



SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

**Enhancing Primary Schools' Accountability for Schools' Performance:
Perspective of Umgungundlovu District Officials**

Ntombiningi Nokukhanya Mbele

954060234

Supervisor: Prof P.E. Myende

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

College of Humanities, School of Education

Pietermaritzburg Campus

July 2021

DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

I, Ntombiningi Nokukhanya Mbele, declare that:

- i. This research report titled *Enhancing primary schools' accountability for learners' academic performance: A perspective of one education district in KwaZulu-Natal* is my original work, except where otherwise indicated.
- ii. This dissertation has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university or institution of higher learning.
- iii. This dissertation does not contain other persons' data, pictures, graphs or other information, unless specifically acknowledged as being sourced from other persons.
- iv. This dissertation does not contain other persons' writing, unless specifically acknowledged as being sourced from other researchers. Where other sources have been quoted, then:
 - a. Their words have been re-written, but the general information attributed to them has been referenced.
 - b. Where their exact words have been used, their writing has been placed inside quotation marks and referenced.
- v. This dissertation does not contain text, graphics or tables copied and pasted from the internet, unless specifically acknowledged, and the sources being detailed in the dissertation and in the Reference section.

Signed:



Date: 12 July 2021

N.N Mbele

STATEMENT BY SUPERVISOR

I, Professor Phumlani Erasmus Myende, declare that this dissertation has been submitted with my full approval. I further declare that, to my knowledge, this work is originally produced by Ms Mbele.



Supervisor: Prof P.E. Myende

08 July 2021
Date

ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE



UNIVERSITY OF
KWAZULU-NATAL
INYUVESI
YAKWAZULU-NATALI

21 April 2020

Miss Ntombiningi Nokukhanya Mbele (954060234)
School Of Education

Pietermaritzburg Campus

Dear Miss Mbele,

Protocol reference number: HSSREC/00001248/2020

Project title: Enhancing primary schools' accountability for learners' academic performance: Perspective of Umkungundlovu District officials

Degree: Masters

Approval Notification – Expedited Application

This letter serves to notify you that your application received on 18 March 2020 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.

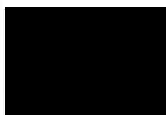
This approval is valid until 21 April 2021.

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 & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee
UKZN Research Ethics Office Westville Campus, Govan Mbeki Building
Postal Address: Private Bag X54001, Durban 4000
Tel: +27 31 260 8350 / 4557 / 3587
Website: <http://research.ukzn.ac.za/Research-Ethics/>

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my late parents, Beatrice Mammie Mbele and Jerome Mbele. Thank you for your unconditional love, sacrifices you made and for believing in the power of education as the key to economic liberation. I will forever be grateful to the Almighty God for blessing me with the parents like you. I could not have asked for better parents; given a second chance, I would still want to be raised by you. May your loving souls continue to rest peacefully.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

All glory and honour to God, the Almighty, All-Powerful, All-Knowing for the courage, perseverance and dedication to see me through this journey.

To my supervisor, Prof Phumlani Erasmus Myende, my sincere gratitude and appreciation for your patience, guidance and motivation throughout this journey. Your honest comments steered me to push harder and through that, this has been possible.

To all the ELMP Department lecturers on the Pietermaritzburg Campus, your teamwork and words of encouragement have made this journey worth enduring.

To my classmates and friends, for your continuous support and encouragement when it felt like it was impossible to soldier on.

My heartfelt gratitude to my siblings, my two loving sisters Sli and Sane, you have been my shoulder to cry on through it all and my dearest brothers, Izinhhlalisuthi, Sonane and Mzwandile. MaBhele AseLenge. A special word of appreciation to my MSWord guru, Sane, you know how much I have relied on your expertise timeously and you always guided me without any complain.

To the participants who harmoniously participated in this study. I thank you for accommodating me in your busy schedule and freely sharing your inputs and experiences with me. Indeed, the completion of this study would have not been possible without you. Much appreciated.

ABSTRACT

The attainment of quality education for all, as envisaged by the Department of Basic Education (DBE), is embedded in the willingness by all stakeholders to play their part in ensuring that effective teaching and learning in schools is not compromised. Given the enormous financial investment that the government is committing in education, the expectation is that such an investment should yield positive returns to the state and the nation at large. Strengthening accountability from those entrusted with such responsibility is one of the strategies to employ in order to attain the state's money's worth. The study was thus purposed at gaining an insight from six district officials (three circuit managers and three subject advisors) about how their education district in the province of KwaZulu-Natal enhances accountability for primary schools' performance. To achieve its purpose, this study was guided by three research questions, which are:

- i) What are district officials' understanding of accountability in relation to the schooling sector?
- ii) How do district officials ensure accountability for performance in primary schools?
- iii) Why do district officials ensure accountability for performance in primary schools the way they do?

This study adopted an interpretative qualitative approach, using a case study methodology. The selection of the six district officials who participated in the study was premised on their job description, which entails, inter alia, exercising oversight and accountability in schools. Semi-structured interviews and document analysis were used to generate data. Face-to-face individual semi-structured interviews were conducted with all the participants. Data was analysed thematically; quality and rigour were ensured using the concept of trustworthiness and all ethics relating to social science research were ensured.

The study found that the phenomenon of accountability is well-understood by the district officials. This was evident in the accountability measures that are instituted by the district, in order to enhance accountability for primary schools' performance. These measures included orientation workshops, school visits, moderation of assessment tasks and quarterly analysis of learners' results. Beyond these measures, the study also revealed that district officials' quest to strengthen accountability is affected by a multitude of challenges that emanate either from the system as a whole, district or school level. These include, inter alia, insufficient personnel at a district level, prioritisation of secondary schools over primary schools, the vastness of the

district and the lack of standardised assessment in the General Education and Training (GET) phase. Such challenges result in the inadequate and inconsistent district support to schools. The study concludes that accountability is a reciprocal process between schools and the district office, and strengthening it at both levels is key to the overall improvement of primary schools' performance. The study further recommends that primary schools play a crucial role of laying a foundation for literacy and numeracy skills and knowledge that learners need throughout their education journey. The DBE should therefore balance the investment between GET and Further Education and Training (FET) with regards to material resources, infrastructure and human resources.

ABBREVIATIONS

ANA	Annual National Assessment
ATP	Annual Teaching Plan
CAPS	Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement
DBE	Department of Basic Education
DH	Departmental Head
ECD	Early Childhood Development
FET	Further Education and Training
GET	General Education and Training
KZN	KwaZulu-Natal
LTSM	Learning and Teaching Support Material
LSEN	Learners with Special Education Needs
NSC	National Senior Certificate
NSLA	National Strategy for Learner Attainment
PAM	Personnel Administrative Measures
PED	Provincial Education Department
PIRLS	Progress in International Reading Literacy Study
PLC	Professional Learning Community
POA	Programme of Assessment
PPN	Post Provision Norm
RSA	Republic of South Africa
SACMEQ	Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Education Quality
SBA	School Based Assessment
SMT	School Management Team
TIMSS	Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study
TLS-GET	Teaching and Learning Specialists – General Education and Training
TLS-FET	Teaching and Learning Specialists – Further Education and Training
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

TABLE OF CONTENTS

STATEMENT BY SUPERVISOR.....	iii
DEDICATION	v
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	vi
ABSTRACT	vii
ABBREVIATIONS.....	ix
TABLE OF FIGURES.....	xiv
CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND	1
1.1 Introduction.....	1
1.2 Background and Rationale.....	1
1.3 Statement of the Problem.....	5
1.4 Purpose Statement.....	7
1.5 Research Questions	7
1.6 Clarification of Concepts	7
1.6.1 Accountability.....	7
1.6.2 Primary school.....	8
1.6.3 Education district	8
1.6.4 Circuit manager	9
1.6.5 Subject advisor.....	9
1.6.6 School performance, learners' academic performance and academic achievement	9
1.6.7 Leadership.....	10
1.6.8 School management team	10
1.7 Organisation of the Report.....	10
1.7.1 Chapter One	11
1.7.2 Chapter Two	11
1.7.3 Chapter Three	11
1.7.4 Chapter Four	11
1.7.5 Chapter Five.....	11
1.7.6 Chapter Six	11
1.8 Chapter Summary	12
CHAPTER TWO LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK	13
2.1 Introduction.....	13
2.2 Critical Analysis and Discussion of the Key Concepts	13
2.2.1 School performance, learners' academic performance and academic achievement	13
2.2.2 Accountability.....	14
2.2.3 School Leadership and Management.....	15
2.3 School Leadership and Accountability.....	17
2.3.1 Providing strategic direction within policy environment.....	17
2.3.2 Promoting professional development for themselves and others.....	18

2.3.3	Leading and managing quality of teaching and learning	18
2.4	Understanding Accountability in Education	19
2.4.1	Performance accountability	19
2.4.2	Regulatory accountability	19
2.4.3	Market accountability	20
2.4.4	Professional accountability	21
2.5	The Nature of Accountability in Education	22
2.6	The Role of Education Districts	24
2.6.1	Support regarding the provision of resources	25
2.6.2	Provision of administrative and professional support.....	26
2.6.3	Exercising oversight and accountability	27
2.7	Factors Affecting Efforts at Enhancing Accountability	28
2.8	Emerging Issues: Lessons from the Review of Literature.....	30
2.9	Theoretical Framework	32
2.9.1	Fostering collaboration between education leaders and developing healthy interrelationships.....	33
2.9.2	Engaging in collective capacity building and promoting joint problem-solving	34
2.9.3	Promoting cross-schools alliances, coalitions and networks	34
2.10	Chapter Summary	36
CHAPTER	THREE RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY	37
3.1	Introduction.....	37
3.2	Research Paradigm.....	37
3.3	Research Approach	38
3.4	Research Methodology.....	39
3.5	Sampling	40
3.6	Gaining Access to the Research Site.....	41
3.7	Data Generation Methods	42
3.7.1	Semi-structured interviews	42
3.7.2	Document analysis method.....	44
3.8	Data Analysis	44
3.9	Trustworthiness of the study	45
3.9.1	Credibility	46
3.9.2	Transferability.....	46
3.9.3	Dependability.....	46
3.9.4	Confirmability.....	47
3.10	Ethical Issues.....	47
3.11	Chapter Summary	48
CHAPTER	FOUR ACCOUNTABILITY IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS: DATA PRESENTATION	49
4.1	Introduction.....	49
4.2	Profiling the Research Site and Participants	49

4.2.1	Research site	49
4.2.2	Profiling the Participants	50
4.3	Data Presentation	50
4.3.1	Understanding the Importance of Accountability	51
4.3.2	Accountability Measures Adopted for Primary Schools.....	54
4.3.2.1	Orientation workshops	54
4.3.2.2	School visits	55
4.3.2.3	Moderation of assessment tasks	57
4.3.2.4	Quarterly analysis of learners' results	58
4.3.3	Factors Affecting Accountability Measures in Primary Schools	59
4.3.3.1	Prioritisation of secondary schools over primary schools	59
4.3.3.2	Discontinuation of common assessment tasks in GET	60
4.3.3.3	The overall number of primary schools in the district	62
4.3.3.4	Other competing and unplanned work activities	63
4.3.3.5	Lack of cooperation from the schools (teachers)	64
4.3.3.6	Geographic location of some schools.....	64
4.3.3.7	Non-viable schools.....	65
4.3.3.8	Staffing in primary schools	67
4.3.3.9	Influence of teacher unions versus district officials' authority	68
4.4	Chapter Summary	69
CHAPTER FIVE ACCOUNTABILITY IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS: WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM DATA		70
5.1	Introduction	70
5.2	Meaning of Accountability	70
5.2.1	Taking responsibility for one's actions	70
5.2.2	Making resources available and the effective use of resources.....	72
5.3	Districts' Measures for Enhancing Accountability in Primary Schools	73
5.3.1	Professional development of teachers.....	74
5.3.2	Conducting school visits	74
5.3.3	Post-moderation of school-based assessment and analysis of results	75
5.4	Factors Affecting the Ensuring of Accountability in Primary Schools	77
5.4.1	Systemic Factors	77
5.4.1.1	The prevailing neglect of the GET band	77
5.4.1.2	Lack of standardised assessment in the GET band	79
5.4.1.3	Lack of subject specialisation in primary schools.....	80
5.4.2	District-based Factors	82
5.4.2.1	District vastness versus available personnel	82
5.4.2.2	Other work-related roles and responsibilities.....	82
5.4.2.3	Geographic location of some schools.....	83
5.4.3	School-based Factors	84

5.4.3.1	Lack of cooperation by schools and the influence of teacher unions.....	84
5.5	Chapter Summary	85
CHAPTER SIX	SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	86
6.1	Introduction.....	86
6.2	Summary of the Study.....	86
6.3	Summary of the Findings.....	87
6.3.1	How do district officials understand accountability in relation to the schooling sector?.....	87
6.3.2	How do district officials ensure accountability for primary schools' performance?	88
6.3.2.1	Capacity-building.....	88
6.3.2.2	Monitoring for support.....	88
6.3.2.3	Benchmarking.....	89
6.3.3	What are the factors affecting measures put in place to ensure accountability in primary schools' performance?	89
6.4	Conclusions.....	90
6.5	Recommendations.....	91
6.5.1	Recommendations for practice	91
6.5.2	Recommendations for further research.....	92
	Final Word	93
	REFERENCES.....	94
	APPENDIX A: LETTER TO KZN DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION ASKING FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH.....	112
	APPENDIX B: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH.....	114
	APPENDIX C: LETTER REQUESTING PERMISSION FROM THE DISTRICT DIRECTOR TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE DISTRICT.....	115
	APPENDIX D: PERMISSION FROM THE DISTRICT DIRECTOR TO CONDUCT RESEARCH.....	117
	APPENDIX E: PARTICIPANTS' CONSENT LETTER WITH DECLARATION FORM.....	118
	APPENDIX F: DECLARATION FORMS	120
	APPENDIX G: SIGNED DECLARATION FORMS FROM PARTICIPANTS.....	121
	APPENDIX H: INTERVIEW SCHEDULES	127
	APPENDIX I: TURNITIN REPORT	128
	APPENDIX J: EDITOR'S LETTER.....	129

TABLE OF FIGURES

Figure 2.1 Reciprocal accounting (adapted from Elmore 2000).....	24
Figure 2.2 Systems thinking approach to leadership	35

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1 Introduction

“Accountability is the cornerstone of good governance. Unless public officials can be held to account, critical benefits associated with good governance such as social justice, poverty reduction and development remain elusive” (Malena & McNeil, 2010, p. 1).

Globalisation has, amongst other things, propelled countries worldwide to prioritise spending on education and more specifically on primary education (UNESCO, 2015). One of the general principles of a successful investment is to ultimately get your money’s worth. The government should thus through investing in education yield positive outcomes in the form of outstanding academic performance of learners, creation of more job opportunities and subsequently improved economic growth. Like Malena and McNeil (2010), I am of the view that strengthening accountability from those who are in charge of education from the school level right up to the highest office in the country will ensure that social justice and reduction of poverty become a reality. Based on this belief, this study sought to explore how Umgungundlovu District enhances accountability for primary schools’ performance. In line with the aim of this study, this chapter (Chapter One) provides an orientation to the whole study. It outlines the background and rationale to the study, the statement of the problem and the purpose of the study. Furthermore, it tables the research questions that guided the study and clarification of key concepts. This chapter further presents an overview of all the chapters of the report.

1.2 Background and Rationale

The current state of primary education in South Africa is characterised by, amongst other things, differentiated access and unequal quality (Badat & Sayed, 2014; Msila, 2014b; Van der Berg, Taylor, Gustafsson, Spaul & Armstrong, 2011). Differentiated access entails that children from affluent households and urban settlements have more access to pre-primary and early childhood education services than their rural counterparts. Unequal quality means that children from the working class and rural settings are still receiving poor quality education due to the poorly resourced schools that they attend (Badat & Sayed, 2014). The historical ‘two-tier’ schooling system thus still persists in South Africa, despite the large-scale education reform policies such as the South African Schools Act of 1996, the White Paper 6 of 2001 and

the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement of 2011 (Salisbury, 2016). The concept of equity and quality education for all thus remains a politically rhetorical statement. Both unequal and differentiated access have dire crippling effects on the academic performance of learners (Badat & Sayed, 2014; Modisaotsile, 2012; Van der Berg, 2011).

South Africa participates in several local and international standardised assessments to ascertain numeracy, literacy and the general cognitive levels of school learners in comparison to learners from other countries. The country's performance in the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) and Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Education Quality (SACMEQ) has shown no improvement over the years (Spaull, 2013). Van der Berg (2015) and Spaull (2015) further note with great concern that South Africa's performance in these assessments is below even much poorer countries such as Kenya, Tanzania and Swaziland.

The results analysis tabled in the 2014 Annual National Assessment (ANA) ¹ Report (DBE, 2014), since abandoned, further confirmed the findings of the international assessments with regards to the levels of South African school learners' cognitive skills (Van der Berg, 2015). From this report, there is glaring evidence of the disparities in learners' performance, based on factors such as the geographic location of schools, socio-economic status of learners as well as school quintile. Likewise, Graven (2014) and Bayat, Louw and Rena (2014) contend that learners' performance is greatly influenced by their socio-economic status. These studies however caution that South Africa needs a deeper interrogation in terms of the "direct" or "indirect" impact of learners' socio-economic status on their academic performance. Morrissey, Hutchison and Winsler (2014) affirm this caution, as they state that more research is needed to ascertain the extent to which learners' achievement is linked to their socio-economic status, given the performance of learners from other poorer African countries as highlighted in the second paragraph.

Like all countries, South Africa is not immune to the effects of globalisation. Janks (2014) emphasises that, because of globalisation, there is an immense demand for countries' education systems to produce learners with relevant skills and knowledge that will enable them to compete successfully with their counterparts. To respond to this, emerging economies of the world are prioritising primary education, with the belief that it is a strategic move to accelerate

¹ Annual National Assessment (ANA) is a standardised national assessment for languages and Mathematics in the GET phase (Grades 1-9) (Khumalo, Maphalala & Govender, 2019).

the production by secondary and tertiary education of a highly skilled workforce (Dreyer, 2017). One of the recommendations stemming from the Report to the National Planning Commission for improving education quality in South Africa is that there is urgent attention that the country needs to provide with regards to issues of quality of education at the primary school level (Van der Berg et al., 2011).

Several research findings (Glewwe, Maiga & Zheng, 2014; Pelinusu, 2015; Ozturk, 2008; Woessmann, 2016) confirm that the quality academic performance of learners has long-term positive implications for a country's economic growth. Hanushek, Ruhose and Woessmann (2015) further attest, in a study conducted within the United States, to the important role of educational achievement in explaining differences in the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita across the US states. The states where learners' academic performance ranked higher had better GDP than those whose learners' performance was lower. In the State of the Nation Address 2019, Mr Cyril Ramaphosa, the President of South Africa, highlighted the changes the country will implement to strengthen the importance of primary education for economic growth. These include, inter alia, introducing the Early Reading Programme in the Foundation Phase, empowering school leadership teams, improving capabilities of teachers and ensuring more consistent measurement of progress for Grades 3, 6 and 9 respectively (Ramaphosa, 2019).

The Action Plan 2019: Towards the Realisation of Schooling 2030 (DBE, 2015) is premised on the collaboration of a broad range of stakeholders essential for transforming the South African schooling system to the one envisaged by the National Development Plan 2030. This Action Plan is both a continuation and retrospection of the 2011 and 2014 plans. Goals 1-9 focus on the outputs the Department of Basic Education (DBE) wishes to achieve by addressing issues of improving learner performance in numeracy and literacy at the exit points of each phase, that is, Grades 3, 6, 9 and 12 respectively. Goal 11 is regarded as one of the five priority goals; it addresses the improvement of the access of children to quality Early Childhood Development (ECD). Furthermore, and of relevance to this study is output goal 27, also indicated to be one of the five priority goals, which focuses on improving the frequency and quality of the monitoring and support services provided by district offices to schools (DBE, 2015). This goal suggests that someone must see to it that education structures across the country ensure that there is the enhanced monitoring necessary to achieve the education goals.

This study is based on an inference that accountability strengthens the quality of the education system holistically (Bantwini & Moorosi, 2018; Dreyer, 2017; Figlio & Loeb, 2011; Maile, 2002; Spaul, 2015). Numerous scholars (Botha & du Plessis, 2011; Easley & Tulowitzki, 2016; Hallinger & Ko, 2015; Rice, 2010; Sahlberg, 2010) have conducted studies that have placed the school leadership at the centre of accountability for the performance of their schools. Likewise, the legislative framework governing education in South Africa, such as the South African Schools Act (Republic of South Africa (RSA), 1996) and Policy on South African Standard for Principalship of 2015 (DBE, 2015) stipulate accountability as one of the critical roles demanded from school leadership. Two critical questions that ensue then are, who should hold schools accountable for learners' academic performance and school performance in general and how should schools be held accountable? As a response to the first question, the Policy on the Organisation, Roles and Responsibilities of Education Districts (DBE, 2013) promulgate that school leadership is accountable to the education district office for the performance of their schools. The current practice in response to the second question is that Grade 12 results are used by districts to ensure the accountability of secondary school leaders. Contrary to this, there remains a lack of clarity as to how primary schools are held accountable for the academic performance of learners. Combined with this is the lack of research on accountability for primary schools. To date, I have not come across a study that documents ways through which leaders in primary schools are held accountable for performance of their learners, yet this performance is of national imperative. Thus, this study is set to respond to this challenge.

Having worked in a secondary school for more than 15 years and having recently switched to a primary school, I am fascinated about the issue of accountability by school leadership in primary schools with regards to learners' academic performance. The National Strategy for Learner Attainment (NSLA) demands a higher degree of accountability from underperforming schools, that is, those obtaining less than 60% overall pass rate in the National Senior Certificate examination (Department of Education, 2007). As implied in the background above, the policy is however silent on the accountability of academic performance of learners in primary schools. In addition, Section 20.3.1 of the Department of Basic Education's Policy on the Organisation, Roles and Responsibilities of Education Districts (DBE, 2013), states that the education districts are responsible for holding principals of schools in districts accountable for the performance of their schools. One can infer from this clause that this applies to both primary and secondary school principals. Furthermore, in my informal conversations with

colleagues from both primary and secondary schools as well as my experience in working in both school settings, there is anecdotal evidence that much more accountability is demanded from secondary schools than from their counterparts, which is contrary to the legislative framework. I am therefore of the view that the proposed study will enhance the current practices in our school towards improving learners' academic performance.

There are notable gains attributed to having effective accountability measures for schools. These include accessing valuable information from an accountability exercise which can be in turn used as a strategy to devise professional development initiatives for teachers and the development of a school as a whole, including infrastructural and physical development (Maile, 2002). Adequate curriculum coverage is improved, thus ensuring that learners attain the prescribed skills and knowledge for different grades or levels respectively. Moreover, accountability promotes ownership of decisions and actions taken, inspires confidence and trust in teachers and present schools with opportunities to critically evaluate their strengths and weaknesses (Figlio & Loeb, 2011).

On the flip side, the eminent lack of accountability in primary schools in South Africa results in the system encountering certain losses. Carnoy, Chisholm and Chilisa (2012), Taylor and Reddi (2013) highlight low curriculum coverage as one of the major losses associated with lack of effective accountability measures for primary schools in South Africa. Their studies, on a representative sample, revealed that only 24% of Grades 4 and 5 topics were covered in the classrooms. As a result, knowledge gap that such learners inherit have dire negative implications for their academic performance in succeeding grades. Furthermore, pressure associated with high stakes national or international testing has reduced curriculum creativity, leading to the so-called "teaching-to-test" rather than in-depth teaching and learning within a broad curriculum (Brill, Grayson, Kuhn & O'Donnell, 2018). These concerns highlighted suggest the need to understand accountability measures put in place to ensure that the performance of learners in primary schools is as desired. Hence the focus of this study on district officials and the methods they adopt to ensure accountability in primary schools.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

The existing body of literature affirms that there have been enormous strides made by the government both financially and policy wise to promulgate and improve the quality of basic

education in South Africa (Spaull, 2019; Van der Berg, Spaull, Wills, Gustafsson & Kotzé, 2016; Van Staden, Graham & Harvey, 2020; Veriava, 2017). These include inter alia, creation of no-fee schools, making schooling compulsory between the ages of 7 and 15, inclusive education, introduction of the National School Nutrition Programme (NSNP) and Continuing Professional Teacher Development (CPTD). In addition, as alluded in the preceding section, the country participates in various local and international assessment programmes for purposes of assessing our learners' academic performance against their peers from other countries. Regrettably, despite these substantial government efforts towards improving the quality of basic education, academic papers, various research institutions and the media at large are still abuzz with reports that our basic education is in crisis (Maddock & Maroun, 2018; Maarman & Lamont-Mbawuli, 2017; OECD, 2019; Spaull, 2019). Challenges of learner-dropouts, teachers with inadequate subject knowledge, teacher absenteeism, low curriculum coverage, inadequate school infrastructure, and minimal parental involvement are still persistent within our schooling system (Bantwini, 2019; Draga, 2017; Maddock & Maroun, 2018; Maarman & Lamont-Mbawuli, 2017; Spaull, 2015). These challenges undoubtedly have negative implications for the overall performance of schools as evident in the next paragraph.

The Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) released the South African TIMSS 2019 results in December 2020. For the purposes of this study, the analysis of only the grade 5 statistics is presented. The results showed that South Africa's grade 5 performance was among the five lowest performing countries. Only 37% of the learners demonstrated that they had acquired basic mathematical knowledge and 28% demonstrated that they had acquired the basic science knowledge (Mullis, Michael, Pierre, Dana & Bethany, 2020). Unfortunately, such results still paint a gloomy picture about the current state of South African primary schooling system and indicate that there is a dire need for a radical transformation in the teaching and learning of mathematics and science in our country. Maarman and Lamont-Mbawuli (2017) and Spaull (2019) posit that provision of resources without improving capacity and strengthening accountability in the various levels of the schooling system becomes a fruitless expenditure and will achieve minimal outputs in terms of improving schools' performance. The DBE (2013) puts education districts at the forefront of ensuring that schools have human, physical, capital and information capacity as well as holding schools accountable for their performance.

1.4 Purpose Statement

The purpose of the study was to gain insight and develop an understanding of how district officials enhance primary schools' accountability for school performance in Umgungundlovu District. The study further explored the reasons behind the ways used to ensure accountability. Furthermore, I hope that the findings that will emanate from this study may assist in closing the treatment disparities between primary and secondary schools by education districts. In line with this purpose, below, I share the research questions that guided this study.

1.5 Research Questions

- What are district officials' understanding of accountability in relation to the schooling sector?
- How do district officials ensure accountability for performance in primary schools?
- What are the factors affecting measures put in place to ensure accountability in primary schools' performance?

1.6 Clarification of Concepts

The concepts presented below are constantly used in the study and therefore I believe that they should be explained to ensure that they are understood as used in this study.

1.6.1 Accountability

Accountability refers to an obligation that an individual; a group of people or an organisation have towards the execution of an activity and being able to justify actions taken or not taken (Schendler, 1999; Pollit, 2003; Whitehead, Keshet, Lombrowski, Domenico & Green, 2007). Maile (2012) further ascertains that accountability is an act of reporting to other people 'voluntarily or compulsory' about what one is doing. Brill et al. (2018, p. 1) categorically define education accountability as "a government mechanism for holding education institutions to account for the delivery of high-quality education." The phenomenon of accountability in education is nonetheless complex, dynamic and varies with different countries (Brill et al., 2018). However, a familiar feature of accountability which is common across the majority of countries' education system is that it is two-folded, namely external and internal. External accountability is vertical, top-down and hierarchal in nature. It entails that schools are accountable to education districts which in turn account to the provincial department of education. The latter is then held accountable by the national department of basic education.

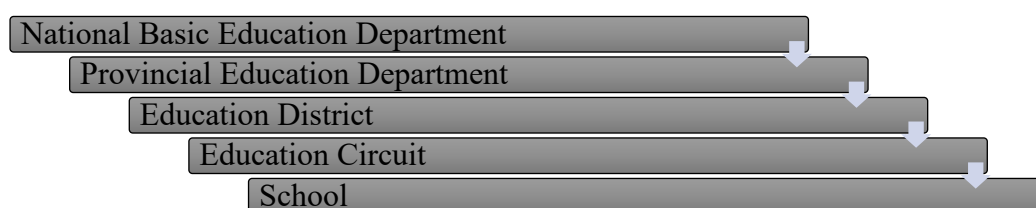
Internal accountability is horizontal, school-based and focuses on interaction between the internal school community (Ehren, Baxter & Paterson, 2018; Myende, Samuel & Pillay, 2018; Poole, 2011). The focus of this study is external accountability measures implemented by education districts on primary schools.

1.6.2 Primary school

In the South African context, the basic education system includes formal schooling from grade R to grade 12. These grades are further grouped into two “bands”, namely the General Education and Training (GET) and the Further Education and Training (FET). The former comprises grade 1 to grade 9 and the latter grades 10 to 12, which is the exit grade from basic education to higher education. Furthermore, the GET band is subdivided into three phases, namely the Foundation Phase, which includes grades 1 to 3, the Intermediate Phase, comprising grades 4 to 6, and the Senior Phase, which includes grades 7 to 9 (Shukla, 2010). These grades, that is, from R to 12, are offered in two categories of schools, namely primary and secondary schools. For the purpose of this study, I will focus on primary schools. A primary school is a school that offers all or a selection of grades from grade R to grade 7. This level of schooling is considered critical for laying a foundation in learners’ literacy and numeracy capabilities (Shukla, 2010).

1.6.3 Education district

In terms of the organisational structure and governance, South Africa’s DBE is demarcated in the following hierarchical order:



DBE (2013, p. 10) defines an education district as “the first-level administrative sub-division of the Provincial Education Department (PED).” Its pivotal role is to provide management and professional support to schools and to help them achieve excellence in learning and teaching (DBE, 2011). In order to effectively fulfil its mandatory role, an education district has various sub directorates, each with its core responsibilities. These sub directorates include, inter alia, the human resource services, human resource management, auxiliary services, circuit management centre, TLS-GET, TLS-FET, governance and management, special needs education services, assessment and examination, planning and infrastructure, teacher

development, national school nutrition programme, finance, education library and information technology services and co-curricular services. All these sub directorates report to the office of the District Director. Employees who work in the various sub directorates within the district are collectively referred to as district officials. This study focuses on the role played by circuit managers and subject advisors under TLS-GET, as these are directly aligned to the mandatory role of the education district of providing management and professional support to schools. Education districts are further divided into education circuits. Education circuits are the second-level administrative sub-division of a PED and are intermediaries between education districts and schools (DBE, 2013). Education circuits are managed by circuit managers.

1.6.4 Circuit manager

A circuit manager as defined in DBE (2013) is the head of a circuit office responsible for executing prescribed functions that have been allocated by the District Director or the Head of the PED. Circuit managers' core responsibility, according to the Personnel Administrative Measures (PAM), as amended by the DBE (2016) is to ensure the effective supervision, management, functionality and performance of schools, in relation to administration, governance and curriculum delivery through professional and educational leadership, guidance and development.

1.6.5 Subject advisor

In this study I will adopt the definition of DBE (2013) which positions subject advisors as office-based teachers working in the district office whose work it is to simplify curriculum implementation, improve the environment and the process of instruction by visiting schools, and consulting with and advising school leadership and teachers on curriculum matters.

1.6.6 School performance, learners' academic performance and academic achievement

The concepts of school performance, academic performance and academic achievement of learners are loosely used interchangeably in the available literature (Kyei, Dodoo, Nyarko & Kyei, 2018; Lamas; 2015; Spaul, 2015). In this study, school performance is defined as a comprehensive and umbrella term for both the academic performance and the academic achievement of learners. It entails the ability of a school to create a culture that drives the school towards the attainment of its goals, which are aligned to the broader vision of the DBE of delivering quality basic education. Narad and Abdullah (2016) define academic performance as the evidence of knowledge acquired which is generally measures through any form of standardised testing either on a continuous basis or an examination. Academic achievement on

the other hand refers to the long-term educational outcomes that a learner has gained from information and skills taught (Arnold, Hodgkins, Kahle, Madhoo & Kewley, 2020; Nabizadeh, Hajian, Sheikan & Rafiei, 2019). Lamas (2015) further asserts that academic performance and academic achievement are generally associated with institutions of higher learning such as universities rather than with basic education. Evidently there is a lot of contestation around these concepts. As a result, thereof in Chapter Two, there is a further critical interrogation of the meanings around these concepts, to justify how I have arrived at the meanings adopted in the study.

1.6.7 Leadership

Several scholars (Bush, 2007; Cartwright, 2002; Daft & Lane, 2011; Harris & Lambert, 2003) define leadership as the leader's ability to influence and direct people's actions, behaviours and attitudes towards the attainment of the desired goals. Schindler (2012) further posits that leadership entails learning together and constructing meaning and knowledge collectively and collaboratively in pursuit of a common vision. In the context of this study, leadership refers to an individual or a group of people who are responsible for guiding, monitoring, supporting and motivating people within the schooling system to work optimally towards the realisation of a specific vision. These people may either be at a school or district level. At a school level, this refers to what is commonly known as the school management team in South Africa (SMT). At a district level, the leadership that is envisaged in this study to strengthen schools' accountability for their performance are circuit managers and subject advisors.

1.6.8 School management team

The SMT comprises the school principal, the deputy principal(s) and departmental heads, as outlined in Section 4 of the Employment of Educators Act (RSA, 1998). The size of the SMT is prescribed in the Post Provisioning Norm (PPN) of the school, which is determined by the total number of learners enrolled in the school in a particular year. The SMT's core responsibility is 'to play a leading role in as far as giving guidance, advice, support, help and leadership to the entire management needs of the school' (Elias, Dinah, Tome, Sizakele & Soane, 2014, p. 369).

1.7 Organisation of the Report

This study is organised and presented in six chapters. Below is a brief outline of what each chapter tackles.

1.7.1 Chapter One

Chapter One has provided an overview of the whole study. It began with an introduction which outlined the purposed of the study. The introduction is preceded by the background and purpose. Subsequently, the purpose statement and the research questions are presented. Key concepts to this study are also clarified.

1.7.2 Chapter Two

Chapter Two provides a detailed literature review. This chapter presents a critical overview of the current national, continental and international debates and discussions about enhancing accountability in education in general and with primary schools in particular. The latter part of this chapter explains the theoretical framework that underpins this study.

1.7.3 Chapter Three

Chapter Three presents the research design and methodology upon which the study is grinded. It provides an in-depth explanation of the research paradigm and research approach employed in the study. Moreover, research participants, sampling technique, data generation method and data analysis strategy used are explained in detail.

1.7.4 Chapter Four

In this chapter, a descriptive meaning and analysis of data generated is presented. This is done thematically and corroborated by verbatim quotes from the participants.

1.7.5 Chapter Five

Chapter Five of this report presents the data generated its analysis and findings of the study. It contains detailed discussions that ensued in the field during interactions with participants and document analysis process.

1.7.6 Chapter Six

Chapter Six concludes the study by providing a summary of the study and the findings based on the research questions. Furthermore, it tables the recommendations for practice and future studies on the phenomenon of accountability as it relates to the schooling sector. Finally, a brief comment on the study is presented.

1.8 Chapter Summary

This chapter presented the overall positioning of this study. The introduction explained briefly what the study aims to achieve. This was followed by the background and rationale, which tabled the current nature and practices within the South African basic education with regards to accountability. Here I presented the current state of primary education in South Africa. In addition, a comparison was made of the performance of learners in South African primary schools with that of their peers in other African countries in several standardised assessment tasks. In the problem statement, I gave an account of the current practices with respect to accountability in education in South Africa and I highlight that the major focus is on secondary schools and specifically on grade 12. The research aim and questions were also stated, which will serve as the compass of the study. Finally, a brief outline of how this report will be organised was then given. Chapter Two discusses the related continental and international literature on the study and the theoretical framework that underpins this study.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

The preceding chapter gave an in-depth outline of what the study aims to achieve. Chapter 2 discusses both international and national literature that is of relevance to this study. The purpose of this will be to critically analyse the available literature on the role of education districts in enhancing accountability for performance in primary schools. The first part of the chapter focuses on the critical analysis and discussions of the key concepts of the study, which are: school leadership, accountability and role of education districts in ensuring accountability in primary schools' performance. This is followed by a discussion on the factors that affect education districts' endeavours of strengthening accountability in primary schools. Thereafter, the issues that emerged from literature are tabled. The final section of the chapter unpacks the relevance of systems thinking as a theoretical framework underpinning the study.

2.2 Critical Analysis and Discussion of the Key Concepts

In this section, the intention is to present detailed definitions and discussion on the key concepts of the study as briefly introduced in Chapter One. These are school performance, academic performance and academic achievement, accountability and school leadership and management.

2.2.1 School performance, learners' academic performance and academic achievement

Various scholars use these concepts interchangeably, but do they mean the same thing, or are they totally different? Myende (2014) argues that the two concepts are distinct however acknowledges that they are inextricable. "Academic performance is a collective set of factors that drive learners' performance towards a better academic achievement" (Myende, 2014, p. 16). Three inferences can be drawn from this conceptualisation. First, that if the factors that influence a learner's academic performance are favourable, their academic achievement will be improved and vice versa. Secondly, that academic performance is more short-term and academic achievement is a more long-term product. Lastly, that academic performance is a process whilst academic achievement is the end-product of academic performance. Expressing similar views, Yusuf (2002) concurs that there is eminent correlation between the two concepts and defines academic performance as observable educational outcomes that are measurable on

a continuous or short-term basis while academic achievement measures acquired knowledge through standardised tests at the end of an educational programme (long-term).

Conversely, Gbollie and Keamu (2017) and Mason (2017) define academic performance and academic achievement as one concept. These scholars describe academic performance or academic achievement as making up a complex phenomenon that entails how well a learner meets the standards set out by the school itself and local or even international authorities. This performance is generally measured by the score attained by a learner in assessments like standardised tests, performance assessments and portfolio assessments administered (Gbollie, 2017; Mason, 2017; Santrock, 2006; Weerakkody, 2017). Attesting further to the contestation that exist between these concepts, Xie and Zhang (2020) argue that overall school performance is judged on the learners' academic performance and academic achievement in assessment scores they have attained, which are largely influenced by the socioeconomic status of a school. The study acknowledges the correlations and overlaps that exist between these concepts, however the focus of this study is on accountability for the school performance which is perceived as a broad term relating to the efficiency of a school in using all available resources to deliver quality education, which, amongst other things, is measured through their learners' performance.

2.2.2 Accountability

The concept of accountability has evolved beyond its bookkeeping origins and has become a rather common concept symbolising good governance in both public and private sectors (Bovens, Schillemans & Goodin, 2014). Accountability in education is a comprehensive and multifaceted concept, ranging from using political processes to assure democratic accountability, introducing market-based reforms to increase accountability to parents and children, or developing peer-based accountability systems to increase the professional accountability of teachers (Hanushek, Machin & Woessmann, 2011). Bovens et al. (2014) perceive accountability as a process that involves an interaction in a hierarchical relationship between those who have power and those who are delegated authority and responsibility. Similarly, Komba (2017), Maile (2002) and Spaul (2015) assert that accountability in education refers to the obligation required of those assigned with authority to lead and manage organisations, which in this case denotes schools; to report, explain and justify the occurrence of educational activities within their institutions. These postulations seem to suggest that

accountability embodies three essential elements, which are enforcement, monitoring and answerability.

Enforcement is mainly concerned with ensuring that the rule of law is observed in schools incessantly. Monitoring involves the execution of power in a transparent manner where all key stakeholders jointly account for their actions. This should not only be a top-down exercise, but it must also be done amongst peers in order to yield positive outcomes, lest it be perceived as ‘policing’. Answerability, on the other hand, entails gathering facts and collecting evidence for purposes of reporting back and responding in follow-up discussions. In this instance, the school leadership responds with information on the actions taken to improve the quality of teaching and learning in their schools (Anderson, 2005; Maile, 2002; Usman, 2016). In education, therefore, schools are accountable for their learners’ learning to the higher-level authority, which is the district office.

For this study, the focus will be on accountability as the process of holding schools responsible for their overall performance. As mentioned earlier, performance is indicated, amongst other things, by the quality of their products, which entails learners’ knowledge, skills and overall academic performance (Brill et al., 2018). Two critical questions that then ensue are, who is accountable for school performance and to whom are they accountable? There appears to be a consensus among various scholars that validates the link between the school leadership and learners’ academic performance (Ates & Artuner, 2013; Bhengu & Mkhize, 2013; Itumeleng & Oupa, 2014; Tigere, 2016; Van der Merwe, 2014).

2.2.3 School Leadership and Management

The concept of leadership has been vastly researched in different contexts. There is nonetheless no universal definition of it but rather some striking converging perspectives. Bush and Glover (2016), Gurr (2014), Leithwood, Patten and Jantzi (2010) and Reed, Klutts and Mattingly (2019) define school leadership as the ability to influence, inspire and motivate others based on shared values, beliefs, norms and goals directed to the attainment of a school vision. This commonly shared perspective about leadership implies certain assumptions. One, that leadership may be exercised by individuals as well as groups, two, that leadership is more about influence than authority and, lastly, that whoever is exercising influence is doing so for specific intentions. Boateng (2012) and Emmanouil, Osia and Paraskevi-loanna (2014) perceive leadership as the efficient application of organisational human, financial and physical resources in a manner that will yield maximum outputs for an organisation. In a school, therefore, this

translates into proper staffing, responsible use of finances and maximum utilisation of the school infrastructure in order to improve the overall school performance. Additionally, and perhaps the simplest definition of school leadership, is that it is the ability to get things done with and through collaboration with other people within the school system (Shamaki, 2015). Literature indicates that closely linked to the concept of leadership is the concept of -management. Some scholars view these concepts as conjoined and overlapping while others argue that the two are dissimilar.

Bohoris and Vorria (2012); Bush (2007); Christie (2010); Kotterman (2006) and Simkins (2012) argue that leadership and management are often used interchangeably because there is a great overlap between them. They define leadership as the ability of an individual or a group of individuals to inspire trust and inculcate commitment, motivation and creativity among people with the purpose of achieving a common vision. They also define management as a process of planning, organising and controlling organisational resources in order to achieve certain goals and objectives. Furthermore, they assert that both leadership and management are essential attributes of a well-balanced and a successful school; that is, one cannot exercise leadership solely without infusing an element of management. This notion is buttressed by Mpungose and Ngwenya (2017) who posit that leadership encompasses management.

Contrary to the above notions, Connolly, James and Fertig (2017) assert that leadership and management are distinct. They view leadership as the act of influencing others to achieve organisational goals and view management as the execution of a delegated responsibility through exerting power and authority on others who are generally on the lower levels of an organisational structure. Therefore, according to them, leadership is more people-oriented and management more task-oriented. These contestations around leadership and management prompt a critical question as to which is more important for the ultimate success of a school. The latter part of the preceding paragraph serves to respond to this question.

Moreover, as schools operate in complex socio-economic environments, contemporary researchers contend that successful schools display leadership traits rather than management ones. Leadership from this perspective is seen as a dynamic, situation-based and social process that is embedded in culture and context (Caldwell, 2013; Hallinger, 2009; Hoadley & Galant, 2015; Kowalczyk & Jakubczak, 2014; Mpungose & Ngwenya, 2017). I concur with the perspective that leadership and management are intertwined and that both are essential for the

overall success of a school. The succeeding section then explores the role of school leadership in accountability.

2.3 School Leadership and Accountability

As alluded in the previous chapter, school leadership in this study denotes the SMT, which is entrusted with a critical responsibility of ensuring that quality teaching and learning takes place in a school (RSA, 1998). To attain this, the SMT's areas of focus include managing staff, planning the curriculum and assessing the performance of learners and teachers. One can extrapolate from the SMT's core responsibility a key point that is supported by educational research, that the success or failure of a school, which is mainly measurable through learners' academic performance, lies squarely on the shoulders of the SMT (Bush, 2007; Duma, 2013; Mampane & Bouwer, 2011; Mpungose & Ngwenya, 2017; October, 2014). Walker and Ko's (2011) comparative study in Hong Kong on the role of school leadership in enhancing learner performance in an era of accountability and Cranston's (2013) analysis of the similar phenomenon in New Zealand, Australia and the United Kingdom respectively summarised key dimensions as essential practices that school leadership should implement in their endeavour to attain the school vision. These include providing strategic direction within policy environment, promoting professional development for themselves and others and leading and managing quality of teaching and learning, and I now give each specific attention.

2.3.1 Providing strategic direction within policy environment

Effective school leadership must be vision-driven (Cranston 2013). They must stimulate commitment and passion, not only within themselves as leaders, but also among the entire school community, that is, teachers and learners. Moreover, Walker and Ko (2011); Van Der Voort and Wood (2014) posit that school leadership need to strategically integrate and enable adherence to relevant aspects of policy from the social, educational and political environment into their planning for school and learner improvement. To achieve this requires school leadership to understand the broader purpose of education, that the learning and development of learners is multi-faceted and is not merely defined by the demands of the externally imposed tests, but also encompasses the development of a critically and socially enlightened citizen who can contribute meaningfully and responsibly to the community and the society at large. Echoing similar sentiments, Wyk and Marumoloa's (2012) study conducted with nine SMT members from three different schools in the North West Province of South Africa on the role

and functioning of SMTs, found that the SMTs fully understand that they are accountable for ensuring that teaching and learning in schools takes place within the stipulated legislative framework.

2.3.2 Promoting professional development for themselves and others

Professional development entails activities and processes that teachers continuously engage in to enhance their professional knowledge, skills and attitudes which in turn improve learners' performance (Imants & Van der Wal, 2020). Continuing professional development is even more critical in the current epoch as schools operate in complex, dynamic and turbulent environments (Mlachila & Moeletsi, 2019; Steyn, 2013). Walker and Ko (2011) contend that the onus is on the school leadership to promote and create a conducive environment for continuing professional and career development for themselves and other teachers. The recent literature trends reveal that one of the effective strategies of ensuring that continuing professional development for both school leadership and teachers at large becomes a reality is the establishment of Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) within a school (Hord, 2004; Gray, Kruse & Tarter, 2016; Jita & Mokhele, 2014; Nkengbeza & Heystek, 2017). Such communities ensure that school leaders as well as teachers keep abreast of educational developments and trends, create opportunities for collaborative learning, foster the sharing of recent and relevant professional knowledge and enhance teachers' inclusive practices aimed at accommodating diversity in learners' needs. The envisaged ultimate purpose of PLCs is to improve school leadership practices and teachers' content knowledge and pedagogical approaches, which result in improved learner performance. Wyk and Marumoloa's (2012) study found that the SMTs organised regular workshops which were facilitated by themselves or by bringing in the expertise of the outsiders like subject advisors and university lecturers to capacitate teachers on relevant and effective pedagogical approaches, techniques and knowledge content in order to enhance schools' performance.

2.3.3 Leading and managing quality of teaching and learning

In their endeavour to fulfil their responsibility, the SMTs must first ascertain adherence to and implementation of various provincial and national policies which will subsequently drive the school towards the vision and mission of the department (Van Der Voort & Wood, 2014). Secondly, the SMTs continuously analyse the overall school strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (Van Der Voort & Wood, 2014). Mpungose and Ngwenya (2017) recommend that this should be a collective exercise, involving the entire school community, that is both the teaching and non-teaching personnel as well the Representative Council for

Learners (only in secondary schools). This exercise, which is normally referred to as a School Self-Evaluation (SSE), eventuates into a school improvement plan. A school improvement plan outlines categorically the strategies the school will devise and implement to address current challenges to ensure that the culture of teaching and learning is continually maintained, which will ultimately drive the school to improved academic performance of learners (Van Der Voort & Wood, 2016). The school leadership's ability to implement these mechanisms will enhance their accountability capacity to external authority. The following section unpacks the concept of accountability as it relates to the education sector.

2.4 Understanding Accountability in Education

Education, as with all social services, is not immune from the 'age of accountability' in which the world is currently operating. Smith and Benavot (2019) attribute the emergence and spread of accountability in education globally to five political and social trends. These trends are the massification, marketisation, decentralisation, standardisation and increased documentation of education. These trends reflect the increased importance of education in societies and to the world at large. Most countries adopt a mix of mechanisms for holding schools accountable. These include performance accountability, regulatory accountability and market accountability (Rosenkvist, 2010).

2.4.1 Performance accountability

Performance accountability, which is a popular mechanism for countries like the United States of America, England, Australia and most African countries, is product-driven rather than process-driven. Its main objective is to hold schools accountable for the academic performance of their learners based on either national or international standardised assessments (Brill, Grayson, Kuhn & O'Donnell, 2018; Rosenkvist, 2010; Skedsmo & Huber, 2019).

2.4.2 Regulatory accountability

Regulatory or bureaucratic accountability is mainly concerned with compliance and adherence to relevant policies, laws and regulations governing education. Schools in this regard are required to complete various reports and forms which must be submitted to the higher-level authority, such as the district office or even the provincial office (Rosenkvist, 2010; Skedsmo & Huber, 2019). Spaul (2015) contends that perhaps strengthening this form of accountability in South Africa could assist in curbing teacher absenteeism and in monitoring Learning and Teaching Support Material (LTSM) procurement and delivery. Teacher absenteeism was

reported in the National Education and Evaluation Development Unit (NEEDU) and the National Planning Commission (NPC) as one of the three major problems eminent in the South African schooling system, with the other two being low curriculum coverage and insufficient information for accountability (NPC, 2012; NEEDU, 2013). Spaul (2015) however avows that bureaucratic accountability is not effective in its ability to measure whether effective teaching and learning are happening in classrooms.

2.4.3 Market accountability

Market accountability, on the other hand, perceives schools as ‘business entities’ and learners as consumers. This form of accountability focuses on the ability of the school to attract and retain learners, which in turn influences the amount and sustainability of funding the school receives from the government (Rosenkvist, 2010; Skedsmo & Huber, 2019). The school’s capacity to fulfil this form of accountability is based on learners’ results.

Proponents of performance, regulatory and market as mechanisms of accountability argue that there are critical benefits which can be yielded from their application. Brill et al. (2018), Figlio and Loeb (2011) and Gill, Lerner and Moesky (2016) postulate that performance and regulatory accountability provide the state (policy makers) and the general public with valuable information regarding schools’ performance in comparison to each other as well as to external performance standards, which they suggest could drive towards improvement in schools’ outcomes. Moreover, they argue that such accountability mechanisms allow policy makers to identify gaps and opportunities in students’ learning as well as teachers’ knowledge and pedagogical skills and present a platform for those with political power and authority to reallocate resources across schools (Hutchinson, Dunford & Treadaway, 2016). However, these mechanisms of accountability are viewed as ‘top-down’ and have negative connotations attached to them.

Skedsmo and Huber (2019) posit that countries that put more emphasis on performance and regulatory accountability are at a risk of attaining negative repercussions of increased accountability pressures exerted in schools resulting in the narrowing of the curriculum, as teachers only focus on drilling and teaching learners only what is to be assessed. Klenowsk and Wyatt-Smith (2012) and Møller (2009) further argue that the focus on test scores neglects the other critical objective and responsibility of the schooling system in general, which is the preparation and development of a well-rounded learner who can participate both emotionally and socially in a wider and democratic society. Furthermore, performance accountability tends

to assume that schools are the same in terms of basic educational tools and resources such as qualified and experienced teachers, high-quality instructional materials, facilities and general safe school conditions (Elmore, 2004; Klenowsk & Wyatt-Smith, 2012; Møller, 2009). Moreover, such accountability mechanisms are viewed as counterproductive and may subsequently hamper teachers' morale. As a result, thereof, there is a shift in the recent empirical studies (Cranston, 2013; Gill, Lerner & Meosky, 2016; Rosenkvist, 2010; Skedsmo & Huber, 2019) towards advocating what is referred to as professional accountability, which places learners' needs at the centre of education.

2.4.4 Professional accountability

Professional accountability is a distinct form of accountability that focuses on giving teachers more support, promotes collaboration and training through observations and assistance by supervisors, and encompasses instructional coaching, with the ultimate goal of giving professional reviews and evaluation (Brill et al., 2018; Gill, Lerner & Meosky, 2016; Rosenkvist, 2010; Skedsmo & Huber, 2019). Furthermore, this form of accountability implies that teachers acquire and apply the relevant knowledge, values, attitudes and skills required for effective and improved work practices (Møller, 2009). Such accountability mechanism is more school-led and grants schools greater autonomy to achieve education outcomes, mainly in the attainment of quality learner performance (Brill et al., 2018). In addition, Gill and Lerner (2017) perceive professional accountability as an effective tool for school improvement, as it incorporates giving teachers valuable feedback that will inform and improve their work practices. Professional accountability is thus learner-oriented and knowledge-based. There is however consensus that, in South Africa, there a severe lack of professional accountability and that more needs to be done to promote it (NPC, 2012; NEEDU, 2013; Spaul, 2015). Notwithstanding the undisputable benefits of this recent trend of accountability, there are notable limitations to it that literature has captured.

A large-scale quantitative study carried out in England and Wales in 2013, however revealed that there was a notable decline in education standards after the abolishment of school league tables, where schools were ranked and quantified based on their performance in standards assessments (Burgess, Wilson & Worth, 2013). Likewise, Klenowsk and Wyatt-Smith (2012) echoed similar sentiments after the decline in the focus of performance accountability and the promotion of professional accountability in Australian schools. Maile (2002) cautions that ineffective implementation of professional accountability could be one of the factors that lead

to the decline of the culture of teaching and learning due to the autonomy that schools are granted.

2.5 The Nature of Accountability in Education

Literature reveals that in most countries, including the United Kingdom, the United States of America, Asian and African countries, accountability of schools is mainly measured through learners' performance in the national and international assessment tests (Anderson, 2005; Hanushek et al., 2011; Komba, 2017; Verger & Parcerisa, 2017). South Africa likewise participates in several local and international tests, which are then used to rank and quantify schools' performance based on learners' results (Spaull, 2013). Locally the Annual National Assessment, used for the GET band and the National Senior Certificate for the FET band, is the only national examination administered currently in South African schooling system.

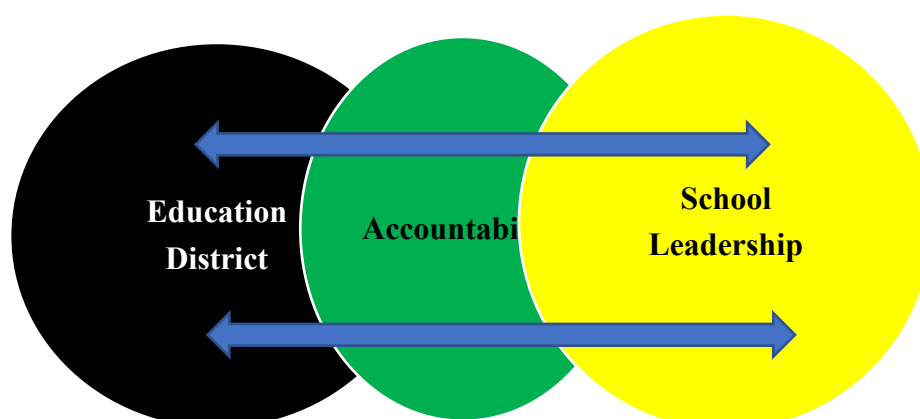
Generally, accountability in education is associated with certain benefits (Brill et al., 2018; Smith & Bonavot, 2019; Usman, 2016). It is perceived to enhance service delivery and control indiscipline in schools and subsequently improves the overall efficiency of the education system. Furthermore, accountability ensures that the school system is responsive, productive, competitive and accelerates attainment of educational goals using available resources. Lastly, a well-planned accountability exercise enriches teaching and learning in schools thereby leading to improved school performance (Komba, 2017). This is attainable when there are supportive structures in place within the education system, which include advisory services, sufficient financial resources and properly designed teacher development programmes. Usman (2016) argues that, when school leaders are held accountable for their schools' performance, it prompts them to adopt leadership practices that promote effective teaching and learning in their schools.

Sahlberg (2010) refutes the notion of the effectiveness and relevance of school accountability through the mere use of test scores in the epoch of knowledge society. The argument put forward is that the challenges of the 21st century demand learners who possess critical thinking and problem-solving skills, communication and collaboration abilities. These cannot be attained from mere standardised tests that focus on a narrow set of outcomes. Recent education scholars and reform advocates are thus calling for strengthening of internal school accountability and reciprocal accountability (Bae, 2018; Elmore, 2010; Jimenez & Sargrad, 2017; Smith & Benavot, 2019).

Internal school accountability entails putting coherent systems in place where teachers and school leaders know what they are accountable for, how they give account for their work and what the consequences for non-compliance are (Bae, 2018; Elmore, 2010). This means there is clear alignment between responsibility, accountability and authority within the school. Elmore (2010) proposes the following as mechanisms for effective internal accountability: collaborative teaching and learning, teachers sharing their practices through classroom observations, regular team meetings by teachers to examine and discuss learners' work, teaching and assessment methods and curriculum implementation (applying the inquiry-based approach) and collectively designed performance and development plans. Strengthening internal school accountability ameliorates a school's organisational ability to respond effectively to external accountability policies. Moreover, such accountability promotes ongoing support to the development of teachers and school leaders, demonstrates trust in their professionalism and grants schools greater leeway in attaining the best outcomes from learners (Bae, 2018; Elmore, 2010; Jimenez & Sargrad, 2017; Smith & Benavot, 2019).

Reciprocal accountability is a concept that was developed by Richard Elmore. Reciprocal accountability is a 'statement of clear intent by the service provider and recipient of the intended services and evaluation of the effectiveness and efficiency of the intent of both parties' (Elmore, 2000 p. 21). Simply stated, reciprocal accountability means that, if district leaders are going to hold principals accountable for something, in this case schools' performance, those leaders have an equal responsibility of ensuring that teachers and principals know what to do and how they are expected to do it (Elmore, 2005). This concept is premised on the principle that accountability and support are inseparable. Furthermore, it practically demands that educational accountability must go parallel with the organisational capacity-building that gives school leaders and teachers the expertise and support they need to attain improved school performance (Mavuso, 2013). In line with this concept, the next section discusses the role of education districts in enhancing schools' accountability for their performance.

Figure 2.1 Reciprocal accounting (adapted from Elmore 2000)



2.6 The Role of Education Districts

Education districts, due to their proximity to schools, are perceived as key to the day-to-day delivery of quality education services, both administrative and professional and pivotal in driving educational reform initiatives (Bantwini, 2015, Leithwood, 2010). Furthermore, global studies suggest that districts can be ‘catalysts and critical supports’ for the development and learning improvement in schools (Bates, 2013; Glewwe & Muralidharan, 2015; Pritchett, 2015). However, it is worth noting that firstly, previously, the role of education districts has been neglected and not clearly defined and emphasised, since there was no legislative framework clearly addressing their mandatory roles and responsibilities, mainly in the South African context (Mphahlele, 1999, Narsee, 2006). Secondly, much of the literature work on education districts stems from experiences of the USA and other developed countries, where district offices are fully equipped and well-resourced to render the necessary support to schools (McLennan & Orkin, 2016). Recent literature studies thus suggest that there is a great demand for education districts to shift from their traditional, authoritarian top-down roles, which mainly revolved around inspection, supervision, control, monitoring and evaluation of schools, to a horizontal contemporary role that focuses on providing support to schools (Bantwini & Moorosi, 2018; Mavuso, 2013; Prew, 2012). This suggestion is echoed by the decentralisation of education in terms of decision-making, which is embedded in the South African Schools Act (RSA, 1996) and in the Department of Basic Education’s Policy on the Organisation, Roles and Responsibilities of Education Districts (DBE, 2013).

In the South African context, the importance of education districts support to schools has been studied and supported immensely by several scholars (Bantwini & Diko, 2011; Bottoms & Schmidt-Davis, 2010; Leithwood, 2010; Mavuso, 2013; Moorosi & Bantwini, 2016;

Thompson & France, 2015). Collectively, these scholars contend that on-going, needs-based and coordinated support by district offices improves teaching and learning in schools. Mavuso (2013) defines district support as ‘concerted and planned efforts’ by officials to assist schools in terms of planning learning activities, using appropriate teaching methods and policy-aligned assessment techniques. Such support is aimed at enhancing learner performance. Moreover, Leithwood and Azah (2017) and McLennan, Muller, Orkin and Robertson (2017) affirm that district support to schools is even more critical in the current standards and accountability-driven context. The next section will discuss the nature of support that is envisaged from districts to schools in the quest to achieve excellence in teaching and learning. These include support regarding the provision of resources, administrative and professional support and exercising oversight and accountability.

2.6.1 Support regarding the provision of resources

Delivery of quality education by schools that is essential for the development of different skills, knowledge, attitudes and values in a learner and that further boosts learner motivation and creativity, is significantly influenced by the availability of resources that facilitate holistic teaching and learning (Bušljeta, 2013; Okongo, Ngao, Rop & Wesonga, 2015). These resources vary from human resources and infrastructure to various other learning and teaching support materials (LTSM).

In a study conducted with eighteen primary and secondary schools’ principals from five different districts in the Eastern Cape Province in South Africa, Bantwini and Moorosi (2018) revealed that 89% of the total sample were dissatisfied with the kind of support their schools were receiving from their respective districts. The common dissatisfaction expressed by participants was around the non-provision of adequate human resources, which affect the delivery of instruction on a daily basis. The short supply of teachers to schools resulted in the use of multi-grade teaching and multi-subject teaching in primary schools and prolonged non-teaching of certain subjects in secondary schools. Multi-grading is associated with a number of limitations that are in contrast with the delivery of quality education, such as minimal curriculum coverage, large class sizes, teaching of subjects not trained to teach, use of inappropriate teaching materials – for example, textbooks used only meet the needs of mono-grade teaching (Bantwini & Letseka, 2016; Du Plessis & Subramanien, 2014; Joyce, 2014). Joyce (2014), however, contends that multi-grade teaching is not only doom and gloom, that with proper in-service training workshops and constant support by the district, teachers would

be in a better position to mitigate the challenges associated with multi-grading. This is however not the case currently.

2.6.2 Provision of administrative and professional support

Several education researchers and policy makers, both at international and national levels, perceive districts as impetus and critical supports for learning improvement in schools (Bantwini & Moorosi, 2018; DBE, 2013; Fullan & Quinn, 2015; McLennan et al., 2017; Prew, 2012). In their analysis and conclusions, circuit managers and subject advisors are viewed as significant levers to enable districts to provide administrative and professional support to schools. This conclusion is affirmed in Section 4 of the Employment of Educators Act, as amended in 2016 (RSA, 1998). Circuit managers and subject advisors are required to facilitate curriculum implementation and improve the environment and process of learning and teaching, by conducting regular visits to schools, holding discussions and advising SMTs and teachers on curriculum matters (McLennan et al., 2017). Van Der Voort and Wood (2016) conducted a study that developed an action-learning model to assist circuit teams to support schools towards whole-school development. This study was conducted in the Cape Town metropolitan area with four under-performing secondary schools. Through the study, it was demonstrated how constant and effective administrative and professional support from circuit managers contributed significantly towards improving schools' performance.

McLennan et al. (2017) postulate that effective district support to schools is hindered by an 'institutional structure as well as bureaucratic, compliance-driven working cultures' that result in CMs and SAs working in silos rather than in complementarity and collaboration with one another. Jet (2014), Moorosi and Bantwini (2016) and Prew (2012) further argue that districts' capacity to provide administrative and professional curriculum management and support is impeded by the lack of resources, both human and financial at a district level. This challenge was buttressed in a study by Bantwini and Moorosi (2018), where schools complained about lack of district officials' visibility in schools to capacitate and assist newly appointed SMT members, as well as to support teachers in dealing with curriculum changes. This was attributed to the shortage of relevant district support personnel, mainly the circuit managers and subject advisors who are mandated to assist schools with enhancing their leadership responsibility and strengthen teachers' content knowledge for effective curriculum delivery. Perhaps this is the rationale for enlisting Goal 27 as one of the five priority goals for the DBE in the Action Plan 2019: Towards the Realisation of Schooling 2030, to address this challenge. It clearly states that the DBE is aiming to improve the frequency and the quality of the monitoring and support

services provided to schools by district offices, partly through better use of e-Education (DBE, 2015). Coupled with the district support role and of relevance to this study, is the oversight and accountability role of the district office.

2.6.3 Exercising oversight and accountability

The concept of accountability has been deeply discussed in the beginning of this chapter. Thus, in following the hierarchical interaction nature of accountability, schools are accountable to districts as intermediaries between the government and schools. Section 20.3.1 of the DBE's Policy on the Organisation, Roles and Responsibilities of Education Districts (DBE, 2013), states that the education districts are responsible for holding principals of schools in districts accountable for the performance of their schools. There is consensus in the recent education accountability literature that the mechanisms used by districts to hold schools accountable need to shift from the traditional approach of reporting and accounting on policy implementation and learners' results, with the aim of placing consequences such as rewards for high performance and sanctions for poor performance, to a more supportive and capacity building approach (Elmore, 2004; 2006; Figlio & Loeb, 2011; Jenkins, Lock & Lock, 2018; Jimenez & Sargrad, 2017; Spaul, 2015).

In the United States of America, a new law was enacted, called the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) of 2015, as a mechanism of strengthening school accountability by moving beyond focusing on test scores and graduation rates to putting emphasis on the importance of a more holistic approach to accountability (Jimenez & Sargrad, 2017). The ESSA distributes responsibility for improvement of learner performance among the state, districts and schools, rather than focussing entirely on school-level actions. Moreover, the Act provides more flexibility for school improvement, requiring evidence-based intervention strategies that are context-driven. Spaul (2015) concedes that there is an extensive lack of accountability for learners' academic performance in South Africa, which is arguably one of the major impediments to attaining quality education, especially for the less advantaged learners. He attributes such lack of accountability not only to schools but to all key stakeholders in education that is, across all education levels – district, provincial and national – as well as to parents. Spaul's (2015) analysis and conclusion of the current state of education in South Africa points to the demand to align what he calls two scenarios that are significant for enhancing accountability in order to improve learners' academic performance. The two scenarios are increasing accountability without increasing support and increasing support without increasing accountability. Increasing accountability in order to improve educational outcomes requires

capacity building and support in the areas of content knowledge of teachers, the administrative capacity of school leadership and the logistical capacity of the district officials. Chuta (2019) also attests that accountability and support are intertwined, that, prior to holding schools accountable, the necessary management and professional support should be discharged by the districts to schools. The next section deliberates on factors that constrain and enhance accountability, specifically in primary schools.

2.7 Factors Affecting Efforts at Enhancing Accountability

It is apparent from earlier discussions in this chapter that effective accountability in education is critical for the overall improvement of teaching and learning to take place in schools. However, strengthening effective accountability in South African primary schools is hindered by numerous factors. These can be summed up as, first, prioritisation of secondary schools over primary schools by education districts results in minimal support to primary schools. Bantwini (2018) posits that secondary schools benefit more from district support in terms of the provision of resources such as teaching and learning support materials, infrastructure and personnel than do primary schools. Similarly, Nkambule and Amsterdam (2018) argue that there is a systemic disregard of primary schools in South Africa, which unfortunately has grave repercussions for our schooling system. As presented in the previous chapter, grade 12 results are the yardstick of the South African schooling system, hence the over-concentration of resources in secondary schools. This raises a series of critical questions that the country must ponder on: is this the most effective strategy for realising the vision of quality basic education as envisaged by DBE; what lessons can be drawn from countries that are regarded as having the best schooling systems?

Secondly, there are no tangible consequences for non-performance in primary schools, stemming from the fact that there is no reliable tool to measure the quality of teaching and learning in primary schools since the discontinuation of the Annual National Assessments (McLennan et al., 2017; Spaull, 2015). These were standardised national assessments for literacy and numeracy in the foundation phase and languages and mathematics in the intermediate and senior phase respectively. Fundamentally, these assessments were designed to enable a systematic evaluation of education performance in order to enhance learner achievement (DBE, 2011). Likewise, Brown and Hattie (2012), Hanushek et al. (2011), Komba (2017) and Verger and Parcerisa (2017) contend that standardised assessments are useful for

improving the quality of teaching and learning, benchmarking and strengthening of accountability in schools.

Thirdly, Spaul (2014) also highlights the strong influence of teacher unions as one of the factors hindering implementation of accountability mechanisms imposed by upper structures on schools. In the same vein, although Mafisa (2017) and Msila (2014a) acknowledge the positive contributions and strides that teacher unions have made towards the development of progressive educational policies and in ensuring quality education, they do recognise that teacher unions have an enormous power in influencing teachers to either comply with or defy directives and policy implementation programmes from the DBE. This view is echoed in the findings of the study by Elias et al. (2014) study that revealed that teacher union's influence on their members resulted in teachers refusing to participate in any professional growth and development programmes scheduled during weekends or after working hours.

Furthermore, another factor crippling education districts' efforts at strengthening accountability in schools is the ratio between available district personnel responsible for supporting, monitoring and enforcing accountability in schools and the total number of schools in each district. Bantwini and Diko (2011) found that district officials in the form of circuit managers and subject advisors had a large number of schools under their supervision and, as a result, they felt overloaded and unable to provide equitable and constant support to schools. Relatedly, Bantwini's (2019) study revealed an overwhelming shortage of human resources both at the school and district level, due to the long delays in filling vacant positions, which has compromised the delivery of quality education and subsequently the strengthening of accountability.

Ehren et al. (2018) further argue that there is a general lack of trust in the South African education system that hinders constructive collaboration between key stakeholders and, as a result, causes schools, referring to teachers and school leadership, to be sceptical of any kind of accountability intervention. Lack of human capital, social capital and technical capital, that is financial and material resources, also inhibit teachers, schools and districts leadership from acting decisively on accountability measures (Ehren et al., 2018; Spaul, 2015).

Purportedly, literature currently reveals more constraining factors for effective accountability than enhancing factors. Smith and Benavot (2019), however, argue that enforcing a structured democratic voice is key to enhancing effective accountability in education. This entails actively engaging all stakeholders, including parents and the community at large, in critical decisions

pertaining to education. Such consultations result in shared responsibility, sound relations and trust among stakeholders that improves the education system as a whole. I am of the view that this study will further contribute towards discovering more factors that strengthen accountability, especially in primary schools. The next section will table a summary of issues that emerge from the literature.

2.8 Emerging Issues: Lessons from the Review of Literature

Firstly, from the literature addressing the role of school leadership, the following issues emerged:

- South African literature focuses mainly on accountability of secondary schools' leadership for learners' academic performance based on the NSC examination results. This further strengthens the argument of the unfortunate neglect of primary schooling in our country (Hoadley, 2012; Mpungose and Ngwenya, 2017; Nkambule & Amsterdam, 2018; Van Der Voort, 2016).
- The focus on school leadership is generally on one person, that is, the school principal, rather than on the collective, which is the entire SMT (Rice, 2010).
- There needs to be a shift from school leadership being more concerned with external accountability to the school leadership that is grounded in notions of professional accountability or responsibility. This shift will enable school leaders to strike a balance between externally mandated requirements of accountabilities and internal improvement accountabilities that can make a substantial difference in learners' academic performance (Cranston, 2013).

Secondly, on the review of literature on accountability in education, the following issues emerged:

- Accountability in education globally is mainly based on the performance of learners either on national or international assessment tasks such as TIMMS and SACMEQ. In South Africa, the NSC examination which is administered in grade 12 serves as the sole mechanism currently used to hold schools accountable for learners' academic performance. Literature reveals that using such accountability mechanism disregards the impact of socio-economic factors such as school resources, poverty, educational background of parents and their income levels, pregnancy and other social ills, whilst there is incontrovertible evidence from education literature that links learners' results with

their socio-economic status (Atarupane, Glewwe & Wisniewski, 2013; Bayat, Louw & Rena, 2014; Ndebele, 2015; Thomson, 2018; Timaeus, Simelane & Letsoalo, 2013). Without getting deeper into the discussion around the impact of socio-economic status on learners' results, the consensus from empirical studies reveals that learners from poor socio-economic settings generally perform at levels lower than those of their counterparts from more affluent settings.

- Professional accountability should be given priority over other forms of accountability, as the proponents contend that it has greater chances of yielding enhanced learner performance (Brill et al., 2018; Gill et al., 2016; Rosenkvist, 2010; Skedsmo & Huber, 2019; Spaul, 2015). This form of accountability propels teachers to take ownership and responsibility for their own professional growth and development, thereby improving their work practices. Moreover, Smith and Benavot (2019) assert that enforcing professional accountability demonstrates trust in teachers' professional capabilities and further motivates them.
- There is a need to reinforce internal school accountability rather than mere compliance to avoid unfavourable judgement from external authority. The argument is that when the former is implemented effectively, compliance with the demands of the latter will be much easier for schools (Bae, 2018; Elmore, 2010; Jimenez & Sargrad, 2017; Smith & Benavot, 2019). There are also arguments in the literature that accountability in education should be enforced at all levels of the system, from the national department down to the classroom (Ehren et al., 2018; Spaul, 2015; McLennan et al., 2017). I concur with this view because different levels have their own unique mandatory roles, responsibilities and powers which can hardly be delegated.

Thirdly, on the role of education districts literature, the following issues emerged:

- Districts tend to be viewed as mere intermediaries between government and schools, with no vigorous authority or powers to make decisions on critical issues that affect schools, such as appointment of teachers and allocation of funds to schools as such decisions fall under the jurisdiction of provinces. Bantwini and Moorosi (2018) thus recommend that provinces need to relinquish some powers and functions to districts in order to enhance the latter's support to schools.

- There appears to be a glaring tension between ensuring compliance to curriculum policy and providing support that exist at district level, resulting in the latter being overlooked and unnecessary competition created among officials tasked with these functions (McLennan et al., 2017).
- Districts' capacity to provide effective support to school is compromised by a lack of adequate human and financial resources (Bantwini, 2019; JET, 2014). This results in a lack of visibility of district officials in schools and in the funding of intervention programmes that target only the FET level, thus further perpetuating the neglect of the GET band.

Research on districts' capacity and practices is too limited to serve as a comprehensive guide for stakeholders seeking to enhance districts' functionality (Anderson & Young, 2018). The limitation is in a sense that most literature is derived from well-developed countries and most studies are done in similar provinces. For example, in South Africa, a substantial amount of literature on districts reports on studies in the Eastern Cape, Gauteng and Western Cape Provinces (Bantwini, 2012; 2016; 2019; Bantwini & Moorosi, 2018; Diko & Molefe, 2015; Mavuso, 2013). Nonetheless, I argue that the available literature in the South African context is an important step towards highlighting the gaps, challenges and opportunities prevailing in districts in fulfilling their mandatory roles and responsibilities.

2.9 Theoretical Framework

This study is underpinned by the Systems Approach to Leadership. The relevance of this theory to this study is premised on the notion that accountability for schools' performance and the overall success of the education system is rooted on the strong leadership and synergy across all levels of the schooling system, that is the national, provincial, district and school levels (Hallinger & Ko, 2015; Spaul, 2015). This theory is discussed below and its relevance to the study is encapsulated.

A Systems Thinking Approach to Leadership

A systems thinking approach to leadership is embedded on the general systems theory which was founded by the biologist Ludwig von Bertalanffy in the late 1920's (Von Bertalanffy,

1972). Peter Senge, one of the leading researchers in the field of this theory, defines systems thinking theory as a ‘discipline for seeing wholes and framework for seeing interrelationship rather than things, for seeing patterns of change rather than static snapshots’ (Senge, 2006, p. 68). Building on this definition, Arnold and Wade (2015); Molderez and Ceulemans (2018) perceive systems thinking as a process of consolidating interrelated, interdependent and interacting elements into a collective entity. Furthermore, from a scientific perspective, a systems theory is “a set of synergistic analytic skill used to improve the capability of identifying and understanding system, predicting their behaviours and devising modifications to them in order to produce desired effects” (Smith, 2018, p. 16). From these scholars’ views, I therefore make an extrapolation that system thinking theory is a holistic way of seeing a picture, in this case seeing the education system as a whole constituting of different parts that are interrelated.

Proponents of the systems thinking theory assert that, given the complexity and dynamic nature of the education environment and in the current era of accountability, this theory remains a critical and appropriate tool to enable the education system to achieve excellence. This is because using this theory allows one to speedily identify the real causes of issues in the system and to precisely know where to work in order to address them (Arnold & Wade, 2015; Molderez & Ceulemans, 2018; Senge, 2006). As alluded to earlier on in this chapter, there is incontrovertible research evidence for a positive connection between effective leadership and successful schools, which is mainly measured through learners’ academic performance. The systems thinking approach to leadership looks at leadership across all levels of the schooling system. However, for this study, the focus will be on the interconnectedness of districts and schools’ leadership as key levers behind improved learner performance. Naicker and Mestry (2015) propose the following mechanisms as essential for a systems thinking approach to leadership. These are: fostering collaboration between education leaders and developing healthy interrelationships, engaging in collective capacity and promoting joint problem-solving, and promoting cross-schools alliances, coalitions and networks.

2.9.1 Fostering collaboration between education leaders and developing healthy interrelationships

Player, Hambrick Hitt and Robinson (2014) posit that the district’s role has shifted from enforcing procedures to building capacity, managing compliance and supporting improvement. There must be collaboration between, for example, circuit managers and school principals as well as subject advisors, departmental heads and teachers at large for efficient policy implementation and curriculum delivery. McLennan et al. (2017) postulate that such

collaborations between various parts of the system are beneficial for the clarification of roles and responsibilities within and between schools and districts, thereby eliminating the tendency to shift blame for non-performance and non-compliance to policy. Additionally, fostering these collaborations creates sound relations between schools and districts.

2.9.2 Engaging in collective capacity building and promoting joint problem-solving

Development of capacity in the areas of human capacity, social capacity, resource capacity and programme coherence is essential for the improvement of learner performance and strengthening of accountability (Garland, Layland & Corbett, 2018). Human and social capacities are often consolidated as ‘professional capacity’, which involves the expansion of knowledge, skills and expertise and enabling interpersonal relationships that support collaboration and model professionalism among members. Resource capacity refers to support with instructional materials, including the use of technological devices, and programme coherence is about ensuring coordinated alignment and cohesiveness of instructional programmes, including structures and processes that are put in place (Garland, Layland & Corbett, 2018).

Bantwini’s (2018) study revealed that schools expressed lack of trust towards some district officials’ capabilities, referring to the ways in which circuit managers cascade information from national and provincial levels to schools. This thus prompts the need for district leadership to ensure that there is continuous capacity building, not only at the level of schools, but also at a district level to ascertain communication of accurate information to schools on issues of policy and curriculum implementation. Moreover, Shaked and Schechter (2016) assert that induction and mentoring of novice leaders, at both school and district levels, are critical to ease adjustment to the new role. Furthermore, Bantwini (2018) proposes inclusion of schools in decision-making and problem-solving on issues pertaining to their schools, as they have a better understanding of their schools’ environment, and argues that such practices demonstrate confidence and trust in school’s leadership capabilities and boost their morale.

2.9.3 Promoting cross-schools alliances, coalitions and networks

Higham, Hopkins and Matthews (2009) contend that systems leaders acknowledge that leadership goes beyond a single school, where leaders work directly for the success and welfare of learners in their schools as well as other schools. This is even more relevant in the South African context, given the high levels of inequality among schools even within the same district. Promoting alliances, coalitions and networking among schools results in the sharing

of resources, knowledge, classroom practices and leadership skills, which subsequently improves learner performance (Mokhele & Jita, 2012, Tembwe, 2013). The formulation of school clusters and PLCs is an example of strategies that are used to promote networking among schools. Van Der Voort and Wood (2014) conducted a qualitative study with four under-performing secondary schools in the Cape Town Metropolitan Area. The study was aimed at assisting the SMTs to develop and implement school improvement plans for their schools, using an action learning approach. One of the critical findings that the study revealed was the importance of networking and collaboration between schools in building capacity amongst each other, through sharing of expertise and experiences resulting in improved school performance. It is however worth noting, through one's observations and interacting with colleagues, that such networks in South Africa are more prevalent within secondary education than with primary education, which means there is a need for balancing such practices across all school levels.

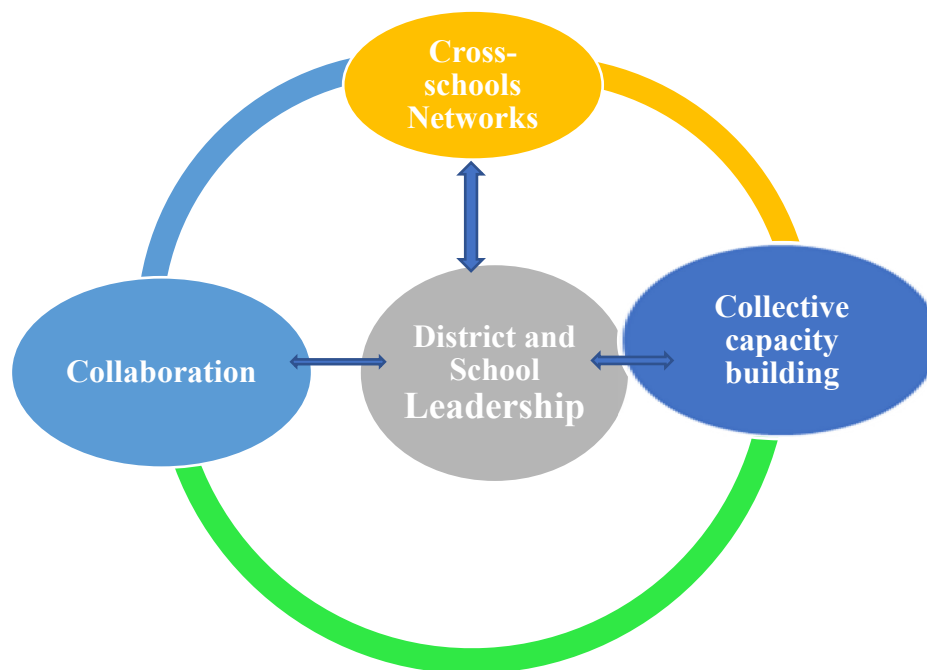


Figure 2.2 Systems thinking approach to leadership

It is apparent that leading schools towards excellence is a mammoth task, however with the use of the systems approach to leadership, the load becomes lightened.

2.10 Chapter Summary

This chapter was two-fold. The first part presented a detailed critical discussion on the literature relating to accountability in education, drawing from empirical studies conducted globally and making a comparison with those from the South African context. In this discussion, the key concepts were unpacked, which are school leadership, accountability and education district. The roles of school leadership and education districts in relation to accountability were discussed, culminating in a conclusion that accountability in education should be enforced across all levels of the department, that is, national, provincial, district and school levels.

The second part of the chapter discussed the systems thinking approach to leadership as the theoretical framework underpinning the study. Chapter Three will present the research design and methodology within which the study is anchored.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

Chapter Two presented a detailed discussion on the international and local literature regarding the phenomenon of accountability in education, by exploring the roles of school leadership and education districts respectively and explained how two theoretical frameworks, namely, the systems thinking and reciprocal accountability, linked to the study. This chapter discusses the research design and methodology that was used in the study. It starts off with the research paradigm and methodology within which the study is anchored, which is followed by a description of the selection of participants process (sampling). Thereafter, descriptions of the data generation methods employed and of the process of data analysis are presented. The latter part of the chapter highlights how the issues of trustworthiness and ethical considerations were ensured in the study, followed by an explanation of what was perceived as limitations of the study.

3.2 Research Paradigm

A paradigm is a worldview or set of assumptions about the nature of what is being studied, how it can be understood and what the purpose of the inquiry is (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2018). This study adopted the interpretivist paradigm as its epistemological foundation. Knowledge, according to this paradigm, is socially constructed and emerges from people's social practices and interaction based on their interpretation of what they understand about the phenomenon being studied (Creswell & Creswell, 2017; Merriam, 2009). Guided by this principle of an interpretive enquiry, the perspectives of district officials were used in this study to construct knowledge on how they enhanced the accountability of primary schools' performance. The proponents of the interpretive paradigm further postulate that the reality and truth about an inquiry is varied, multiple and context-dependent (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014; Creswell, 2014). In this study the sampled district officials thus included subject advisors from each of the three phases under GET and circuit managers who were managing schools from a variety of contexts within the districts. Moreover, the purpose of the interpretivist research is not only to acquire insight and develop understanding of the participants' views about a social phenomenon, but also to change people by allowing them to take ownership of the process (Cohen et al., 2018). The main objective of this study was to understand the

phenomenon of accountability by exploring it from the participants' experiences (Stake, 2010). Using the voices of subject advisors and circuit managers, this study therefore sought to understand how an education district fulfils one of its mandatory responsibilities, that of enhancing accountability in primary schools' performance.

3.3 Research Approach

A qualitative research approach was employed in the study. This approach uses a naturalistic inquiry, allowing the researcher to become involved in the research, thereby enabling them to understand the phenomenon under investigation in all its complexities and eliminating any manipulation of emerging data (Cohen et al., 2018). Qualitative research is grounded on the philosophy that meaning is socially constructed by individuals through interacting with the real-world settings of the phenomenon (Patton, 2002). This approach is thus discovery-oriented where the findings are not predetermined, but the researcher is particularly interested in understanding 'how' and 'why' things occur the way they do (Creswell, 2014). This was evident in this study as the research questions were aligned with the questions usually asked by qualitative researchers. These questions were:

- How do district officials understand accountability in relation to the schooling sector?
- How do district officials ensure accountability for learners' academic performance in primary schools?
- Why do district officials ensure accountability of primary school leaders for learners' academic performance the way they do?

Qualitative research scholars have identified what they consider to be key characteristics of qualitative research and assert that these characteristics are 'interconnected' and 'mutually reinforcing' (Creswell, 2014; Creswell & Creswell, 2017; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 2009). One of the key characteristics of qualitative research is that the focus is on meaning and understanding which entails that the critical concern of this approach is to gain meaning and understanding of the studied phenomenon from the participants' perspectives, not the researcher's (Merriam, 2009). In this study, the education district as an intermediary between the state and schools has mandatory responsibilities amongst which are holding schools accountable for learners' academic performance as well as providing the necessary administrative and professional support to schools (DBE, 2013). In soliciting meaning and understanding of how the education district fulfilled these mandatory responsibilities, the

participants in the study included district officials that are entrusted with these responsibilities as part of their job description. These were circuit managers and subject advisors.

Another prominent feature of qualitative research is the focus on the process that is inductive in nature. This means the research process is grounded on the generation of data which is subsequently used to build themes, hypothesis or theories rather than deductively imposed theories (Merriam, 2009). Through the use of semi-structured interviews and document analysis, the study was able to generate extensive data on the inquiry. The generated data was then presented according to themes that emerged from it.

In addition, in a qualitative research, the researcher is the primary instrument of data generation as well as data analysis (Merriam, 2009). To do this, the researcher must among other things develop the level of skill appropriate for the generation and interpretation of data and prepare a research design that utilises accepted strategies for naturalistic inquiry (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In this study, I was the key instrument in the generation, interpretation as well as analysis of data, using semi-structured interviews and document analysis in order to gain an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon. This allowed the study to produce an extensively descriptive data, which is also one of the key features of qualitative research.

3.4 Research Methodology

Research methodology is a systematic procedure that researchers adopt to describe, explain and predict a phenomenon (Igwenagu, 2016; Sileyew, 2019). This study adopted a case study research methodology. Several scholars (Creswell, 2014; Crowe, Cresswell, Robertson, Huby, Avery, & Sheikh, 2011; Harling, 2012; Merriam, 2009; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2008) have contributed immensely to the use of a case study as a research methodology. In their conceptualisation of a case study, there are notable areas where they diverge, converge and complement one another on what constitutes a case study and when to use it in research. It is evident that a case study as a research methodology can be defined in a variety of ways, however, the central principle is the need to explore an event or phenomenon in depth and in its natural context (Starman, 2013). A case study is an in-depth, multifaceted exploration and understanding of a complex issue in its real-life settings (Crowe et al., 2011; Hyett, Kenny & Dickson, 2014). Similarly, Creswell (2014), Stake (2010) and Yin (2009) posit that a case study is a design of inquiry where the researcher investigates a real-life, contemporary bounded system (case) or multiple-bounded systems (cases) over time, through detailed in-depth data

collection and analysis involving multiple sources of information. Furthermore, a case in a study may be a person, a community, an institution or a collection of institutions (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014; Cohen et al., 2018; Creswell, 2014). Njie and Asimiran (2014) also postulate that a case study involves a selection of a specific group, area or situation for the purposes of getting intensive understanding and explanation of the case of interest. Applied to this study, it is thus described as a single case study design of one education district in the province of KwaZulu Natal and the boundary was accountability of primary schools.

Yin (2003) postulates that a case study should be considered in instances where the focus of the study is to answer “how” and “why” questions; in those instances where the researcher cannot manipulate the behaviour of those involved in the study and the focus is rather to cover contextual conditions deemed relevant to the phenomenon; and/or the boundaries between the phenomenon and the context are not clear. In this study, the focus was to gain a comprehensive insight about how an education district ensures accountability in primary schools’ performance by interacting with those district officials who by virtue of their job description work closely with schools and are thus more knowledgeable about the concerned phenomenon.

Moreover, case studies seek to explain why things happen the way they do, in order to illuminate and predict understanding on similar cases from a single example, hence the need for an in-depth investigation that will provide an extensive description of phenomenon under study (Cohen et al., 2018). In this study one education district was used and I argue that the findings derived from the data generated contribute reasonably to existing literature about the phenomenon, in particular within the South African context.

3.5 Sampling

Sampling is the general research process of identifying and selecting a limited number of participants and/or site(s) needed to conduct the research (Cohen et al., 2018). There are various strategies that researchers can employ in this process. In this study, purposive and convenience sampling strategies were used. Purposive sampling is an eminent feature of qualitative research where the researcher handpicks the cases (individuals) to be included in the sample, based on their judgement of their typicality or possession of particular characteristics sought (Cohen et al., 2018). Etikan, Musa and Alkassim (2016) further assert that purposive sampling is used in order to access people with in-depth knowledge about issues, maybe by virtue of their professional role, power, expertise or experience. Thus, in accordance with this specification,

the sample comprised subject advisors from the GET phase and circuit managers, all from Umgungundlovu District. The participants were purposively selected based on the number of years of experience in their current position, which ranged between 5-12 years. In addition, these participants were selected due to their job description, which in the main involves supporting teaching and learning in schools, which is directly linked to the purpose of the study as outlined in Chapter One.

The study also used convenience sampling. Convenience sampling is when research sites or participants are selected due to their geographic proximity and easy accessibility for the researcher (Cohen et al., 2018; Etikan et al., 2016; Robinson, 2014). The research site selected was easily accessible to me, since I reside in the same region where the district is situated and moreover, I work in one of the schools in the same district and thus it was feasible both in terms of finances and time resources. Lastly, qualitative studies in general are conducted using small sample sizes (Cohen et al., 2018; Dworkin, 2012). In accordance with most qualitative studies, this study therefore had a total of six participants. Although the Umgungundlovu District has a total of 17 circuits, only three circuit managers were selected for the study. The three circuits were selected on the basis that they represented the geographic diversity of the district. Thus three circuit managers were selected who were in charge of schools either in urban, semi-urban or deep-rural areas, as explained in the next chapter (Chapter Four). The three subject advisors, on the other hand, were selected based on our previous collaboration in facilitating workshops and on their willingness to participate in the study.

3.6 Gaining Access to the Research Site

The process of gaining access to the research site and getting participants who are willing and enthusiastic about participating in a research project is not always a smooth journey (Crowhurst, 2013; Hoskins, 2015; Kondowe & Booyens, 2014). There are various prescribed guidelines and protocols that the researcher has to adhere to, as fully explained later in this chapter under ethical issues. I had to obtain the gatekeeper's permission prior to interacting with the participants (Kay, 2019). In my case, this entailed the District Director. I did not experience any challenges with the office of the district director, in fact the response to my request was quicker than I had envisaged. Nonetheless, being a schoolteacher and researching about people at a district level made me feel rather tentative and nervous. To overcome this challenge, I opted to recruit four participants that I have worked with in the past, one way or

the other. Two of these were my fellow union leaders while they were still working as schoolteachers, one was my current subject advisor and the other one I had worked with as a co-facilitator of some teacher development workshops on behalf of the South African Council for Educators (SACE). The other two participants were recommended by my subject advisor. I found that with the two participants that I was not familiar with, I had to do a lot of explaining about the intentions of my research project and how it would unfold before they could agree to participate in the study. I can therefore say that the process of gaining access to the field was easy as a result of the relationships that I had with the majority of the participants.

3.7 Data Generation Methods

Data generation in qualitative research comprises activities such as ‘searching for, focusing on, noting, selecting, extracting and capturing data’ using various methods (Goldkuhl, 2019). This study used semi-structured face to face interviews and document analysis as data generation methods.

3.7.1 *Semi-structured interviews*

Olsen (2012) defines a semi-structured interview as a type of interview in which the interviewer systematically solicits information from the interviewee in the form of a few predetermined questions and the rest of the questions arise spontaneously as a result of ‘prompts’ in a free-flowing conversation. Interviews are a valuable and predominant mode of data generation in qualitative research (Creswell, 2007). Using semi-structured interviews promotes a deep and holistic understanding of a phenomenon by both parties, which is in line with the interpretivist paradigm upon which the study was premised (Sapsford & Jupp, 2006). Goldkuhl (2019) further avers that interviews are an essential method to access the participants’ everyday life reality about a phenomenon. However, in the same vein, Goldkuhl (2019) acknowledges that interviews pose a challenge for researchers in that they have to rely solely on interviewees to provide valid knowledge about a phenomenon and to express it appropriately, hence the use of document analysis as well in this study as explained in paragraph 3.6.2. Moreover, Newcomer, Harty and Wholey (2015) caution that semi-interviews are time-consuming and costly and thus demand immense planning and preparation from the researcher (interviewer). To ameliorate these challenges, I prepared an interview schedule that I used with all the participants. An interview schedule is a useful tool to guide the interviewer/researcher in generating data as it facilitates the conduct of an interview, increases the likelihood of collecting accurate, in-depth

and relevant data and minimises time consumption (Olsen, 2012). What I also found to have assisted the flow of the interview was that prior to doing the actual fieldwork, I held a mock interview using the same questions with a friend of mine, a subject advisor in another district. This allowed me to assess the clarity of the interview questions, check if the responses I was getting were addressing the objectives of the study, think about possible probing questions and get an estimation of the actual duration interviews would take.

Participants were interviewed individually to enhance confidentiality and due to the dispersed locality of their offices. The duration for each interview was between 30 to 50 minutes. I had to be mindful of the participants' work schedule, which meant that I had to be flexible in terms of the interview times. I therefore had to arrange with each participant the most convenient time of the day for them to have our interview, to minimise interfering with their working hours. All the interviews were audio recorded as the participants' consent. I also made brief notes during each interview which in turn informed my probing questions to ensure that I captured as much information as possible on each question. I realised that code switching between English and IsiZulu as the interviews were proceeding enhanced the flow of the conversations and more information was shared. Having been known as a union activist, I felt that it was imperative for me to explain to the participants that my intentions were neither for casting aspersions nor as a fault-finding mission, but rather to obtain a better understanding of the phenomenon from their perspective. By so doing, I wanted to create a conducive environment for the interviews where the participants would feel at ease to respond to questions honestly and more openly. Bolderston (2012); Ryan, Coughlan and Cronin (2009) posit that one of the essential prerequisites for a successful interview is to establish rapport and trust between the interviewer and the interviewee from the beginning of the interview to ensure that the environment is comfortable for the interviewee.

Out of the six interviews that I had, only two started on the scheduled time, two were delayed for more than an hour, which meant that I had to wait, and the other two had to be rescheduled for other dates due to unavailability of the participants for various reasons. As expected, I felt a bit irritated, frustrated and inconvenienced, since at times I had to report late or request an early departure from work. To a certain degree, I wished there were other sources I could have used to generate data rather relying on human beings. Nonetheless, one of the best life lessons that I learnt from doing fieldwork was patience, which is one the essential principles for success in research.

Furthermore, conducting field work during the Covid-19 pandemic also presented an element of fear for both the researcher and the participants. While I had to take the bull by the horns, I had to put the participants' feelings first hence I confirmed with them first prior to our meeting if they were still comfortable with participating in the study. I had to ensure that we observe all the stipulated safety protocols prior to commencing with the interviews. To further support the data generated from the interviews, the study also used the method of document analysis.

3.7.2 Document analysis method

Document analysis is a systematic procedure for reviewing or evaluating documents, either printed or electronic with an ultimate purpose of examining and interpreting data in order to elicit meaning, gain in-depth understanding and develop empirical knowledge about a phenomenon (Bowen, 2009). Documents that were analysed in this study were official documents that district officials use when visiting schools, either for monitoring or support purposes. These documents included the curriculum coverage tool, School Based Assessment (SBA) moderation tool, school visit form, report on utilisation of workbooks and class visit form. The process of interrogating such documents facilitated the convergence and corroboration of information solicited from semi-structured interviews and reduced the possibility of bias that can prevail in a case of a single study (Bowen, 2009). In addition, such documents were relevant to this study as means of providing background information, context and historical insight, as well as tracking changes and developments with regards to the phenomenon. What stuck out from the documents that were analysed is that they were user-friendly and that it was thus easy for anyone to get the gist of the intended objectives for each document. Accessing documents for research purpose is not always easy (Denscombe, 2017). Nonetheless, in this study I experienced this process to be smooth since the documents that I requested were frequently used by district officials when conducting school visits and thus they were readily available for my perusal. I further requested one subject advisor to e-mail the copies of documents, which gave me an opportunity to analyse them deeper.

3.8 Data Analysis

Data analysis involves systematically organising, synthesising and explaining data generated with the intention to understand rather than to predict data in terms of participants' interpretation of the phenomenon in question (Cohen et al., 2018). Kaluwich (2004) posits that data analysis is a process which involves making sense of the raw generated data by

summarising and categorising it and identifying patterns and themes that are revealed. In this study, I used a thematic method of data analysis. According to Nowell, Norris, White and Moules (2017), this process includes identifying, organising, describing and reporting themes found within generated data. This method is useful for breaking down a large quantity of data into manageable chunks (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018). Moreover, by using thematic analysis, the researcher is able to deduce similarities and differences from the participants' perspectives (Akinyonde & Khan, 2018; Nowell, et al., 2017).

Guided by the method of thematic analysis, I began by listening to audio recordings of the interviews with the participants. I then engaged in verbatim transcription, which produced a written copy of the interviews. Through this process, I was able to familiarise myself with generated data. Stuckey (2014) posits that transcribing generated from the spoken text is the first step in analysing data, which provides the researcher an opportunity to make sense of the data. Although this process gave me a better insight on the data generated, I found it exhausting and time-consuming. I must further admit that the online workshop that was facilitated by the supervisor after I had completed the fieldwork assisted a lot in guiding me how to do data interpretation. After transcribing all the interviews, I then began the coding process. Baralt (2012) defines coding as the process of organising large quantity of raw data into manageable segments or themes in order to interpret and link related data. The themes that emerged from the generated data were guided by the research questions with the ultimate objective of gaining an insight of how district officials in the form of circuit managers and subject advisors strengthen accountability in primary schools. Furthermore, in analysing the documents that district officials used when visiting schools, either for support, monitoring or moderation of SBA, I wanted to supplement and verify the data that was generated from semi-structured interviews.

3.9 Trustworthiness of the study

Unlike in quantitative research, where the researcher depends on instrument construction to address the issues of reliability and validity in a study, in qualitative research, “the researcher is the key instrument”, thus the issue of trustworthiness of the latter study is often questioned (Patton, 2002). Nonetheless, qualitative research should be conducted procedurally and in a transparent and explicit manner like any other form of research (Hammarberg, Kirkman & de Lacey, 2016). To address how qualitative researchers establish that the research findings are

trustworthy, the terms credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability are used (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The succeeding paragraphs seek to outline how issues of credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability were addressed in this qualitative study.

3.9.1 Credibility

Credibility refers to the truth of the data or the participants' views and the interpretation and representation of them by the researcher (Polit & Beck, 2012). Shenton (2004) and Hammarberg et al. (2016) posit that triangulation which entails using more than one method of data generation is one of the critical provisions a qualitative researcher may adopt to promote credibility of the study. In accordance with this provision, I used semi-structured interviews and document analysis as data generation methods. Using triangulation in this study ensured comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon for both the researcher and participants. In addition, semi-structured interviews ensured 'iterative questioning' which involves using probing to obtain detailed data thereby further enhancing credibility of the study (Shenton, 2004). To further buttress the credibility of the study, I audio-recorded interviews to enhance accuracy of the transcripts and made written notes during interviews and when analysing documents. The constant guidance and recommendations from my supervisor throughout the study in the form of either written comments on my work or virtual meetings further enhanced the credibility of the study.

3.9.2 Transferability

Transferability is the extent to which the study findings can be applied to other similar settings or groups (Houghton, Casey, Shaw & Murphy, 2013). A qualitative study that has met this criterion would present findings that resonate with individuals who were not directly involved in the study but are in similar contexts (Polit & Beck, 2012). Case studies represents themselves and no other context, but, to allow others who may wish to transfer this study to their contexts, I provided detailed contextual information about the research site. I am therefore of the view that the findings of this study might enable readers to make reasonable inferences of transferability to any district with similar contextual factors as Umgungundlovu District.

3.9.3 Dependability

Several scholars (Cope, 2014; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 2001; Tobin & Begley, 2004; Polit & Beck, 2012) concur that dependability and credibility are closely related. They argue that dependability refers to the consistency of the data over similar conditions. Furthermore, Shenton (2004) asserts that detailing the process of the research design and methodology

strengthens the dependability of a qualitative study. In this study I present in detail the process of the research design and methodology and I believe that if a similar study would be conducted by another researcher, using similar participants in another district, similar findings would be yielded.

3.9.4 Confirmability

Confirmability refers to the researcher's ability to demonstrate that the data represent the participants' viewpoints and not the researcher's biases and viewpoints (Cope, 2014). The research findings should thus be objective and neutral (Lemon & Hayes, 2020). To ensure confirmability for my study, I confirmed transcriptions from the audio-recordings with the participants. To get confirmation from the participants took longer than I had anticipated. I further used, sparingly, direct quotes from participants to confirm that my findings truly represented the views of the participants.

3.10 Ethical Issues

Ethical issues in research refer to acceptable and unacceptable actions by researchers when conducting research (Nuwagaba & Rule, 2015). At all material costs, any form of research should be conducted 'rigorously, scrupulously and in an ethical defensible manner' (Cohen et al., 2018). Different professional bodies, organisations and institutions prescribe certain guidelines and principles that researchers ought to adhere to before, during and after the research project (Arifin, 2018). This study was conducted in line with the guidelines prescribed by the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) - Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC). The first step was to apply for the permission to conduct the study in the selected district from KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education (KZNDoE). In my application, I stated categorically the nature of the research I intended doing and the objectives thereof. I must hasten to admit that the process of obtaining permission from KZNDoE went more smoothly and faster than I had anticipated, having been informed otherwise. I then applied online for ethical clearance from the UKZN-HSSREC to conduct the study. Now this was a tedious and prolonged process, with various technicalities to meet. I also had to seek permission from the district director's office as the gate-keeper for the participants of my study. After receiving permissions from these various offices, I was then in a position to commence with my field work.

According to Arifin (2018), Cohen et al. (2018) and Sanjari, Bahramnezhad, Fomani, Shoghi and Cheraghi (2014), informed consent, confidentiality and anonymity are important ethical concerns that should be taken into consideration when conducting qualitative research as it directly involves people as the main source of data. In ensuring that such issues were addressed in the study, participants were thoroughly informed in writing about the nature of the research, its intended objectives and how it was to be conducted. Thereafter, participants were requested to sign consent letters. These informed them that, amongst other things, their participation was purely voluntary throughout the study, their right to withdraw at anytime from the study and that their participation would not result in neither financial gain nor loss (Moosa, 2013). Furthermore, to assure participants of their anonymity, they were informed that pseudonyms will be used to conceal their real identity in terms of personal names and circuit names. In addition, participants were informed that no information gathered during the interviews would be shared with other people except the supervisor solely for guidance purposes. This was done to strengthen participants' freedom to speak with ease when responding to interview questions (Nuwagaba & Rule, 2015).

3.11 Chapter Summary

In this chapter I have presented the research design and methodology chosen to conduct this study. I discussed and justified the choice of the qualitative approach and interpretive paradigm upon which the study was anchored. I then outlined the sampling methods which the study adopted and the rationale thereof. This was followed by the data generation methods employed, data analysis, trustworthiness and a discussion of ethical considerations and how these were addressed in the study. The next chapter provides a descriptive analysis of the data generated.

CHAPTER FOUR

ACCOUNTABILITY IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS: DATA PRESENTATION

4.1 Introduction

The preceding chapter outlined the research design and methodology that was used to generate data for the study. This chapter presents the data generated through semi-structured interviews and document analysis. This chapter remains at a descriptive level, which is the first level of analysis. As such, it provides the descriptive meaning elicited from the data. As alluded to in Chapter One, the study sought to establish how an education district enhances accountability for primary schools' performance. I begin the chapter by giving the profile of the education district where the study was conducted, as a way of contextualising the findings of the study and further introduce the participants to the study. Pseudonyms are used for both the circuits and participants in order to protect their identity, an ethical requirement of research. This is followed by the presentation of the findings of data generated then the chapter summary.

4.2 Profiling the Research Site and Participants

In this section I provide the profiles of the research site and those of participants. The reason for this is to ensure that the reader and other researchers understand the features of the site and of the participants, to understand whether they can apply the findings to other contexts or not.

4.2.1 Research site

The study was conducted in Umgungundlovu District which is situated in the Midlands Region of the Province of KwaZulu-Natal. The district is the sixth largest of the twelve districts in the province. The district is demarcated into three Circuit Management Centres (CMCs)² with a total of 17 circuits. There are 487 public schools (320 primary, 127 secondary, 31 combined and 9 schools for learners with special educational needs, referred to as LSEN henceforth) and 51 independent schools (21 primary, 14 secondary and 15 combined and 1 LSEN). These schools are located geographically in urban³, semi-urban⁴, rural and deep rural⁵ areas,

² A CMC is a cluster of circuit offices in the same geographic location.

³ Urban areas refer to areas within and surrounding a city characterised by high population density (Schaffer, White & Brown, 2018).

⁴ Semi-urban in this study refers to areas that lie of the outskirts of a city which are also referred to as townships (Hartell & Steyn, 2019).

⁵ Deep-rural in the context of this study includes farm sites. These are areas where there very few households which are far apart from each other (Seroto, 2012; Taole & Mncube, 2012).

spreading over 17 circuits. The study focused on the district officials from two sub-directorates, namely, Teaching and Learning Support in the General Education and Training Band (TLS-GET) and Circuit Management, as these are directly linked to the mandatory roles of an education district office as outlined in Section 20 of the Policy on Organisation, Roles and Responsibilities of education districts (DBE, 2013). The table below (Table 4.1) presents the profile of the participants.

4.2.2 Profiling the Participants

As indicated in Chapter Three, this study used three subject advisors and three circuit managers, all with a minimum of five years' experience in the current position. These are presented in the table below:

Table 4.1 Participants' Profiles

P	CP	YECP	NSR
Mrs PP Zimbali	SA-SP	10	325
Mrs KP Nembula	SA-IP	11	365
Miss NN Kampula	SA-FP	8	345
Mr ZG Nzimakwe	CM-Bambanani Circuit	9	22 (17)
Mrs TP Nkonisa	CM-Umzimvubu Circuit	9	25(17)
Mrs CP Shimase	CM-City Central Circuit	5	25(17)

P: participant; **CP:** current position; **YECP:** years of experience in the current position; **NSR:** number of schools responsible for; **SA-SP:** Subject Advisor-Senior Phase; **SA-IP:** Subject Advisor-Intermediate Phase; **SA-FP:** Subject Advisor-Foundation Phase; **CM:** Circuit Manager; **():** Primary schools

4.3 Data Presentation

Data in this study is presented thematically, guided by the research questions, interview questions, and documents analysis. I must indicate that data that emerged from document analysis was only relevant to address the second question of the study, which relates to the measures that are in place to enhance accountability in primary schools. Verbatim quotes are used as evidence of what actually emerged during the interviews with participants, a

trustworthiness principle. The data is presented under the following themes, which are drawn from the three research questions of this study:

- 4.3.1 Participants' understanding of accountability.
- 4.3.2 Accountability measures adopted for primary schools.
- 4.3.3 Factors affecting ensuring accountability in primary schools.

4.3.1 Understanding the Importance of Accountability

In this research question, the intent was two-fold. First, it was to elicit the participants' understanding of the concept of accountability as it relates to the schooling sector and to their work as district officials. Secondly, this question sought to understand whether the participants perceived accountability as important, especially in primary schools, and why it was important.

The interviews with subject advisors and circuit managers revealed a common understanding of what accountability is. It came out that the participants understand accountability as taking responsibility for one's actions and that it is about putting resources allocated for teaching and learning into good use. On taking responsibility for one's actions, Mrs Nembula, a subject advisor in the intermediate phase said, "*Accountability entails taking responsibility for the activities that take place in a school.*" Ms Kampula, a subject advisor in the foundation phase shared similar sentiments but added that it is about taking responsibility about what happens in the school in relation to teaching and learning. She said, "*Accountability as it relates to the schooling sector means taking responsibility for what is going on in a school, which is primarily teaching and learning.*" While Mrs Nkonisa, a circuit manager, shared similar views with Mrs Nembula and Ms Kampula, she further added that accountability is about the schools availing themselves to be checked on whether what is expected of them is actually taking place. Below is how she expressed this:

Accountability in this case is about schools taking a responsibility for the duties they are supposed to do. It is about schools availing themselves for monitoring or checking upon them that what is expected of them is actually taking place.

Mrs Nkonisa's view corresponds with those of Mrs Shamase and Mr Nzimakwe, the two other circuit managers who participated in this study. In their words they argued that accountability is about schools reporting on the academic performance of learners and the reasons behind the state of academic performance. This is what they said:

It is about schools taking responsibility for what is happening in their schools in terms of teaching and learning. They need to report and justify why learners are performing in a particular manner academically (Mrs Shamase).

Accountability basically means ensuring that whatever schools do, they answer, take responsibility for it and are able to state reasons why certain things or actions were done in a certain way and why certain results thereof (Mr Nzimakwe).

The above meanings of accountability directly portray two aspects of accountability as directly elicited from participants' voices. Firstly, accountability is seen above as taking responsibility for one's actions and this taking responsibility means explaining what happens and what reasons account for what happened. Although her meaning relates to the other meanings presented above, a subject advisor in the senior phase, Mrs Zimbali, shared a meaning which seemed to be different to those of the others, in that she viewed accountability not as something she should expect from schools but something that she first should do in order for her to expect from others. In her response she said:

Accountability in the schooling sector entails the ability to use available resources to produce the expected results. This immediately drives me to conclude that in order for my office to hold schools accountable, schools need to be in possession of essential resources that will enable them to deliver their core business, which is teaching and learning. These resources include material resources and most importantly human resource.

The direct meaning of Mrs Zimbali is that for one to account they must have resources to do what they are required to do. She further states that now this means she needs to account to schools by making sure that essential resources are made available to schools and thereafter schools are held to account. This understanding is different from that of the others, in that the other participants viewed accountability of schools as something that does not include their own accountability as circuit managers and subject advisors.

As indicated at the beginning of this theme, the focus here was to elicit the participant's meaning of accountability and why in their view accountability was important. On the latter, it transpired that the participants perceived accountability in primary schools as important for the following reasons. Firstly, accountability in primary schools is an effective strategy for ensuring that primary schools are fulfilling their role in the schooling system as envisaged by the DBE, which, in the main, is to lay a foundation in terms of basic knowledge, skills and values that learners need throughout their schooling years. Secondly, accountability helps to evaluate whether primary schools are indeed equipping learners with prescribed numeracy and literacy competencies. This was what was said by Mrs Nkonisa: *"Primary schools should indeed account for learners' academic performance as that is where the foundation in terms*

of basic knowledge, skills and values is laid. Primary schools should thus account in terms of how and why they attain the prescribed numeracy and literacy competencies that they are to teach.” Echoing similar sentiments, Ms Kampula, a subject advisor in the foundation phase, further expounded, *“My phase for instance is responsible for equipping learners with the basic skills, knowledge, values and attitudes which are needed throughout the schooling system, therefore they should account for learners’ academic performance to ensure that the right foundation is being laid.”*

Mrs Shamase, a circuit manager, further argued that accountability in primary schools is crucial as a tool for ensuring that secondary schools receive learners who are ready for this level of schooling with regards to their numeracy and literacy skills. She said, *“If primary schools are not concerned with and accountable for learners’ academic performance, it means that they are going to feed secondary schools with learners who are not performing at the required level in terms of numeracy and literacy.”*

Further emphasising the importance of accountability, what emerged from the data suggest that accountability enables schools to clarify who is responsible for what and how different tasks are carried out. Explaining this point, Ms Kampula said *“Accountability makes it clear for example to see who is doing what and who is not doing what they are supposed to be doing and why certain things are happening in a particular way within a school.”* Mrs Nembula, on the other hand, further asserted that accountability in primary schools is pivotal as it provides an opportunity for identification of barriers to learning at an early stage as she equated primary schools to the primary sector in terms of the levels of production. She said, *“By being accountable, primary schools are strategically positioned to identify any learning barriers that learners experience at an early stage. If we were to locate primary schools in terms of the production stages, I would say they are the input phase hence it is critical that whatever is happening there is justifiable.”* While Mr Nzimakwe echoed the sentiments of his colleagues on the importance of accountability in primary schools, his view portrays another important element about accountability, which suggested that, through being accountable, schools are able to reflect on their culture and values and the impact thereof on the academic performance of learners as he expounded: *“Every school should account for learners’ academic performance including primary schools. Accountability offers an opportunity for schools to reflect on their culture, ethos and values and how these influence the overall performance of learners.”*

What emerged clearly from the data is that the participants have a sound understanding of what accountability entails in the schooling sector and the importance thereof in the attainment of quality education as envisaged by the DBE. The next theme then sought to establish the accountability measures that are adopted by the education district for primary schools.

4.3.2 Accountability Measures Adopted for Primary Schools

Building on the participants' assertions that primary schools should indeed account for learners' academic performance, the intent here was to discover the measures that are in place to ensure accountability in primary schools and the rationale for such measures. The data generated through interviews and document analysis reveal that there are measures in place that the participants adopt in order to enhance accountability for performance in primary schools. The measures include orientation workshops, school visits, moderation of assessment tasks and quarterly analysis of learners' results. These measures are discussed separately below.

4.3.2.1 Orientation workshops

From the interviews, all subject advisors acceded that it was of paramount importance for their offices to ensure that the curriculum in schools is implemented within the relevant legislative parameters. Schools must thus be aware of and fully conversant with relevant curriculum policies. In order to achieve this, at the beginning of every academic year, TLS-GET runs orientation workshops for both teachers and departmental heads respectively. The purpose of such workshops was twofold – the distribution of curriculum policies to schools and appraising teachers and departmental heads about them. This was evident on the programme for the orientation workshops, as the bulk of time was allocated for discussions on policy expectations for both teachers and departmental heads as well as fundamental content topics for each subject. Further attesting to this, Mrs Zimbali and Mrs Nembula said the following during interviews:

First and foremost, I need to ascertain that schools have relevant curriculum policies like the Subject Policy Statement, the Annual Teaching Plan (ATP) and Programme of Assessment (POA). During the orientation workshops at the beginning of each academic year, I then mediate and interpret these policies to teachers (Mrs Zimbali).

At the beginning of each academic year, I run orientation workshops where policy documents, ATPs and POAs are distributed and discussed with teachers (Mrs Nembula).

The views of Mrs Zimbali and Mrs Nembula suggest that their focus was mainly on subject teachers. While sharing similar sentiments as her colleagues, Ms Kampula, a foundation phase

subject advisor, further highlighted that orientation workshops were also extended to departmental heads. She explained, *“during the orientation workshops held at the beginning of the year, I explain to foundation phase teachers and departmental heads what the policy says and what is expected from them in relation to curriculum delivery and curriculum management.”* When probing further on the inclusion of departmental heads, it surfaced that in the foundation phase, departmental heads are teaching all the subjects over and above supervising the work of teachers.

These orientation workshops, which are both content and curriculum management-based for teachers and departmental heads, suggest that the subject advisors acknowledge the importance of curriculum delivery within the confines of relevant policies. It further transpired that orientation workshops provided a backdrop against which district officials premised their accountability sessions with schools. As Mrs Zimbali explained, *“by conducting orientation workshops, I want to be satisfied that when I visit schools to monitor their work, I am at ease that I have played my part in terms of providing the necessary support first.”* Suffice to say that the circuit managers relied on their TLS-GET colleagues in ensuring that schools are delivering curriculum as legislated. This was evident in their responses in the next sub-theme.

4.3.2.2 School visits

Data reveals that the participants conducted school visits from time to time, for various reasons that are aligned to their core responsibility as district officials entrusted with ensuring delivery of quality education, which includes holding schools accountable. From the participants’ responses it came out that school visits served a dual purpose. It provided an opportunity for the participants to monitor the implementation of curriculum policies and to identify any lack of fit between policy and practice. This was articulated clearly by Mrs Zimbali and Mrs Nembula respectively:

When I conduct school visits, I check on the implementation of policies such as the ATP and the POA to identify gaps in terms of curriculum coverage and assessment. I expect teachers to justify the gaps I have identified and advise accordingly (Mrs Zimbali).

In my first visit to schools, I ask for teachers’ file accompanied with a sample of learners’ workbooks. With this I am able to see implementation of the ATP and POA which in turn informs me of any gaps and support that a teacher requires (Mrs Nembula).

While speaking on the same issue of school visits, Ms Kampula further expounded *“during these visits, I go to teachers’ classrooms to check their classroom setup, timetable and*

learners' workbooks to ascertain compliance and effective implementation of the ATP and assessment protocols. By so doing, I am able to identify gaps and offer the necessary support."

These articulations suggest that subject advisors interacted mainly with subject teachers when visiting schools, while circuit managers interacted mainly with school principals. This is what was said by one circuit manager: *"In my visit to a school, I have a one-on-one meeting with the principals where they account on the overall teaching and learning processes within the school. Through such meetings, I am able to get progress with regards to curriculum coverage, challenges encountered, and successes achieved. These in turn inform my support services that are needed."* Another circuit manager, when explaining their reasons for conducting school visits said: *"When visiting schools as a circuit manager, first and foremost I look at the issue of curriculum delivery. Moreover, I request an asset file from the school principal to ascertain the availability of LTSM, mainly textbooks and other prescribed curriculum delivery support documents such as CAPS, ATPs and POAs."*

From the participants' voices, it is clear that conducting school visits was one of the strategies they employed in enhancing accountability in primary schools. Through these visits, district officials are able to monitor effective curriculum delivery and identify the type and amount of support individual schools need. However, it is worth noting that not all schools are visited by officials, due the vastness of the district and the rurality of some circuits. These factors suggest that enforcing accountability across all primary schools is not always feasible. Such accountability as discussed in Chapter One of this study, has numerous benefits for all parties involved. Speaking on the vastness of the district, Ms Kampula said *"Due to the large number of schools, I must admit that I do a random sample of schools to visit; suffice to say that there is no clear guideline stipulated to specify how schools are selected."* This was evident when analysing the schedule for school visits in a particular term, which indicated schools mainly from similar circuits within the district. Mrs Shamase on the other hand attested how her work was at times compromised by bad weather conditions as she said, *"Sometimes I am unable to visit some schools in my circuit especially when there are heavy rains as some schools become inaccessible due to their road conditions."*

The tools that I analysed and that the participants used when visiting schools indicated that school visits were conducted for purposes of monitoring and support. Monitoring according to the tools involved ensuring compliance to policy, in terms of checking such things as adherence to notional time when timetables are drawn up, and tracking curriculum coverage in line with

the ATPs, coupled with evidence of learners' written work. Moreover, monitoring tools also required evidence of lesson planning, school-based assessment and availability of relevant learning and teaching support materials (LTSM) such as textbooks, stationery, workbooks, etc. Support according to the tool used involved providing guidance, motivating teachers and the SMT respectively and making recommendations in order to ensure effective curriculum delivery.

4.3.2.3 Moderation of assessment tasks

From the interviews and analysis of documents that district officials use when visiting schools, it transpired that moderation of assessment tasks, a measure that was mentioned only by subject advisors, was one of the measures that they considered critical in enhancing accountability in primary schools. This is mainly because, in their job description, one of the key performance areas stipulated for subject advisors is the moderation of school-based assessment (ELRC, 2017). It was revealed that moderation is used in order to establish that, firstly, primary schools were conducting assessment according to policy directives and, secondly, to ascertain the quality of assessment administered. *"Moderation gives us an opportunity to check that assessment protocols were indeed followed"* (Mrs Zimbali). Supporting this was Mrs Nembula, who said, *"In conducting moderation, we want to check that assessment was according to the POA and moreover, we want to ascertain that pre and post moderation was done by departmental heads."*

Speaking on checking the quality of assessment, in terms of type of questions asked and the manner in which they are asked, Mrs Nembula and Ms Kampula said:

We do moderation of assessment tasks collectively as TLS-GET starting the second term, focusing on different grades. This allows us to check that the tasks were valid and reliable, that is, they met the required standard, meaning it catered for the different cognitive levels (Mrs Nembula).

With regards to assessment, the foundation phase mainly conducts continuous school-based assessment as opposed to the summative one. In my endeavour to ascertain the standard of assessment in schools, I ask for a sample of learners' workbooks (Ms Kampula).

Further explaining the procedure that TLS-GET in Amahlahla district follows when conducting moderation of school-based assessment, Mrs Zimbali added, *"Moderation of assessment tasks is done for targeted schools to identify gaps in learners' performance, ask for improvement plans and provide support and guidance."* When probing further as to which schools are targeted, it was revealed that these were schools that were deemed underperforming according

to Circular D2 of 2017⁶, which addresses the identification, management and support of underperforming schools. In line with this circular, Ms Kampula said, *“After checking on the assessment task, I hold one-on-one conversations with teachers to get their challenges and offer the necessary support.”* One is thus learning from Mrs Zimbali and Ms Kampula that moderation of assessment affords them an opportunity to identify gaps in the nature of an assessment task and also allows them to provide the necessary support to teachers.

To further support what the subject advisors said during interviews about moderation of school-based assessment, I checked the tool that they used. The moderation tool checked if the assessment task addressed issues relating to compliance to CAPS, content coverage as per ATP, cognitive skills, language usage and evidence of internal moderation. Each criterion had a few questions relating to it and a space for comments was provided where gaps identified were recorded there and the type of support needed.

4.3.2.4 Quarterly analysis of learners’ results

Data reveals that after administering school-based assessments, primary schools are required to compile an analysis of learners’ results on a quarterly basis. Data generated in this respect suggest that such analysis provides a platform for district officials to obtain reasons for learners’ performance, especially in cases where performance is below the required standard as defined in Circular D2 of 2017. According to Circular D2 of 2017, a primary school is deemed to be underperforming if fewer than 60% of the learners perform at Level 4 (50-59%) and above in Literacy and Numeracy. This was evident from these enunciations that were made by two circuit managers:

As a starting point, I look at the quarterly analysis of learners’ performance mainly in Mathematics and English as guided by Circular D2. Upon analysing these, I am able to ask questions with the purpose of establishing reasons in the case of underperformance of learners (Mrs Nkonisa).

Guided by Circular D2, I am able to look at the quarterly analysis of learners’ results and have a meeting with the SMT to discuss the actions that they have taken to improve learners’ performance if it is below the required standard (Mrs Shamase).

Furthermore, it emerged from data that the quarterly analysis of learners’ results is an essential instrument for district officials to identify the nature and amount of support they need to provide to individual schools. Attesting to this, Mrs Nembula said, *“This analysis helps us to*

⁶ Circular D2 of 2017 from the DBE states the criteria and processes that must be followed in the identification, management and support of underperforming schools (Circular D2 of 2017).

poke further in terms of identifying the kind of support which is needed by the subject teachers or even DHs.” Her point was buttressed by her colleague Mrs Zimbali who stated, *“Looking at learners’ analysis of results informs our priorities as TLS-GET in terms of school visits and urgent support needed.”*

From the data generated, one gathers that the Umgungundlovu District does have measures that are in place to enhance accountability in primary schools as mandated by law (DBE, 2013). The outlined measures and the justification thereof suggest that the participants were indeed concerned with ensuring that primary schools, like secondary schools, deliver on their core mandate, which is effective teaching and learning. The succeeding theme will then present factors that impact accountability measures that the Umgungundlovu District implements in its endeavour to hold primary schools accountable for their performance.

4.3.3 Factors Affecting Accountability Measures in Primary Schools

Under this theme, the intention is to present the views expressed by the participants with regards to factors that they perceived as having an impact on their endeavours of holding primary schools accountable. Factors that emerged from data generated included the prioritisation of secondary schools over primary schools, the discontinuation of common assessment tasks, the overall number of primary schools in the district, other competing and unplanned work activities, the lack of cooperation from the schools (teachers), the geographic location of some schools, non-viable schools, staffing in primary schools and the influence of teacher unions versus the authority of district officials. These factors and their effects on accountability in primary schools are presented separately below.

4.3.3.1 Prioritisation of secondary schools over primary schools

All participants expressed the issue of prioritisation of secondary schools over primary schools within the system as a whole to be a major concern as it compromised the fulfilment of their core responsibilities. When probing further, again it transpired that, even in the secondary schools, the focus is mainly on grade 12. Expressing their frustrations in this regard, two participants said, *“The instruction from the higher office will say drop everything and monitor grade 12 examinations, without any consideration of my plans pertaining to my work (Mrs Zimbali).”* *“When it comes to grade 12 examinations, sometimes I am appointed as a resident monitor which means that I have to be at that school for the duration of the examination, which means I have to forget about my work as a foundation phase subject advisor (Ms Kampula).”*

These views indicate that, during grade 12 examinations, GET subject advisors are instructed by their supervisors to put their work plans in abeyance and attend to monitoring grade 12 examinations.

After further enquiries, it emerged that the prioritisation of grade 12 comes in many forms, including special programmes designed to improve learners' academic performance, the amount of support in terms of school visits by district officials, personnel, learner support materials, etc. To substantiate this, the following views were expressed by the participants:

The reality is that everyone's focus is on grade 12 and that influences my priorities as a circuit manager. Even when doing my itinerary, secondary schools are top in my list of support activities (Mrs Nkonisa).

You see in my circuit, there is a challenge of low learner numbers in both primary and secondary schools which result in teachers not teaching only subjects of their specialisation, but for secondary schools, there are measures implemented such as using "lead teachers" from other schools who are deemed as subject experts to support learners in schools where subject performance is low. Unfortunately, primary schools with similar problems are not afforded such opportunities. Such programmes have financial implications which are borne by the district (Mrs Shamase).

The focus is mostly in secondary schools and to be specific grade 12, thus even myself as the circuit manager, most of my efforts to support schools are focused in secondary schools as a result of systemic and even societal pressures exerted on secondary schools. Grade 12 results are used as an instrument to measure secondary schools and classify or deem them as good or bad schools (Mr Nzimakwe).

A critical deduction that can be made from the participants' views expressed above is that the district as a whole directs financial, human and material resources towards one grade, which is grade 12, at the expense of all other grades in the schooling system.

4.3.3.2 Discontinuation of common assessment tasks in GET

Data indicated that, since the discontinuation of common assessment tasks in the GET band, ensuring the quality of assessment administered in primary schools, in order to benchmark their learners' academic performance and hold them accountable, has complicated the district officials' fulfilment of this responsibility. These common assessment tasks were administered either at a provincial or national level. *"The discontinuation of the ANA and even provincial and district common assessments in primary schools left us with no instrument to benchmark primary schools and hold them accountable for learners' academic performance. With these, as subject advisors, we were able to report categorically on the performance of schools based on results analysis and moreover hold them accountable" (Mrs Zimbali).* Mr Nzimakwe also

added that, “*Lack of standardisation of assessment tasks in primary schools has in a way compromised our strides in ensuring accountability in primary schools.*”

It further emerged that the participants felt that the discontinuation of common assessment tasks also perpetuated the challenge of low curriculum coverage in some primary schools. This was evident from these expressions from some participants:

Now teachers are only assessing what they have taught, which is mostly far below the ATPs (Mrs Zimbali).

In my observations as a Circuit Manager, I have noted that some primary schools now just teach what they are comfortable with and assess only that which is mostly below the work to be covered. The quality of teaching and learning in the GET band has thus been compromised in one way or the other (Mr Nzimakwe).

In addition, Mrs Nembula, who also demonstrated her staunch belief in common assessment tasks, had this to say:

If I were given powers, I would introduce common assessment tasks in primary schools which are done at the end of each semester as a way of ensuring quality of teaching and learning taking place in primary schools and also as an instrument to benchmark their performance.

There was however a contrary view from one participant, Mrs Nkonisa, who felt that ANA in particular as much as it was a sound instrument for ensuring quality assessment in the GET band, it however fell short in terms of assessing multiple intelligences and skills that foster learning and problem-solving techniques from learners and that it mainly assessed rote memorisation skills. She further asserted that ANA failed to consider the different contextual factors that impact effective teaching and learning such as human, physical and material resources that are at the disposal of schools. This was her voice:

I feel that ANA’s intended purposes were good but, however, for me it tended to promote memorisation of information from learners and assumed that all schools had the same quality of resources in terms of teachers and learner support materials. You see, if I had powers, I would introduce common assessment tasks for the GET band to be administered starting at a circuit level to a circuit management centre and later roll it out to a district level and provincial level, rather than the national level. I believe these will be more context-driven and more relevant to learners and strengthen accountability in primary schools and narrow the benchmarking scale.

It is apparent that the participants collectively believe that the discontinuation of common assessment tasks and, in particular, the ANA, in a way disempowered the district in terms of ensuring quality of assessment in the GET band and benchmarking primary schools based on their learners’ academic performance.

4.3.3.3 *The overall number of primary schools in the district*

As alluded to in the second paragraph, the district has a total of 538 schools, both public and independent, of which 387 offer grades that are under GET. The structuring of schools in the district is such that there are those that start from grade R to grade 4, others from grade R to grade 7, others from grade 5 to grade 7 and then there are combined schools that start from grade R to grade 12. I am making this distinction as it has a bearing on the number of schools that each subject advisor is responsible for, as was evident in their responses. The data in the study revealed that this number is a huge hindrance, specifically to the subject advisors' endeavours to support and ensure accountability in all schools. Data revealed that GET subject advisors in the district had too many schools under their supervision, which meant that the envisaged support to primary schools could not be provided. This is how the subject advisors articulated their frustrations in this regard:

The ratio of 1:325 in my case is a major hindrance. As the only subject advisor for EMS in the senior phase for the entire district, I believe that I am not doing justice in terms of both providing curriculum delivery support to schools and ensuring that they account for learners' academic performance. If perhaps the ratio was 1:30 like in the Western Cape Province, I am certain that I will be executing my responsibilities fairly (Mrs Zimbali).

There are just too many schools with foundation phase in the district that one has to support and monitor. With 345 schools that I am accountable for and on top of that my responsibility stretches over the four subjects in the foundation phase I feel that I am not doing enough in terms of conducting regular visits to schools (Ms Kampula).

With the ratio of 1:365, I find that I am unable for example to do as much follow-ups with individual schools as I would like in terms of supporting teachers. When it comes to the issue of accountability, one ends up doing random sampling of schools (Mrs Nembula).

These excerpts provide evidence that the number of GET Subjects Advisors in Umgungundlovu District is not enough for justice to be done in terms of fulfilling their mandatory role as set out in the preceding paragraphs. Circuit managers on the other hand have an average of 17 primary schools under their jurisdiction, however, their job description stretches to secondary schools as well and further does not confine them to curriculum issues only as Mrs Shamase said on the latter, "You see as a circuit manager you are like a doctor who is a general practitioner, you have to resolve all the problems that arise within schools." This articulation from Mrs Shamase suggests that, even though circuit managers had a reasonable number of schools under their supervision, their work entails providing support to schools with regards to all challenges that affect their smooth running.

4.3.3.4 *Other competing and unplanned work activities*

From the generated data, the participants also indicated that they have a number of other work-related activities that they are required to attend to, which they felt competed with their fundamental responsibility of supporting and ensuring accountability in schools. **Mrs Zimbali** explained, *“There are meetings, trainings, workshops, emergencies, team visits like multi-disciplinary teams that visit schools and one has to be part of.”* Expressing similar sentiments, her colleague **Mrs Nembula** said, *“Sometimes my weekly or monthly planned visits to schools are disrupted by subject meeting or workshops at a provincial office or district meetings that I must attend.”* Nevertheless, they did acknowledge that such activities were important for their professional growth as they said, *“All these other activities fall outside my core responsibility, but I understand are important for my professional growth as a subject advisor and have to accommodate them in my schedule thus minimising my time to visit and support schools (Mrs Zimbali).”* *“Nonetheless I do acknowledge that workshops are also important for me keep abreast of educational developments especially in my area of specialisation (Mrs Nembula).”*

What perhaps emerged as their concern in this regard was the fact that at times such activities would be done randomly. This is what was said by **Ms Kampula**, *“There are other activities that will at times just pop-up demanding my attention from the higher offices, which then necessitate that I put my plans to visit schools in abeyance and attend to them immediately.”* On the same vein, **Mr Nzimakwe** elaborated that over and above attending meetings and workshops, at times his work is disrupted by unplanned activities that demand his immediate attention, as he expounded, *“On top of various meetings and workshops that one has to attend, there is also other things that as a Circuit Manager I must attend to which are unplanned for example an issue of instability in one school in a CMC which requires a team of circuit managers to resolve it which at times can take up the whole day.”*

One participant, **Mrs Nkonisa** further added that she felt that at times she was executing someone else’s work as she lamented, *“There is a lot of administrative work that consumes a lot of my time I should be dedicating to supporting schools, for instance I have to collect and collate attendance statistics for teachers and learners from schools. I feel that it unnecessary for my office as a Circuit Manager to be doing this and that it should be done by administrative clerks but unfortunately their vacancies are not filled by the district.”*

The above excerpts indicate that the participants feel that at times there is a lack of proper planning from higher offices, which in turn compromises the execution of their mandatory

roles. Nonetheless, they appreciate the importance of attending to such activities as subject meetings, compiling reports, workshops and other forms of training for their professional growth and development.

4.3.3.5 Lack of cooperation from the schools (teachers)

Data revealed that some schools (teachers) tend to be uncooperative when district officials visit their schools. They make excuses and perceive questions from district officials about certain things they are observing as a way of finding them at fault, rather than as a way of ascertaining the type and amount support district officials may want to render to them. This was evidenced by these comments from the participants.

Some schools (teachers) are not cooperative. When you visit a school and ask to see for example their timetable, they will give excuses and that discourages me as I believe that in order to support schools, I need to first ascertain the areas where they are experiencing challenges and then advice accordingly. They view our visits as a fault-finding exercise (Ms Kampula).

I wish that schools can understand that, as subject advisors, schools are our workplace. When visiting schools, sometimes we are not perceived as people who are there to support and advice rather as people who are there to inspect, find fault and lay a blame. Hence some schools require us to make an appointment prior, which sometimes may not be honoured due to other activities demanding my attention at the office as a form of directives from top offices (Mrs Nembula).

At times when I visit schools and ask for some documents like the curriculum management file or even learners' workbooks, I am told that if they had known about my visit earlier, they would have ensured it was available. You are only bombarded by problems the school is having (Mrs Shamase).

These comments suggest that some schools (teachers) become apprehensive towards district officials' random visits to their schools. As a result thereof, the envisaged accountability session is compromised. This prompts one to ponder on whether such a reaction by schools is justifiable or not; should district officials visit schools without making prior arrangements or not? On the contrary, though, **Mrs Nkonisa** reported an experience different from those of her colleagues, as she stated, "*Having been a principal myself in one of the primary schools within the same circuit I am now managing, I must admit that mostly the reception, attitude and cooperation that I receive from the SMT when visiting primary schools allows me to be at ease when fulfilling my responsibility of ensuring accountability.*"

4.3.3.6 Geographic location of some schools

The other constraining factor that emerged from data concerns the geographic location of some schools within the district. This poses a challenge in terms of schools' ability to execute their

core business and for officials when trying to support schools. Expressing his frustration in this regard, **Mr Nzimakwe** said: *“As a result of the rurality of my circuit, learner and teacher absenteeism and late coming are high, due to transport challenges in the case where common transport is used. This result in inadequate curriculum coverage and minimal written work by learners.”* Concurring with her colleague, **Mrs Shamase** further elaborated that unfavourable weather conditions makes schools inaccessible due to poor roads and flooding and this has a negative impact on the district officials’ work. Further evidence from **Mrs Shamase** is that these conditions also make teachers to find other schools and leave schools in her rural circuit.

“Sometimes when there are heavy rains, some schools in my circuit become inaccessible due to poor roads or rivers over-flooding and thus teaching and learning is halted and even my scheduled visits to those schools are postponed. Moreover, I find that teachers come and go in most schools as soon as opportunities avail themselves elsewhere in the district due to the rurality of my circuit and this affects teaching and learning in some schools. I am not referring to promotional opportunities alone per se.”

As reported in the second paragraph of this chapter, which gave a profile of Amahlahla district, some schools are located in deep rural areas that are characterised by numerous challenges such as unmetalled roads, poor infrastructure, inadequate supply of water, etc. Schools in such areas are not exempted from these challenges and, as a result, effective teaching is compromised by the high absenteeism of teachers and learners due to transport issues (du Plessis & Mestry, 2019; Hlalele, 2014; Seroto, 2012; Taole & Mncube, 2012). Moreover, schools in deep rural areas become inaccessible for all stakeholders, including district officials, during heavy rainfalls and they also struggle to retain experienced and well-qualified teachers.

4.3.3.7 Non-viable schools

Data further revealed that another constraining factor that is a prevalent feature in rural and deep rural circuits is the existence of the so-called “non-viable schools.” These are schools with a low number of learners. In a case of primary schools, such a school has fewer than 150 learners overall (Gardiner, 2008; Taole & Mncube, 2012). Furthermore, such schools are characterised by poor infrastructure (dilapidated school buildings, lack of water and improper sanitation), inaccessibility of schools and difficulties in attracting and retaining teachers and learners (Gardiner, 2008; Hlalele, 2014; Seroto, 2012). As a result of the low learner enrolment, these schools are compelled to adopt multi-grading teaching, which has numerous limitations,

as articulated in Chapter Two of this study. This is how some of the participants expressed their frustrations with supporting such schools:

50% of primary schools in my circuit are doing multi-grade teaching due to the number of learners they are having, for example some of these schools from grade 1-7, they have a total of 50 learners and with two teachers including the principal having to teach all these grades and all subjects. Suffice to say that learners' academic performance in these schools is not good. When teachers are trained at tertiary level, they are not trained on teaching in a multi-grading system. I find it challenging also as a Circuit Manager with no sufficient expertise in their situation to support and hold such schools accountable. I just work with what they are able to give me (Mrs Shamase).

As a rural circuit, learner enrolment is very low in some primary schools and as a result they have to use multi-grade teaching. When visiting such a school, I find that there are sometimes two teachers including the principal and it becomes a challenge to have a meeting with them as we have to use the same classroom and learners are there too. On top of that in our conversation, you find that the principal is only able to account for the phase which they are teaching. Curriculum management within such schools is non-existent since there are no departmental heads to do both pre and post moderation of assessment tasks (Mr Nzimakwe).

In the same vein, **Mrs Zimbali** said: “Multi-grade classrooms pose an even bigger challenge with regards to supporting teachers and holding them accountable for learners’ academic performance. With such schools, adherence to ATPs and POAs is very minimal.”

The participants’ views suggest that non-viable schools are compelled to implement a multi-grade approach to teaching, which they associate with problems such as low learner performance, low curriculum coverage and lack of internal curriculum management. However, **Mrs Nembula** viewed the issue of multi-grade classrooms in a slightly different perspective from other participants. This was her comment on the issue:

Having been exposed to multi-grade teaching in my early years of teaching, I acknowledge that this is not an ideal situation to be teaching under, but I strongly believe that it depends on how dynamic and versatile an individual teacher is in handling multi-grade teaching. One has to be very strategic in planning for different grades in one classroom. Moreover, one can never over emphasize the importance of support for such schools, especially novice teachers which maybe in a form of workshops and lesson demonstration.

Mrs Nembula’s perception seem to suggest that, with relevant and constant support from the education district in the form of capacity-building workshops, non-viable schools would be able to implement multi-grade teaching with greater ease. This will subsequently enhance accountability in such schools, as they will know what is expected from them through capacity-building workshops.

4.3.3.8 Staffing in primary schools

Data revealed that inadequate staffing in some primary schools is also crippling the delivery of quality education. This refers to the so-called ‘duty load’ referring to the grades and subjects assigned to an individual teacher in a year and the structuring of the SMT with regards the phases or grades they are assigned to supervise. The participants highlighted that the constant rotation of teachers in terms of the subjects they are teaching, which is prevalent in primary schools, derail their plans of holding schools accountable as they believe that support should precede accountability. Articulating her concerns on staffing, one participant clearly stated:

The chopping and changing of teachers by schools when it comes to duty load affects our work as subject advisors. One finds that they always have to start afresh in terms of curriculum delivery support as schools rotate teachers in terms of the subjects they teach. As I mentioned earlier that I believe in giving teachers support before holding them accountable (Mrs Nembula).

Ms Kampula, on the other hand raised a concern about the structuring of the SMT in some primary schools, where one finds that one departmental head is responsible for supervising teachers in two different phases, while their specialisation is in one phase. As a result, internal support and curriculum management of one phase is compromised. This means during accountability sessions; district officials have to take this factor into consideration for some of the gaps they find in schools. This is what she stated:

In some schools, you find that both the foundation and the intermediate phases are supervised by one departmental head and in your interaction with that departmental head with respect to curriculum management issues, you discover that they are not well versed with foundation phase issues since their specialisation is on the other phase and as a result there are gaps in terms of curriculum management and internal support to teachers. This calls for me then to be more understanding during my accountability sessions with both subject teachers and Departmental Heads (Ms Kampula).

In addition, Mrs Zimbali and Mr Nzimakwe further remarked on how inadequate staffing in some primary schools impacted on effective curriculum delivery. In some schools, due to the low number of learners overall, teachers end up teaching all subjects either in the intermediate or senior phase. This then means that an individual teacher, for example, is potentially accountable for learners’ academic performance in all nine subjects, in the case of the senior phase. This is how they voiced their concerns:

Perhaps being a subject advisor in the senior phase what I find challenging for both myself as well as teachers is non-specialisation in terms of duty loads by teachers in some primary schools. In other schools, the situation is severe where one teacher is doing all subjects either in the senior phase or intermediate phase. In some instances, they will tell that “I do five subjects in the first two terms and the other four in term

three and four” in the case of senior phase. This means if I visit a school as a subject advisor and find that my subject was not taught in that particular term, I have achieved a nil return (Mrs Zimbali).

I strongly believe that implementing subject and grade specialisation in primary schools in both intermediate and senior phases would enhance the process of professional development of teachers and improve accountability in primary schools which will in turn lead to improved academic performance by learners (Mr Nzimakwe).

The above excerpts suggest that effective curriculum delivery is compromised by the lack of subject specialisation in primary schools. This in turn limits the participants’ endeavours to support schools and hold them accountable.

4.3.3.9 Influence of teacher unions versus district officials’ authority

From the generated data, it further emerged that the participants’ ability to support schools and hold them accountable was at times imperilled by the influence of teacher unions as well the powers vested in district officials’ respective offices. It came up from the interviews that the participants at times got side-tracked in their attempts of ensuring accountability in schools by teacher unions, who accused them of operating like officials during the apartheid regime whose motives were to ingrain fear in teachers, find fault and enforce policy compliance (Mavuso, 2013; Narsee, 2007; Spaul, 2011). Expressing their exasperations about how teacher unions at times inhibited them in executing their duties, the participants made the following comments:

At some stage I was making a follow-up with primary schools who I had found to be performing below standard in terms of curriculum coverage and learners’ academic performance, I had to stop due to the pressure I got from organised labour (Mr Nzimakwe).

Some schools go to an extent of reporting you to their trade unions and accuse you of operating like officials from the old dispensation when you visit them and ask for certain documents that are vital for effective curriculum delivery (Ms Kampula).

In our work, one has to tread carefully when dealing with schools. It is not foreign to receive a call from a leader of a teacher’s union interrogating you about perhaps your unannounced visit to a particular school (Mrs Shamase).

Moreover, participants at a district level appear to lack authoritative powers in dealing with non-compliance by teachers. This was evident from this comment made by **Mrs Zimbali** said: “As a subject advisor, I have no powers to take punitive measures against schools (teachers) for non-compliance. All I can do is advise, support and recommend certain actions to be adopted in order to improve learner performance like having a recovery or catch-up plan in place.”

4.4 Chapter Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to present the participants' voices on accountability in primary schools. It transpired that the participants collectively understand accountability as taking responsibility for one's actions and further acknowledged that accountability in primary schools was just as important as in any other organisation. Moreover, it emerged that orientation workshops, school visits, moderation of assessment tasks and quarterly analysis of learners' results were adopted as measures to enhance accountability in primary schools. In the latter part of the chapter, prioritisation of secondary schools over primary schools, discontinuation of common assessment tasks, the overall number of primary schools in the district, schools' perceptions of district officials, inter alia, were presented as factors that emerged as constraining participants' endeavour to enhance accountability in primary schools. The next chapter will present the discussion of the findings.

CHAPTER FIVE

ACCOUNTABILITY IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS: WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM DATA

5.1 Introduction

Chapter Four presented a descriptive analysis of data on how an education district enhances accountability in primary schools' performance. Data was generated through semi-structured interviews and document analysis with six officials from one education district in the province of KwaZulu-Natal. From the generated data, three main themes with sub-themes emerged, which were then used to present and analyse data. This chapter discusses the main findings of the study, which emanate from the themes presented in Chapter Four. The discussion of the findings will address the purpose of the study and will be related to the relevant literature and the theoretical framework underpinning the study, as discussed in Chapter Two. The findings are discussed under the following main themes, which emanated from the research questions of the study:

- Meaning of accountability
- Districts' measures for enhancing accountability in primary schools
- Factors affecting ensuring accountability in primary schools.

5.2 Meaning of Accountability

From the data, it emerged that accountability is understood in two ways. First, the study found that accountability encompasses taking responsibility for your actions. Secondly, accountability is associated with making resources available and the effective use of such resources. These understandings of accountability are discussed in the succeeding paragraphs.

5.2.1 Taking responsibility for one's actions

The study found that accountability is understood as taking responsibility for one's actions, which in this study pertains to teaching and learning taking place in primary schools. From the data, it emerged that district officials did not exonerate themselves from this responsibility. This was evident from the measures which they have in place for ensuring accountability in primary schools, such as running orientation workshops and provision of support through school visits. The study thus found that, in as much as the district officials expected teachers to take responsibility for what is happening in schools in relation to teaching and learning, they too took the responsibility of ensuring that they themselves took action as a way of accounting

for what schools are doing with regards to fulfilling their core business. What this understanding of accountability by the participants therefore suggests is that accountability is a two-way process, exhibiting both top-down and bottom-up dimensions, as discussed in Chapter Two of this study.

Various scholars hold different views about what accountability means generally and what it means in relation to the schooling sector as discussed in Chapter Two of this study. Some views are similar to the views expressed by the participants while others are dissimilar but related. For example, the view of Myende et al. (2018) appears to resonate with that of the participants, as they argue that accountability has multiple dimensions, demonstrating not only 'vertical hierarchal power associations' but also taking into cognisance horizontal and downward interactions between key stakeholders in the organisation. Therefore, these scholars' viewpoint on accountability concurs with that of the district officials, that they are as much accountable to schools as schools are accountable to them. In contrast, Bovens et al. (2014), Komba (2017), Maile (2002) and Spaul (2015) postulate that accountability is hierarchical in nature; that there are those with power (district office) and those who exercise delegated authority and responsibility (schools), where the latter is expected to report, explain and justify the occurrence of activities relating to teaching and learning to the former. These scholars thus perceive accountability as a one-dimensional phenomenon and basically suggest that schools are answerable to the district office and that the latter has no responsibility to assume in terms of what is happening with regards to teaching and learning in schools. I dissent from the view that accountability is one-dimensional, and argue that an education district has an equal responsibility to assume with regards to teaching and learning taking place in schools, as suggested by the participants. This is corroborated by the available literature that suggests that supportive districts breed successful schools (Bantwini & Moorosi, 2018; Bottoms & Schmidt-Davis, 2010; Leithwood, 2010).

Coupled with taking responsibility for one's actions, it was also found in the study that accountability is associated with making resources available and the effective use thereof. The next section discusses the latter finding.

5.2.2 Making resources available and the effective use of resources

From the study, it emerged that accountability is also understood as a process of making resources available to schools and ensuring the effective use thereof. The question that is immediately prompted by this elucidation is: who is responsible for availing resources and ensuring effective application thereof? The study revealed that relevant policy documents that support effective curriculum delivery are issued to schools by subject advisors during orientation workshops which are organised at the beginning of each school year. Such documents as subject policy statements, ATPs and POAs. On the other hand, it was found that circuit managers as part of their job description ensured that schools have the right number of teachers as per the Post-Provisioning Norm policy. The Post-Provisioning Norm (PPN) is the DBE policy that determines the number of educator-posts each school is entitled to, based on the total number of learners enrolled in that school (Gustafsson, 2016). These actions from the district officials therefore suggest that they take full ownership of the responsibility of making resources available to schools and by so doing, they consider that as being accountable. The first part of the question raised above is thus answered.

With regards to ensuring effective use of resources, the study revealed that the district officials once again believe that they were liable for this. For example, it transpired during the interviews and the documents that were analysed that during school visits, some of the things that district officials checked upon was the implementation of the ATPs and POAs that schools were provided with and the availability of LTSM in the main textbooks. This was done to ascertain that teachers were effectively using the relevant policy prescripts in delivering curriculum. However, I am of the view that the study fell short in providing comprehensive evidence of how district officials ensured effective use of resources by schools. With regards to for instance, issues of staffing and the use of LTSM like textbooks, there was no evidence from data to suggest how district officials ensured effective use of such resources, except for checking availability of these.

There appears to be a gap between what emerged from this study as participants' understanding of accountability, which associates it with making resources available to schools and ensuring effective use thereof, and how accountability is understood in the available literature, as reviewed in Chapter Two of this study. For example, Bušljeta (2013), Leithwood and Azah (2017), McLennan et al. (2017) and Okongo et al. (2015) assert that it is incumbent upon a district office to ensure that schools under their care are provided with the necessary resources to execute their core business. Such resources encompass human resources, physical resources

(infrastructure), and teaching and learning support materials, which include policy documents, textbooks, etc. The only emerging connection between what these scholars are saying and what the study revealed is that the district office is responsible for providing schools with resources, however, the term used in the literature is that of ‘district support’ rather than ‘district accountability’.

Succinctly, what the study revealed as participants’ understanding of what accountability means is that it is reciprocal. This perception of reciprocal accountability as found in this study is congruent with one of the forms of accountability discussed in Chapter Two. Reciprocal accountability emphasises the importance of equal responsibility between the ‘service provider and the recipient’ (Elmore, 2000). The service provider in this study refers to the education district and the recipient refers to schools (teachers). In the education domain, reciprocal accountability entails that the department, from the national to provincial down to the district level has an equal responsibility to provide schools with the necessary support and capacity building in order to ensure that the latter delivers quality education which is mainly measured through learners’ academic performance (DuFour & Marzano, 2011; Mthiyane, Naidoo & Bertram, 2015). Furthermore, what the study suggests is that the participants view accountability as an obligatory process of making resources available by those in the upper echelons of the department to those below them and ensuring effective use thereof. In the context of this study, this means the district office has an obligation to provide resources to schools. This perception of accountability seems to portray a different perspective from the available literature on how accountability is understood. Therefore, from the discussions that have ensued on the participants’ understanding of accountability and how accountability is explained by various scholars, I argue that the district officials do exhibit evidence of a sound and relevant understanding of the phenomenon in question. The next theme tables a discussion of what emerged from the data as district measures of enhancing accountability in primary schools.

5.3 Districts’ Measures for Enhancing Accountability in Primary Schools

Several measures emerged from the study as ways of enhancing accountability in primary schools. These measures include professional development of teachers, school visits and moderation of school-based assessment coupled with analysis of learners’ quarterly results.

Such measures are intended to serve specific purposes that are in line with the DBE's vision of quality education as discussed below:

5.3.1 Professional development of teachers

Parallel to the notion that accountability is a two-way process of taking responsibility for one's actions as discussed in the above theme, the study found that district officials take the responsibility for ensuring continuing profession development of teachers. This was evident from the orientation workshops that are conducted at the beginning of each school year with the purpose of enhancing teachers' subject content knowledge, their pedagogical methods and strengthening departmental heads' capabilities for effective curriculum management. The finding is that, by ensuring professional development of teachers, the district officials wanted to ensure that, indeed, primary schools had the necessary skills and resources that are essential for effective curriculum delivery, prior to holding them accountable. This stance by district officials is congruent with reciprocal accountability, which is premised on the principle that those with authoritative power must ensure conducive working conditions to subordinates prior to holding them accountable (Elmore, 2004).

Various scholars and policy makers concede that, hierarchically, an education district is strategically positioned to ensure that the DBE provides administrative and professional development support to schools (Bantwini & Moorosi, 2018; Fullan, 2015; Mavuso, 2013; McLennan et al., 2017; Prew, 2012). These scholars place a district office at the centre of ensuring attainment of the DBE's vision of quality education by providing support to schools, of which professional development is one form. Furthermore, and in support of this study, DBE (2013) stipulates that subject advisors and circuit managers are at the forefront of ensuring that the district office accede to this call.

5.3.2 Conducting school visits

It was found in the study that district officials conduct school visits occasionally. Such visits are purposed for monitoring effective curriculum delivery, holding schools accountable and providing the necessary support to schools (DBE, 2013). During school visits, meetings are held with both subject teachers and SMT members, which subsequently enables district officials to identify the type and amount of support that is needed by schools. Data showed that support required by primary schools range from subject content mastery and pedagogy to administrative and management. However, it is worth noting that there was no evidence from the findings that subject advisors provided support to subject teachers in terms of improving

their pedagogical skills, through such methods as lesson demonstrations. It further emerged from the study that insufficient district personnel in the form of GET subject advisors and the systemic prioritisation of secondary schools resulted in random selection of primary schools visited by district officials, which disadvantages other schools.

Correspondingly, in a study conducted by Nkambule and Amsterdam (2018) in the Nkangala district of Mpumalanga Province, it was found that, due to the shortage of subject advisors responsible for primary schools in the district concerned, provision of curriculum delivery support was highly compromised. Likewise, Bantwini and Moorosi (2018) conducted a study in five school districts in the Eastern Cape Province and found that 89% of the schools were not satisfied with the kind of support provided by their districts. Issues of poor support regarding provision of resources, management and professional development and the lack of visibility of district officials in primary schools were cited as concerns. Additionally, Mabaso's (2019) study in two education districts in the Gauteng Province found that the District Based Support Teams did not have the capacity to visit all schools in order to capacitate them for effective implementation of inclusive education due to insufficient district personnel. It is therefore clear, both from empirical studies conducted (Bantwini & Moorosi, 2018; Mabaso, 2019; Nkambule & Amsterdam, 2018) and from what this study found, that school visits, as one of the effective measures to enhance accountability in primary schools, are curtailed by insufficient personnel at a district level.

5.3.3 Post-moderation of school-based assessment and analysis of results

Assessment is a critical aspect of teaching and learning that provides teachers, schools and the entire system an opportunity to classify and grade learners, give feedback and reflect on practices that are working and those that are amiss (Tosuncuaglu, 2018). Assessment in schools is conducted within specific legislative frameworks. The National Protocol for Assessment Grades R-12 (DBE, 2011) and the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) (DBE, 2011) stipulate the assessment procedures to be followed by schools currently. Both policies specify that School-based Assessment (SBA) is a compulsory component for the progression and promotion of learners in the different grades and outlines how such assessment should be administered in terms of the frequency and quantity for various subjects for grades R-12 respectively. SBA is a 'continuous planned process of identifying, gathering and interpreting information about the performance of learners using various forms of evaluation' (Kanjee & Sayed, 2013, p. 444). Policy further states that SBA must be moderated either internally or externally and before (pre-moderation) and after it is administered (post-

moderation). Moderation is a quality assurance measure used to certify that an assessment task is fair, reliable and valid (Dube-Xaba & Makae, 2018; Van Staden & Motsamai, 2017).

From the study it emerged that some district officials, in the main subject advisors, exclusively dedicate the first couple of weeks of terms two, three and four respectively of the school year for the post moderation of SBA. Coupled with the moderation process, data revealed that analysis of learners' quarterly results ensue. Through these processes, the district is then able to assess the quality of assessment administered by schools, get reasons for learners' performance, identify gaps, provide support and guidance and benchmark primary schools' performance with the focus in Mathematics and English as outlined in Circular D2 of 2017 as explained in Chapter Four. I argue that moderation of SBA by the district officials is an effective mechanism for enhancing accountability in primary schools, as it a norm that people tend to be more responsible in their conduct in the workplace when they know that their actions are monitored and that they answerable somewhere for their performance (Han & Hong, 2019; Tsafack, 2018).

However, it emerged from the study that not all primary schools in the district are accommodated in the moderation of SBA, due to the insufficient number of subject advisors. Consequently, only primary schools that are deemed 'underperforming' according to Circular D2 of 2017 are targeted for post moderation of SBA by district officials. With regards to available literature on assessment and moderation, most studies conducted focus either on secondary schools or explore the capacity of departmental heads in conducting moderation of assessment (Chavalala, 2015; Dube-Xaba & Makae, 2018; Mdabe, 2018; Rantsu, 2018; Stephen, 2018). Through this study, I argue that there is insufficient literature that addresses the role of education districts in moderation of assessment tasks in primary schools apart from legislative framework (ELRC, 2017).

From the discussion that has been presented thus far, it does appear that there are substantial measures that are in place in the Umgungundlovu District to strengthen accountability in primary schools. These measures are purposed for capacity building, monitoring and benchmarking of primary schools' performance. The succeeding section will table a discussion of what emerged from the findings as factors affecting ensuring accountability in primary schools.

5.4 Factors Affecting the Ensuring of Accountability in Primary Schools

It is common knowledge that the execution of any responsibility that one is entrusted with is affected by factors that may either be positive or negative. A finding is that the participants highlighted only factors that constrain their efforts of ensuring accountability in primary schools. Nevertheless, I believe that the situation is not all dull and gloom, that there are lessons to be learnt from the negative factors revealed by the study which could be turned around into positive factors. Similarly, the available literature as presented in Chapter Two of the study also revealed constraining factors only. These factors may be categorised as systemic, district and school based.

5.4.1 Systemic Factors

Systemic factors in the context of this study refer to those issues that are prevalent throughout the entire Department of Basic Education (Joseph & Reigeluth, 2010). The study found that the prevailing neglect of the GET band, lack of standardised assessment in the GET band and non-specialisation in primary schools were systemic factors that were highlighted as having a negative effect on strengthening accountability in primary schools. These factors and their effects on accountability in primary schools are discussed separately below.

5.4.1.1 The prevailing neglect of the GET band

The study revealed that there is, evidently, prioritisation of the FET phase and in particular grade 12 over the GET phase throughout the basic education system in our country. This prioritisation comes in the form of special learning programmes, learner support materials, personnel and constant visits by district officials. The participants conceded that this kind of practice is crippling the system as a whole and putting unnecessary pressure on all parties concerned. It emerged from the data that, as a result of this systemic focus on one grade, GET subject advisors are timeously expected to halt their core responsibility of supporting primary schools and focus on grade 12 programmes. In South Africa, it is common knowledge and practice that the quality of our basic education system is measured through the grade 12 results, hence the enormous pressure of the DBE to give special attention to this grade. The questions that as a country we should be pondering on are whether this is an effective and just strategy, and whether it really doing justice to the need produce the calibre of learners that are capable of handling the competitive pressures of the world outside the schooling system. What lessons can be drawn from countries that are deemed to have the best schooling systems? The following paragraphs attempt to respond to these questions.

A key finding is that the participants felt that the sole focus on one grade was not the most effective strategy for attaining quality education. They expressed that if it were within their powers, the GET band would be afforded similar and even more attention than the FET band in terms of experienced and qualified teachers and learning support materials. I agree with this view expressed by the participants, as there is insurmountable evidence from research that countries with successful basic education systems, as measured at large by learners' academic performance, put considerable emphasis on the role played by primary schools (Birchler & Michaelowa, 2016; Dreyer, 2017; Etor, Mbon & Ekanem, 2013; Van der Berg et al., 2016). Primary schools are universally perceived as having a critical role to play in laying the foundation of knowledge, skills, values and attitudes upon which the quality of other levels of education is entrenched and thus should receive even greater support from the DBE system at large. What the literature is therefore suggesting is that the entire system of basic education should be investing more resources in primary schooling, which is contrary to what was found in the study.

A study done by Bantwini (2019) in the province of Eastern Cape echoes the sentiments of what emerged from this study. Bantwini (2019) revealed that there was eminent neglect of the GET band in terms of education district support to schools. It was found in his study that there was an excessive support from the education district in terms of intervention programmes, funding and personnel that target the FET band whilst the GET band was neglected. Similarly, Nkambule and Amsterdam (2018) contend that the South African schooling system is more product-oriented than process-oriented; that the focus is more on the exit point of the schooling system in terms of human and capital resources support that schools receive from the DBE. These scholars argue that this trend of disregarding primary schooling in South Africa is a major contributing factor towards the poor performance in numeracy and literacy in our country when compared to our fellow African countries, as discussed in Chapter One of this study.

Furthermore, this prioritisation of the FET band at the expense of the GET band is contrary to systems thinking theory, which provides a holistic way of seeing a picture, in this case the schooling system that comprises GET and FET bands. According to systems thinking theory, both the FET and the GET bands should be perceived as interrelated, interdependent and interacting elements forming a collective entity (Arnold & Wade, 2015; Molderez & Ceulemans, 2018). Therefore, what is suggested by systems thinking theory is that there must be equitable distribution of district support to both primary and secondary schools, which, as is evident from the data, is not the case currently. One of the mechanisms of the systems

thinking, as discussed in Chapter Two, is the promotion of cross-schools alliances, coalition and networks for purposes of sharing resources, classroom knowledge and practices and leadership skills among schools. Such practices are more common in secondary schools (Mokhele & Jita, 2012; Van der Voort, 2014). Equitable distribution of district support will subsequently strengthen accountability in primary schools, as argued earlier in theme one of this chapter; support and accountability are conjoined.

5.4.1.2 Lack of standardised assessment in the GET band

The phenomenon of standardised assessments is a common practice within education systems of various countries globally, and South Africa is no exception. From the study, it emerged that, since the discontinuation of the Annual National Assessment (ANA) in 2015, there has been no national assessment that is administered in the GET band in order to benchmark schools on their learners' academic performance. The participants conceded that the decision to abolish the ANA by the DBE left a void in ensuring quality in assessment by schools and further complicated their task as district officials in terms of benchmarking schools and holding them accountable. Likewise, McLennan et al. (2017) and Spaul (2015) contend that the lack of a reliable tool to measure the quality of teaching and learning in primary schools as a result of the discontinuation of ANA as a standardised form of assessment has compromised the process of benchmarking primary schools in South Africa. They further argue that a national assessment was useful in improving educational outcomes, providing instructional diagnosis and identifying gaps in teachers' content knowledge and appropriate pedagogy application. In addition, Hanushek et al. (2011), Komba (2017) and Verger and Parcerisa (2017) postulate that standardised assessments are an effective strategy to measure a country's literacy and numeracy levels, provide the system with credible feedback on learners' academic performance and further strengthen accountability throughout the system. What this study found, corroborated by existing literature, thus suggests that there is a lack of trust in the quality of assessment administered by individual schools and that standardised assessment from either a district, provincial or national level is more credible, reliable and valid.

On the contrary, although the ANA was specifically introduced to improve the quality of teaching and learning in South Africa, its implementation was met by a plethora of criticism from various educational specialists and key stakeholders in education such as teacher unions. Kanjee and Moloi (2014), for example, assert that there is no tangible evidence on how the ANA impacted the improvement of the actual teaching and learning in schools. Similarly, Graven and Venkat (2014) contend that the ANA, like any other form of standardised test,

failed to ‘truly measure’ what was happening in the classroom in terms of teaching and learning practices. Modzuka, Long and Machaba (2019) further aver that the ANA promoted rote learning and drilling of learners in what they were to be tested on rather than teaching them holistically. Regardless of the shortcomings that the opponents of the ANA have highlighted, it emerged from the study that participants strongly believe that its discontinuation weakened accountability in primary schools. Through this study, I argue that the benefits of standardised assessments outweigh their drawbacks and further that such assessments in primary schools would be more efficient when administered from a provincial rather than a national level, as the former will be more contextually based.

Furthermore, the overwhelming confidence on standardised assessment as a strategy for holding schools accountable that is found in the study validates what was raised in the literature review in Chapter Two of this study. It emerged in the literature review that the relevance of other mechanisms of accountability such as regulatory, market and professional is overshadowed by performance accountability, where the emphasis is on holding schools accountable for their learners’ academic performance based on the scores attained in standardised tests (Brill et al., 2018; Rosenkvist, 2010; Skedsmo & Huber, 2019). However, the enormous focus on performance accountability contradicts systems thinking theory. Deducing from what this theory entails, all forms of accountability are essential and should be treated as interrelated and interdependent for the overall success of schools (Arnold & Wade, 2015; Molderez & Ceulemans, 2018). I am therefore of the view that strengthening professional as well as regulatory accountability in schools, as explained in Chapter Two, is as important as performance accountability and has a direct impact on teaching and learning, which subsequently influence learners’ academic performance. Likewise, Spaul (2015) contends that the challenges of teacher absenteeism and lack of monitoring of LTSM procurement and delivery that are prevalent in the majority of South African schools could be curbed by enforcing both professional and regulatory accountability respectively. What systems thinking theory therefore implies for this study is that district officials’ approach to enforcing accountability in schools should be holistic in nature. They must strive to apply accountability mechanisms in a complementary rather than in an isolated manner.

5.4.1.3 Lack of subject specialisation in primary schools

Traditionally in most countries, South Africa included, primary school teachers are considered generalists rather than specialists in terms of the subject(s) they are allocated to teach. The study revealed that the participants strongly believe that the introduction of subject

specialisation in primary schools, as is the case with secondary schools, would fast-track effective curriculum delivery and subsequently improve learner performance. The study found that the situation was even worse in some primary schools that are located in rural areas. In such schools, it is a common practice for a single teacher to teach all six subjects in the intermediate phase or all nine subjects in grade seven. Low curriculum coverage in such schools is a constant challenge and most of them are propelled to implement multi-grading teaching, which is associated with a myriad of problems such as lack of curriculum adaptation, a low level of learner performance, and the absence of teacher-training and support for multi-grade teachers and large class sizes (Bantwini & Letseka, 2016; Du Plessis & Subramanien, 2014; Joyce, 2014). Moreover, it emerged from the study that lack of subject specialisation in primary schools complicates the district support in terms of subject content mastery and pedagogy, as schools rotate teachers in terms of the subjects that they teach which subsequently disrupts consistency in support from the district. The participants further admitted that lack of subject specialisation coupled with multi-grade teaching in primary schools make their mandatory responsibility of holding schools accountable cumbersome, as they also do not have the necessary capabilities of providing support in such cases.

The available literature suggests that, with the recent educational reforms and the increased emphasis on schools' accountability, countries like Australia, China, England, Zimbabwe and Botswana have introduced subject specialisation in primary schools. Such a change has yielded more positive than negative returns for these countries' primary schooling system. At the apex of these positives is the general improvement in the quality of their primary education. In a study conducted by Samkange (2015) in two primary schools in Zimbabwe, it was found that there was notable improvement in the overall pass rate at grade 7 with the introduction of subject specialisation. Similarly, in a study done in Australia with six primary school principals, a major conclusive finding was that the introduction of Mathematics specialists in primary schools drastically improved learners' performance in Mathematics (McMaster, Way, Bolas & Beswick, 2018). Nonetheless, the available limited literature on this topic suggests that it is still a highly contested terrain between those who champion subject specialisation in primary schools and those who are staunch believers of general classroom teaching (Bautista, Toh & Wong, 2018; Makhila, 2008; McMaster et al., 2018; Mokotedi, 2013; Samkange, 2015).

5.4.2 District-based Factors

Under district-based factors, it emerged that insufficient district personnel, competing work-related activities and the geographic location of some schools had negative effects on the district office's efforts to enhance accountability in primary schools. These factors are discussed separately below.

5.4.2.1 District vastness versus available personnel

The study showed that the available number of GET subject advisors in the Umgungundlovu District is not enough to provide effective and equitable support to all primary schools in the district. It emerged from the data that on average, each GET subject advisor is responsible for 345 schools. While circuit managers, on the other hand, have on average only 17 primary schools to manage, their job description stretches to secondary schools, which, as highlighted above are given precedence. Moreover, circuit managers' responsibilities are not only limited to the provision of curriculum delivery support to schools but further involves resolving challenges that impact on teaching and learning ranging from human relations within schools to governance issues (DBE, 2016). The study found that the limited number of personnel in the form of GET subject advisors, as well as the systematic factor of the prioritisation of secondary schools over primary schools, compromised the visibility of district officials, the support provided and accountability enforcement in primary schools.

Likewise, studies by Bantwini (2019), Bantwini and Diko (2011), Bantwini and Moorosi (2018) and Dreyer (2017) echo what was found in this study. These studies found that the deficit of human capacity at district levels is one of the major factors hindering efficient district support to schools, which ultimately impacts negatively on the attainment of quality basic education generally in our country. Nevertheless, I am of the view that there are strategies that could be devised both by primary schools and the district office to reverse the situation and these are presented in the final chapter of this study.

5.4.2.2 Other work-related roles and responsibilities

From the data, it emerged that district officials feel like they are bombarded with other work-related roles and responsibilities that they have to attend to, over and above ensuring effective curriculum delivery in schools (DBE, 2013). Attending district or provincial meetings, trainings, workshops, conducting team visits to schools and compiling reports are additional activities that demand the attention of district officials. Even though the participants

appreciated the importance of their professional growth and development gained through such activities, what perhaps arose as a bone of discontent was the manner at which they were informed about them by higher office. It emerged that at times such activities were organised in an impromptu manner, thereby interfering with the participants' plans of executing their mandatory roles.

Existing literature shows that engaging in various professional development activities is essential for one to sharpen their skills, remain relevant, keep abreast of any developments within their profession and also to improve their overall work performance (Abu-Tineh & Sadiq, 2018; Kennedy, 2016; Nguyen, 2019). However, Desimone and Garet (2015) caution that, for professional development to be effective and yield intended outcomes, it should be well-planned, relevant, communicated timeously and involve collective participation. I therefore argue that with clear and timely communication, district officials' perception about other work-related roles and responsibilities that they are expected to attend would change and they will be able to accommodate these in their planned weekly or monthly schedules.

5.4.2.3 Geographic location of some schools

As explained under the site profile in the preceding Chapter, some schools in the Umgungundlovu District are located in deep rural areas. Accessibility for these schools is subject to major hindrance, due to poor road infrastructure in the area and the long distance between schools. The study indicated that, when it is raining, district officials are unable to reach these schools and as a result whatever planned visits, meetings or intervention programmes scheduled are cancelled. Moreover, schools located in deep rural areas tend to have low learner enrolment which propels them to adopt multi-grade teaching due to their PPN. Multi-grade teaching, as discussed earlier in this chapter, is not an ideal schooling system and compromises the quality of teaching and learning (Bantwini & Letseka, 2016; Du Plessis & Subramanien, 2014; Joyce, 2014). In addition, recruitment of qualified and experienced teachers and retention thereof also surfaced as other challenges facing schools in deep rural settings.

What the study found about the challenges they experience in supporting some schools due to their geographic location echoes the findings of the study conducted by Du Plessis (2014) in the Nelspruit and White River rural schools of Mpumalanga Province. Du Plessis (2014) reports that the overall learner performance in these schools was low due to a multitude of challenges that they operate under. Issues of low curriculum coverage, inaccessibility due to

bad weather conditions, inability to attract and retain qualified and experienced teachers and lack of constant and sufficient support from the district officials were highlighted as some of the factors contributing to poor learner performance. Therefore, given the fact that there are schools that are located in rural settings in our country, this study posits that education districts as direct links between schools and the DBE need to explore avenues of assisting these schools and these are shared in the next chapter.

5.4.3 *School-based Factors*

This sub-theme presents a discussion of the hindrances that the study found schools placing on district officials' attempts to enhance accountability in primary schools. It is important to note that these factors represent the participants' experiences with some of the primary schools within the district. These factors are presented and discussed conjointly as they are closely connected.

5.4.3.1 *Lack of cooperation by schools and the influence of teacher unions*

A significant finding is that district officials sometimes are not well received by some schools when conducting random visits, especially in instances where prior arrangements were not made with the schools. In such cases, it was found that schools do not cooperate with district officials in terms of availing documents such as teachers' files, learners' written work, management file, assessment tasks, etc., which then means that they are not in a position to ascertain the quality of teaching and learning taking place in schools. The participants further revealed that in some instances they find themselves being at loggerheads with teacher unions in their endeavours to strengthen accountability in schools, as teachers report them to their respective unions. They are accused of adopting a stance of departmental officials from the past regime who would simply pop into schools without the knowledge of schools, with the sole purpose of finding faults rather than rendering support to enhance teaching and learning.

In the same vein, Ehren et al. (2018), Elias et al. (2014) and Spaul (2014) contend that the strong influence of teacher unions in South Africa at times limits accountability measures by departmental officials. They call for constructive collaborations between teacher unions and the DBE for the attainment of quality basic education. Likewise, Mafisa (2017), in a study conducted in the Tshwane South District of the Gauteng Department of Education, argues that teacher unions have a critical influence on their members and thus are at the centre of the enhancement of the culture of teaching and learning in schools. He further buttresses the importance of a 'cordial relationship' between teacher unions and the DBE in order to improve

the quality of education. What the study found, together with available literature, thus suggests that teachers' actions, whether positive or otherwise, are influenced by the support of their unions and there should therefore be a clear memorandum of understanding between schools, teacher unions and the DBE with regards to their roles, responsibilities and expectations from each other to avoid unfavourable consequences for all parties concerned. I am of the view that indeed school should be informed of district officials' intention to visit schools prior in order to avoid disruption of internal plans schools may have in place.

5.5 Chapter Summary

The focus of this chapter was on the discussion of the findings of this study. Briefly, the study found that, first, the participants displayed a solid understanding of accountability as it relates to the schooling sector. Secondly, the Umgungundlovu District does have substantial measures in place to enhance accountability in primary schools. These measures are instituted to build capacity, provide support, monitor and benchmark primary schools' performance. Lastly, it emerged from the study that the district's efforts to strengthen accountability in primary schools at times encounter setbacks that emanate from the system as a whole, which includes the district and school levels. Chapter Six which follows will table a summary, recommendations and concluding remarks of the study.

CHAPTER SIX

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction

This chapter aims to wrap up the whole study. This is done, firstly, by providing a summary of the whole study as well as that of the findings based on the research questions. Thereafter, I present the conclusions of what emerged from the study in response to each research question. Finally, based on the findings, I present recommendations for practice and for further research.

6.2 Summary of the Study

This study was premised on the view that the state should yield favourable returns from its investment in basic education. Such returns are in the form of the overall learner performance in the country. Through this study, it was argued that strengthening of accountability from the school level right up the highest office of the DBE is sacrosanct. In line with this view, the purpose of this study was to put into perspective what the district officials in the form of circuit managers and GET subject advisors are doing to enhance accountability for school performance in primary schools. To achieve this purpose, the report was demarcated into six chapters, each with a specific goal, as presented below.

In Chapter One, I introduced the study and outlined the background and the problem. From this chapter, the key argument was that, whilst primary schools are perceived as an important level of education for laying the foundation in terms of skills, knowledge, values and attitudes, which learners need throughout their secondary and tertiary levels, research on the accountability of primary schools is however limited. Research shows that, in reality, accountability is demanded more from secondary schools and is particularly based on their learners' performance in the NSC examination.

In the second chapter, I presented local and international scholarly debates on accountability as it relates to the schooling sector in terms of how it is understood and how it is ensured. What emerged from the literature was that there is an over-reliance on performance accountability at the expense of the other mechanisms of accountability that are just as important. Available literature further revealed that education districts, as intermediaries between schools and the DBE, have an important role to play in supporting and enhancing accountability in schools. Moreover, in this chapter I outlined the systems thinking approach as the theoretical framework underpinning the study. Through the systems thinking approach, I advance a central premise

of this study, that accountability should be seen as holistic, rather than an isolated responsibility for one level of the schooling system. Moreover, through the systems thinking approach, this study argues that accountability is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon.

I then moved on to Chapter Three, where I presented a detailed discussion on the research design and methodology of the study. The study adopted the interpretivist theoretical paradigm as its epistemological foundation. This allowed me to understand the perspective of district officials in enhancing primary schools' accountability for their performance. Using a qualitative case study methodology enabled me to gain an in-depth understanding of how and why district officials ensured accountability in primary schools. To ensure that the study selected participants who had ample and relevant information on the phenomenon in question, I used purposive and convenience sampling. Face to face semi-structured interviews with six participants and document analysis were the primary methods used for generating data. Thematic analysis was used to analyse the generated data. The latter part of the chapter discussed how the study addressed issues of trustworthiness and ethical considerations.

Chapter Four focused on the presentation of data generated through semi-structured interviews with participants and document analysis. This was followed by Chapter Five where the findings that emerged from data were presented and analysed using themes which were aligned to the research questions. The following section, 6.3 summarises the findings of the study.

6.3 Summary of the Findings

In this section, I summarise the findings of the study. In summarising the findings of the study, I revisit all the research questions and provide the summary of findings under each question.

6.3.1 How do district officials understand accountability in relation to the schooling sector?

The study revealed that district officials' understanding of accountability is two-fold. Firstly, the participants unanimously regarded accountability as a process of taking responsibility for the realisation of the DBE's vision of attaining quality education in schools. In their understanding, the participants stated vehemently that the district office had as much responsibility as schools in ensuring that indeed effective teaching and learning is taking place in primary schools. By ensuring that they organise professional development programmes for teachers and departmental heads respectively, district officials believed that they were taking responsibility for what primary schools are doing in pursuit of the DBE vision. Therefore,

accountability is perceived as a reciprocal process. Secondly, and in complementarity to this view, the study found that accountability entails making resources available to schools and ensuring effective use of them. Both these responsibilities reside with those in the upper echelons of an organisation, which in the context of this study refers to the district office. In accordance with this, the participants ensured that schools had the resources that support curriculum delivery, such as policy documents, ATPs and personnel. However, it emerged from the study that the district's powers to ensure that schools have all the resources are at times constrained by system issues. For example, it emerged that the district office does not have resources to address infrastructural issues in schools due to the hierarchical structure of the DBE as presented in Chapter One of the study.

6.3.2 How do district officials ensure accountability for primary schools' performance?

Having ascertained what accountability means to district officials, I wanted to explore the various measures that are in place to strengthen accountability in primary schools as well as the rationale for such measures. What emerged from the findings is that district officials organise professional development programmes for teachers on an on-going basis, conduct random school visits and analyse learners' quarterly results. Additionally, subject advisors engage in post-moderation of SBA. The findings further revealed that the various accountability measures that were instituted served specific purposes, with the ultimate goal of ensuring effective curriculum delivery. These purposes may be summarised as capacity-building, monitoring for support and benchmarking of primary schools.

6.3.2.1 Capacity-building

The participants perceived professional development programmes that they organise for teachers as fundamental towards the attainment of quality education. These development programmes ensured that teachers know what precisely to teach and by when and also how to teach, that is, subject content, knowledge and pedagogy. Moreover, through these capacity-building programmes, teachers were appraised of the relevant legislative frameworks within which teaching and learning should take place.

6.3.2.2 Monitoring for support

District officials conducted school visits to monitor adherence to various policies governing curriculum delivery, to track curriculum coverage, to moderate each school's SBA as well as

to check on administrative and management related issues. The latter included such things as timetabling, procurement of LTSM and curriculum management plans. Through the process of monitoring, district officials were in a better position to identify gaps that came from policy implementation, subject knowledge, application of various assessment techniques, administrative or management related issues, and subsequently to ascertain the nature of support needed. However, providing efficient and constant support to multi-grading schools, which are mainly found in rural areas, proved to be a challenge as district officials acknowledged falling short in this regard in terms of having the necessary expertise and experience.

6.3.2.3 *Benchmarking*

Analysing learners' quarterly results served as a strategy for benchmarking primary schools and classifying them as either performing or under-performing. In turn that assisted the district in terms of knowing which primary schools to prioritise with regards to provision of resources and support. There was however an element of distrust portrayed by district officials regarding the reliance on individual schools' assessment as an effective tool for benchmarking primary schools' performance, as they argued that standardised assessments are more credible.

6.3.3 *What are the factors affecting measures put in place to ensure accountability in primary schools' performance?*

In this research question, the purpose was to discover favourable and unfavourable factors that affect the district officials' efforts of enhancing accountability in primary schools. The study found that the mandatory responsibility of district officials to hold schools accountable is affected by a multitude of unfavourable factors. These factors emanated from the district and school levels of the system.

Systemic factors include the prioritisation of grade 12, lack of standardised assessment in the GET band and lack of subject specialisation in primary schools. The prioritisation of grade 12 over other grades impedes GET subject advisors' plans of supporting primary schools, which is their core responsibility, as they are assigned additional responsibilities of monitoring matric examination that are conducted twice a year. Similarly, circuit managers' give priorities to secondary schools in terms of visiting schools, providing administrative and management support and ensuring teacher supply to schools. Lack of standardised assessment makes it difficult for district officials to benchmark primary schools' performance and to hold them

accountable as they have to rely on the SBA, which varies with schools. Lack of subject specialisation, coupled with the multi-grade teaching and learning that obtain in primary schools, is associated with a number of challenges, as explained in Section 5.4.1.3. This impacts the work of district officials, as such schools have to be treated and supported differently.

In terms of district-based factors, the number of GET subject advisors is not enough to reach all primary schools, for example, the average ratio is 1:345, which results in the random sampling of schools for support and accountability sessions. Secondly, some schools in the district are inaccessible during rainy seasons due to their geographic location and poor roads infrastructure. In addition, subject advisors and circuit managers have other work-related roles and responsibilities that consume a lot of their time.

Lastly, the study found that district officials' work of ensuring accountability is affected by the lack of cooperation they encounter with some schools, especially when their visits are unannounced. Moreover, it emerged from the findings that the influence of teacher unions at times interfered with the work of district officials. District officials sometimes have to abandon their follow-up sessions with some schools as a result of directives from teacher unions to their members. Nevertheless, this study asserts that there are valuable lessons to be learned from these unfavourable factors that can be used instead to favour the enhancement of accountability in primary schools. These lessons are presented later in this chapter in the form of recommendations for practice.

6.4 Conclusions

Having summarised the findings of the study, the following conclusions can be drawn from the study:

District officials demonstrated a sound and relevant understanding of accountability. Accountability is understood as a reciprocal process between the district and the schools for taking responsibility for teaching and learning taking place in schools. Moreover, beyond what is typically identified in the literature about accountability, there is another element to this phenomenon that has to do with the provision of resources and ensuring their effective use. In the context of this study, this means that if the district office has not provided schools with resources, it may become difficult to hold them accountable.

There are progressive measures that the district has put in place to enhance accountability for primary schools' performance. However, these measures seem to address a singular mechanism of accountability, which is learners' academic performance and overlook other accountability mechanisms such as professional, regulatory and market. The study argues that the various accountability mechanisms are critical for the overall improvement of schools' performance and thus should be strengthened in a coordinated and complementary approach rather than in isolation.

Ensuring accountability is not always a smooth process for the district. It is compounded by several challenges that arise either from the system, district or even school level, over which the participants to the study have limited or even no control. The district officials have no control over challenges that are imposed by the schooling system as a whole, such as the prioritisation of secondary schools and existence of non-viable schools. District officials are compelled, for example, to prioritise secondary schools over primary schools in terms of provision of resources, supporting them with learner support materials and other special programmes like lead teachers since the district's performance is measured by the NSC examination results. With regards to district and school-based challenges which include amongst others, lack of cooperation by schools when they are visited by district officials, influence of teacher unions, lack of standardised assessment, they can devise strategies to counter them as presented in the next section.

6.5 Recommendations

In this section, I present the recommendations of this report. These recommendations are offered for practice and for further research, as presented below.

6.5.1 Recommendations for practice

Based on the finding that schools tend to be disrupted by district officials' random school visits, there is a need for improved communication and collaboration between schools and the district office. District officials, for example, should make appointments with schools prior to their visits to avoid the disruption of schools' plans. In the same vein, teachers need to understand that schools are workplaces for district officials. Moreover, there should be a memorandum of understanding between district officials and teacher unions to ensure there is no intimidation of one by another in as far as strengthening of accountability is concerned.

It is common knowledge that for any assessment to be deemed effective, it must be credible, valid and reliable. One way of ensuring that primary schools' SBA meet these criteria, this study recommends administering of common assessment in primary schools at a circuit level as a start and escalating these to the district level at a later stage. Common assessment at both these levels will be effective because it will be context driven.

District officials need to facilitate the formation of clusters for neighbouring primary schools. These will be effective for, inter alia, sharing of resources and information between experienced and novice teachers, setting of common quarterly-assessment tasks and post-moderation thereof.

Primary schools play a crucial role in laying a foundation for literacy and numeracy skills and knowledge that learners need throughout their education journey. The DBE should therefore balance the investment between GET and FET with regards to material resources, infrastructure and human resources. For instance, there should be more GET subject advisors, in order to provide equitable and constant support to primary schools. Furthermore, GET subject advisors should strictly be demarcated to service primary schools as per their legislated responsibilities, instead of being deployed to grade 12 issues.

The DBE should eradicate non-viable schools that are prominent in rural areas. This can be achieved by merging these schools and having one boarding school in that area or organising scholar transport to take learners to one school. This will in turn ensure that no primary school is compelled to implement multi-grade teaching.

6.5.2 Recommendations for further research

This was a small-scale study conducted in one education district in the province of KwaZulu-Natal with only six participants. I therefore recommend that a similar study be conducted at a larger scale to explore what district officials do regarding enhancing accountability in primary schools. That study can further include the perspectives of primary school teachers, that is, how they receive accountability measures that are put in place by district officials. In addition, further research needs to be undertaken to ascertain the precise impact of accountability on the overall performance and conduct of primary schools.

Final Word

Accountability is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon. However, there is a strong perception from the literature that advocates the strengthening of accountability as the cornerstone of success for organisations. In accordance with what literature suggests, this study therefore argues that the realisation of the DBE's vision of the provision of quality basic education for all requires commitment, cooperation and willingness to go beyond the call of duty, solid accountability and collaboration among all key stakeholders in their respective levels in the DBE hierarchy. Moreover, as per the systems thinking approach, all the levels of the DBE from the school to the national office regardless of their designated roles and responsibilities have to work like a well-oiled machine. A final word of caution this study would like to submit is that accountability should not be enforced with a 'one-size-fits-all' approach, but should acknowledge contextual factors that could have either positive or negative impacts on the overall performance of an organisation.

REFERENCES

- Abu-Tineh, A. M., & Sadiq, H. M. (2018). Characteristics and models of effective professional development: the case of school teachers in Qatar. *Professional Development in Education*, 44(2), 311-322.
- Akinyode, B. F., & Khan, T. H. (2018). Step by step approach for qualitative data analysis. *International Journal of Built Environment and Sustainability*, 5(3), 163-174.
- Anderson, E., & Young, M. D. (2018). If they knew then what we know now, why haven't things changed? An examination of district effectiveness research. *Frontiers in Education*, 3(87), 1-20.
- Anderson, J. A., & International Institute for Educational Planning. (2005). *Accountability in education*. Paris: International Institute for Educational Planning.
- Arifin, S. R. M. (2018). Ethical considerations in qualitative study. *International Journal of Care Scholars*, 1(2), 30-33.
- Arnold, L. E., Hodgkins, P., Kahle, J., Madhoo, M., & Kewley, G. (2020). Long-term outcomes of ADHD: Academic achievement and performance. *Journal of Attention Disorders*, 24(1), 73-85.
- Arnold, R. D., & Wade, J. P. (2015). A definition of systems thinking: A systems approach. *Procedia Computer Science*, 44, 669-678.
- Ateş, H., & Artuner, G. (2013). The importance of school management has been increasing in student academic success, based on international exams. *International Journal on New Trends in Education & their Implications (IJONTE)*, 4(3), 197-202.
- Aturupane, H., Glewwe, P., & Wisniewski, S. (2013). The impact of school quality, socioeconomic factors, and child health on students' academic performance: evidence from Sri Lankan primary schools. *Education Economics*, 21(1), 2-37.
- Badat, S., & Sayed, Y. (2014). Post-1994 South African education: The challenge of social justice. *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 652(1), 127-148.
- Bae, S. (2018). Redesigning systems of school accountability: A multiple measures approach to accountability and support. *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, 26, 8.
- Bantwini, B. D. (2015). Analysis of the state of collaboration between natural sciences school district officials and primary school sciences teachers in South Africa. *Journal of Baltic Science Education*, 14(5), 586-598.

- Bantwini, B. D. (2019). Developing a culture of collaboration and learning among natural science teachers as a continuous professional development approach in a province in South Africa. *Teacher Development*, 23(2), 213-232.
- Bantwini, B. D. (2019). District officials' perspectives regarding factors that impede the attainment of quality basic education in a province in South Africa. *Education 3-13*, 47(6), 717-729.
- Bantwini, B. D., & Diko, N. (2011). Factors affecting South African district officials' capacity to provide effective teacher support. *Creative Education*, 2(3), 226.
- Bantwini, B. D., & Moorosi, P. (2018). School district support to schools: Voices and perspectives of school principals in a province in South Africa. *International Journal of Leadership in Education*, 21(6), 757-770.
- Baralt, M. (2012). Coding qualitative data. *Research methods in second language acquisition*. Retrieved from <https://www.ocic.on.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Coding-Center-for-Evaluation-and-Research.pdf>. (07 July 2021).
- Bates, A. (2013). Transcending systems thinking in education reform: Implications for policy-makers and school leaders. *Journal of Education Policy*, 28(1), 38-54.
- Bautista, A., Toh, G. Z., & Wong, J. (2018). Primary school music teachers' professional development motivations, needs, and preferences: Does specialization make a difference? *Musicae Scientiae*, 22(2), 196-223.
- Bayat, A., Louw, W., & Rena, R. (2014). The impact of socio-economic factors on the performance of selected high school learners in the Western Cape Province, South Africa. *Journal of Human Ecology*, 45(3), 183-196.
- Bertram, C., & Christiansen, I. (2014). *Understanding research: An introduction to reading research*. Pretoria: Van Schaik Publishers.
- Bhengu, T. T., & Mkhize, B. N. (2013). Principals' instructional leadership practices in improving learner achievement: Case studies of five secondary schools in the Umbumbulu area. *Education as Change*, 17(sup1), S33-S47.
- Boateng, C. (2012). Leadership styles and effectiveness of principals of vocational technical institutions in Ghana. *American International Journal of Contemporary Research*, 2(3), 128-134.
- Bohoris, G. A., & Vorria, E. P. (2008). *Leadership vs Management: A Business Excellence/ Performance Management view*. Lund University. Retrieved from <https://ep.liu.se/ecp/026/076/ecp0726076.pdf>. (5 July 2021)

- Bolderston, A. (2012). Conducting a research interview. *Journal of Medical Imaging and Radiation Sciences*, 43(1), 66-76.
- Bottoms, G., & Schmidt-Davis, J. (2010). *The three essentials: Improving schools requires district vision, district and state support, and principal leadership*. Southern Regional Education Board. Retrieved from <http://www.sreb.org>. (7 July 2021)
- Bowen, G. A. (2009). Document analysis as a qualitative research method. *Qualitative Research Journal*, 9(2), 27-40.
- Brill, F., Grayson, H., Kuhn, L., & O'Donnell, S. (2018). *What impact does accountability have on curriculum, standards and engagement in education? A literature review*. Slough, UK: National Foundation for Educational Research.
- Brown, G. T., & Hattie, J. (2012). The benefits of regular standardized assessment in childhood education: Guiding improved instruction and learning. In S. Suggate and E. Reese (Eds.), *Contemporary debates in childhood education and development* (pp. 301-306). London: Routledge.
- Burgess, S., Wilson, D., & Worth, J. (2013). A natural experiment in school accountability: The impact of school performance information on pupil progress. *Journal of Public Economics*, 106, 57-67.
- Bush, T. (2007). Educational leadership and management theory, policy and practice. *South African Journal of Education*, 27(3), 391-406.
- Bush, T., & Glover, D. (2016). School leadership and management in South Africa: Findings from a systematic literature review. *International Journal of Educational Management*, 30(2), 1-27.
- Bušljeta, R. (2013). Effective use of teaching and learning resources. *Czech-Polish Historical and Pedagogical Journal*, 5(2), 55.
- Caldwell, B. J. (2013, October). Leadership and governance in the self-transforming school. In *Annual Conference of the Australian Council of Educational Leaders, Canberra, October* (Vol.4). Retrieved from <http://educationaltransformations.com.au/wp-content/uploads/Leadership-and-Governance-in-the-Self-Transforming-School-Brian-J-Caldwell.pdf>. (7 July 2021)
- Castleberry, A., & Nolen, A. (2018). Thematic analysis of qualitative research data: Is it as easy as it sounds? *Currents in Pharmacy Teaching and Learning*, 10(6), 807-815.
- Chavalala, D. (2015). *The role of school assessment teams in quality assurance of English First Additional Language assessment practices in primary schools* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation) University of Pretoria, Pretoria, South Africa.

- Christie, P. (2010). Landscapes of leadership in South African schools: Mapping the changes. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, 38(6), 694-711.
- Chuta, V. H. (2018). *District-level policy and practice for supporting instructional leadership by school principals in South Africa* (Unpublished doctoral thesis). University of the Free State, South Africa.
- Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2018). *Research methods in education* (8th Ed). London and New York: Routledge.
- Connolly, M., James, C., & Fertig, M. (2019). The difference between educational management and educational leadership and the importance of educational responsibility. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, 47(4), 504-519.
- Cope, D. G. (2014, January). Methods and meanings: Credibility and trustworthiness of qualitative research. *Oncology Nursing Forum*, 41(1), 89-91.
- Cranston, N. (2013). School leaders leading: Professional responsibility not accountability as the key focus. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, 41(2), 129-142.
- Cranston, N. C., & Ehrich, L. C. (2009). Enhancing leadership density through effective senior management teams (SMTS). *Australian School Leadership Today*, 348-366.
- Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods approaches* (4th Ed). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2017). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods approaches* (5th Ed). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Crowe, S., Cresswell, K., Robertson, A., Huby, G., Avery, A., & Sheikh, A. (2011). The case study approach. *BMC Medical Research Methodology*, 11(1), 100.
- Crowhurst, I. (2013). The fallacy of the instrumental gate? Contextualising the process of gaining access through gatekeepers. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 16(6), 463-475.
- DBE (Department of Basic Education). (2013). *Policy on the organisation, roles and responsibilities of Education Districts*. Government Gazette No. 36324. Vol. 300. Pretoria: Government Press.
- Denscombe, M. (2017). *EBOOK: The good research guide: For small-scale social research projects*. London: McGraw-Hill Education.
- Department of Education (1999). *Personnel Administrative Measures*. Government Gazette No. 19767 Dated 18 February 1999. Pretoria: Government Printer.
- Department of Education (2007). *Framework for the National Strategy for Learner Attainment*

- (NSLA). Pretoria: CTP Book Printers.
- Desimone, L. M., & Garet, M. S. (2015). Best practices in teacher's professional development in the United States. *Psychology, Society and Education*, 7(3), 252-263.
- Diko, N., Haupt, G., & Molefe, M. R. M. (2015). Reviewing the role of the provincial and district offices in the implementation of assessment policies in the Gauteng and Western Cape provinces, *Human Science Research Council*, 1-56.
- Draga, L. (2017). Infrastructure and equipment. In F. Veriava, A. Thom and T. Fish Hodgson (Eds.), *Basic education rights handbook: Education rights in South Africa* (pp. 237-245). Johannesburg: Section 27.
- Dreyer, L. M. (2017). Constraints to quality education and support for all: A Western Cape case. *South African Journal of Education*, 37(1), 1-11.
- Du Plessis, A., & Subramanien, B. (2014). Voices of despair: Challenges for multigrade teachers in a rural district in South Africa. *Educational Research for Social Change*, 3(1), 20-36.
- Du Plessis, P. (2014). Problems and complexities in rural schools: Challenges of education and social development. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, 5(20), 1109.
- Du Plessis, P., & Mestry, R. (2019). Teachers for rural schools – a challenge for South Africa. *South African Journal of Education*, 39(1), 1-9.
- Dube-Xaba, Z. H., & Makae, M. P. (2018). HODs' views on their capacity to conduct moderation of school based assessment in tourism. *African Journal of Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure*, 7(4), 1-9.
- Dworkin, S. L. (2012). Sample size policy for qualitative studies using in-depth interv *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, 41, 1319-1320.
- Ehren, M., Baxter, J., & Paterson, A. (2018). Trust, capacity and accountability as conditions for education system improvement; The case of South Africa. Retrieved from <http://www.jet.org.za/work/project-showcase/accountability-in-education/conceptual-paper> (6 July 2021)
- Elias, M., Dinah, M. M., Tome, M., Sizakele, M., & Soane, M. (2014). The school management team leadership role in rural primary school setting. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, 5(7), 367.
- Elmore, R. F. (2002). *Bridging the gap between standards and achievement: The imperative for professional development in education*. Washington, DC: Albert Shanker Institute.

- Elmore, R. F. (2004). *Agency, reciprocity, and accountability in democratic education*. Paper presented for 1st International Summit on Leadership in Education. Pretoria, South Africa.
- Elmore, R. F. (2005, June). Accountable leadership. *The Educational Forum* 69(2), 134-142.
- Elmore, R. (2006). *Leadership as the practice of improvement*. Paper presented at the International Conference on Perspectives on Leadership for Systemic Improvement, sponsored by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), London.
- Elmore, R. (2010). Leading the instructional core. *Conversation* 11(3), 1-12.
- Elmore, R. F. (2016). "Getting to scale..." it seemed like a good idea at the time. *Journal of Educational Change*, 17(4), 529-537.
- Emmanouil, K., Osia, A., & Paraskevi-Ioanna, L. (2014). The impact of leadership on teachers' effectiveness. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 4(7), 34-39.
- Etikan, I., Musa, S. A., & Alkassim, R. S. (2016). Comparison of convenience sampling and purposive sampling. *American Journal of Theoretical and Applied Statistics*, 5(1), 1-4.
- Figlio, D., & Loeb, S. (2011). School accountability. In E. Hanushek et al. (Eds.), *Handbook of the Economics of Education* (Vol. 3, pp. 383-421). Amsterdam: Elsevier.
- Fullan, M., & Quinn, J. (2015). *Coherence: The right drivers in action for schools, districts, and systems*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Gardiner, M. (2008). Education in rural areas. *Issues in Education Policy*, 4, 1-33.
- Garland, J., Layland, A., & Corbett, J. (2018). *Systems thinking leadership for district and school improvement*. Chicago: Illinois Center for School Improvement: American Institutes for Research.
- Gbolliie, C., & Keamu, H. P. (2017). Student academic performance: The role of motivation, strategies, and perceived factors hindering Liberian junior and senior high school students learning. *Education Research International*, 1(1), 1-11.
- Gill, B. P., Lerner, J. S., & Meosky, P. (2016). Reimagining accountability in K-12 education. *Behavioral Science & Policy*, 2(1), 57-70.
- Glewwe, P., & Muralidharan, K. (2015). *Improving school education outcomes in developing countries*. RISE Working Paper 15/001, Gaps, and Policy Implications. Oxford: RISE Directorate.
- Glewwe, P., Maiga, E., & Zheng, H. (2014). The contribution of education to economic growth: A review of the evidence, with special attention and an application to Sub-Saharan Africa. *World Development*, 59, 379-393.

- Goldkuhl, G. (2019). The generation of qualitative data in information systems research: The diversity of empirical research methods. *Communications of the Association for Information Systems*, 44, 572-599.
- Graven, M. H. (2014). Poverty, inequality and mathematics performance: The case of South Africa's post-apartheid context. *ZDM*, 46(7), 1039-1049.
- Gray, J., Kruse, S., & Tarter, C. J. (2016). Enabling school structures, collegial trust and academic emphasis: Antecedents of professional learning communities. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, 44(6), 875-891.
- Gurr, D. (2014). Successful school leadership across contexts and cultures. *Leading and Managing*, 20(2), 75-88.
- Guskey, T. R. (2007). Leadership in the age of accountability. *Educational Horizons*, 86(1), 29-34.
- Hallinger, P. (2009). Leadership for the 21st century schools: From instructional leadership to leadership for learning. Hong Kong: The Hong Kong Institute of Education. Retrieved from: <https://its.web.ied.edu.hk/vod/hallinger.htm> (6 July 2021).
- Hammarberg, K., Kirkman, M., & de Lacey, S. (2016). Qualitative research methods: When to use them and how to judge them. *Human Reproduction*, 31(3), 498-501.
- Hanushek, E. A., & Woessmann, L. (2011). The economics of international differences in educational achievement. In E. A. Hanushek, S. Machin and L. Woessmann (Eds.), *Handbook of the Economics of Education* (Vol. 3, pp. 89-200). Amsterdam: Elsevier.
- Harling, K. (2012). *An overview of case study*. Retrieved from: https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2141476 (5 July 2021).
- Hartell, C. G., & Steyn, M. G. (2019). Challenges influencing the professional context of the foundation phase teachers in rural and township schools in South Africa. *CICE Series*, (6), 175-195.
- Higham, R., Hopkins, D., & Matthews, P. (2009). *System leadership in practice*. London: McGraw-Hill Education.
- Hoadley, U. (2012). What do we know about teaching and learning in South African primary schools? *Education as Change*, 16(2), 187-202.
- Hoadley, U., & Galant, J. (2015). The organisation of schools that succeed against the odds. *Southern African Review of Education with Education with Production*, 21(2), 29-52.
- Houghton, C., Casey, D., Shaw, D., & Murphy, K. (2013). Rigour in qualitative case-study research. *Nurse Researcher*, 20(4), 12-17.

- Hudley, C. (2013). Education and urban schools. *The SES Indicator*, 6(2), 1-4.
- Hutchinson, J., Dunford, J., & Treadaway, M. (2016). Divergent pathways: The disadvantage gap, accountability and the pupil premium. London: Education Policy Institute.
- Hyett, N., Kenny, A., & Dickson-Swift, V. (2014). Methodology or method? A critical review of qualitative case study reports. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies on Health and Well-being*, 9(1), 23606.
- Igwenagu, C. (2016). *Fundamentals of research methodology and data collection*. Saarbrücken: LAP Lambert Academic Publishing.
- Imants, J., & Van der Wal, M. M. (2020). A model of teacher agency in professional development and school reform. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 52(1), 1-14.
- Itumeleng, S. M., & Oupa, L. L. (2014). The role of school management teams in underperforming schools: A matter of values. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, 5(3), 475.
- James, C., & Fertig, M. (2017). The difference between educational management and educational leadership and the importance of educational responsibility. *Leadership*. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1741143217745880> (6 July 2021).
- Janks, H. (2014, January). Globalisation, diversity, and education: A South African perspective. *The Educational Forum* 78(1), 8-25).
- Jelsma, J. M., & Clow, S. E. (2005). Ethical issues relating to qualitative research. *South African Journal of Physiotherapy*, 61(1), 3-6.
- Jenkins, J., Lock, L., & Lock, M. A. (2018). Leadership: A critical bridge to accountability. *Delta Kappa Gamma Bulletin*, 84(3), 10-15.
- Jimenez, L., & Sargrad, S. (2017). *A new vision for school accountability*. Washington: Center for American Progress.
- Joseph, R., & Reigeluth, C. M. (2010). The systemic change process in education: A conceptual framework. *Contemporary Educational Technology*, 1(2), 97-117.
- Joyce, T. M. (2014). Quality basic education for all: Challenges in multi-grade teaching in rural schools. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, 5(1), 531-536.
- Kanjee, A., & Moloi, Q. (2014). South African teachers' use of national assessment data. *South African Journal of Childhood Education*, 4(2), 90-113.
- Kanjee, A., & Sayed, Y. (2013). Assessment policy in post-apartheid South Africa: Challenges for improving education quality and learning. *Assessment in Education: Principles, Policy & Practice*, 20(4), 442-469.

- Kawulich, B. B. (2004). Data analysis techniques in qualitative research. *Journal of Research in Education, 14*(1), 96-113.
- Kay, L. (2019). Guardians of research: Negotiating the strata of gatekeepers in research with vulnerable participants. *Practice: Social Work in Action, 1*(1), 37-52.
- Kennedy, M. M. (2016). How does professional development improve teaching? *Review of Educational Research, 86*(4), 945-980.
- Khumalo, N. D. F., Maphalala, M. C., & Govender, S. (2019). Teachers' perspectives on the implementation of Annual National Assessment (ANA) in South African Primary Schools. *Gender & Behaviour, 17*(1), 12569-12582.
- Klenowski, V., & Wyatt-Smith, C. (2012). The impact of high stakes testing: The Australian story. *Assessment in Education: Principles, Policy & Practice, 19*(1), 65-79.
- Komba, A. A. (2017). Educational accountability relationships and students' learning outcomes in Tanzania's public schools. *SAGE Open, 7*(3). <https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244017725795> (July 2021).
- Kondowe, C., & Booyens, M. (2014). A student's experience of gaining access for qualitative research. *Social Work, 50*(1), 146-152.
- Kotterman, J. (2006). Leadership versus management: What's the difference? *The Journal for Quality and Participation, 29*(2), 13-17.
- Kowalczyk, P., & Jakubczak, J. (2014). New public management in education: From school governance to school management. Human capital without borders: Knowledge and learning for quality of life. *International Journal of Management, Knowledge and Learning, 1*, 1281-1288.
- Kyei, P., Dodoo, N. D., Nyarko, N. Y. A., & Kyei, J. J. (2018). School performance. F-33300-GHA-1
- Lamas, H. A. (2015). School Performance. *Journal of Educational Psychology-Propositos y Representaciones, 3*(1), 351-385.
- Leithwood, K. (2001). School leadership in the context of accountability policies. *International Journal of Leadership in Education, 4*(3), 217-235.
- Leithwood, K., & Azah, V. N. (2017). Characteristics of high-performing school districts. *Leadership and Policy in Schools, 16*(1), 27-53.
- Leithwood, K., Patten, S., & Jantzi, D. (2010). Testing a conception of how school leadership influences student learning. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 46*(5), 671-706.

- Lemon, L. L., & Hayes, J. (2020). Enhancing trustworthiness of qualitative findings: Using Leximancer for qualitative data analysis triangulation. *The Qualitative Report*, 25(3), 604-614.
- Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.
- Maarman, G. J., & Lamont-Mbawuli, K. (2017). A review of challenges in South African education and possible ways to improve educational outcome as suggested by decades of research. *Africa Education Review*, 14(3-4), 263-289.
- Maddock, L., & Maroun, W. (2018). Exploring the present state of South African education: Challenges and recommendations. *South African Journal of Higher Education*, 32(2), 192-214.
- Maddock, L., & Maroun, W. (2018). Exploring the present state of South African education: Challenges and recommendations. *South African Journal of Higher Education*, 32(2), 192-214.
- Mafisa, L. J. (2017). The role of teacher unions in education with specific reference to South Africa. *Gender and Behaviour*, 15(4), 10553-10566.
- Maile, S. (2002). Accountability: An essential aspect of school governance. *South African Journal of Education*, 22(4), 326-331.
- Mason, H. D. (2017). Sense of meaning and academic performance: A brief report. *Journal of Psychology in Africa*, 27(3), 282-285.
- Mavuso, M. P. (2013). *Education district office support for teaching and learning in schools: The case of two districts in the Eastern Cape*. (Unpublished doctoral dissertation) University of Fort Hare, Alice, South Africa.
- McGrath, S. K., & Whitty, S. J. (2018). Accountability and responsibility defined. *International Journal of Managing Projects in Business*, 11(3), 687-707.
- McMaster, H., Way, J., Bobis, J., & Beswick, K. (2018). Principals' perceptions and expectations of primary teachers with a specialisation in mathematics. In *Proceedings of the 41st annual conference of the Mathematics Education Research Group of Australasia* (pp. 551-558). Brisbane: Mathematics Education Research Group of Australasia Inc.
- Merriam, S. B. (2009). *A guide to design and implementation: Revised and expanded from qualitative research and case study applications in Education*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

- Metcalfe, M. (2015). Jika iMfundo 2015–2017: Why, what and key learnings. In P. Christie and M. Monyokolo (Eds.), *Learning about Sustainable Change in Education in South Africa* (pp. 17-74). Johannesburg: SAIDE.
- Mlachila, M. M., & Moeletsi, T. (2019). *Struggling to make the grade: A review of the causes and consequences of the weak outcomes of South Africa's education system*. Washington DC: International Monetary Fund.
- Modisaotsile, B. M. (2012). *The failing standard of basic education in South Africa*. Policy brief, Africa Institute of South Africa. 72, 1-7.
- Mokhele, M. L., & Jita, L. C. (2012). Institutionalising teacher clusters in South Africa: Dilemmas and contradictions. *Perspectives in Education*, 30(2), 1-11.
- Møller, J. (2009). School leadership in an age of accountability: Tensions between managerial and professional accountability. *Journal of Educational Change*, 10(1), 37-46.
- Moorosi, P., & Bantwini, B. D. (2016). School district leadership styles and school improvement: Evidence from selected school principals in the Eastern Cape Province. *South African Journal of Education*, 36(4), 1-9.
- Moosa, D. (2013). Challenges to anonymity and representation in educational qualitative research in a small community: A reflection on my research journey. *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education*, 43(4), 483-495.
- Morrissey, T. W., Hutchison, L., & Winsler, A. (2014). Family income, school attendance, and academic achievement in elementary school. *Developmental Psychology*, 50(3), 741-753.
- Mpungose, J. E., & Ngwenya, T. H. (2017). School leadership and accountability in managerialist times: Implications for South African public schools. *Education as Change*, 21(3), 1-16.
- Msila, V. (2014a). Teacher unionism and school management: A study of (Eastern Cape) schools in South Africa. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, 42(2), 259-274.
- Msila, V. (2014b). Transforming society through quality primary education in South Africa: Lessons from two decades after apartheid. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, 5(6), 339-339.
- Mullis, I. V. S., Michael, O. M., Pierre, F., Dana, L. K., & Bethany, F. (2020). *TIMSS 2019 International Results in Mathematics and Science*. Boston: TIMSS & PIRLS International Study Center, Lynch School of Education and Human Development,

- Boston College and International Association for the Evaluation of Educational achievement (IEA).
- Myende, P. E. (2014). *Improving academic performance in a rural school through the use of an asset-based approach as a management strategy* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation. University of the Free State, South Africa.
- Myende, P. E., Samuel, M. A., & Pillay, A. (2018). Novice rural principals' successful leadership practices in financial management: Multiple accountabilities. *South African Journal of Education*, 38(2), 1-11.
- Nabizadeh, S., Hajian, S., Sheikhan, Z., & Rafiei, F. (2019). Prediction of academic achievement based on learning strategies and outcome expectations among medical students. *BMC medical education*, 19(1), 99.
- Naicker, S. R., & Mestry, R. (2015). Developing educational leaders: A partnership between two universities to bring about system-wide change. *South African Journal of Education*, 35(2), 1-11.
- Narad, A., & Abdullah, B. (2016). Academic performance of senior secondary school students: Influence of parental encouragement and school environment. *Rupkatha Journal on Interdisciplinary Studies in Humanities*, 8(2), 12-19.
- Narsee, H. (2006). *The common and contested meanings of education districts in South Africa*. (Unpublished doctoral thesis). University of Pretoria, Pretoria, South Africa.
- Ndebele, M. (2015). Socio-economic factors affecting parents' involvement in homework: Practices and perceptions from eight Johannesburg public primary schools. *Perspectives in Education*, 33(3), 72-91.
- Ndlovu, S. M. (2018). *The role of circuit managers in the professional development of school principals* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). University of Pretoria, Pretoria, South Africa..
- NEEDU (National Education Evaluation and Development Unit). 2013. *NEEDU national report 2012: The state of literacy teaching and learning in the foundation phase*. Pretoria: NEEDU.
- Nguyen, H. C. (2019). An investigation of professional development among educational policy-makers, institutional leaders and teachers. *Management in Education*, 33(1), 32-36.
- Njie, B., & Asimiran, S. (2014). Case study as a choice in qualitative methodology. *Journal of Research & Method in Education*, 4(3), 35-40.

- Nkengbeza, D. and Heystek, J. (2017) Professional learning communities: A comparative study of three educational areas in the North West Province of South Africa. *Open Journal of Social Sciences*, 5, 98-119.
- Nowell, L. S., Norris, J. M., White, D. E., & Moules, N. J. (2017). Thematic analysis: Striving to meet the trustworthiness criteria. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 16(1), 1-13.
- NPC, S. (2012). *National Development Plan 2030: Our future – make it work*. Pretoria, South Africa. Sherino Printers.
- Nuwagaba, E. L., & Rule, P. (2015). Navigating the ethical maze in disability research: Ethical contestations in an African context. *Disability & Society*, 30(2), 255-269.
- OECD (2019). *Education at a glance 2019: OECD Indicators*, OECD Publishing, Paris. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1787/f8d7880d-en> (5 July 2021).
- Okongo, R. B., Ngao, G., Rop, N. K., & Wesonga, J. N. (2015). Effect of availability of teaching and learning resources on the implementation of inclusive education in pre-school centers in Nyamira North Sub-County, Nyamira County, Kenya. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 6(35), 132-141.
- Olsen, W. (2012). *Data collection: Key debates and methods in social research*. London: Sage Publications Ltd.
- Ozturk, I. (2008). The role of education in economic development: A theoretical perspective. *Journal of Rural Development and Administration*, 33(1), 39-47.
- Patton, M. Q. (2002). Two decades of developments in qualitative inquiry: A personal, experiential perspective. *Qualitative Social Work*, 1(3), 261-283.
- Pelinescu, E. (2015). The impact of human capital on economic growth. *Procedia Economics and Finance*, 22, 184-190.
- Player, D., Hambrick Hitt, D., & Robinson, W. (2014). *District readiness to support school turnaround: A users' guide to inform the work of state education agencies and districts*. Washington, DC: Center on School Turnaround at WestEd.
- Plowright, D., & Plowright, A. S. (2011). School improvement and the role of district education officials in South Africa. In *BERA Annual Conference* (pp. 6-8).
- Polit, D., & Beck, C. (2012). Essentials of nursing research. *Ethics*, 23(2), 145-160.
- Poole, S. M. (2011). The relationship between external accountability policy and internal accountability: A cross-state analysis of charter and traditional public schools. *Journal of School Choice*, 5(3), 261-280.

- Prew, M. (2012). *Education districts: Issues in education policy*. Retrieved from <https://www.cepd.org.za> (5 July 2021).
- Pritchett, L. (2015). Creating education systems coherent for learning outcomes: Making the transition from schooling to learning. *Research on Improving Systems of Education (RISE) Programmes*. Johannesburg: Human Resource Development Council.
- Ramaphosa, C. (2019). *State of the nation address*. National Assembly, Cape Town. Retrieved from <https://www.gov.za/speeches/president-cyril-ramaphosa-2019-state-nation-address-7-feb-2019-0000> (5 July 2020)
- Rantsu, N. J. (2018). *Moderation of business studies assessment tasks in the Further Education and Training Band in the Soutpansberg Circuit Cluster*. (Unpublished MEd thesis) University of Venda, Thohoyandou, South Africa.
- Reed, B. N., Klutts, A. M., & Mattingly, T. J. (2019). A systematic review of leadership definitions, competencies, and assessment methods in pharmacy education. *American Journal of Pharmaceutical Education*, 83(9), 1873-1885.
- Republic of South Africa. (1996a). *The South African Schools Act no. 84 of 1996*. Pretoria: Government Printers.
- Rice, J. K. (2010). *Principal effectiveness and leadership in an era of accountability: What research says. Brief 8*. Washington, DC: National Center for Analysis of Longitudinal Data in Education Research.
- Robinson, O. C. (2014). Sampling in interview-based qualitative research: A theoretical and practical guide. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 11(1), 25-41.
- Rosenkvist, M. A. (2010). Using student test results for accountability and improvement: A literature review. OECD Education Working Papers, No. 54, OECD Publishing.
- Ryan, F., Coughlan, M., & Cronin, P. (2009). Interviewing in qualitative research: The one-to-one interview. *International Journal of Therapy and Rehabilitation*, 16(6), 309-314.
- Salisbury, T. (2016). Education and inequality in South Africa: Returns to schooling in the post-apartheid era. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 46, 43-52.
- Samkange, W. (2015). Subject specialisation at primary school: A new development in Zimbabwean education system. *Global Journal of Advanced Research*, 2(5), 845-854.
- Sanjari, M., Bahramnezhad, F., Fomani, F. K., Shoghi, M., & Cheraghi, M. A. (2014). Ethical challenges of researchers in qualitative studies: The necessity to develop a specific guideline. *Journal of Medical Ethics and History of Medicine*, 7, 2-6.
- Santrock, J. (2006). *Educational psychology: Classroom update: Preparing for PRAXIS and practice*. (2nd ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill International.

- Sapsford, R., & Jupp, V. (2006). *Data collection and analysis*. London: Sage Publications.
- Senge, P. (2006). *The fifth discipline: The art and practice of the learning organization* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Doubleday.
- Seroto, J. (2012). Rural education in South Africa: A critical reflection on government reconstruction and development efforts. *Journal of Human Ecology*, 37(2), 77-84.
- Shaked, H., & Schechter, C. (2016). Sources of systems thinking in school leadership. *Journal of School Leadership*, 26(3), 468-494.
- Shamaki, T. A. (2015). Influence of learning environment on students' academic achievement in mathematics: A case study of some selected secondary schools in Yobe State-Nigeria. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 6(34), 40-44.
- Shenton, A. K. (2004). Strategies for ensuring trustworthiness in qualitative research projects. *Education for Information*, 22(2), 63-75.
- Shukla, R. (2010). *Dictionary of education*. Delhi: APH Publishing.
- Sileyew, K. J. (2019). Research design and methodology. In E. Abu-Taieh, A. El Moutasim and I. H. Al Hadid (Eds.), *Cyberspace* (pp. 27-38). London: IntechOpen.
- Simkins, T. (2012). Understanding school leadership and management development in England: Retrospect and prospect. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, 40(5), 621-640.
- Skedsmo, G., & Huber, S. G. (2019). Forms and practices of accountability in education. *Educational Assessment, Evaluation and Accountability*, 31(3), 251-255.
- Smith, R. E. (2018). *Systems thinking in medicine and new drug discovery* (Vol. 1). Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- Smith, W. C., & Benavot, A. (2019). Improving accountability in education: The importance of structured democratic voice. *Asia Pacific Education Review*, 20(2), 193-205.
- Spaull, N. (2013). Poverty & privilege: Primary school inequality in South Africa. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 33(5), 436-447.
- Spaull, N. (2015). Accountability and capacity in South African education. *Education as Change*, 19(3), 113-142.
- Spaull, N. (2019). Equity: A price too high to pay? In N. Spaull and J. Jansen (Eds.), *South African schooling: The enigma of inequality* (pp. 1-24). Cham: Springer International Publishing.

- Spaull, N., & Van der Berg, S. (2020). Counting the cost: COVID-19 school closures in South Africa and its impact on children. *South African Journal of Childhood Education*, 10(1), 1-13.
- Starman, A. B. (2013). The case study as a type of qualitative research. *Journal of Contemporary Educational Studies/Sodobna Pedagogika*, 64(1), 28-43.
- Steyn, G. M. (2013). Building professional learning communities to enhance continuing professional development in South African schools. *The Anthropologist*, 15(3), 277-289.
- Stoop, N. (2018). What people say: Application of rural definitions and descriptors of community in Ingersoll, Ontario. *Rural review: Ontario Rural Planning, Development, and Policy*, 2(1), 1-15.
- Stuckey, H. (2014). The first step in data analysis: Transcribing and managing qualitative research data. *Journal of Social Health and Diabetes*, 2(1), 6-6.
- Taole, M., & Mncube, V. S. (2012). Multi-grade teaching and quality of education in South African rural schools: Educators' experiences. *Studies of Tribes and Tribals*, 10(2), 151-162.
- Taylor, N. (2006). *Accountability and support in school development in South Africa*. 4th Sub-regional Conference on Assessment in Education. Johannesburg: Umalusi.
- Tembwe, N. N. (2013). *Perceptions of educational professionals regarding the goals and implementation of the school cluster system reform in Namibia: A case study of one cluster in Caprivi region: 1999-2011* (Unpublished doctoral thesis). University of Cape Town, Cape Town.
- Theofanidis, D., & Fountouki, A. (2018). Limitations and delimitations in the research process. *Perioperative Nursing*, 7(3), 155-163.
- Thompson, E., & France, R. G. (2015). Suburban district leadership does matter. *Journal for Leadership and Instruction*, 14(1), 5-8.
- Thomson, S. (2018). Achievement at school and socioeconomic background—an educational perspective. *NPJ Science of Learning*, 3 (5), 1-2.
- Tigere, M. T. (2016). *The role of school management teams in managing factors that influence learner academic performance in grade 12 examinations in KwaZulu-Natal* (Unpublished MEd thesis) University of South Africa, Pretoria.
- Tobin, G. A., & Begley, C. M. (2004). Methodological rigour within a qualitative framework. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 48(4), 388-396.

- Usman, Y. D. (2016). Accountability in education: An imperative for service delivery in Nigerian school systems. *Online Submission*, 1(1), 264-272.
- Van Der Berg, S. (2011). Current poverty and income distribution in the context of South African history. *Economic History of Developing Regions*, 26(1), 120-140.
- Van der Berg, S. (2015). What the Annual National Assessments can tell us about learning deficits over the education system and the school career. *South African Journal of Childhood Education*, 5(2), 28-43.
- Van der Berg, S., Spaull, N., Wills, G., Gustafsson, M., & Kotzé, J. (2016). *Identifying binding constraints in education*. Stellenbosch, South Africa: Department of Economics, University of Stellenbosch.
- Van der Berg, S., Taylor, S., Gustafsson, M., Spaull, N., & Armstrong, P. (2011). *Improving education quality in South Africa: Report for the National Planning Commission*, 2, 1-23.
- Van Der Voort, G., & Wood, L. (2014). Assisting school management teams to construct their school improvement plans: An action learning approach. *South African Journal of Education*, 34(3).
- Van Der Voort, G., & Wood, L. (2016). An action-learning model to assist Circuit Teams to support School Management Teams towards whole-school development. *South African Journal of Education*, 36(4), 1-11.
- Van Staden, S., Graham, M., & Harvey, J. (2020). An analysis of TIMSS 2015 science reading demands. *Perspectives in Education*, 38(2), 285-302.
- Verger, A., & Parcerisa, L. (2017). *Accountability and education in the post-2015 scenario: International trends, enactment dynamics and socio-educational effects*. Paris: UNESCO.
- Veriava, F. (2017). Basic education provisioning. In F. Veriava, A. Thom & T. F. Hodgson (Eds.), *Basic education rights handbook: Education rights in South Africa* (pp. 218-235). Johannesburg, South Africa: Section 27.
- Von Bertalanffy, L. (1972). The history and status of general systems theory. *Academy of Management Journal*, 15(4), 407-426.
- Wagner, R. B. (2013). *Accountability in education: A philosophical inquiry*. New York: Routledge.
- Walker, A., & Ko, J. (2011). Principal leadership in an era of accountability: A perspective from the Hong Kong context. *School Leadership & Management*, 31(4), 369-392.

- Weerakkody, N. C. (2017). *Student academic performance: The role of motivation, strategies, and perceived factors hindering students of vocational training and education at tertiary level in Sri Lanka*. In: Proceedings of the International Postgraduate Research Conference 2017 (IPRC–2017), Faculty of Graduate Studies, University of Kelaniya, Sri Lanka.
- Whitehead, K., Keshet, M., Lombrowski, B., Domenico, A., & Green, D. (2007). Definition and accountability: A youth perspective. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 77(3), 348.
- Woessmann, L. (2016). The economic case for education. *Education Economics*, 24(1), 3-32.
- Wyk, C. V., & Marumoloa, M. (2012). The role and functioning of school management teams in policy formulation and implementation at school level. *Journal of Social Sciences*, 32(1), 101-110.
- Xie, G., & Zhang, Y. (2020). School of golden touch? A study of school effectiveness in improving student academic performance. *The Journal of Chinese Sociology*, 7, 1-22.
- Yan, Y. (2019). Making accountability work in basic education: Reforms, challenges and the role of the government. *Policy Design and Practice*, 2(1), 90-102.
- Yazan, B. (2015). Three approaches to case study methods in education: Yin, Merriam, and Stake. *The Qualitative Report*, 20(2), 134-152.
- Yin, R. K. (2003). Designing case studies. In L. Maruster & M. J. Gijsenberg (Eds.), *Qualitative Research Methods* (pp. 359-386). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.
- Yin, R. K. (2009). How to do better case studies. In L. Bickman and D. J. Rog's (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of applied social research methods* (pp. 254-282). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.
- Yusuf, A. (2002). Inter-relationship among academic performance, academic achievement, and learning outcomes. *Journal of Curriculum and Instruction*, 1(2), 87-96.

APPENDIX A: LETTER TO KZN DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION ASKING FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

6 Firtree Avenue
22 Paramount Park
Cleland
PIETERMARITZBURG
3201

15 January 2020

The Head of Department
KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education
247 Burger Street
Anton Lembede House
PIETERMARITZBURG
3201

Dear Sir

RE: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT ONE OF YOUR DISTRICTS

My name is Ntombiningi Nokukhanya Mbele (student no. 954060234) currently a teacher at Esigodini Public Primary School. In pursuit of my continuing professional development, I have enrolled for a Master's in Education Degree in the field of Leadership and Management, at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. As part of the prescribed procedures for completing this degree, I am required to conduct a research project. My research topic is: Enhancing primary schools' accountability for learners' academic performance: Perspective of Umgungundlovu district officials. This letter thus seeks to request permission from you to conduct research at your district.

The main aim of my study is to gain insight on how the district office enhances accountability for learners' academic performance in primary schools. Given the enormous financial investment that the government is committing in education, one believes that such an investment should yield positive dividends to the state and the nation at large. Ensuring accountability from those entrusted with such responsibility is one of the strategies to employ in order to attain the state's money's worth.

My study will involve interviewing sample of officials from Umgungundlovu District. The sample will comprise TLS-GET, circuit managers and Assessment and Examinations respectively. Interviews will be recorded and take up to a maximum of 45 minutes. An interview schedule will be semi-structured and be made available before the interview.

Participants' anonymity and confidentiality during and post the research project will be assured using pseudonyms. Furthermore, participation is purely voluntary and thus participants will be at liberty to withdraw from the project at any stage without incurring any negative consequences.

Please note that there will be neither financial rewards nor costs for participants in the research project, it is purely on a voluntary basis. Arrangements with regards to date, time and venue will be done well in advance with participants to ensure minimal encroachment of their working hours.

For any further questions or concerns that you may have pertaining the study, I have enclosed the contact details of my supervisor.

Yours faithfully

NN Mbele (Miss)

Cell No. 083 958 0947

Email: ziniingi@gmail.com OR 954060234@stu.ukzn.ac.za

Supervisor's Details

Prof Phumlani Myende

Faculty of Education

University of KwaZulu-Natal – School of Education

Edgewood Campus

Tel. No. 031-260 3965/ 031-260 5291

Email: MyendeP@ukzn.ac.za

UKZN Research Ethics Office

Tel. No. 031-2604557

Email: Hssrec@ukzn.ac.za

APPENDIX B: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH



education

Department:
Education
PROVINCE OF KWAZULU-NATAL

Enquiries: Phindile Duma/Buyi Ntuli

Tel: 033 392 1063/51

Ref.: 2/4/8/4019

Miss Ntombingi Nokukhanya Mbele
6 Firtree Avenue
22 Paramount Park
PIETERMARITZBURG
3201

Dear Ms Mbele

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE KZN DoE INSTITUTIONS

Your application to conduct research entitled: **"ENHANCING PRIMARY SCHOOL' ACCOUNTABILITY FOR LEARNERS' ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE"**, 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 15 January 2020 to 10 January 2022.
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 at the contact numbers below.
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.

Ac
Go

UMGUNGUNDLOVU DISTRICT

Dr. EV Nzama
Head of Department: Education
Date: 15 January 2020

KWAZULU-NATAL DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Postal Address: Private Bag X9137 • Pietermaritzburg • 3200 • Republic of South Africa
Physical Address: 247 Burger Street • Anton Lembede Building • Pietermaritzburg • 3201
Tel.: +27 33 392 1063 • Fax.: +27 033 392 1203 • Email: Phindile.Duma@kzndoe.gov.za • Web: www.kzneducation.gov.za
Facebook: KZNDOE... Twitter: @DBE_KZN... Instagram: kzn_education... Youtube: kzndoe

...Championing Quality Education - Creating and Securing a Brighter Future

APPENDIX C: LETTER REQUESTING PERMISSION FROM THE DISTRICT DIRECTOR TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE DISTRICT

6 Firtree Avenue
22 Paramount Park
Cleland
PIETERMARITZBURG
3201

15 January 2020

The District Director
Umgungundlovu District
185 Langalibalele Street
PIETERMARITZBURG
3201

Dear Sir

RE: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT YOUR DISTRICT

My name is Ntombiningi Nokukhanya Mbele (student no. 954060234) currently a teacher at Esigodini Public Primary School. In pursuit of my continuing professional development, I have enrolled for a Master's in Education Degree in the field of Leadership and Management, at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. As part of the prescribed procedures for completing this degree, I am required to conduct a research project. My research topic is: Enhancing primary schools' accountability for learners' academic performance: Perspective of Umgungundlovu district officials. This letter thus seeks to request permission from you to conduct research at your district.

The main aim of my study is to gain insight on how the district office enhances accountability for learners' academic performance in primary schools. Given the enormous financial investment that the government is committing in education, one believes that such an investment should yield positive dividends to the state and the nation at large. Ensuring accountability from those entrusted with such responsibility is one of the strategies to employ in order to attain the state's money's worth.

My study will involve interviewing sample of district officials. The sample will comprise TLS-GET, circuit managers and Assessment and Examinations respectively. Interviews will be recorded and take up to a maximum of 45 minutes. An interview schedule will be semi-structured and be made available before the interview.

Participants' anonymity and confidentiality during and post the research project will be assured using pseudonyms. Furthermore, participation is purely voluntary and thus participants will be at liberty to withdraw from the project at any stage without incurring any negative consequences.

Please note that there will be neither financial rewards nor costs for participants in the research project, it is purely on a voluntary basis. Arrangements with regards to date, time and venue will be done well in advance with participants to ensure minimal encroachment of their working hours.

For any further questions or concerns that you may have pertaining the study, I have enclosed the contact details of my supervisor.

Yours faithfully

NN Mbele (Miss)

Cell No. 083 958 0947

Email: ziniingi@gmail.com OR 954060234@stu.ukzn.ac.za

Supervisor's Details

Prof Phumlani Myende

Faculty of Education

University of KwaZulu-Natal – School of Education

Edgewood Campus

Tel. No. 031-260 3965/ 031-260 5291

Email: MyendeP@ukzn.ac.za

UKZN Research Ethics Office

Tel. No. 031-2604557

Email: Hssrec@ukzn.ac.za

APPENDIX D: PERMISSION FROM THE DISTRICT DIRECTOR TO CONDUCT RESEARCH



education

Department:
Education
PROVINCE OF KWAZULU-NATAL

ENQUIRES: MR S MABINZA

REF:94/3

DATE: 31/02/2020

TO : Ms. N.N MBHELE

FROM: MR.S MABINZA
DISTRICT DIRECTOR
UMGUNGUNDLOVU DISTRICT

Dear Madam

RE: REQUEST TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT UMGUNGUNDLOVU DISTRICT
SCHOOLS/OFFICES

1. The above matter refers.
2. This serves to grant you permission to conduct your research in the schools & offices under UMgungundlovu District.
3. Kindly note that the granting of the permission does not compel any Principal or official to participate in the research.
4. Any participant will do so freely and voluntarily without any duress.
5. We wish you all the best in your studies.

Thank you

MR S. MABINZA
DISTRICT DIRECTOR
UMGUNGUNDLOVU DISTRICT

31/02/2020
DATE

Leading Social Compact and Economic Emancipation
Through a Revolutionary Education for ALL

KWAZULU-NATAL DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Postal Address: Private Bag X91367 • Pietermaritzburg • 3200 • Republic of South Africa
Physical Address: 185 Langalibalele Street • Old Mutual Building • Pietermaritzburg • 3201
Tel: +27 33 365 2334 • Email: longeka.Mkhize@kzndoe.gov.za • Web: www.kzndoe.gov.za
Facebook: KZNDOE...Twitter: @DOE_KZN...Instagram: kzn_education...Youtube: kzndoe

APPENDIX E: PARTICIPANTS' CONSENT LETTER WITH DECLARATION FORM

6 Firtree Avenue
22 Paramount Park
Cleland
PIETERMARITZBURG
3201

15 January 2020

Dear Participant

RE: INFORMED CONSENT LETTER

My name is Ntombiningi Nokukhanya Mbele. I am currently a teacher at Esigodini Public Primary School. In pursuit of my continuing professional development, I have enrolled for a Master's in Education Degree in the field of Leadership and Management, at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. As part of the prescribed procedures for completing this degree, I am required to conduct a research project. My research topic is: Enhancing primary schools' accountability for learners' academic performance: Perspective of Umgungundlovu district officials. This letter thus seeks to request you to participate in the study.

My study will involve interviewing sample of district officials. The sample will comprise TLS-GET, circuit managers and Assessment and Examinations respectively. Interviews will be recorded and take up to a maximum of 45 minutes. An interview schedule will be semi-structured and be made available before the interview.

Additionally, please take note of the following regarding your participation:

- There will be neither financial rewards nor costs for participating in the research project, it is purely on a voluntary basis.
- Your identity will under no circumstances, be disclosed during and post the study.
- Any information given by you cannot be used against you, and the collected data will be used only for research purposes.
- Your choice to participate is only voluntary and you can withdraw at any stage and there will be no negative consequences thereof.
- Transcripts of all sessions will be made available to you and you are allowed to withdraw some of the information you will provide in the case of second thoughts.
- The information gathered in this study will be kept for five years in a secured and safe place at the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

For any further questions or concerns that you may have pertaining the study, I have enclosed the contact details of my supervisor.

Yours faithfully

NN Mbele (Miss)
Cell No. 083 958 0947
Email: ziniingi@gmail.com OR 954060234@stu.ukzn.ac.za
Supervisor's Details

Prof Phumlani Myende
University of KwaZulu-Natal
Tel.No.031-2603965/031-260 5291
Email: MyendeP@ukzn.ac.za

UKZN Research Ethics Office
Tel. No. 031-2604557
Email: Hssrec@ukzn.ac.za

APPENDIX F: DECLARATION FORMS

DECLARATION FOR PARTICIPANTS

I, (Full name of participant) hereby confirm that 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 that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire.

Additional consent, where applicable

I hereby provide consent to:	YES	NO
Audio-record my interview		
Furthermore, I understand that:		
No financial rewards or costs will be incurred for my participation		
My identity will not be disclosed during and post the study		
My participation will be voluntary throughout the study		
Information given cannot be used against me during and post the study		

SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT

DATE

.....

.....

For any queries and further information, you may consult my supervisor, Prof. Phumlani Myende on 031-260 2052 or myendep@ukzn.ac.za. You can also contact me (Ms Ningi Mbele using the details provided in the letter requesting permission).

APPENDIX G: SIGNED DECLARATION FORMS FROM PARTICIPANTS

DECLARATION FOR PARTICIPANTS

I, [REDACTED] (Full name of participant)
hereby confirm that 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 that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire.

Additional consent, where applicable

I hereby provide consent to:	YES	NO
Audio-record my interview	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Furthermore, I understand that:		
No financial rewards or costs will be incurred for my participation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My identity will not be disclosed during and post the study	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My participation will be voluntary throughout the study	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Information given cannot be used against me during and post the study	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT

[REDACTED]

DATE

19/10/2020

For any queries and further information, you may consult my supervisor, Dr Phumlani Myende on 031-260 2052 or myendep@ukzn.ac.za. You can also contact me (Ms Ningi Mbele using the details provided in the letter requesting permission).

DECLARATION FOR PARTICIPANTS

..... (Full name of participant)
hereby confirm that 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 that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire.

Additional consent, where applicable

I hereby provide consent to:	YES	NO
Audio-record my interview	X	
Furthermore, I understand that:		
No financial rewards or costs will be incurred for my participation	X	
My identity will not be disclosed during and post the study	X	
My participation will be voluntary throughout the study	X	
Information given cannot be used against me during and post the study	X	

SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT

.....

DATE

01/10/2020

For any queries and further information, you may consult my supervisor, Dr Phumlani Myende on 031-260 2052 or myendep@ukzn.ac.za. You can also contact me (Ms Ningi Mbele using the details provided in the letter requesting permission).

DECLARATION FOR PARTICIPANTS

I, (Full name of participant)
hereby confirm that 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 that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire.

Additional consent, where applicable

I hereby provide consent to:	YES	NO
Audio-record my interview	✓	
Furthermore, I understand that:		
No financial rewards or costs will be incurred for my participation	✓	
My identity will not be disclosed during and post the study	✓	
My participation will be voluntary throughout the study	✓	
Information given cannot be used against me during and post the study	✓	

SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT

.....

DATE

02/10/2020

For any queries and further information, you may consult my supervisor, Dr Phumlani Myende on 031-260 2052 or myendep@ukzn.ac.za. You can also contact me (Ms Ningi Mbele using the details provided in the letter requesting permission).

DECLARATION FOR PARTICIPANTS

I, [REDACTED] (Full name of participant)
hereby confirm that 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 that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire.

Additional consent, where applicable

I hereby provide consent to:	YES	NO
Audio-record my interview	✓	
Furthermore, I understand that:	✓	
No financial rewards or costs will be incurred for my participation	✓	
My identity will not be disclosed during and post the study	✓	
My participation will be voluntary throughout the study	✓	
Information given cannot be used against me during and post the study	✓	

SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT

[REDACTED]

DATE

2020. 10. 05

For any queries and further information, you may consult my supervisor, Dr Phumlani Myende on
031-260 2052 or myendep@ukzn.ac.za. You can also contact me (Ms Ningi Mbele using the details
provided in the letter requesting permission).

DECLARATION FOR PARTICIPANTS

I, [REDACTED] (Full name of participant)
hereby confirm that 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 that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire.

Additional consent, where applicable

I hereby provide consent to:	YES	NO
Audio-record my interview	✓	
Furthermore, I understand that:	✓	
No financial rewards or costs will be incurred for my participation	✓	
My identity will not be disclosed during and post the study	✓	
My participation will be voluntary throughout the study	✓	
Information given cannot be used against me during and post the study	✓	

SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT

[REDACTED]

DATE

18/10/2020

For any queries and further information, you may consult my supervisor, Dr Phumlani Myende on 031-260 2052 or myendepi@ukzn.ac.za. You can also contact me (Ms Ningi Mbele using the details provided in the letter requesting permission).

DECLARATION FOR PARTICIPANTS

I, (Full name of participant)
hereby confirm that 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 that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire.

Additional consent, where applicable

I hereby provide consent to:	YES	NO
Audio-record my interview	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Furthermore, I understand that:		
No financial rewards or costs will be incurred for my participation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
My identity will not be disclosed during and post the study	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
My participation will be voluntary throughout the study	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Information given cannot be used against me during and post the study	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	

SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT

.....

DATE

20/10/2020

For any queries and further information, you may consult my supervisor, Dr Phumlani Myende on 031-260 2052 or myende@ukzn.ac.za. You can also contact me (Ms Ningi Mbele using the details provided in the letter requesting permission).

APPENDIX H: INTERVIEW SCHEDULES

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE: subject advisors and circuit managers.

1. The district is quite big, how many primary schools are there and how many are you responsible for?
2. What do you understand by the concept of accountability as it relates to the schooling sector especially primary schools? What does it mean to hold schools accountable?
3. Do you believe that primary schools should account for learners' academic performance? Why
4. Understanding the financial commitment that the government is making in education, how do you ensure that through your office, how do you ensure that primary schools account for the work that they do? Why do you make them account in that particular manner?
5. What measures do you have in place to ensure that primary schools do account for learners' academic performance? Why take that particular action?
6. Share with me what are the factors that constrain your work in ensuring that primary schools do account for learners' academic performance?
7. What strategies do you employ to enhance accountability in primary schools? OR What factors enhance holding primary schools' accountability for learners' academic performance?
8. Do you think your office is doing enough in terms of ensuring accountability in primary schools? What changes do you think need to be instituted in order to strengthen accountability in primary schools?
9. We are aware and the literature shows that secondary schools in the country use national results to benchmark schools and further to ensure that schools account. Now in the context of primary schools where there is no national assessment for benchmarking, tell me how do you ensure that school leaders account for learners' academic performance?
10. One of the challenges that the literature reveals is that district officials are not visible enough in schools, especially in primary schools, would you say the same happens in your case?
11. There is this view that there must be a balance between holding schools accountable and providing support. What is your take on this?

APPENDIX I: TURNITIN REPORT

Digital Receipt

This receipt acknowledges that Turnitin received your paper. Below you will find the receipt information regarding your submission.

The first page of your submissions is displayed below.

Submission author: Ntombeningi Nokukhanya Mbele
Assignment title: FINAL DISSERTATION
Submission title: Thesis
File name: FINAL_THESIS_ZININGI.docx
File size: 209.13K
Page count: 94
Word count: 35,410
Character count: 201,017
Submission date: 08-Jul-2021 10:33PM (UTC+0200)
Submission ID: 1617261232

Thesis

ORIGINALITY REPORT

9%

SIMILARITY INDEX

7%

INTERNET SOURCES

3%

PUBLICATIONS

4%

STUDENT PAPERS

PRIMARY SOURCES

1

researchspace.ukzn.ac.za

Internet Source

1%

2

Submitted to University of KwaZulu-Natal

Student Paper

1%

APPENDIX J: EDITOR'S LETTER

Crispin Hemson
15 Morris Place
Glenwood
Durban
South Africa 4001

hemsonc@gmail.com
0829265333

This is to confirm that I have undertaken language editing of a Masters study by Ziningi Mbele, entitled **Enhancing Primary Schools' Accountability for Schools' Performance: Perspective of Umgungundlovu District Officials**

.



8th July 2021

