who have the capacity to answer the research questions; it is critical to choose persons who can supply information that answers the research questions. Purposive sampling was used to choose the two secondary schools at first. This method of sampling was utilized with the goal of selecting participants who possessed the necessary defining features for the study (Maree, 2016). Purposive sampling was used to include DHs that I am familiar with in terms of working in the same circuit. Purposive sampling is effective mostly in small scale research. A total of two participants were selected from each school, making up the total number of four participants.

### **3.6 Data generation method**

In this study semi-structured interviews were used to generate qualitative data from research participants. Interviews is one of the most popular method of generating data in qualitative inquiry (Cohen et al., 2018) According to Creswell & Creswell (2017), qualitative interviews are used to gain access to participants' viewpoints and experiences, as well as acquire rich data that clarifies their thoughts on the issue under investigation. Qualitative research interviews focus on specific topics and explore all participants' experiences (Cohen et al., 2011). As a result, this approach of data collection was deemed appropriate since I wanted to extract the DHs' perspectives and experiences. Through semi-structured interviews, research participants are able to freely express their views and the researchers have the opportunity to do follow-ups for purposes of seeking clarity on issues being discussed (Maree, 2016). The main objective of the interviews, and semi-structured interviews, specifically in this study, was to understand the concept of quality teaching and learning in the selected schools. Through this type of interviews, I explored the participants' perspectives and their experiences of leadership for quality teaching and learning.

According to Bryman (2016), while conducting telephonic interviews using an interview schedule, the questions asked to participants are all the same and delivered in the same order. The advantage of employing interviews, according to Briggs, Coleman, and Morrison (2012), is that they allow

researchers to gather rich data when they are unable to observe participants directly in context. According to Creswell (2014), the researcher is in charge of steering the interview dialogue toward the topic and research questions. Although interviews are viewed as an effective data collecting strategy, Creswell (2014) claims that the data acquired during interviews may be biased because the interviewees'/participants' viewpoints are the primary focus.

### **3.7 Data analysis**

Data analysis is usually the next step to take when undertaking research. The idea is that all the data elicited from the participants must be transformed to a meaningful text. The data for this study was analysed using content analysis. Cohen et al. (2018) describe content analysis as comprising coding, classifying, matching, deducing and extracting theoretical suppositions from the textual data. This entails processes whereby the voluminous amount of words spoken by the participants is reduced to fewer categories (Cohen et al., 2018).

To undertake the data analysis process, I began by transcribing the interview verbatim, from audio-recorded format into a written text. The process of transcribing of the data is defined by Creswell (2014) as a process of converting the audio-recordings into a written text. In this study, the process was tedious and took many hours to complete. I then moved on to repeatedly reading through the entire transcripts. During the reading process, initial stage of coding was carried out which entails labelling each of the segments of the text with codes (Robson, 2002). Thereafter, the second stage of coding was carried out so that initial codes could be combined into smaller number of themes (Robson, 2002). This merging of first and second level coding allowed comparisons and conclusions to be made regarding the themes.

### **3.8 Issues of trustworthiness**

Trustworthiness, according to Noble and Smith (2015), is the soundness of research in terms of its appropriateness and the integrity of its final results. In a qualitative study, trustworthiness is utilized to bolster the notion that the findings are important. According to Creswell et al. (2017), the credibility,



transferability, dependability, and conformability of data in a qualitative study are all factors to consider. The above four issues are discussed in detailed in the following paragraphs.

### **3.8.1 Credibility**

Credibility comprises the truthfulness of the data generated in the research study. According to Flick (2006), credibility refers to the accurateness of the documentation, the reliability of the producer of the document, and the freedom of errors. Similarly, Shenton (2004) states that credibility is about ensuring that the instruments used to measure results are trustworthy and credible. To ensure that the findings were credible, I had to ensure that I do not coerce the participants and that they know what the study is all about and also that they know everything about their rights. In terms of these undertakings, I ensured that all the participants were aware of their rights and powers to decide whether to participate in the study or not.

### **3.8.2. Transferability**

Transferability is used by the readers of the research study (Shelton, 2004). It is a level at which the readers can apply the current research to their contexts. According to Cohen et al. (2002), transferability is the point to which results of the search can be generalised to a wide-ranging population. Generalisation of the results from this study could not be transferred to other contexts. Data presented in this study is not stagnant and it may change as the context changes; it also changes from departmental head to departmental head. Findings of qualitative research such as this one, are not generalisable to the whole population. Nevertheless, it is important that other research can apply the procedures to other contexts that are similar. That is where the importance of transferability comes in. To ensure that the findings were transferable, I gave a detailed or thick description of the methods and all other steps that I took during the course of the study.

### **3.8.3 Dependability**

Bitsch (2005) defines dependability as “the stability of findings over time”. It is concerned with the consistency of the research findings. According to Shelton (2004), dependability is the extent to which

a piece of work can obtain similar results if the work was repeated in the same context with same methods. Shelton (2004) suggests that the researcher should use an “overlapping method” to ensure dependability. To ensure dependability in this study I ensured that I describe all the stages of the research that gave these results of this study for the next researchers to follow if they want to replicate it. I used similar interview schedule for all the participants in the study. The interviews done in the two secondary schools had the same questions to ensure consistency of the findings and dependability, which suggested that the findings are reliable.

#### **3.8.4 Confirmability**

According to Shenton (2004), confirmability is the concern of the researcher in a qualitative study about the objectivity of the study. Further on confirmability, Shenton (2004) argues that the results of the study must be based on experiences and ideas of the participants, instead of the predilection of the researcher. I tried to eradicate any act of bias in the study, I went through the generated data, reflecting several times just to ensure that I am not biased in any form. In addition, when the transcripts had been done, I gave each participant a copy so that they could confirm if what I had written down was a true reflection of what transpired during our discussions. Member-checking is another technique that I used during the research process. Member-checking enables the researchers to check that their interpretations are consistent with those of the participants, and reflecting the realities of the participants and not those of the researchers (Maree, 2016).

#### **3.9. Ethical consideration**

There is consensus among scholars that all research conducted has to adhere to ethical principles and standards. Ethics is concerned with moral issues (Kumar, 2001). I made sure that I adhered to the highest ethical standards of conducting qualitative research. Kumar (2005) avers that there are different ethics for different professions. Van Rensburg (2001, p.25) mentions that research ethics refers to “the moral dimensions of researching; our decisions about what is right and wrong while engaged in research”. Qualitative research involves sharing information of the participants with the researcher. The researcher needs to gain trust from the participants throughout the stages involved in the research. Creswell (2012) maintains that ethical issues involve respect of the participants, informed consent,

confidentiality, voluntary participation, protection of the participants against any harm and caring. For purposes of this study, I obtained the ethical clearance from the University of KwaZulu-Natal. It is during such ethical clearance application that I explained how all the principles and processes governing the conduct of research would be upheld. For example, getting permission from gatekeepers to conduct research is one of the processes researchers have to undertake. For purposes of this study, I applied to the provincial Department of Education seeking permission to conduct the study in the selected schools, and the permission was granted. In addition, permission to conduct research in the two secondary schools was sought from and was granted by the principals of the sampled schools. I visited the schools to discuss with the participants the procedures of the research. Participants were informed about their autonomy and rights. For instance, they were informed that their participation was voluntary and that they had the right to withdraw from the research at any stage during the research process, without any negative consequences. After they had agreed to participate, I gave each one of them a declaration of informed consent forms to sign and they all signed. In addition, I assured them that whatever they told me would remain between us and that nobody would know who gave me the information that I would use to write the research report. In other words, their anonymity was guaranteed, and so was their safety. Anonymity is used to protect the identities of the participants so that they cannot be harmed should it happen that the information they provided is too sensitive and might incriminate others who may not necessarily be participants in the study.

### **3.10 Chapter summary**

The research design and methodology used in the study were presented in this chapter. It was offered a discussion of the research paradigm and research approach. A case study was also mentioned as a favored methodology for this study in the chapter. All of the study procedures were discussed in detail, including sampling methodologies, data generation methods, data processing, guaranteeing trustworthiness, and ethical considerations. The next chapter focuses on the data presentation and discussion of findings.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **DATA PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

The previous chapter provided a discussion on the research design and methodology that informed the research process of this study. Among other things, the chapter discussed the methods that were used to generate data, the methods were based on interviews as the main method of data generation and document reviews. This chapter presents and discusses data that was generated from the semi-structured interviews and documents' reviews. The aims of the study were to understand the Departmental Heads leadership for quality teaching and learning at the two secondary schools. Departmental Heads leadership practices for quality teaching and learning and the challenges encountered by Departmental Heads at the secondary schools. Participants had complete freedom to express themselves during the interviews, as is typical of qualitative research. Probes were conducted to clarify some points and to refocus debate on the study's objectives. Pseudonyms are used to protect the school Departmental Heads' identities, and these are Mr Mbotjini, Pisces Secondary School (PSS), Miss Zanele, Pisces Secondary School (PSS), Miss Samantha, Gemini Secondary School (GSS) and Mr Ndlovu, Gemini Secondary School (GSS). In presenting the data, verbatim quotes are used to ensure that the 'voices' of the participants remain pristine. The literature and theories (instructional and distributed leadership theories) discussed in the Chapter Two is incorporated to enhance the analysis. The first theme is based on the Departmental Heads leadership for quality in teaching and learning at the schools. The second theme is on departmental heads leadership practices for quality in teaching and learning at the secondary schools, and lastly the challenges of Departmental Heads for quality in teaching and learning at the secondary schools.

#### **4.2 Profiling of the participants**

As already highlighted above, the study generated data from two secondary schools and four participants. These participants as already mentioned above came from Pisces Secondary School (PSS) and Gemini Secondary School (GSS), not their real names. These participants shared their leadership perspectives as Departmental Heads (DHs) in leading for quality teaching and learning. For anonymity

reasons, these participants, and the college in which they serve were given pseudonyms as shown in the table below.

Table 1: Profile of participants

Name of participant	Gender	Qualifications	Department led	Years of teaching experience	Years as a Department Head
Mr Mbotjini (PSS)	Male	Bachelor of science; PGCE	Maths & Sciences	15	9
Miss Zanele (PSS)	Female	STD, ACE, BEdHons; Med	Commerce	26	12
Miss Samantha (GSS)	Female	JSTC; HED, SED; ACE; BEdHons	Languages	33	17
Mr Ndlovu (GSS)	Male	Bachelor of Education	Social sciences	18	10

#### 4.2.1 Mr Mbotjini (PSS)

Mr Mbotjini (DH 1) is a 39-year-old male at Pisces Secondary School (PSS) and has been teaching for 15 years. He has a Bachelor of Science with a major in Mathematics and Physical Science. During his fourteen years (14yrs) of teaching, he has taught Physical Science for 10 years of his teaching career. He is a Departmental Head and still teaches Physical Science to Grades 11 and Grade 12 learners. He has 9 years' experience as DH for Mathematics and Sciences department such as Physical Science, Life Sciences, and Natural Science.

#### 4.2.2 Miss Zanele (PSS)

Miss Zanele is the second participant interviewed as a Departmental Head (DH 2). She is a 49-year-old female at Pisces Secondary School (PSS) with a teaching experience of 26 years. Her professional qualifications include a Secondary Teachers Diploma (STD) in which she majors in Accounting and Economics. She has been a DH for 12 years in the Commerce department. She has taught Computer Applied Technology (CAT) for 11years of her 20 years teaching experience. She is a Departmental

Head Managing Accounting, Economics, Business Studies and EMS with 9 educators in her department.

#### **4.2.3 Miss Samantha (GSS)**

The third participant is a 55-year-old female at Gemini Secondary School (GSS) who has been teaching for 33 years. She has qualifications in Junior Secondary Teacher's Certificate (JSTC) majoring in Geography and English. She has been teaching English for the last 30 years. She has been a DH for 17 years in Languages department. The department she heads have 13 educators include managing IsiZulu and English.

#### **4.2.4 Mr Ndlovu (GSS)**

Mr Ndlovu is the fourth Departmental Head (DH 4) and is a 49-year-old male at Gemini Secondary School (GSS) with a teaching experience of 18 years. His professional qualifications include a Bachelor's degree in Education majoring in Life Orientation and IsiZulu. In addition, he holds an International Computer Driving Licence. For the past 8 years, he has been teaching Life Orientation. He has been a DH for 7 years in the Social Sciences department. He manages the department of History, Geography, Life Orientation and Social Sciences with 5 educators in his department.

### **4.3 Data presentation and discussion**

In this section, the data for the study is presented and discussed under four major themes with sub-themes which were generated in line with the research questions and research objectives of the study. The themes will be discussed with subthemes to further give clarity. The major themes will be discussed in this order; the first theme is based on the Departmental Heads' understandings of leadership for quality in teaching and learning at the secondary schools in the Pinetown District. The second theme is on Departmental Heads' leadership practices for quality in teaching and learning at the secondary schools. The third theme is on the challenges that Departmental Heads encounter as they

lead for quality in teaching and learning at the secondary schools. Each of the themes will be discussed with evidence drawn from each participant responses as presented below.

#### **4.3.1 Departmental Heads' understandings of leadership for quality in teaching and learning**

The understanding of quality enhancement in teaching and learning according to the Departmental Heads included supporting pedagogical and methodological skills that improves teacher's ability to teach. Therefore, in this section, DHs understandings of leadership for quality in teaching and learning is provided. During the interviews with the participants, they came up with several different descriptions of quality in teaching and learning, implying the existence of multiple understandings of this subject. Despite the range of views that the participants shared, it was evident that the phenomenon was multifaceted involving actions that result in changes across the school system. According to the participants, their understanding of quality was anchored on supporting, reporting, and communicating the activities of the school in terms of progress and challenges and how it can be improved. These viewpoints are discussed under the following sub-themes; supporting pedagogical and methodological skills of teachers, reporting progress and challenges of the department, professional staff development, and keeping communication lines open as tools for enhancing quality of teaching and learning. In terms of supporting pedagogical and methodological skills of teachers, the participants expressed the fundamental need for teachers in their departments to develop capacities and skills to be included in the planning (of for example, timetables) and the ability to connect teaching with innovative research for quality in teaching and learning. This is discussed in detail below with evidence drawn from the data.

##### **4.3.1.1 Supporting pedagogical and methodological skills of teachers**

The focus of this theme was on Departmental Heads' abilities and efforts to support pedagogical skills such as the capacity to plan, initiate, lead, and develop a good teaching and learning environment that enhances quality in teaching and learning at the secondary schools. The Departmental Heads expressed the need for teachers in their departments to be upskilled in research and the ability to connect it to quality teaching and learning. They also shared similar views regarding planning especially in formulating workable timetable for quality in teaching and learning. The Departmental Heads all

shared similar views that to achieve this process included creating a vision and setting goals that would invite stakeholders to participate in the construction of the vision and assist in setting goals that supported both the pedagogical and methodological skills. The following voices show the participants' sentiments on this theme of creating a clear vision for the improvement of pedagogical and methodological skills. Mr Mbotjini of PSS had this to say:

*For me, as a Departmental Head, having a plan in the form of a clear timetable and skilled teachers in research and teaching is the starting point. However, I cannot realise the vision on my own. For it to be successful, I need to share it with the teachers and other stakeholders. As a result, it must be a joint vision. Everyone must claim ownership of that vision so that whatever happens to it, whether success or failure, can be shared (Mr Mbotjini, PSS).*

Miss Zanele of (PSS) also commented:

*Pedagogy and pedagogical skills are the central core of any school. As a Departmental Head, I believe that having a well-thought-out pedagogy can improve the quality of teaching and the way students learn. So, I support teachers to have a deeper grasp of the fundamental materials to teach accompanied with critical research skills to connect teaching and enhance the quality of teaching and learning. As a Departmental Head, we therefore collaborate on this with the teachers and stakeholders to ensure that this is practiced and achieved (Miss Zanele, PSS).*

At Gemini Secondary School (GSS), Miss Samantha also expatiated on supporting pedagogical and methodological skills. She said:

*Improving quality of teaching and learning entails a variety of decisions made by the inclusion of Departmental Heads to effect positive change in the school system. It entails ensuring that teachers understand the pedagogy and possess the required pedagogical and methodological skills that would enhance the quality in teaching and learning in the school (Miss Samantha, GSS).*

Mr Ndlovu of PSS also conceived leadership for quality as relating to the improvement in the teaching and learning through supporting pedagogical and methodological skills where the learner was the beneficiary. Mr Ndlovu expatiated:

*Schools are designed to help children to get quality teaching and learning. So, the Departmental Heads' primary goal is to improve quality of teaching and learning. As a result, it is the responsibility of Departmental Heads to assist and influence teachers to improve the teaching and learning process (Mr Ndlovu, GSS).*



According to the literature, DHs are members of the School Management Team (SMT) in South Africa, and they are the first in line of the SMT. They are fundamentally involved in ensuring that teachers employed under their departments possess the required pedagogical and methodological skills for quality teaching and learning. They also monitor and supervise curriculum delivery daily to guarantee that students receive high-quality teaching and learning. In that regard, Naiker and Mestry (2013) maintain that if teachers are properly nurtured and their leadership and teaching skills are developed, they are likely to contribute to school improvement and to cultivate a school culture that is conducive to successful learning. According to the instructional leadership theory, instructional leaders create a school vision that includes high standards for teachers and students (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985; Rhodes & Brandreth, 2010). The goal is to increase learning outcomes through high-quality teaching and learning. In the South African context, Grant (2008) supports the notion that DHs leadership for quality includes teachers working collaboratively with all stakeholders towards a shared and dynamic vision of their school within a culture of fairness, inclusion, mutual respect and trust.

#### **4.3.1.2 Reporting progress and challenges of the department for improved quality in teaching and learning**

The Departmental Heads in the study were also in agreement that, reporting progress of the schoolwork and the day-to-day challenges faced in their departments to the school management team (SMT) was important if quality in teaching and learning was to be ensured. Mr Mbotjini, the Departmental Head at Pisces Secondary School, had this to say:

*One of my practices as a Departmental Head is to ensure that I provide periodic reports about the department's milestones in terms of teaching and learning and, also the areas that teachers encounter challenges in. I normally discuss this with teachers and the stakeholders so that we identify areas that require improvement (Mr Mbotjini, PSS).*

Miss Zanele also from PSS commented:

*In the school system like ours, quality improvement must be a collaborative endeavour. Departmental Heads are directly involved in the collaborative efforts. In order to improve the quality of teaching and learning, it is necessary to report areas that the department is doing well and areas that they are facing challenges. The main objective of quality improvement is students' improvement (Miss Zanele, PSS).*

Miss Samantha, Departmental Head from Gemini GSS saw reporting progress of the department and the challenges as important in enhancing the quality of teaching and learning. She commented:

*Since the pass rate of the school is very important, it is imperative that as a Departmental Head, I note areas that the department is doing well and/not doing well and report this to the school management. However, since there is no success without challenges, I also ensure that these challenges are reported for optimal improvement of quality in teaching and learning at the school (Miss Samantha, GSS).*

Also, at Gemini, Mr Ndlovu also supported the views expressed by Miss Samantha above, saying:

*There is no success without challenges, thus as a departmental head, I take note of both the underperforming areas with all the challenges encountered with the view to improving on them for quality teaching and learning (Mr Ndlovu, GSS).*

According to the literature, Departmental Heads also serve as a link between groups of people, bridging or brokering information. They constitute a platform of communication between senior staff and teachers, and they clarify school and district policies for classroom instructors (Busher & Harris, 2019). Gumede (2011) observes that in practice, DHs does exist in South Africa, as teachers in South African schools engage in different leadership tasks, such as motivating others, collaborating in learning areas and mentoring new teachers. They bring to the table issues of concern that require action for quality improvement at the schools. Thus, in the discussion of the theme, the Departmental Heads are seen establishing communication platform by reporting progress and challenges of the department for improved quality in teaching and learning. According to the instructional leadership theory, Hallinger and Murphy (2010) provided one of the models of leadership as communicating the school's goals which include communicating progress of the department activities, as well as challenges for the purpose of improving quality in teaching and learning.

#### **4.3.1.3 Prioritising professional staff development for enhancing quality in teaching and learning at the secondary schools**

In this sub-theme, the DHs shared their views on professional staff development as important in enhancing quality in teaching and learning. All the Departmental Heads shared similar views that the most important resource a school has is its staff, and that professional staff development should be prioritised. Teachers play a critical role in the operation of a school, so every effort to improve the

quality of teaching and learning in schools is extremely important to the Departmental Heads. As a result, it was clear from all Departmental Heads' responses that they encouraged professional staff development in their schools. Emphasising the issue of professional staff development, Mr Mbotjini from PSS had this to say:

*When the opportunity arises, I always engage in free discussions with the teachers during staff meetings, tea breaks, and public gatherings. I also encourage a staff development workshop once a term where a variety of professional issues are discussed. This promotes professional development for both teachers and Departmental Heads. Teachers require a democratic environment in which to freely discuss professional issues (Mr Mbotjini, PSS).*

Miss Zanele from PSS also added her voice to the area of professional staff development. She had this to say:

*I encourage open discussion in formal meetings at this school. I also openly communicate with them during tea breaks and even lunch to hear their opinions on professional issues like discipline, pass rates, and quality, among others. Once a term, the school also hosts a staff development session. Teachers give papers on a variety of professional topics, such as student motivation at these workshops. These workshops for teachers and Departmental Heads are periodically organised by the regional office. (Miss Zanele, PSS).*

Miss Samantha, Departmental Head at Gemini Secondary School shared similar sentiments, saying that she encouraged professional staff development through seminars and workshops organised by the department and school to improve teachers teaching skills. She believed that, by having occasional workshops for staff, it provided motivation and, also provided the opportunity for them to share their teaching experiences and challenges and how it can be improved for quality in teaching and learning. She had this to say:

*Organising periodic meetings and/or workshops among teachers can open vistas for both professional development and the enhancement of quality teaching and learning. Thus, at this school, I encourage this through the regular meetings organised and even at workshops for the purpose of quality in teaching and learning at our school (Miss Samantha, GSS).*

In support of professional staff development, Mr Ndlovu said:

*I urge teachers to participate in staff development workshops as a Departmental Head. This is beneficial to the school's efforts to foster professional practice and thereby improve teaching and learning quality. We reflect on the problems debated by staff members, such as teachers*

*and DHs, after they have debated them, and this may result in their professional development. These debates are enjoyable for teachers and department heads, especially if they are not hostile (Mr Ndlovu, GSS).*

From the literature, it has emerged that the Departmental Heads may be asked to work together with management on the issue of professional staff development from the process of hiring new teachers and adopting school-wide policy. Department Heads can use a variety of strategies by organising seminars and workshops to improve professional staff development and collaboration among colleagues. The data from the documents I reviewed, indicated for instance, the records of planned dates for the workshops, as well as some of the key reflections that teachers had as feedback after each workshop session.

The findings also show that DHs worked collaboratively by, amongst others, creating committees, providing release time, rearranging meetings, and staff development, one principal's collaborative effort discussed in Siskin's (2017) research, encouraged staff to engage in cross-curricular endeavours by supporting those identified as moving in the "right" direction. Webber (2018, p. 2) observed that the literature on DHs identifies various attributes of teacher leaders, including “professional practice that includes leadership within and outside the classroom; collaboration with colleagues; reflective practitioners; learning together with colleagues and change agents.” In addition, fostering a collaborative culture through the formation of common norms, expectations, and routines is critical to influencing other teachers and working towards student achievement. Collaborative effort also supports the distributed leadership theory that assigns tasks to different individuals and fosters teamwork. Agenda of meetings also indicated that there were sessions that teachers with various skills took a leading role in facilitating discussions, especially in areas where they had expertise.

#### **4.3.2 Departmental Heads’ leadership practices for quality in teaching and learning at the secondary schools**

Departmental Heads (DHs) performed multiple leadership practices in the secondary schools for quality teaching and learning. These practices as drawn from the generated data include (a) curriculum planning and implementation, (b) selection, and placement of students to programmes, (c) observation, and assessment of subjects. Below, I present these practices in separate themes with evidence drawn from data.

#### 4.3.2.1 Curriculum planning and evaluation

Curriculum planning is an important aspect in secondary schools and involves the process of making decisions about what to learn, why and how to organise teaching and learning process. Departmental Heads in secondary schools are directly involved at the curriculum planning stage to enable for a right formulation of teaching requirements in schools and to ensure that the right curriculum is adopted for quality teaching and learning. The generated data shows that Departmental Heads at both schools play significant roles in planning the curriculum and ensuring that it is implemented in the schools. The DHs in the secondary schools mentioned curriculum planning as one of its major functions and the effective implementation of it if quality in teaching and learning is to be ensured. In terms of curriculum planning and implementation, the Departmental Heads ensure that subjects are allocated correctly to the teachers in line with their areas of specialisation. These plans are clearly visible in the records of planned activities and year plans. The minutes of meetings that were held every term also showed the areas of the curriculum that needed serious attention and where all was working well. They also ensure that there is a clear and workable timetable for all academic duties to be achieved. Mr Mbotjini, Departmental Heads at Pisces Secondary School had this to say:

*The curriculum is very important, so one of my major responsibilities as a Departmental Head is to ensure that aspects that address the curriculum such as subject contents development, and subject allocation in line with specialisation is ensured. This is because if subjects are not allocated to the right teachers, there will be a lot of discrepancies in terms of teaching and learning. I am also involved in making sure that the allocated subjects have adequate time on the timetable to be taught. I supervise some of these classes occasionally to ensure that the right things are taught in my areas of specialisation (Mr. Mbotjini, PSS).*

Miss Zanele who heads Accounting, Economics, Business Studies and EMS at Pisces Secondary School also mentioned curriculum planning as one of her functions. She said:

*In my department where I am the head, it is one of my main responsibilities to ensure that the curriculum is right and that all the teachers understand what they are supposed to teach from the very beginning of the term. So, I ensure that teaching loads are allocated according to areas of specialisation and that the timetable is effective for teaching and learning (Miss Zanele, PSS).*

Miss Samantha from Gemini GSS also shared a similar position. According to Samantha:

*One of my main roles as a Departmental Head is around curriculum because that is where teaching and learning takes place. So, I ensure that there is a clear compilation of a department moderation plan as well as ensuring that there is a programme of assessment for each subject (Miss Samantha, GSS).*

Mr Ndlovu shared similar sentiments with Miss Samantha. He had this to say:

*Just as my colleague has said, although we are from different departments, my responsibilities also include curriculum-based approaches. I work hand in hand with the principal of the school to ensure that the curriculum assigned to our school is fully implemented and that every subject is taught by the right person who understands what is expected. Even the timetable we try to make sure that it is effective for teaching and learning (Mr Ndlovu, GSS).*

From the data, it is evident that curriculum planning and implementation plays a pivotal role for Departmental Heads (DHs) in managing teaching and learning. The DHs work hand in hand with the principal to make sure that they have a clear academic plan in terms of drafting and allocation of duties and devising effective timetable for teaching and learning. According to the literature (e.g. Grant, 2015), Departmental Heads are prominent professionals who serve as role models for their department employees and colleagues. Brown and Rutherford (2018) expand on the concept of the Departmental Head as a leading professional by emphasising the department's and students' teaching, learning, and achievement. Departmental Heads must be up to date on curricular changes and must be more than just good teachers. They exert influence in the department and school (Naiker & Mestry, 2013). The instructional leadership theory sees Departmental Heads as expected curriculum and/or instructional leaders. As I mentioned earlier in this section that time tabling showed that academic tasks were carried out and achieved, this is another indication that administration is important through meticulous record keeping and these DHs paid particular attention to that. In that way, I was in a better position to understand and relate what the participants had told me during conversations and what I actually saw in the records.

#### **4.3.2.2 Selection and placement of students to programmes for quality in teaching and learning**

The selection and placement of students to programmes is fundamental for quality in teaching and learning. The process of selection and placement is done at the entry stage so that students are placed in the right areas of study according to their qualifications and areas of strength/interest. The selection and placement of students is done to ensure that students are placed in the right subject areas. Mr.

Mbotjini, the head of Mathematics and Sciences places importance on the placement of students to programmes for quality in teaching and learning. He explains:

*Since Mathematics and Sciences are sensitive areas to students especially at the entry level, I ensure that the documentation of students is done properly by checking their grades and ensuring that they are placed in the right subject areas... (Mr. Mbotjini, PSS).*

Again, Miss Zanele also emphasises that she was always involved at the admission stage to ensure the right placement of students. She explained:

*... One of my responsibilities is to oversee the placement of students when they arrive at the entry point. This entails identifying the right students or learners based on the various subject areas that we offer, such as commerce, mathematics and science, English, and others. I go over their documents to see if they qualify, particularly in my department which is commerce (Miss. Zanele, PSS).*

Miss Samantha is also involved in the placement of students: She explained:

*I am actively involved in student admission and placement. You are aware that placement is critical to ensuring effective teaching and learning because it ensures that the learners' interests are identified at an early stage. Most of them don't know what they want to study, so they just show up. As a result, myself and the other Departmental Heads carefully examine their results to determine their placement (Miss. Samantha, GSS).*

Mr Ndlovu corroborated the point made by Miss Samantha by also commenting on placement of students to academic programme as one of his responsibilities. Mr Ndlovu explained:

*As part of my responsibilities, I ensure through a collaborative effort with the principal and the other Departmental Heads to select appropriately students to their various programmes. From screening to admission, I am actively involved in the process (Mr Ndlovu, GSS).*

From the data, it became clear that the Departmental Heads played a critical role in ensuring that students were properly placed in the right programmes. Data shows that, while Departmental Heads determined student placement, they collaborated with the principal and other administrators to ensure that it was done correctly. The importance of student placement in the programme was recognised in the secondary schools because it is the first step towards ensuring quality in teaching and learning. Drawing literature, Bush and Coleman (2019) aver that placing students in the appropriate programme fosters an environment in the institution that promotes high-quality teaching and learning as well as

student success. This function is consistent with distributed leadership theory and is one of Departmental Heads' collaborative functions. Distributed leadership theory encourages the collaborative efforts of teachers who are assigned specific roles that would encourage efficiency in the work environment.

#### **4.4.2.3 Observation of teaching and learning**

Departmental Heads at the secondary schools also perform the function of observing teaching and learning. The DHs conduct observation of both teaching and student's work. In the context of this study, Departmental Heads performed the function of regular classroom visit to ensure that teachers attended their classes and that they taught what they were supposed to teach. In addition, they also checked learners work and assessment to ensure a quick follow up on academically disadvantaged students and improve on it. This approach also included impromptu visits by DHs to observe classes and to ensure that teachers were teaching students the right content at the right time and in the right place. Mr. Mbotjini explained:

*As the head of my department, I always take time out of my duty to pay impromptu classroom visits and to observe the classroom activity and to ensure that teachers under my department are present and teaching the appropriate subjects. I also assess the reports and assessments of students to check that they are following every lesson. This helps me to know areas of improvement where necessary (Mr Mbotjini, PSS).*

Miss Zanele is also of the same opinion with Mr Mbotjini. She explained:

*One of the key leadership practices that I perform is the observation of teaching and learning. I go into classrooms every now and then to see what's going on, whether teachers are attending and teaching the right things or if students are paying attention. In my department, I review students' assessments and identify those who are underperforming. I try to figure out what the problem is and what special attention is required (Miss Zanele, PSS).*

Miss Samantha also explained:

*In my school where I am the head of Languages, leadership practices also include observation for effective teaching and learning. My observation of teaching is most times impromptu, and it helps me to have a good idea of the competency of my teachers and their commitment to every lesson. Also, checking of student's assessment reports is one of the leadership practices I*



*perform. This ensures that quality of teaching and learning is always maintained in the school (Miss Samantha, GSS).*

Mr Ndlovu is also in support of Miss Samantha's position. He explained:

*At this school, and in my department, we can only ensure that there is quality by observing what and what is done in the classroom and outside of the classroom. I perform the duties of observing teaching and learning as the Departmental Head and I also ensure that I am updated with students' assessments as well as their performance (Mr Ndlovu, GSS).*

According to the data, some of the leadership practices of Departmental Heads include observation of teaching and learning as well as subject assessment through impromptu visits. Although the DHs are seen leading the observations, they work with other teachers to ensure that students are attending classes and that teachers are teaching what they need to teach at the appropriate time. According to literature (Bassett & Robson, 2017; Weber, 2017) note that instructional leaders must observe the teaching staff, provide constructive feedback, and conduct formative evaluations of instructional deficiencies for them to be improved. This method was evident in the schools based on the data and it was deemed successful because it required both staff and students to be disciplined in the school's academic activities, which in turn improved the quality of teaching and learning.

Drawing from the instructional leadership theory on teaching and learning, Blasé and Blasé (2016a & 2018) found that when instructional leaders observe and provide feedback on the teaching and learning process, there were increases in teacher reflection and reflectively informed instructional behaviours, greater variety in teaching strategies, more response to student diversity, and lessons were prepared and planned.

#### **4.3.3 Challenges encountered by Departmental Heads (DHs) in enhancing quality of teaching and learning**

Earlier in this chapter, some participants mentioned some challenges they faced when working on various aspects of their jobs, such as (i) inadequate material resources, and (ii) poor time management. In this section, discussion is done on the challenges that Departmental Heads encountered in their efforts to improve the quality in teaching and learning. The two challenges identified are discussed below.

#### 4.3.3.1 Inadequate material resources

The participants all decried that there was a challenge of inadequate material resources both human and material. The verbatim response from the participants provide evidence of these challenges. The Departmental Heads at the schools all complained of inadequate material resources. For example, Mr Mbotjini at Pisces PSS had this to say:

*The most common challenge includes inadequate resources both physical and human. For example, when one teacher goes on leave the replacement teacher comes after a long fight with the school principal. Same thing applies in the case of physical resources such as learner-teacher support material and internet connectivity (Mr Mbotjini, PSS).*

Miss Zanele also from Pisces, PSS mentioned inadequate resources as one of the main challenges she encountered. She explained:

*The major challenge at this school is a lack of adequate resources as a result of late or non-payment of school fees because of the economic hardship brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic. This challenge of resources is perennial. There is also a problem of unstable internet connectivity which makes it difficult for students to search for information relevant for this new and updated curriculum (Miss Zanele, PSS).*

Miss Samantha from Gemini GSS also highlighted the challenge of inadequate resources for quality teaching and learning. She commented:

*Most of the times we face the challenge of human resources especially when there is need to replace a teacher in the same area of specialisation under my department. Also, is the challenge of textbooks and other stationaries. With the COVID-19 pandemic, there was a huge challenge is terms of resources such as internet connectivity and other online learning platforms (Miss Samantha, GSS).*

Mr Ndlovu from Gemini GSS also commented on the challenge of resources as affecting the quality of teaching and learning. He said:

*COVID-19 pandemic brought a number of challenges since we relied heavily on remote teaching and learning. This meant that teachers and all academic staff of the school will have to pass through training to be able to teach. Because of this, the problem of internet and internet connectivity as well as the human resource to provide these services appeared challenging.*

*Also, additional resources like computers and other teaching aids were not readily available (Mr Ndlovu, GSS).*

According to literature (Brown & Rutherford, 2018; Glover & Miller, 2016; Muijs & Harris, 2017), resources come in a variety of forms, with time and materials being the most valuable. Time is constantly mentioned as being necessary but in short supply for Departmental Heads to perform successfully. The two theories used in this study (instructional leadership theory and distributed leadership theory) all indicate that leaders also encounter challenges in the school management that affect quality in teaching and learning. Blasé & Blasé (2018) note that instructional leaders address challenges through careful planning and strategy for optimal solutions. However, these challenges are surmountable through strategic efforts by instructional leaders for improved quality in teaching and learning. The challenge of time management is surmounted through regular interaction with student through remote teaching and learning on recommended days.

#### **4.3.3.2 Poor time management**

Another challenge experienced by the Departmental Heads was that of poor time management especially due to the COVID-19 pandemic phenomenon. All the Departmental Heads decried that, COVID-19 pandemic abruptly disrupted the activities of the school and the effective management of time in the school's day-to-day programmes. The voices of the Departmental Heads provide evidence of this. For instance, Mr Mbotjini, a DH at Pisces (PSS), had this to say:

*When COVID-19 pandemic came, it was really a difficult moment for the school and the department to try and adjust to the new timetable and new regulations. In fact, there was a lot of pressure on the part of the department to readjust the teaching activities and initiate modalities to adjust from the offline selves to the online learning. This meant that I would have to be seriously engaged alongside teachers in my department on new training that would make effective teaching and learning possible (Mr Mbotjini, PSS).*

Miss Zanele from Pisces, also explained that time management was a very serious challenge during the COVID-19 pandemic because of the effect it had on the activities of the school and the department. She explained:

*The most challenging moments for this department have been the disruption of all the academic activities due to the Coronavirus pandemic. As such, the need to adjust to a new system affected*

*the way we manage time to effectively carry out teaching and learning responsibilities. For example, I was trying to update myself with the new teaching experience and meet up with teaching and learning, it was not easy at all (Miss Zanele, PSS).*

In a similar position, Miss Samantha also decried the issue of poor time management due to the pandemic. She explained:

*The problem of time management extends to include monitoring teaching and learning. With COVID-19 pandemic, it became difficult for me as a Departmental Head to meet up with my schedule and to monitor learners work since we had to shift teaching and learning online (Miss Samantha, GSS).*

Mr Ndlovu from GSS also lamented:

*The most challenging factor is that of time management. Apart from it affecting my teaching activities and monitoring, it also affected how we alternate learner attendance. This is because, during the pandemic, we had to divide learners into specific days of the week upon which they attended, but this was cumbersome because of the clashes it most times had and the inconsistency that our teaching and learning progressed (Mr Ndlovu, GSS).*

According to the data, even though the DHs performed a variety of leadership practices to improve teaching and learning, they still faced some challenges that they attempted to overcome. Departmental Heads, according to the literature, work in a variety of settings, with varying conditions at times. Because each school is unique, the work environment will be as well. All the Departmental Heads acknowledged that the COVID-19 pandemic played a significant role in the challenges they faced because of the abrupt transition from offline selves to online personas. According to Bennett, “four specific factors play a role in creating this diversity: subject epistemology; department membership; the Subject Leader's individual competence and expertise; and the concept of teaching underpinning the Subject Leader's practice” (Bennett, 2018, p.23). The impact of COVID-19 on society and education in particular has been acknowledged by senior government officials. For instance, in his Freedom Day speech, the President of South Africa, Cyril Ramaphosa, talked at length about how COVID-19 pandemic had disrupted all social activities but most importantly, the education sector.

#### **4.4 Chapter summary**

This chapter has presented data on the Departmental Heads' leadership for quality in teaching and learning, their leadership practices for quality in teaching and learning, as well as their challenges in teaching and learning at secondary schools. The narratives of Departmental Heads revealed their understanding of quality leadership in teaching and learning, practices, and challenges, at the secondary schools in Pinetown. The next chapter presents summary, conclusions, and recommendations of the study.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **REFLECTIVE STUDY SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

The previous chapter presented the data and the discussion of findings. The three broad themes emerged from data and these themes were then used to present the discussion. These themes were Departmental Heads' understandings of leadership for quality in teaching and learning at the secondary schools, Departmental Heads' leadership practices for quality in teaching and learning at the secondary schools, and challenges encountered by the Departmental Heads leading for quality in teaching and learning at the secondary schools. In this chapter, I present the conclusions drawn from the findings, and then, making the recommendations. Before present the conclusions, I begin by giving a summary of the study.

#### **5.2 Summary of the study**

This study explored the perspectives of Departmental Heads' leadership for quality teaching and learning at two secondary schools in the Pinetown District, KwaZulu-Natal. The study is organised into five chapters with the chapter introducing the study. The second chapter discusses the review of literature on this topic and also presents theoretical framework. This framework is made up of two theories, Instructional Leadership and Distributed leadership.

Issues of research design and methodology are presented in Chapter Three. To begin the discussion, the issues of research paradigms and the research approach used were discussed. Sampling techniques, data generation methods or techniques, as well as methods used to analyse the data are discussed. This is followed by the discussion of the measures that were adopted to ensure trustworthiness of the findings and issues of ethics are presented. The fourth chapter presents the findings. The final chapter, presents conclusions drawn from the findings.

### **5.3 Conclusions from the findings**

In the next section, I present the conclusions drawn from the data discussed in the study. These conclusions are linked to the three research questions. Below the research questions are presented to remind readers:

1. What are Departmental Heads understanding of leadership for quality teaching and learning at the secondary schools?
2. What are Departmental Heads understanding of leadership practices for quality teaching and learning at the secondary schools?
3. How do departmental heads address the challenges encountered for quality teaching and learning?

Three main themes with subthemes emerged from the data which were discussed. Conclusions here will be drawn from the themes that emerged from data.

#### **5.3.1 Departmental Heads' understandings of leadership for quality teaching and learning**

Among other things, the study explored the Departmental Heads' understandings of leadership for quality teaching and learning that participated in this study. Four Departmental Heads from two secondary schools participated in the study. The study shows that the Departmental Heads' understandings of leadership for quality included the supporting of pedagogical and methodological skill of teachers, reporting the progress and challenges of the department for improved quality in teaching and learning, and lastly professional staff development at the secondary schools. Although the departmental understandings for quality was similar and also multifaceted, each of them had unique approaches in their various department where they head. Therefore, supporting pedagogical and methodological skills emerged as the number one of the Departmental Heads understandings of leadership for quality which they performed to ensure that there is effective and quality teaching and learning. These DHs invested time in devising a workable timetable, allocated duty loads, and placed teachers in their areas of specialisation. The study found that the Departmental Heads start the process of academic preparation of the students from the enrolment stage. The preparation is done through having a clear academic plan at the schools and ensuring that teachers are assigned the right duty loads

and that they are allocated the right subjects to teach. The type of functions the DHs play validates the instructional and distributed leadership which are theories that underpinned the study. In short, it is evident their understandings were dominated by instructional leadership practices. That is why instructional leadership was an appropriate lens to analyse and understand how the participants understood quality inputs to ensure effective teaching and learning.

### **5.3.2 Departmental leadership practices for quality teaching and learning at the secondary schools**

The study explored the leadership practices for quality teaching and learning and found that, the Departmental Heads performed a number of practices. These practices included curriculum planning and evaluation, selection and placement of students into programmes and lastly, observation of teaching and learning. Firstly, the Departmental Heads were involved in a collaborative effort with the senior management team in the process of curriculum planning and evaluation. This process, the study found, was imperative for quality teaching and learning since the curriculum is the core mandate of the school. Thus, the Departmental Heads participated in the planning of academic materials, planning of time-table and ensuring that the right content is taught in the schools. Secondly, the Departmental Heads participated in the selection and placement of students to programmes. This practice enabled the Departmental Heads to select students from the admission stage and place them into the right programme to ensure that they are studying subjects of interest. This approach enhanced quality teaching and learning at the secondary schools.

### **5.3.3 Challenges encountered by Departmental Heads for quality teaching and learning**

The study identified the practices of the Departmental Heads for quality teaching and learning, and these have been explained in the previous sections. In addition, the study has also found that the Departmental Heads faced numerous challenges which tended to undermine their efforts to foster effective teaching and learning. These challenges include inadequate materials and resources, and time management. Firstly, the inadequate materials and resources came first as one of the challenges faced by the Departmental Heads in the schools. Secondly, extreme time constraints under which DHs work came as the second challenge. Often times the Departmental Heads are overwhelmed with work and



have inadequate time to bridge the gap between their administrative functions and academic work which they serve. COVID-19 pandemic further brought unique challenges where it became difficult to monitor student works and commitment to studies due to the on-line learning experience. Added to this, the split nature of the schooling system during the pandemic, in terms of which, learners could attend schools on certain days, also contributed to the challenges that undermined efforts to manage effective curriculum delivery in the schools. Although there is little to be done about some of the challenges in practical terms, the Departmental Heads did not succumb to such challenges but rather focused on teaching and learning as a core mandate for ensuring quality at the schools.

## **5.4 Recommendations**

Based on the conclusions reached, I make the following recommendations. The recommendations are directed at the participating schools and also to the research community.

### **5.4.1 Recommendations to the participating schools**

First, the study found among other things, that Departmental Heads performed multifaceted duties in order to enhance quality in teaching and learning. Departmental Heads have virtually become curriculum watchdogs so as to sustain and maintain quality of teaching and learning. In other words, without their vigilance in terms of ensuring and assuring quality in schools, there can be no talk of quality teaching and learning. From the findings, it was evident that senior managers in the participating schools in the form of principals, did not appear to be supportive to the efforts of the DHs' efforts in supervising teaching and learning. For example, from the perspectives of the participant's principals contributed to the delays in terms of material resources acquisition. One conclusion I made is that principals were not fully supportive. I, nevertheless, acknowledge that the study did not include the principals, and therefore, I could not cross-check what the DHs said about this. Nonetheless, based on this conclusion, I can recommend that, more collaboration and mutual understandings between the DHs and their principals need to be harnessed and collaboration enhanced if common efforts can be made and positive effects felt within the schools.

### **5.4.2 Recommendations to the research community**

It would be very interesting to explore the perspectives of Departmental Heads outside the location of this study but also extend to Departmental Heads in rural areas on how they are able to enhance quality at their schools. Departmental Heads are not only teachers, but they are curriculum implementers, and they have experience in the school. Surely, they can make interesting contributions that can impact positively in the improvement of the secondary schools. This study was too small with only two schools participating. It is recommended that more research, involving all key stakeholders should be undertaken. This recommendation is being made within a backdrop of literature that shows that many schools in the country do not perform at their optimum levels.

## **5.5 Chapter summary**

This chapter has presented a discussion on the conclusions reached from the findings that were presented in the previous chapter. Before the conclusions could be presented, a summary of the study was presented. Conclusions and recommendations were made. The study has added to the discussion about the role of DHs in improving quality in teaching and learning.

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## **APPENDICES**

### **APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE**

***Proposed Time: 1 hour***

**TITLE:** Leadership for quality teaching and learning: Perspectives of Departmental Heads in secondary schools in Pinetown District

#### **Biographical information**

1. How many years have you been teaching at this school?
2. When did you become a DH and for which department?
3. How has your experience contributed towards quality teaching and learning?
4. What is your understanding for quality in teaching and learning?

#### **Practices of departmental heads in a school**

5. What are the understandings of your key roles and responsibilities as a DH?
6. How has Covid 19 impacted in your responsibilities?

#### **Challenges encountered by DHs**

7. What are the challenges you experience when carrying out your roles and responsibilities?
8. How have educators under your leadership responded to these challenges?
9. Explain how you deal with your challenges.

#### **How can DHs address these challenges?**

10. What do you do to be innovative and creative during this pandemic?
11. Is there anything you would like to add or share about being a DH?

## APPENDIX B: GATEKEEPER'S CONSENT LETTER



**KWAZULU-NATAL PROVINCE**

EDUCATION  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

**OFFICE OF THE HEAD OF DEPARTMENT**

Private Bag X9137, PIETERMARITZBURG, 3200  
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Ref.:2/4/8/7022

Mrs Hlengiwe Teresa Dumakude  
201 Royalhill Road  
Hillgrove  
**NEWLANDS WEST**  
4037

Dear Mrs Dumakude

### PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE KZN DoE INSTITUTIONS

Your application to conduct research entitled: **"LEADERSHIP FOR QUALITY TEACHING AND LEARNING: WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR DEPARTMENTAL HEADS (DHs) IN SECONDARY SCHOOL?";** in the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education Institutions has been approved. The conditions of the approval are as follows:

1. The researcher will make all the arrangements concerning the research and interviews.
2. The researcher must ensure that Educator and learning programmes are not interrupted.
3. Interviews are not conducted during the time of writing examinations in schools.
4. Learners, Educators, Schools and Institutions are not identifiable in any way from the results of the research.
5. A copy of this letter is submitted to District Managers, Principals and Heads of Institutions where the Intended research and interviews are to be conducted.
6. The period of investigation is limited to the period from 01<sup>ST</sup> October 2020 to 10<sup>TH</sup> March 2023.
7. Your research and interviews will be limited to the schools you have proposed and approved by the Head of Department. Please note that Principals, Educators, Departmental Officials and Learners are under no obligation to participate or assist you in your investigation.
8. Should you wish to extend the period of your survey at the school(s), please contact Miss Phindile Duma/Mrs Buyi Ntuli at the contact numbers above.
9. Upon completion of the research, a brief summary of the findings, recommendations or a full report/dissertation/thesis must be submitted to the research office of the Department. Please address it to The Office of the HOD, Private Bag X9137, Pietermaritzburg, 3200.
10. Please note that your research and interviews will be limited to schools and institutions in KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education.

## **APPENDIX C: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH**

My name is Hlengiwe Teresa Dumakude I am a **Master of Education (M.Ed)** (**qualification which is being studied towards**) student from the Leadership and Management Cluster, School of Education, College of Humanities, University of KwaZulu-Natal. I am conducting the research titled **“Leadership for quality in teaching and learning: Perspectives of Departmental Heads in Secondary Schools in Pinetown District”**.

Numerous studies have been conducted on the role of Departmental Heads (DHs) as leaders of learning (Kaushik & Walsh, 2019). They all concur that Departmental Heads should be driving supervision of teaching and learning in schools. The above researchers’ further assets that leading the process of learning is the core duty of DHs

In view of the foregoing, I intend to explore the perspectives of four Departmental Heads at two secondary schools on their leadership practices for quality in teaching and learning.

### **The objectives of the research are as follows:**

1. To explore Departmental Heads understanding of leadership for quality teaching and learning.
2. To explore Departmental Heads leadership practices for quality teaching and learning at the secondary schools.
3. To understand the challenges encountered by Departmental Heads leadership for quality teaching and learning at the secondary.

**You are invited to please participate in the study because you are a Departmental Head involved in the leadership of the school. You have been identified through consultation with the management of the school as one of the Departmental Head in the school.**

**To gather the information, I am interested in requesting you to participate in this project by reflecting critically on your experiences and how it has shaped your leadership for quality teaching and learning at the school. Additionally, your leadership experience to effectively lead the secondary schools for quality**

**teaching and learning. I will also ask you some questions during an individual interview, each of 30 minutes to one-hour duration.**

**Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, I assure that there will be strict adherence to the Covid-19 regulations. Social distance shall be maintained during the interview process as well as sanitizing of hands and wearing of mask. The interview will be tape recorded for the purpose of transcription and your anonymity will be maintained in the study.**

This study has been ethically reviewed and approved by the UKZN Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (approval number HSSREC/00002716/2021).

Please note that:

- Your participation is voluntary. If you do not participate you **will not be penalized** in any way. There is no disadvantage to your work and your career if you choose not to participate. No marks will be deducted from your project if you decline to participate.
- Your confidentiality is guaranteed as your inputs will not be attributed to you in person, but reported only as a population member opinion. Strict anonymity will be maintained and any information you provide will be treated with high confidentiality.
- Individual interview will be granted along with document review that support the interview process (1 of each) will last for about 30 minutes to 1 hour and may be split depending on your preference.
- Any information given by you cannot be used against you, and the collected data will be used for purposes of this research only.
- Data will be in the form of interview transcripts and completed portfolios, and will be stored in secure storage and destroyed by shredding after 5 years. Digitally recorded data will be deleted after five years.
- You have a choice to participate, not participate or stop participating in the research. You will not be penalized for taking such an action. You are free to withdraw from the research anytime you choose not to proceed and you will not be penalized.



- Your involvement is purely for academic purposes only, and there are **no financial** benefits involved. However, it is expected that you will gain insight into the leadership perspectives of Departmental Heads for quality teaching and learning. The potential benefit is that; the project will assist other Departmental Heads to understand the leadership perspectives for quality in teaching and learning.

Thank you

Yours faithfully

HLENGIWE, TERESA DUMAKUDE

My contact details are as follows:

Email: [hdumakude@gmail.com](mailto:hdumakude@gmail.com) .....

Cell phone: 0826644666.....

My supervisor is Dr Mkhize, he is a lecturer in the leadership and management cluster, School of Education, College of Humanities, Edgewood Campus, University of KwaZulu-Natal

You may also contact the Research Office at:

**University of KwaZulu-Natal**

**Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics**

**Govan Mbeki Centre**

**Tel +27312604557**

**Email: [HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za)**

Thank you for reading this document about this research.

## APPENDIX D: PARTICIPANT CONSENT LETTER

### DECLARATION OF CONSENT

I ..... (Full names of participant) hereby confirm that I have been informed about the study entitled “**Leadership for quality in teaching and learning: Perspectives of Departmental Heads in Secondary Schools in Pinetown District**” by Hlengiwe Teresa Dumakude. **I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to participating in the research project.**

I understand the purpose and procedures of the study (add these again if appropriate).

I have been given an opportunity to answer questions about the study and have had answers to my satisfaction.

I declare that my participation in this study is entirely voluntary and that I may withdraw at any time without negative consequences.

**I voluntarily give permission for the interviews to be audio-recorded.**

**My identity will not be disclosed and pseudonyms will be used to protect my identity**

If I have any further questions/concerns or queries related to the study, I understand that I may contact the researcher at 0826644666.

If I have any questions or concerns about my rights as a study participant, or if I am concerned about an aspect of the study or the researcher, then I may contact:

### HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS ADMINISTRATION

Research Office, Westville Campus

Govan Mbeki Building

Private Bag X 54001

Durban

4000

KwaZulu-Natal, SOUTH AFRICA

Email: [HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za)

Additional consent, where applicable

- I am willing to be part of the garden project and interviews. I am also willing to allow recording by the following equipment, and the use of other data:

audio recording of interviews	g	lling
portfolio of evidence		
reflective diary		

.....

**Name of Participant**

.....

**Signature of Participant**

.....

**Date**

## APPENDIX E: TURNITIN REPORT

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ev.turnitin.com/app/carta/en\_us/?o=1724303539&lang=en\_us&ts=1&u=1042004587

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**CHAPTER ONE**  
**INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY**  
**1.1. Introduction**

Departmental Heads (DHs) are crucial to the success of any educational institution around the world, and South Africa is no exception to this reality. Commenting on the importance of quality education, Javadi (2015, p.16) maintains, "the quality of citizens is determined by the quality of the educational system, and the quality of education is determined by the combined efforts of planners, educators, and administrators." The research reported in this dissertation focuses on the significant responsibilities that the Departmental Heads undertake in providing high-quality education in their respective departments and schools. The study explores the leadership roles of Departmental Heads (DHs) in ensuring quality in teaching and learning in secondary schools in the Mafukuzela Gandhi Circuit, Pinetown District. Departmental Heads (DHs) in South Africa are responsible for monitoring, leading, training, and managing staff as

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