

**The role of principals and departmental heads as curriculum leaders in  
fee-paying Gauteng secondary schools**

by

**Johnson Bhila**

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree

**Magister Educationis**

(Education Management, Law and Policy Studies)

in the

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**Faculty of Education**

**University of Pretoria**

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**JUNE 2024**

## DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

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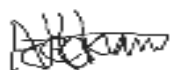
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I, Johnson Bhila (student number: 22681443), declare that this dissertation, entitled: “The role of principals and departmental heads as curriculum leaders in fee-paying Gauteng secondary schools”, has not previously been submitted by me for a degree at the University of Pretoria or any other university; that this is my own work in design and execution and that all material from published sources contained herein has been duly acknowledged.



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<b>INVESTIGATOR</b>	Mr Johnson Bhila
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<b>APPROVAL TO COMMENCE STUDY</b>	02 May 2023
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## ETHICAL STATEMENT

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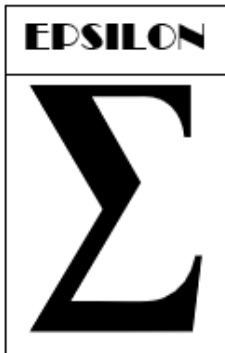
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I, Johnson Bhila (student number (22681443), obtained ethical approval for the investigation into “The role of principals and departmental heads as curriculum leaders in fee-paying Gauteng secondary schools”. I declare that I observed the ethical standards and policy guidelines for responsible research in the code of ethics for researchers prescribed by the University of Pretoria.



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#### TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

This is to confirm that I have completed the language editing of the thesis **The role of principals and departmental heads as curriculum leaders in fee-paying Gauteng secondary schools** by Johnson Bhila submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree Master of Education in the Department of Education Management, Law and Policy Studies in the Faculty of Education at the University of Pretoria.

Yours faithfully

Isobet Oberholzer

7 April 2024



# DEDICATION

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This dissertation is dedicated to God the Father, God the Holy Spirit and God the Son, Jesus Christ, my Lord and Saviour. To Him alone be all the Glory. “This is the LORD's doing; it is marvellous in our eyes.” Psalm 118 verse 23.



# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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# ABSTRACT

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This study employed a qualitative descriptive case study design that investigated the roles of curriculum leadership in South African fee-paying secondary schools in the Gauteng Province. Adopting an interpretive paradigm, the study used Instructional Leadership theory as the theoretical framework. The study responds to challenges associated with poor coordination in the implementation of the curriculum, teaching, assessment, and evaluation to promote quality teaching and learning. The study's target population comprised principals and departmental heads in fee-paying secondary schools within the Gauteng Province. Purposive sampling was used to select 12 participants, comprising principals and departmental heads from six secondary schools, to explore the roles of these curriculum leaders through in-depth interviews and document analysis. The data was analysed thematically, and findings indicated that principals adopt holistic responsibilities, encompassing teaching, community engagement, and overall school functionality. In contrast, departmental heads focus on specific domains, ensuring high-quality teaching within their departments and highlighting the collaborative nature of educational management. The study exposed challenges curriculum leaders face, such as external pressures and resource constraints. Results indicated that addressing these challenges necessitates balanced approaches, integrating collaborative professionalism, evidence-based practices, and comprehensive leadership training. Strategic initiatives, including stakeholder engagement and positive school climate promotion, emerge as key strategies in effective curriculum leadership, aligned with established educational leadership principles. The research paints a comprehensive picture of curriculum leadership in South African fee-paying secondary schools. The study argues that despite the identified challenges, strategic, evidence-based, and collaborative approaches pave the way for effective curriculum leadership. The study offers practical, policy, and theoretical recommendations, emphasizing continuous professional development, standardized disciplinary guidelines, and the integration of Instructional Leadership Theory into official policies.

## **Keywords:**

Curriculum leadership, principals, departmental head, fee-paying schools, curriculum leadership roles.



## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

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NCS	National Curriculum Statement
CAPS	Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement
EWP6	Education White Paper 6
SASA	South African Schools Act
RNCS	Revised National Curriculum Statement
DBE	Department of Basic Education
DOE	Department of Education
TIMSS	Trend in Mathematics and Science Study
NEPA	National Education Policy Act
SGB	School governing body
DH	Departmental head
SBA	School-based assessments
SMT	School management team
GDE	Gauteng Department of Education
ATP	Annual teaching plan
NNSSF	National Norms and Standards for School Funding
GDP	Gross Domestic Product



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# CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

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## 1.1 INTRODUCTION

Curriculum leadership is characterised by coordinating the curriculum, teaching, assessment and evaluation to promote quality learning and understanding (Darling-Hammond, 2017). There are numerous benefits to receiving a high-quality education, and curriculum leadership activities have been recognised as helping schools provide this type of education (Huber, 2017). One can note that good curriculum leadership enhances the quality of education offered by a school. Good curriculum leadership supports the development of a school that is conducive to positive change, and a school culture that embraces collaboration and administrative and teaching staff willing to work exceptionally hard for their students and meet their diverse needs (Jorgensen, 2015). The study therefore argues that good curriculum leadership is pivotal to a school's well-being and all-around success.

The roles of school leaders as curriculum leaders have evolved over the years for reasons that include the need for higher standards of education quality and more accountability and to respond to increasing parental demands (Grootenboer, 2018). Harris *et al.* (2020) note that curriculum leadership requires a critical evaluation of teaching fundamentals, including content, progression, assessment and pedagogy. Fullan and Gallagher (2020) add that it is crucial not to undervalue curriculum leaders' role in enhancing learning environments, educational institutions, and systems.

Conversely, many curricula leadership problems stem from a lack of alignment between educational goals and teaching practices, indicating a disconnect between leaders' vision and classroom implementation (Smith, 2021). This study argues that when such a disconnect occurs between curriculum and practice, the standards of education drop, resulting in the poor achievement of learning outcomes. Jones (2020) also affirms that insufficient communication and collaboration among educational leaders often hinder effective curriculum development, leading to fragmented approaches and confusion among educators. Another issue is the failure to adequately address student populations' changing needs and diversity, as Harris *et al.* (2020) indicated. A lack of responsiveness can hinder effective curriculum leadership and lead to disparities in educational outcomes (Milondzo &

Seema, 2015). This study, therefore, in light of the identified challenges, aimed to address the gap to enhance the effectiveness of school leaders in their role as curriculum leaders.

In an attempt to address the above-highlighted issues surrounding curriculum leadership roles, countries across the globe have implemented several strategies to improve educational outcomes and ensure effective leadership in curriculum development, teaching, assessment and evaluation. Notably, countries like the United States of America, England, and New Zealand have adopted localised systems, commonly known as “site-based management” or “site council governance” (Grootenboer, 2018). As Grootenboer (2018) described, site-based management refers to a decentralised educational management approach where individual schools are given increased autonomy and decision-making powers. . In such a system, schools have the authority to make key decisions related to curriculum development, resource allocation, and educational strategies tailored to the specific needs of their students and communities. However, while these localised systems aim to address the issues, it is important to clarify the specific mechanisms through which they empower school leaders and how they effectively resolve the challenges associated with curriculum leadership roles.

Looking to the African continent, the adoption of site-based leadership and school governance board approaches was noted by researchers like Moorosi and Bush (2019), who undertook a comprehensive exploration of the educational landscape in the sub-Saharan African region that included countries such as Tanzania, South Africa, Nigeria, Namibia, Lesotho, Kenya, Ghana, Cameroon and Botswana. Moorosi and Bush's (2019) research extends to specific examples of African nations implementing these innovative school leadership models. One notable challenge identified is the need for a comprehensive overhaul of entrenched centralised education systems, which often resist the transition to decentralised decision-making (Moorosi & Bush, 2019). Additionally, ensuring equitable access to educational resources and opportunities across diverse regions within these countries can be a persistent challenge, as local autonomy in curriculum design may inadvertently exacerbate educational disparities (Eacott, 2022). These challenges highlight the complexity of implementing site-based leadership approaches to address curriculum leadership roles and call for relevant strategies tailored to each context.

In the South African context, the role of principals and departmental heads in curriculum leadership is rooted in theories that emphasise participation, site-based management, teamwork, and distributed leadership (Bush & Glover, 2016). Naidoo and Petersen (2016)

observe that with the advent of the South African Schools Act (SASA) of 1996, decision-making has been decentralised to the level of individual school structures, where stakeholders such as principals and departmental heads are expected to regulate the processes of administering the schools. Principals and departmental heads are accountable for the professional management of the institution (DOE, 2006). This means they must deeply understand the school curriculum vision and mission (Xiong, Lim & Liu, 2020). Furthermore, the Personnel Administrative Measures (PAM) document lays out in detail the roles of principals and department heads, including managing teachers and support staff, overseeing the implementation of curriculum activities and educational programs, and keeping accurate records of student performance in accordance with the requirements of the South African Schools Act (DBE, 2022).

In South Africa, implementing principals' curriculum roles is usually associated with several challenges (Nevenglosky *et al.*, 2019). Recently, Tapala, Mentz and Fuller (2020) also shed light on the context of curriculum leadership in South Africa, highlighting a notable absence of formal preparation programs for individuals aspiring to become principals and departmental heads before assuming leadership and management roles. The same researchers also point out that in-service professional development programs in curriculum leadership are limited within the South African educational landscape. Tapala (2019) also indicates that departmental heads have a great deal of responsibility as curriculum leaders, and this position calls for some level of training and growth.

Given the challenges described above, this study explored how principals and departmental heads in fee-paying secondary schools in the Gauteng Province of South Africa understand their roles as curriculum leaders and their strategies in performing these roles. The decision to focus on fee-paying secondary schools in Gauteng Province of South Africa is rooted in the desire to contribute to the existing body of knowledge on curriculum leadership, as previous studies mainly concentrate on non-fee-paying schools situated in the townships and rural areas (Mestry, 2017). Fee-paying schools are located in urban areas and enjoy privileged access to enhanced resources and specialised skills, as highlighted in a study by Mestry (2017). Fee-paying schools, falling within quintiles 4 to 5, often possess diverse skill sets due to their socio-economic status, contrary to quintiles 1 to 3 schools situated in low-income areas and dependent on government funding. This skill variance could influence their access to school management capacity programs, potentially shaping how principals and departmental heads carry out their curriculum leadership roles. Recognising the

distinctive dynamics, expectations, and resource allocations prevalent in fee-paying schools is essential. By concentrating on these urban fee-paying schools, the study aimed to uncover new insights into the intricacies of principals' and departmental heads' curriculum leadership roles within this specific context as well as to complement and enhance the broader understanding of curriculum leadership.

## **1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT**

Ideally, principals and departmental heads should understand and implement their curriculum leadership roles successfully. Understanding their roles as curriculum leaders will increase proficiency in their work (Al-Mahdy *et al.*, 2018), providing them with evidence of achievement and encouraging dedication (Chan *et al.*, 2022). Excellent understanding is usually accompanied by enthusiasm for the work and invention of superior tactics for accomplishing set aims. Principals and departmental heads can make innovative contributions towards realising educational goals and improving learner performance if they are prepared for and made aware of their roles as curriculum leaders in a school setup (Heystek, 2016).

However, principals and departmental heads face challenges in understanding and implementing their curriculum leadership roles (Madonsela & Proches, 2021). Tapala (2019) points to challenges that include internal conflicts among the principals and departmental heads, a lack of teamwork, divisions among staff members, and no effective professional development, all leading to the lack of monitoring and support by principals and departmental heads in secondary schools. Principals and departmental heads grapple with numerous pressing issues, including meetings, personnel concerns, conflicts, and decision-making processes (Seobi & Wood, 2016), all requiring immediate attention. Priorities become problems as they cannot perform all simultaneously (Ogina, 2017). Where principals and departmental heads are engaged in too many activities, they will lag in their work. Competing priorities aggravate the already limited time available to principals and departmental heads and prevent them from performing specific duties (Murphy & Bleiberg, 2019). Similarly, Bush (2018) also underscores the immense pressure principals face due to increased administrative responsibilities, and departmental heads often find themselves working in isolation from top management and distanced from their fellow teachers.

The problem underpinning this study stemmed from the challenges uncovered in previous studies regarding school leaders' curriculum leadership roles, as discussed above. '*How do*

*principals and department heads perform their roles as curriculum leaders in fee-paying secondary schools in Gauteng Province, South Africa?* is the primary research question posed by the study to deal with this problem. Ultimately, the goal is to contribute to a more comprehensive and better understanding of curriculum leadership that can inform educational policy and practice within this specific context and offer broader lessons for educational leadership and curriculum development.

### **1.3 RATIONALE OF THE STUDY**

The primary motivation for conducting this research was the discovery of gaps in scholarly literature regarding curriculum. For instance, while Harris *et al.* (2023) assert that the issue of curriculum leadership is a major contributor to under-performance in some schools, they claim that there is a narrow understanding of curriculum leadership roles amongst many principals and departmental heads in South Africa. This issue of limited understanding and its repercussions has been further echoed in the research by Bush and Glover (2016), emphasising the need for comprehensive studies to explore the challenges and gaps in curriculum leadership. Additionally, Marekwa's study (2014) reports challenges and intricacies surrounding curriculum leadership within South African secondary schools. These observations point to a pressing problem that necessitates further investigation and exploration within the field.

Second, this study was motivated by my professional and personal experiences as a school teacher. For some time, I had noticed real challenges and complexities related to the leadership style of the principals and departmental heads regarding their roles as curriculum leaders. For example, the principal and the departmental heads at my school presumed that I knew everything. I was not conscientised and introduced to the realities of my job, so I was able to implement the curriculum just like any other teacher who had been there before me. I had to learn through trial and error which is not supposed to be the case. I was not taught, and it was a challenge. It is the duty of the principals and departmental heads to conscientise and introduce newly appointed teachers to the realities of their job so that they can implement the curriculum. The above practical experience served as a compelling catalyst for the study. By conducting research in secondary schools in Gauteng Province, particularly in Johannesburg East, where limited prior research has been conducted, this study aims to explore deeply into the issues identified. It aspires to contribute theoretically and practically to understanding and enhancing curriculum leadership in South Africa, filling a pressing need for comprehensive investigation and analysis within the field.

## **1.4 PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The purpose of this study is to explore the roles of the principals and departmental heads as curriculum leaders in some fee-paying secondary schools in Gauteng Province, South Africa. For this purpose, the following objectives were devised:

- ❖ To describe how principals and departmental heads understand their roles as curriculum leaders in fee-paying secondary schools in Gauteng Province, South Africa.
- ❖ To determine the strategies principals and departmental heads use in performing their curriculum leadership roles in fee-paying secondary schools in Gauteng Province, South Africa.
- ❖ To identify the challenges principals and departmental heads encounter as curriculum leaders in fee-paying secondary schools in Gauteng Province, South Africa.
- ❖ To identify and discuss how principals and departmental heads can be supported in enhancing the performance of their curriculum leadership roles in Gauteng Province, South Africa.

## **1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

In line with the purpose and objectives of the study, a main research question and four secondary research questions were posed.

### **1.5.1 Main research question**

How do principals and departmental heads perform their roles as curriculum leaders in fee-paying secondary schools in Gauteng Province, South Africa?

### **1.5.2 Secondary research questions**

1. How do principals and departmental heads understand their roles as curriculum leaders in fee-paying secondary schools in Gauteng Province, South Africa?
2. What are the strategies used by principals and departmental heads in performing their roles as curriculum leaders in fee-paying secondary schools in Gauteng Province, South Africa?

3. What are the challenges encountered by principals and departmental heads in their roles as curriculum leaders in fee-paying secondary schools in Gauteng Province, South Africa?
4. How can the principals and departmental heads as curriculum leaders be supported to enhance the performance of their curriculum leadership roles in Gauteng Province, South Africa?

## **1.6 CLARIFICATION OF CONCEPTS**

### **1.6.1 Curriculum leadership**

To understand the concept of curriculum leadership, it is important to begin by drawing a line between the concepts of curriculum leadership and curriculum management as these concepts are sometimes used interchangeably in literature (Terhoven, 2016). Management as a discipline is concerned with implementation, transaction and system, and focuses on stability. In contrast, leadership focuses on vision, transformation and people, and entails taking risks by challenging the status quo (Clarke, 2007; Christie, 2010). In the same line of thinking, Terhoven (2016) asserts that schools require a curriculum leadership that will move them forward and give them a sense of direction by developing a vision for the future that allows them to adapt and adhere to the day-to-day requirements of an ever-changing complex society.

In the context of this study, curriculum leadership refers to the pivotal role of school principals in guiding and overseeing the development, implementation, and improvement of the school's educational programs and curriculum (Bahtilla & Hui, 2020). This leadership role extends to setting a clear vision for academic excellence and aligning the curriculum with educational standards and the school's mission (Dematthews, 2014). According to Tak *et al.* (2022), these educational leaders are responsible for providing a direction for learning objectives and collaborating with departmental heads and teachers to make informed decisions about curriculum content, instructional methods, and assessment strategies.

### **1.6.2 Curriculum leaders**

Curriculum leaders are educational professionals entrusted with the responsibility of shaping and overseeing the academic programs within a school or educational institution (Naidoo & Petersen, 2016). These individuals play a pivotal role in designing, implementing, and evaluating the curriculum to ensure it aligns with educational standards, learning objectives,

and the needs of the students (DeMatthews, 2014). Curriculum leaders collaborate with teachers, assess educational resources, and make data-driven decisions to enhance the overall learning experience, fostering a dynamic and effective educational environment (Huber, 2017). This study focused on school principals and departmental heads as curriculum leaders.

### **1.6.3 School principals**

School principals are educational leaders responsible for a school's overall administration and management. They serve as the central authority, overseeing teachers, staff, and students while ensuring the school's adherence to educational policies and standards. Principals play a crucial role in shaping the school's vision and mission, fostering a positive learning environment, and promoting a culture of academic excellence (Tak, Ridley & Morris, 2022). They are involved in decision-making processes, curriculum planning, and the implementation of effective teaching methodologies. Principals also engage with parents, the community, and other stakeholders to create a supportive network for the school (Sanders, 2014). Their leadership encompasses various aspects, including financial management, personnel supervision, student discipline, and fostering a safe and inclusive school environment. Effective principals inspire and motivate their staff, empowering them to create a nurturing educational environment conducive to student success (Naidoo & Petersen, 2016).

### **1.6.4 School departmental head**

Departmental heads are experienced educators who assume leadership roles within specific academic departments, such as mathematics, science, or humanities, in schools or educational institutions (Tapala, Mentz & Fuller, 2020). They are responsible for overseeing the curriculum, instructional practices, and assessment methods within their designated department (Mestry, 2017). Departmental heads collaborate with teachers to ensure the effective delivery of subject-specific content, aligning with educational standards and learning objectives. Their responsibilities include curriculum development, lesson planning, and assessment design tailored to their subject area. They play a vital role in supporting and mentoring teachers, providing guidance on teaching methodologies, classroom management, and student engagement strategies (Heystek, 2016). Departmental heads also liaise with school leadership and other department heads to coordinate interdisciplinary activities and foster a cohesive educational experience for students. Their expertise and

leadership contribute significantly to the overall academic quality and coherence of the school's educational programs (Tapala, Mentz & Fuller, 2020).

### **1.6.5 Fee-paying schools**

In South Africa, public schools are categorised into five quintiles based on the socio-economic status of the communities they serve. Quintile 1 to 3 schools are classified as no-fee schools, which receive full state funding and do not charge school fees. Quintile 4 and 5 schools are classified as fee-paying schools, which receive partial state funding and charge school fees according to their own policies (DBE, 2018). Fee-paying schools are generally perceived as having better resources, facilities, and performance than no-fee schools (Mestry, 2016). In these schools, students often experience smaller class sizes, specialised programs, and enhanced resources due to the financial contributions from parents or guardians. While these schools offer additional amenities and personalised attention, their accessibility often depends on the financial means of the students' families. Fee-paying schools aim to provide a high-quality education, emphasising individualised learning, extracurricular opportunities, and academic excellence, often attracting families seeking specialised or exclusive educational environments (Bush & Glover, 2016). However, fee-paying schools also face various challenges and pressures, such as maintaining high standards of education quality and accountability, meeting learners' and parents' diverse needs and expectations, and coping with the competition from other schools (Naicker *et al.*, 2020).

### **1.6.6 Roles**

In the educational context, roles refer to the specific functions, responsibilities, and duties assigned to individuals within a school or academic setting (Walker & Shaw, 2015). These roles are diverse and encompass various stakeholders, including teachers, administrators, students, parents, and support staff. Teachers are central figures responsible for classroom instruction, creating engaging learning experiences, and assessing student progress (Macleod, 2017). Administrators, such as principals and departmental heads, assume leadership roles, overseeing the overall school management, curriculum implementation, and teacher supervision, (Milondzo & Seema, 2015). Students have roles as learners, actively engaging in the educational process, participating in class activities, and completing assignments (Naidoo & Petersen, 2016).

## **1.7 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The theoretical lens that guides this study is the Instructional Leadership Theory by Hallinger (2011). Hallinger's (2011) theory has three components: defining school goals, managing instructional programmes and promoting the school climate. Hallinger (2011) points out that the role of the principal should be to frame and communicate school goals. Managing instructional programmes entails supervising and evaluating the instruction, coordinating the curriculum and monitoring students' development (Mestry, 2017). Promoting the school climate entails protecting the instructional period, always seen, providing incentives for teachers and promoting professional development.

The Instructional Leadership Theory can be used to evaluate whether principals understand their roles according to the three components of the study. For example, the responses of principals regarding their understanding of their roles can be evaluated in terms of their goal formulation and the methods they use to communicate the goals to the different stakeholders, as proposed by Hallinger's (2011) theory. The theory is also relevant in explaining the principals' strategies for implementing their roles, such as defining school goals, managing instructional programmes, and maintaining a good school climate.

The theory also proves valuable in comprehending the diverse challenges confronted by school leaders while executing their roles. For instance, in the realm of managing instructional programs, the theory serves as a framework to elucidate the varied hurdles experienced by school leaders, encompassing tasks such as coordinating the curriculum, supervising teachers, and monitoring student development (Hallinger, 2011). Its applicability lies in providing a structured perspective on these challenges, aiding school leaders in devising effective strategies to overcome these obstacles and optimise their roles in fostering educational excellence (Hallinger, 2011).

## **1.8 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The research methodology in this study aligns with the interpretive research paradigm. This paradigm was chosen to capture diverse perspectives and participants' lived experiences in relation to the roles of principals and departmental heads as curriculum leaders in fee-paying secondary schools. It emphasises the exploration of subjective realities and offers a lens through which the study's qualitative data collection and analysis will be approached (Saunders & Townsend, 2018).

### **1.8.1 Research design**

In order to explore the roles of principals and departmental heads as curriculum leaders in fee-paying secondary schools, a qualitative case study research design was adopted. This approach involved the investigation of six fee-paying public secondary schools in the Gauteng Province of South Africa. The case study research was chosen due to its suitability for conducting research in real school contexts, allowing for interviews in the natural settings of the participants. This section briefly introduces the chosen research methodology (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

### **1.8.2 Sampling strategy**

The study's target population comprises principals and departmental heads in fee-paying secondary schools within the Gauteng Province. A purposive sampling technique as described by Creswell and Creswell (2017) was employed to select one principal and one departmental head from each of the six selected schools. Purposive sampling involves the deliberate selection of participants based on specific criteria to ensure that those selected possess relevant knowledge and insights related to the research topic. This technique was chosen to achieve diversity in perspectives and roles within the educational context. The criteria for school selection included their location in the Gauteng Province, specifically within the Johannesburg East district, their fee-paying status, and the experience requirements of principals and departmental heads which informs the rationale behind the sampling strategy (Denzin & Lincoln, 2013).

### **1.8.3 Research participants**

The research participants were the six principals and six departmental heads from the six selected fee-paying Gauteng Province secondary schools. The participants included five females and seven males. The gender distribution reflects the availability and willingness of participants within the context of the study. More males were available and willing to participate, this naturally influenced the final numbers. The participants' highest qualifications range from Ph.Ds. to diplomas in education, showcasing a spectrum of educational expertise.

### **1.8.4 Data collection techniques**

Qualitative data for this study were generated through semi-structured interviews, which are guided conversations with selected principals and departmental heads. and document

analysis, which involves examining relevant documents and materials. Additionally, document analysis which involves examining relevant documents and materials was employed as a data-generation instrument to enhance the study's rigor and triangulate data sources for increased trustworthiness. These data collection methods were chosen to gather rich and contextually relevant information, as explained by Merriam and Tisdell (2016).

#### **1.8.5 Data analysis approach**

The qualitative data analysis followed a thematic approach, involving the preparation of summary notes for each interview. Thematic analysis was chosen as the primary analytical method to uncover the awareness of the principals and departmental heads regarding their roles as curriculum leaders.

### **1.9 ACCURACY AND TRUSTWORTHINESS**

The criteria for achieving trustworthiness should be adhered to during qualitative research. Trustworthiness considers how truthful the data set is and how consistent the data is with the findings. Shufutinsky (2020) explains that the trustworthiness of a study emanates from the study's credibility, dependability, transferability and confirmability which are discussed in detail in Chapter 3.

### **1.10 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE STUDY**

Ethical principles in research concern the standards that guide researchers on how they should interact with research participants. Researchers must establish trust, rapport and authentic communication patterns with participants, as access and entry are sensitive components of research studies (Johnson & Christensen, 2017). The ethical considerations for this study are discussed in Chapter 3. In brief, the researcher kept the following ethical issues in mind: obtaining permission to conduct the research, explaining the purpose of the research along with the stages and processes to be followed to all participants, and guaranteeing participants confidentiality, anonymity and privacy during the research, safeguarding the dignity, rights, safety and well-being of the participants, asking participants to give their informed consent to participate, providing participants with an option to withdraw from the research without any negative consequences (Johnson & Christensen, 2017).

### **1.11 STRUCTURE OF THE RESEARCH REPORT**

This report is divided into five chapters, as described below.

## **Chapter 1**

This chapter provides the background and rationale for the study. It outlines the study's purpose and objectives and lists the research questions guiding it. It gives a brief overview of the methodology and theoretical framework used in the study. It ends by offering definitions of the essential concepts used in the research and an outline of this report's structure.

## **Chapter 2**

Chapter 2 presents a review of the literature researched for the study. It begins by defining the school curriculum and presenting different types of curricula used in educational institutions today. It then examines curriculum leadership and the roles of principals and departmental heads in undertaking this leadership role both globally and in South Africa. The chapter concludes by presenting the theoretical framework used in the study.

## **Chapter 3**

Chapter 3 looks at the research approach and discusses the research design, data collection and data analysis methods, and the measures put in place to ensure the validity and reliability of the study. Ethical considerations that were put in place during data collection are also discussed.

## **Chapter 4**

Chapter 4 presents the findings of the study and their interpretation. In this chapter, the study's findings are comprehensively presented and thoroughly analysed, shedding light on the key insights derived from the research. Through rigorous data analysis and interpretation, the chapter provides a deeper understanding of the relationships and patterns uncovered during the study, offering valuable insights into the research questions or objectives.

## **Chapter 5**

The last chapter summarises the study's findings and the conclusions drawn from the findings. It then makes recommendations for the stakeholders involved with curriculum

leadership in South Africa based on these conclusions. Finally, the chapter lists the study limitations and possible directions for future research to overcome these limitations.

## **1.12 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

This chapter introduced the study by providing the context of the study and presenting the problem to be researched. It outlined the purpose, objectives and research questions devised for the study. It then indicates the research methodology and the theoretical framework used to guide the study. The chapter ends with the structure of the research dissertation. The next chapter focuses on the literature review of recent and current scholarly work related to this study.



## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

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### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

An in-depth review of the literature on curriculum leadership in schools is given in this chapter. It specifically examines the roles played by principals and departmental heads in the school context. Through this review, the chapter aims to analyse the current state of research, pinpoint any existing gaps in knowledge, and rationalise the selection of the research topic. Additionally, it outlines the theoretical framework that serves as the foundation for this study, providing a structured framework for the research inquiry.

### 2.2 DEFINING SCHOOL CURRICULUM

A school curriculum can be defined as everything that is taught at a school, including the timetable, the learning subjects and everything at school that influences how the school operates and is sustainable (Huber, 2017; Darling-Hammond, 2017). A curriculum includes the school experiences that relate to the improvement of the skills and strategies of the learners as implemented by the educators (Glatthorn *et al.*, 2018). A curriculum is all of the learning experiences that students participate in over a course of study (DeMatthews, 2014). The aim of a curriculum is to accomplish distinct goals as well as general ones that have been formulated within a framework of theory and research (Goodwin, 2017). These goals should consider both current and historical professional practices as well as the changing demands of the society.

Definitions of a curriculum can generally be categorised as prescriptive or descriptive (Glatthorn *et al.*, 2018). Prescriptive curriculum prescribes what should happen in schools by taking the form of a plan or intended programme of study or by providing an expert opinion regarding what needs to take place in a study programme (Glatthorn *et al.*, 2018). Two definitions of the prescriptive category are as follows: Dewey (1902) defines a curriculum as a continuous reconstruction that occurs as a child moves from their present experience into an experience that is represented by organised bodies of truth called studies. Secondly, curriculum is defined by the Indiana Department of Education (2010) as the organised way in which students engage with the instructional content, resources, materials, and procedures used to accomplish and assess learning goals.

Descriptive definitions of curriculum, in contrast, explain how a curriculum either benefits or harms the individuals it influences (Xiong *et al.*, 2020). Two definitions of the descriptive curriculum are firstly as all the experiences that children go through while being supervised by teachers in schools, and secondly as the portion of a school's programming that has an immediate impact on students. According to this definition, anything included in the lesson plan that does not reach the student is not a part of the curriculum; rather, it is an educational wish (Kiat *et al.*, 2017).

Having reviewed the various definitions of the school curriculum, as discussed above, the study suggests that a curriculum can be defined as a set of plans used to guide learning in a school. These plans are usually recorded as documents that apply to several levels of the school environment. These plans should be implemented in a learning environment that has the potential to influence what is learnt by the learner (Glatthorn *et al.*, 2018). The following section looks at the six types of curriculum identified by Glatthorn *et al.* (2018).

### 2.2.1 Types of Curricula

This section discusses the types of curriculum that can be used by principals and departmental heads as curriculum leaders, following the classification by Glatthorn *et al.* (2018). Recommended, written, supported, taught, tested, and learned curriculums are the six types of curriculum according to Glatthorn *et al.* (2018). School leaders must take the goals, qualities, and difficulties of each curriculum type into consideration.

Scholars, associations for professionals, and reform commissions support the **recommended curriculum**. According to Fisher and Frey (2016), the recommended curriculum represents the curriculum mandated by policy-making authorities like state education agencies and public departments. This kind of curriculum provides standards and recommendations for what students should study and accomplish at multiple educational levels.

The approved district and provincial curriculum guides represent the **written curriculum**. The guides guarantee that the system's educational objectives are met and prepare students for college and various vocations (Glatthorn *et al.*, 2018). This type of curriculum is documented and communicated to educators, students, and parents.

The resources allotted to support and deliver the curriculum determine the **supported curriculum**. According to Fisher and Frey (2016) and Glatthorn *et al.* (2018), it calls for

departmental heads and school principals to rally a broad coalition of support on the personal, curriculum, and technological fronts. This type of curriculum includes the materials, equipment, facilities, personnel, and training that are available for teaching and learning.

The ***taught curriculum*** is dependent on the resources provided to teachers, including textbooks, curriculum guides, course materials, and supplementary materials. It is left to the discretion of the teacher how to teach the learners (Glatthorn *et al.*, 2018). This type of curriculum depends on the teacher's knowledge, skills, beliefs, and practices.

The ***tested curriculum*** offers a collection of acquired information and abilities that are evaluated through either teacher-planned in-class evaluations or standardised testing. It is used to compare learner performance and hold schools accountable for their goals and decisions (Huber, 2017; Glatthorn *et al.*, 2018). This type of curriculum influences what educators teach and what students learn.

Lastly, the ***learned curriculum*** addresses every issue pertaining to behavior, values, and perspectives as the result of educational experiences. It comprises the knowledge, skills, and understanding that the student picks up from both the hidden and intended curriculum (Huber, 2017; Glatthorn *et al.*, 2018). This type of curriculum reflects the actual outcomes of education. The knowledge of these different types of curriculums can inform curriculum leaders on how to carry out their curriculum leadership roles.

## **2.3 CURRICULUM LEADERSHIP**

Curriculum leadership denotes a crucial aspect of educational management that transcends geographical boundaries and applies to diverse schools worldwide (Bahtilla & Hui, 2020). It signifies the influential role assumed by educational leaders in steering the development, execution, and enhancement of a school's educational programs and curriculum (Fleet, *et al.*, 2015). These leaders, often school principals, shoulder the responsibility of crafting a clear and compelling vision for academic excellence. This vision encompasses aligning the curriculum with rigorous educational standards and harmonising it with the school's overarching mission and goals (Gülbahar, 2017).

In a broader sense, curriculum leadership is defined by Ylimaki (2011) as the act of performing tasks that facilitate the accomplishment of a school's main objective, which is to deliver high-quality education. In order to do this, Ylimaki (2011) contends that curriculum

leadership must be a cooperative process of fundamental change involving progressive groups of parents, educators, students, administrators, and community leaders who methodically handle related social and educational issues.

According to Glatthorn and Boschef (2014), one of the responsibilities of curriculum leaders is to employ appropriate techniques to align the written, taught, supported, and tested curriculums in a way that maximises the learned curriculum. Consequently, curriculum leaders must exercise strong leadership to support the dynamic curriculum of the school by assisting staff and any curriculum workers in considering and choosing a curriculum design that best meets the needs of the students (Ediger, 2014).

Shellard (2002) has identified the competencies that a principal needs to possess in order to function as an effective curriculum leader. These competencies include observation, analysis, teaching improvement, learning theory, and methods to instructional planning. Professional development could enhance principals' curriculum leadership abilities (Boston *et al.*, 2017). Glatthorn *et al.* (2018) assert that the most successful curriculum leaders take on a dynamic role and go above and beyond what is required of them. According to Heystek (2016) curriculum leaders facilitate school development processes, provide new directions, align people and resources, and inspire participation.

Curriculum leadership enhances student learning and comprehension in schools by establishing connections between curriculum, instruction, assessment, and evaluation (Nevenglosky *et al.*, 2019). Curriculum leaders should look at issues of monitoring, reviewing, developing staff in the schools, and promoting a culture of building and allocating resources (Goodwin, 2017). Nevenglosky (2018) sums up the components of curriculum leadership as identifying the mission, overseeing curriculum and instruction, assessing student progress, supervising teaching, and fostering an instructional climate. Therefore, core components like teaching, methodology, assessment and content must all be carefully considered for curriculum leadership. This explains why curriculum leadership is important, why it merits much more study, and why curriculum leaders in schools should be capacitated to effectively perform the curriculum leadership duties.

## **2.4 CURRICULUM LEADERS IN SCHOOLS**

In the realm of education, curriculum leaders are highly skilled and experienced professionals designated to craft and manage the academic programs within educational institutions, transcending the role of principals (Menter, 2019). These experts bear the

responsibility of meticulously designing, executing, and assessing the curriculum to guarantee its alignment with rigorous educational standards, meet predefined learning objectives, and cater to the diverse needs of students (Ni *et al.*, 2018). This means, that in order to address the unique requirements of students, it is necessary for curriculum leaders in schools to be diversified and able to use a variety of techniques to fulfil the different demands of their student body.

The pivotal role of curriculum leaders extends to fostering collaboration with educators, where they actively engage in the assessment of educational resources. Furthermore, curriculum leaders leverage data-driven insights to make informed decisions, ensuring the enhancement of the overall learning experience. By creating a vibrant and dynamic educational environment, these professionals play a fundamental role in nurturing a culture of academic excellence and continuous improvement within the institution (Chan *et al.*, 2022). Therefore, it goes against the conventional wisdom that dictates organisations should operate in silos and pushes curriculum leaders to create new routines and frameworks that encourage mutual learning.

## **2.5 ROLES ATTRIBUTED TO THE CURRICULUM LEADERS IN SCHOOL**

Curriculum leaders in schools play multifaceted roles that are critical to the success of educational institutions (Hiesh *et al.*, 2021). They are responsible for various aspects of the national curriculum policies within the organisations they are assigned to, such as developing, implementing, and evaluating the curriculum, supporting and supervising educators, and ensuring alignment with standards and goals (Fullan, 2015). Some of the roles of curriculum leaders in school are discussed below.

### **2.5.1 Curriculum-related roles**

Curriculum-related roles refer to the various responsibilities and functions that individuals, such as curriculum leaders and educators, undertake to design, develop, implement, and assess educational curricula. In the following paragraphs, some key curriculum-related roles and their importance in the educational system are discussed.

***Curriculum planning and development*** involve designing, organising, and creating a curriculum framework that aligns with educational standards, objectives, and student needs. According to Priestley *et al.* (2015), curriculum planning is a deliberative process that involves making choices about what knowledge, skills, and values should be included in the

curriculum. Priestley *et al.* (2015), argue that curriculum planning should be driven by a clear educational purpose and a consideration of learners' needs and aspirations. Priestley and Biesta (2013) also shared the same view by saying curriculum planning should involve a more flexible and responsive approach that considers students' diverse needs and interests. In addition to the existing literature on curriculum planning and development, it is critical to consider students' academic demands, backgrounds, and abilities during the design and development stage in order to guarantee an inclusive curriculum.

**Curriculum implementation** is the process of converting the planned curriculum into instructional practice in classrooms and schools. It includes curriculum-related roles of school curriculum leaders. Fullan and Quinn (2016) emphasise the importance of effective implementation, which involves supporting educators in understanding and enacting the curriculum as intended. Fullan and Quinn (2016) further indicate that implementation requires ongoing monitoring, feedback, and adjustment to ensure fidelity to the curriculum goals. However, debates might occur on the degree of adherence to the recommended curriculum and teacher autonomy (Bryk & Schneider, 2023). Thus, Qian and Walker (2013) highlight the necessity of giving educators the latitude to modify the curriculum to suit the individual requirements of their students.

One of the curriculum-related roles of school curriculum leaders is assessment and evaluation, which is vital in establishing the efficacy of the curriculum and student learning outcomes. Shepard *et al.* (2018) highlight the importance of using various assessment methods to capture the complexity of learning and inform instructional decision-making. However, there are controversies concerning the application of high-stakes testing and how it affects teaching and learning. Some scholars, such as Popham (2020), criticise the overemphasis on standardised testing and advocate for a broader range of assessment practices that capture a more comprehensive understanding of student learning. Therefore, curriculum leaders must choose the appropriate form of assessment rather than succumbing to pressure to favour one over another.

Curriculum leaders are responsible for facilitating professional development opportunities for educators to enhance their instructional practices. Shields (2017) emphasise the importance of sustained, job-embedded professional development that is aligned with curriculum goals and focused on improving instruction. Shields (2017) argues that effective professional development should provide educators with opportunities for collaboration, reflection, and ongoing support. Nonetheless, there are obstacles in the way of guaranteeing

that all teachers have equal access to excellent professional development opportunities and that these opportunities directly impact classroom practice (Jorgensen, 2015). The necessity of comprehensive approaches to professional development that cater to the unique requirements of educators and encourage ongoing growth is emphasised by Darling-Hammond (2017).

Curriculum leaders coordinate and align the curriculum across different grade levels, subject areas, and departments (Domínguez *et al.* 2020). They ensure coherence and progression in the curriculum, promoting vertical and horizontal alignment to enhance student learning experiences. Domínguez *et al.* (2020) emphasize the role of curriculum leaders in facilitating collaboration and communication among teachers to ensure a seamless transition and consistency in the curriculum. However, challenges can arise when balancing consistency with the need for flexibility and adaptation to meet the diverse needs of students (Domínguez *et al.* 2020).

Curriculum leaders are responsible for evaluating the effectiveness of the curriculum and ensuring its alignment with educational goals and standards (Reeves, 2020). They conduct regular evaluations, gather feedback, and make necessary adjustments to enhance the quality of the curriculum (Reeves, 2020). Evaluation and quality assurance processes are essential for continuous improvement. However, differences of opinion can arise regarding the criteria used for evaluation and the extent to which evaluation processes are standardized. Some scholars, like Yin and Lee (2019), advocate for a balanced approach that combines qualitative and quantitative measures to capture a comprehensive understanding of curriculum effectiveness.

### **2.5.2 Administrative roles of curriculum leaders**

Within the scope of the study, examining the role of principals and departmental heads as curriculum leaders in fee-paying Gauteng secondary schools, the term “administrative roles” pertains to principals’ and departmental heads’ responsibilities, which include strategic planning, resources management, collaboration with stakeholders, and the evaluation of the school activities. In this context, these administrative roles are intricately linked to curriculum leadership because they enable all other facets of education to enhance student learning (Tapala *et al.*, 2020). This is in line with the findings of Milondzo and Seema (2015), who noted that the implementation of effective administrative practices had an impact on student achievement.

According to Hargreaves (2018), strategic planning involves setting long-term goals and developing a clear roadmap for achieving them. Curriculum leaders collaborate with school administrators and stakeholders to align curriculum goals with the school's overall vision and mission (Hiesh *et al.*, 2021). They consider the needs and aspirations of the school community to develop comprehensive and forward-thinking curriculum plans (Sinnema & Stoll, 2020). However, differences of opinion arise regarding the prioritisation of goals and the allocation of resources. Some researchers, like Fullan and Gallagher (2020), emphasise the importance of focusing on equity and social justice in strategic planning to ensure that all students have access to a high-quality curriculum. It is critical for curriculum leaders to be skilful in strategic planning in order to avoid setting unrealistic goals and directing resources towards erroneous goals.

Curriculum leaders use data analysis to guide decision-making. To identify areas for improvement and create data-driven initiatives, curriculum leaders examine data on student success, assessment outcomes, and curriculum evaluation findings. Goodwin (2017) argues that data-informed decision-making is crucial for enhancing the effectiveness of the curriculum. On the other hand, there are contentions about when data should be used and how easily it might be misconstrued or abused. Braun and Kanjee (2018), emphasise the importance of using multiple sources of data and considering contextual factors in data analysis. Clearly, data analysis has the potential to offer insightful information that supports curriculum leaders in making better decisions and raising student achievement. Engaging stakeholders is a vital aspect of curriculum leadership because developing relationships with stakeholders who can support learning and the school atmosphere is another aspect of curriculum leadership (Mestry, 2017). Curriculum leaders actively involve various stakeholders in decision-making processes, such as educators, parents, students, and community members (Ni *et al.*, 2018). They establish open lines of communication and gather feedback to ensure that curriculum development, implementation, and evaluation are responsive to the needs and perspectives of the school community (Braun & Kanjee, 2018). Daniel (2017) highlights the role of curriculum leaders in building trusting relationships with stakeholders to foster a collaborative and inclusive decision-making process.

Curriculum leaders actively participate in the development and implementation of policies related to curriculum, instruction, and assessment. They stay informed about educational policies and regulations to ensure compliance within their leadership role. Hsieh, Tseng and Chen (2021) highlight the importance of curriculum leaders in interpreting policies and

translating them into actionable plans at the school level. However, debates can arise regarding the impact of policy mandates on teacher autonomy and the extent to which policies reflect the diverse needs of students. Menter (2019), advocate for policies that provide flexibility and allow for local adaptation to accommodate contextual factors. Curriculum leaders' administrative attributes would enhance their flexibility and interpretation of the policy.

By considering the perspectives of the consulted literature, curriculum leaders can gain valuable insights into the various dimensions of their administrative roles. It is important for curriculum leaders to engage with perspectives of the consulted literature critically, adapt them to their specific contexts, and promote ongoing dialogue and reflection to enhance their administrative practices.

### **2.5.3 Resource management roles of curriculum leaders**

Resource management roles of curriculum leaders involve the strategic allocation of educational resources, including budgeting, staff deployment, and procurement of materials and technologies. These roles are discussed in detail below.

According to Steinberg and Simon (2019), curriculum leaders are responsible for budget planning and allocation to meet the resource needs of curriculum implementation. Curriculum leaders prioritise resource allocation based on identified needs and allocate funds accordingly. On the other hand, conflicting demands for resources and a lack of funding might lead to problems. Trujillo and Perdomo-Rivera (2020) emphasise the need for equitable budgeting practices to ensure that all schools and students have access to necessary resources. This aligns with the views of Sorenson (2011), who noted that curriculum leaders should look at issues of monitoring, reviewing, developing staff in the schools, and promoting a culture of building and allocating resources. Although there are challenges faced in ensuring that all the necessary resources needed for the school are available, it is evident that it is the curriculum leaders' role to budget planning and allocation to meet the resource needs of curriculum implementation (Steinberg & Simon, 2019).

Curriculum leaders oversee procurement and inventory management of curriculum resources (Madriz & Yildirim, 2018). They collaborate with suppliers, negotiate contracts, and ensure the timely delivery of resources. Additionally, they manage inventory to track resource usage and maintain efficient resource utilisation (Madriz & Yildirim, 2018). Although literature shows that curriculum leaders oversee the procurement process to

ensure resource relevance and alignment with instructional goals (Madriz & Yildirim, 2018), nevertheless, choosing the right resources and running procurement procedures well might be difficult (Whitley *et al.*, 2020). The procurement process may also be delayed as the curriculum leaders have many other demanding roles in their position. As such, it is critical to understand the strategies used by curriculum leaders to fulfil their roles.

The role of curriculum leaders in managing and integrating technology resources is crucial in the modern educational landscape. According to Niederhauser and Sadera (2019) curriculum leaders identify technology needs, explore options, and coordinate the acquisition and implementation of digital tools and resources. They also provide support and training to educators for effective technology integration. Warschauer (2021) emphasises the importance of thoughtful technology integration that supports meaningful learning experiences for all students. This concurs with the views of Ward *et al.* (2021) who noted curriculum leaders must manage technological resources. Managing and integrating technology resources is an important role of curriculum leaders, but it can be a daunting task because of the rapid changes in technological resources.

Furthermore, curriculum leaders oversee the maintenance and renewal of curriculum resources to ensure availability and accessibility (Macleod, 2017). They provide instructional materials and technology tools are in good condition, up to date, and accessible to educators and students (Fullan, 2015). They develop strategies for resource renewal, replacement, and disposal as needed. Drayton and Falk (2021) emphasise the importance of sustainable resource management practices that consider the environmental impact and cost-effectiveness of resource maintenance and renewal. Therefore, to improve their resource management techniques, curriculum leaders should critically interact with these concepts, modify them for their unique settings, and encourage continual discussion and evaluation.

Curriculum leaders evaluate and select curriculum resources that align with educational goals and student needs. They review textbooks, supplementary materials, online resources, and other instructional aids to ensure quality, relevance, and alignment with curriculum objectives. In the process, they involve teachers and stakeholders to gather diverse perspectives. However, controversies can arise regarding the evaluation criteria used and the influence of commercial interests in resource selection. Research by Hess (2019) highlights the importance of transparency and evidence-based criteria in resource evaluation to ensure high-quality selections.

In the same line, curriculum leaders allocate resources and plan professional development opportunities for teachers to enhance their instructional practices (Darling-Hammond *et al.* 2017). They identify relevant workshops, conferences, courses, and other learning opportunities and arrange for funding and scheduling to support teachers' professional growth (Darling-Hammond *et al.* 2017). However, challenges can arise in providing ongoing professional development that meets the diverse needs of teachers. Darling-Hammond *et al.* (2017) emphasize the importance of job-embedded professional development that is tailored to teachers' specific needs and supports sustained improvement in instructional practices.

Above all effective resource management is essential for curriculum implementation. Dabbagh and Kitsantas (2021) explain that curriculum leaders are responsible for managing and allocating resources such as instructional materials, technology, and professional development opportunities. They ensure that teachers have the necessary resources to support their instructional practices and enhance the curriculum. However, controversies can emerge around resource allocation and equity. Scholars, such as Spillane *et al.*, (2021), argue that resource management should address disparities among schools and provide equitable access to resources to ensure a fair and inclusive curriculum.

#### **2.5.4 Partnering, liaising, and involvement of stakeholders-related roles**

Partnering, liaising, and involvement of stakeholders refer to the collaborative efforts and communication strategies employed by curriculum leaders to engage various individuals and groups, such as parents, educators, community members, and educational policymakers, in the curriculum development and implementation process (Hiesh *et al.*, 2021). The activities foster cooperation, gather input, and build consensus to create a curriculum that aligns with stakeholders' diverse needs and perspectives are discussed below.

According to Fullan (2015), curriculum leaders actively engage in building collaborative relationships with various stakeholders. Curriculum leaders establish relationships and liaise with universities, businesses, and nonprofit organisations to leverage additional expertise and resources. They collaborate with these organisations to enhance curriculum offerings, provide real-world connections, and facilitate student experiential learning opportunities (Schmidt & Hayes, 2022). They establish open lines of communication, foster trust, and promote partnerships to ensure meaningful involvement in curriculum-related decision-making processes. This approach aligns with the idea of distributed leadership, where

multiple stakeholders contribute to shaping the curriculum. However, challenges can arise in building and maintaining collaborative relationships, particularly when stakeholders have diverse perspectives and interests. These challenges include stakeholders' poor communication and non-attendance at meetings (Glatthorn *et al.*, 2018). These challenges can possibly be addressed by building collaborative relationships on trust. Trust can be cultivated among other things by being truthful, open, keeping commitments and accomplishing objectives.

Curriculum leaders, as highlighted by Robinson and Timperley (2020), serve as advocates and representatives of the school community in broader educational contexts. They participate in educational networks, professional organisations, and policy discussions to voice the needs and perspectives of their stakeholders (Epstein & Sheldon, 2022). Through their involvement, they ensure that the interests of the school community are considered in educational policies, reforms, and decision-making processes. But, striking a balance between advocacy work and the obligations of regular curriculum leadership duties can be difficult (Glatthorn *et al.*, 2018).

Creating a culture of professional collaboration is essential for curriculum leaders. They promote teamwork and facilitate opportunities for teachers to share best practices, engage in professional learning communities, and collaborate on curriculum-related initiatives. Osterman and Kottkamp (2021) emphasize the importance of collaborative learning environments that enable teachers to collectively improve their instructional practices. However, differences of opinion can emerge regarding the extent of collaboration and its impact on individual teacher autonomy. Dufour, Eaker, and Karhanek (2016), argue for a systemic approach to professional collaboration that emphasizes collective responsibility for curriculum implementation and improvement.

Furthermore, curriculum leaders play a crucial role in fostering collaboration and communication among teachers, administrators, and stakeholders. Fullan (2015) emphasizes the importance of collaborative professionalism, which involves creating a culture of trust and shared responsibility for the curriculum. He argues that effective collaboration enables teachers to learn from one another, engage in collective problem-solving, and drive continuous improvement. However, challenges exist in establishing collaborative structures and overcoming barriers to effective communication. Bryk and Schneider (2023), highlight the importance of building relational trust and creating a supportive environment for collaboration to thrive.

Curriculum leaders establish collaborations with external partners such as publishers, vendors, and community organizations to access additional resources and support (Lumpe, Czerniak, and Haney, 2019). They negotiate partnerships, seek grants or sponsorships, and explore opportunities for resource sharing and collaboration. However, conflicts of interest and differences in priorities can arise when collaborating with external partners. Research by Lumpe, Czerniak, and Haney (2019) emphasizes the need for transparency and shared goals in external collaborations to ensure the alignment of resources with curriculum objectives.

In their research, Harris, Jones, and Chapman (2020) emphasize the importance of conducting stakeholder needs assessments. Curriculum leaders seek input from teachers, parents, and students to gather valuable insights that inform curriculum planning, development, and improvement efforts. By considering diverse perspectives, they can create a curriculum that reflects the needs and values of the school community. However, controversies can emerge regarding whose voices are prioritized in the needs assessment process and how to balance different stakeholder perspectives.

Hargreaves (2018) highlight the importance of collaboration between curriculum leaders and teachers. Curriculum leaders provide support, guidance, and professional development opportunities that empower teachers to actively participate in curriculum planning, instructional design, and assessment practices. By valuing teachers' expertise and insights, curriculum leaders foster a sense of ownership and commitment to the curriculum among the teaching staff. However, tensions can arise when there is a lack of clarity in roles and responsibilities or when power dynamics hinder effective collaboration.

Researchers like Epstein and Sheldon (2021) emphasize the active involvement of parents and the wider community in curriculum-related matters. Curriculum leaders organize parent and community forums, workshops, and events to share information about the curriculum, seek feedback, and foster collaboration. They also promote opportunities for parents and community members to contribute their knowledge, skills, and resources to enrich the curriculum and enhance student learning experiences. However, challenges can arise in ensuring equitable and meaningful engagement, especially when there are disparities in access to resources and participation.

In their work, Bryk, Gomez, and Grunow (2018) emphasize the importance of partnerships and collaborations with external organizations. Curriculum leaders establish relationships

and liaise with universities, businesses, and nonprofit organizations to leverage additional expertise and resources. They collaborate with these organizations to enhance curriculum offerings, provide real-world connections, and facilitate experiential learning opportunities for students. However, controversies can arise regarding the influence of external entities on the curriculum and the potential commercialization of education.

By considering the perspectives of Hiesh *et al.* (2021), Fullan (2015) and Robinson and Timperley (2020), it becomes evident that partnering, liaising, and involving stakeholders are crucial aspects of effective curriculum leadership. The significance of cooperation and involvement is widely acknowledged, yet managing the varied viewpoints of stakeholders, guaranteeing fair participation, and preserving a balance between competing interests can present problems and conflicts. Curriculum leaders must navigate these complexities while promoting meaningful partnerships and shared ownership of the curriculum.

### **2.5.5 Co-curricular and extracurricular activities-related roles**

Co-curricular and extracurricular activities cover non-academic endeavours and experiences that happen away from the conventional classroom (Balonon-Rosen & Yu, 2021). Curriculum leaders should provide programmes that offer students opportunities for personal growth, skill development, and social engagement beyond their regular academic coursework as discussed below.

According to Graham (2020), curriculum leaders are responsible for developing and overseeing co-curricular and extracurricular programs. They consider student interests, talents, and developmental needs to design a diverse range of activities that complement the formal curriculum. This aligns with the idea that such activities contribute to students' social, emotional, and physical growth. However, it can be challenging to strike a balance between the variety of activities offered to meet the interests of various student populations and making sure that these activities also support educational objectives (Balonon-Rosen & Yu, 2021).

Reynolds and Brown (2019) emphasise the role of curriculum leaders in actively engaging students in co-curricular and extracurricular activities. They promote participation, communicate the benefits, and encourage students to explore their interests and talents beyond the classroom. Nevertheless, it could be difficult to engage and connect with every student, particularly those from underrepresented or marginalised groups, and to ensure that everyone has equal access to a wide range of possibilities (Pedersen & Lundy, 2021).

It is, therefore, critical for curriculum leaders to be innovative in order to be successful in their role of actively engaging students in co-curricular and extracurricular activities.

In addition, Hodge and Wechsler (2021) emphasise the importance of curriculum leaders in providing support and professional development opportunities for faculty members involved in co-curricular and extracurricular activities. This support ensures that educators have the necessary skills and knowledge to facilitate meaningful student experiences. However, tensions may arise when there is a lack of dedicated time and resources for faculty professional development or when faculty members feel overwhelmed by additional responsibilities (Hill *et al.*, 2020). Therefore, curriculum leaders like principals and departmental heads have an obligation to go above and beyond to give their faculty members the assistance and professional development they so desperately need.

Schmidt and Hayes (2022) highlight the importance of collaborative planning between curriculum leaders, teachers, coaches, advisors, and community partners. This collaborative approach ensures that co-curricular and extracurricular activities are well-integrated with the formal curriculum and contribute to students' overall learning experience. However, controversies may arise regarding the allocation of resources, scheduling conflicts, and balancing the demands of academic and non-academic commitments (Taliaferro *et al.*, 2019). As such it is vital that curriculum leaders to have in-depth understanding of the school goals and objectives while allocating resources.

Furthermore, Sánchez-Vásquez *et al.* (2020) indicate that curriculum leaders foster community engagement through co-curricular and extracurricular activities. They establish partnerships with local organizations, businesses, and institutions to provide students with real-world experiences, mentorship, and community service opportunities. This integration of community resources enriches students' learning experiences and fosters a sense of civic responsibility.

## **2.6 UNPACKING THE NOTION OF CURRICULUM LEADERSHIP – A GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE**

To provide an international context around the focus of the study on curriculum leadership, it is essential to explore the experiences and practices of curriculum leaders in other countries. Several international studies have shed light on this topic, offering valuable insights that can enhance understanding of curriculum leadership in different educational contexts.

### **2.6.1 United States of America**

The United States of America (USA) has acknowledged that curriculum leadership in schools is essential to implementing successful school-based curriculum changes that will support students' learning and help them adjust to a changing society (Madonsela & Proches, 2021). In the USA, pressure to hold principals and their subordinate management more accountable for student test results is growing (Murphy & Bleiberg, 2019). Some departmental heads and principals claim that the implementation of the national curriculum has undermined their confidence in their abilities to teach and diminished their capacity to lead the curriculum in the classroom (Jorgensen, 2015). Bush *et al.* (2011) further note that the dual imperatives of changing cultural values and the rapidity of change have propelled the progressive transition toward site-based management in education systems, which has been a global phenomenon. Site-based management refers to the practice of appointing principals and department heads at schools and assigning them responsibilities similar to the principals and departmental heads in South Africa.

### **2.6.2 England**

England has focused on school leadership since the government established the National College for School Leadership in 2000 (O'Neill & Stephenson, 2019). The 1988 Education Act, which granted England's 24,000 schools unprecedented control over their curricula and budgets, provided the foundation for the College's establishment. The National College developed a set of programs for aspiring principals, inexperienced principals, and senior leaders in addition to creating a competency framework that outlined the abilities that school heads require. Schools with heads that participated in these programs improved more quickly than other schools. The National College changed over time from offering nationwide training programs to appointing regional and local trainers. These suppliers made use of the competency framework while customising support and training to meet the unique requirements of schools that are becoming more and more independent. In order to improve challenging schools, the institution has more recently moved its emphasis from leadership development to a more explicit focus on leadership.

### **2.6.3 Wales**

Wales unveiled a newly developed national curriculum framework in 2020. The most important result of Wales' curriculum reform is that it has provided new opportunities for educators to engage in systemic change (Donaldson, 2015). A special emphasis is made

on the vital role that departmental heads and principals play as curriculum leaders to highlight the new curriculum's co-constructed nature. Typically, curriculum leadership involving principals and departmental heads has been restricted to micro-level school-based curriculum leadership through district and regional agency engagement (Crick & Priestley, 2019). Priestley and Biesta (2013) also noted that principals and heads of departments participated systematically and extensively in macro-level curriculum creation of national policy as relatively autonomous leaders.

This methodical approach to curriculum leadership is well-established in Wales instructors' professional agency, and curricular leadership are emphasised by the curriculum "pioneers," or instructors who were actively involved in the co-construction process (Crick & Priestley, 2019). Across the many stages of curriculum construction, principals and departmental heads have worked together and applied their creativity to envisage radically different practice trajectories than those that were previously in place (Crick & Priestley, 2019). Co-constructing the new curriculum has also resulted in the production of several forms of curriculum leadership, including pedagogic leadership, subject/disciplinary leadership, and larger system/structural leadership (Donaldson, 2015). Curriculum leaders, including principals and departmental heads, must therefore, adjust to the numerous changes in curriculum leadership brought about by the new national curriculum framework.

#### **2.6.4 Nigeria**

Since Nigeria gained its independence from Britain in 1960, there have been numerous curriculum reforms. Among the curriculum reforms implemented was the 6-3-3-4 education system in the 1980s, comprising six years of elementary, three years of junior secondary, three years of senior secondary, and four years of post-secondary education (Igbokwe, Mezieobi & Eke, 2014). In order to help students develop self-sufficiency abilities, this system required a junior secondary phase curriculum that was heavily weighted toward science, technology, and vocational topics. After finishing junior secondary school, students had the option to withdraw from their studies and not continue on to the senior phase (Adeyemi, 2015). The government, regrettably, neglected to take into account crucial components for effective execution, which prevented the curriculum's goals from being fulfilled (Igbokwe *et al.*, 2014). The Universal Basic Education Programme was introduced in 1999, and Curriculum 2007 was subsequently put into effect by the Nigerian Federal Government in 2008 (Igbokwe, 2015). The curriculum for this nine-year program is based on the nine-year Basic Education Curriculum, which is divided into three levels: lower level,

Grades 1-3, middle level, Grades 4-6, and upper level, Junior Secondary School (JSS) Forms 1-3. According to Igbokwe (2015), who references the Federal Ministry of Education (2008), the subjects offered in Primary 1 through JSS 3 vary in number from ten to sixteen.

With the introduction of Curriculum 2007, Nigeria's mathematics curriculum was revamped (Igbokwe, 2015). The new mathematics curriculum was well-received by teachers, according to a descriptive survey research conducted by Awofala *et al.* (2012) on 200 elementary and secondary teachers in Calabar Cross River State. Nonetheless, their findings are at odds with those of previous research by Obiunu (2011). It was reported that inadequate teacher preparation, a lack of professional growth opportunities, and a shortage of instructional resources hindered the Curriculum 2007's implementation (Igbokwe, 2015). The nine-year curriculum was amended in 2012 in response to several national and current concerns about making the curriculum more relevant, practical, and in line with international best practices. The revised version was put into effect in September 2014 and is still in use.

It is well known that no educational system can surpass its teachers. These challenges to implementation would likely lead to principals and departmental heads' dissatisfaction and demotivation to fully engage in their curriculum leadership role. This poses new challenges in curriculum leadership for principals and departmental heads who are faced with challenges like incompetence, inadequate training on curriculum innovations, and allocating funds and resources for extracurricular and curricular activities (Olibie, 2013). Nwangwa and Omotere (2013) mention inadequate training on the new curriculum roles of principals and departmental heads in addition to inadequate funds. The role that departmental heads and principals play in supporting teachers is likewise rendered useless by this circumstance. Implicitly, this hinders teachers' access to school-based ongoing professional development, which has an impact on their ability to drive curriculum at the instructional level. Therefore, in order to have the resources and funds necessary to carry out their duties with ease, principals and departmental heads must devise strategies for obtaining resources and funds.

### **2.6.5 Kenya**

Since introducing free primary and free day secondary education in 2003, curriculum leadership has faced more issues throughout Kenya (Orodho *et al.*, 2013). The research findings indicate that there are several issues, including inadequate funding, improper professional skills in educators (Waihura *et al.*, 2016), a shortage of staff and inadequate

facilities, resources, and materials (Kigwilu *et al.*, 2016). These challenges make it difficult for principals and departmental heads to guide curriculum successfully. Ziganyu (2010) also notes understaffing and a high learner-teacher ratio in large classes, which result in a hard burden for educators and make it difficult for principals and departmental heads to fulfil their responsibility of supporting educators. Therefore, curriculum leaders such as principals and departmental heads must be dynamic in their positions in order to carry out their responsibilities in the face of challenges.

It seems that school leaders around the world are faced with challenges in performing their curriculum leadership roles which they have to deal with by employing various strategies depending on the situation. Hence, it is important to explore the curriculum leadership issues faced by South African secondary school principals and departmental heads, and the strategies employed in performing their curriculum leadership duties.

## **2.7 SCHOOL CURRICULUM CHANGES IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN CONTEXT**

In order to understand curriculum leadership matters in the South African context, it is vital to have knowledge and understanding of the historical background of South Africa's education, South Africa's education system pre-1994 and South Africa's school curriculum changes since 1994. The ensuing section looks at these points.

### **2.7.1 Historical background of South Africa's education**

Six years after the colony's founding, in 1658, the Cape Colony saw the establishment of its first school. Coincidentally, this was also the time when the first slaves from outside the Cape arrived. The Cape Colony's commander from 1652 to 1662, van Riebeeck, "saw the need to establish an institution that would teach slaves sufficient linguistic skills, in order to promote a greater understanding of their master's orders. In addition, these slaves would also be indoctrinated in their master's religion, which would teach them the values of servitude, discipline, and obedience" (Molteno, 1984: 45, cited in Moore, 2015: 20). According to Moore (2015), the initial structure to be officially assigned would open its doors in 1685. Subsequently, missionary schools approached education with a comparatively more humanistic perspective. However, this brought into confrontation with trekboer regulations, which prohibited missionary work in the Eastern Cape in order to prevent the spread of "unsettling ideas of human equality as taught in [one presumes some] missionary schools" (Moore, 2015: 21, citing Welsh, 2000: 109). Fast forward to the formalism of

apartheid in the 1940s and 1950s, the next section examines South Africa's education pre-1994.

### **2.7.2 South Africa's education system pre-1994**

The Bantu Education Act of 1953 (Act No. 47 of 1953) was passed into law to govern South Africa's educational system prior to the country's transition from apartheid to majority rule. Enforcing racially orientated access to schools and associated programs was one of its primary goals (Moore, 2015). Quality universities and schools were by then regarded as tribal temples, accessible mainly to the privileged, primarily white population. According to Byrnes (1996), the goal of the Bantu (African) education program was to push young Black people into the unskilled labour market by using inferior educational institutions that resembled community and technical colleges of today.

Hendrik Verwoerd, the Minister of Native Affairs at the time, claimed that Bantu Education sought to tackle Black people's "ethnic problems" by dividing the population into complementary political and economic groups rather than to isolate them. In essence, certain programmes and schools catered primarily to the needs of White people. There were also fewer competent teachers in Black schools as a result of Black teachers' pay being significantly less than that of White teachers. In a similar vein, White children's schools had the best resources and standards, whereas Black children's schools had less than 30% of students without access to safe water and electricity. While government spending on Black education was one-tenth of that on White schools, education for the Black population, Indians, and Coloureds was far less expensive, although it was not free (Giliomee, 2009). Byrnes (1996) goes on to say that by 1976, all black schools were required by the Afrikaans Medium Decree of 1974 to teach learners in both Afrikaans and English starting in their final year of primary school. This Decree served as the impetus for the Soweto Uprising, which claimed over 575 lives. Additionally, segregation of the Black population through tuition fees, foreign language of instruction, and restrictive access to private schools persisted as major obstacles to equal education even after this Decree was repealed by the Education and Training Act of 1979.

Apartheid and its discriminatory social structures were declared illegal by the Interim Constitution in 1994. This led to the enactment of the South African Schools Act in 1996. The goal of this new act was to establish an egalitarian and democratic framework that would enable a democratic society to flourish. The curriculum needed to be changed in order to

teach new ideals and aspirations for a democratic South Africa. This was the only way to achieve this goal. Different curriculum reforms subsequently resulted from this. According to Young and Muller (2013), there was a belief that equitable access to information, which is a crucial component of any curriculum and the basis for all learning, was necessary to achieve equitable socioeconomic transformation. School curriculum should be updated frequently in order for knowledge to stay relevant and fulfil its intended aims because knowledge is not static and instead commonly changes over time (Nouri & Sajjadi, 2014). On this point, Hoadley (2017) and Soudien (2015) have all acknowledged the importance of the kinds of changes that South Africa should have implemented.

### **2.7.3 South Africa's school curriculum changes since 1994**

South Africa has implemented a number of curriculum changes since the democratic elections of 1994 with the goal of democratising education and doing away with all historical apartheid-era injustices (Du Plooy & Zilindile, 2014). Put simply, the main goal of these reforms was to mend the damage caused by apartheid government policies, which included those pertaining to Bantu education, settlement, and socioeconomic classification based on racial and ethnic distinctions. As a result, the people had very high expectations for these policy improvements because, for the first time at least, everyone had envisaged enjoying a good life that would contrast with the dehumanizing conditions of the previous administration. In terms of education, the most significant curriculum changes since 1994 were the Curriculum 2005 (C2005), which was introduced in 1998 and was based on the ideas of Outcomes-Based Educational (OBE) education. Subsequent revisions including the National Curriculum Statement (NCS), Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS) and Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) were introduced. These curriculum changes since 1994 are examined in the following section.

#### **2.7.3.1 Curriculum 2005**

Introduced by the Ministry of Education in 1997, Curriculum 2005 is sometimes referred to as the “outcomes-based education (OBE) curriculum.” The OBE system aimed to align South Africa's education system with principles of democracy, human rights, inclusivity, and social justice (DBE, 2011). This approach aimed to establish a learning environment in South Africa that values social justice, equity, and diversity (Smith, 2021). It highlights the value of education as a tool for empowering people and encouraging civic engagement. This is consistent with Du Plessis' (2013) observations that Curriculum 2005 strongly emphasised the development of values, knowledge, and skills. This approach deviates from conventional

content-based teaching techniques and emphasises the development of skills pertinent to the needs of the contemporary workplace. In response to challenges such as bureaucracy, authoritarianism, and hierarchical behaviours found characterising Curriculum 2005, the National Curriculum Statement 2007 (NCS) was developed.

#### *2.7.3.2 National Curriculum Statement (NCS)*

The NCS was introduced in 2007. The curriculum required all students in grades 10, 11, and 12 to finish a minimum of seven (7) subjects, as opposed to the six (6) subjects required by the OBE curriculum. According to Ngubane (2014), students following the NCS curriculum are required to study at least two South African languages. In addition to studying the two languages, students must choose between studying Mathematics or Mathematical Literacy, as well as Life Orientation. The NCS also provided precise guidelines for what needed to be taught and learned during each term.

In 2000, a ministerial committee was formed to evaluate the effectiveness and progress of the curriculum (DoE, 2002). According to the Department of Education (2004), the review's brief addressed the provincial support for educators working in classrooms, the curriculum's structure and design, teacher orientation, training, and development, and implementation schedules. The ministerial committee's proposals to condense the curriculum and make it more accessible to educators were reflected in the National Curriculum Statement (NCS) 2002, which culminated in the Revised National Curriculum Statement. Gumede and Biyase (2016) noted that NCS 2002 put a lot of pressure on the educators who would eventually lead educational reform in the classroom. Bynard (2011) goes on to say that there was a lack of resources and government backing, in addition to the fact that instructors were not adequately trained. Additionally, Hoadley (2017), contends that inadequate educator preparation impeded the proper implementation of the NCS curriculum. Because of this, it is essential that educators participate in and get training in curriculum implementation.

#### *2.7.3.3 Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS)*

The ministerial committee's proposals to streamline the curriculum and make it more accessible to educators led to amendments in the National Curriculum Statement (NCS) 2002 that resulted to the Revised National Curriculum Statement (Gumede & Biyase, 2016). This was done to guarantee that the NCS will remain relevant and aligned with the evolving needs of the South African society (DBE, 2011). This revision process demonstrates a continuous dedication to raising the quality and efficacy of the curriculum. DBE (2011) states

that the adjustments were grounded in the values of environmental sustainability, inclusivity, social justice, and human rights. The modifications also attempted to address the problems of an overly complex curriculum, unclear instructions, and inadequate execution (Bynard, 2011). The updated NCS aims to offer a precise and comprehensive framework for instruction in all subject areas and phases.

Critical thinking, problem-solving, and acquiring 21<sup>st</sup> century abilities were prioritised heavily in the NCS amendments (DBE, 2011). These modifications acknowledge that students must develop the capabilities necessary for success in the contemporary environment. Learners need to be equipped with knowledge, skills, and values that will enable them to cope with these changes because the world is changing rapidly (DBE, 2011). Thus, the goal of the updated NCS was to encourage an innovative, creative, and inquisitive culture among educators and students. The updated NCS also aim to support students' entire growth in the physical, social, emotional, cognitive, and moral areas (Badgelat, 2012).

The emphasis on critical thinking in the revised NCS highlights the importance of nurturing students' ability to analyse information, evaluate arguments, and make informed decisions (Johnson, 2022). This focus on critical thinking skills equips students with the capacity to navigate complex challenges and engage in meaningful problem-solving. Johnson (2022) argues that critical thinking is a key competency for 21st-century learners who need to deal with uncertainty, diversity, and change. Critical thinking also enables learners to develop a critical consciousness that empowers them to challenge injustice and oppression. The revised NCS encourage the development of critical thinking skills through various strategies, such as inquiry-based learning, project-based learning, and cooperative learning.

Similarly, the emphasis on problem-solving skills in the revised NCS underscores the importance of enabling students to approach real-world problems with creativity, adaptability, and resilience (Brown, 2023). By cultivating problem-solving abilities, students become equipped to tackle challenges in various contexts and contribute to innovative solutions. Brown (2023) asserts that problem-solving is a vital skill for 21st-century learners who need to cope with complex and ill-structured problems that require interdisciplinary and collaborative approaches. Problem-solving also fosters a sense of agency and responsibility among learners who can apply their knowledge and skills to address local and global issues. The revised NCS support the development of problem-solving skills through various methods, such as case studies, simulations, games, and design thinking.

Furthermore, the emphasis on acquiring 21st-century skills in the revised NCS recognizes the evolving demands of the digital age and the globalized world (DBE,2011). These skills encompass a range of competencies, including digital literacy, collaboration, communication, and cultural awareness (DBE,2011). By developing these skills, students are better prepared to navigate an interconnected and rapidly changing society. DBE (2011) states that “learners need to be able to use technology effectively and responsibly; work with others in diverse teams; communicate clearly and persuasively; and appreciate different cultures and perspectives”. The revised NCS facilitate the acquisition of 21st-century skills through various means, such as integrating technology into teaching and learning; promoting cooperative learning; enhancing oral and written communication; and incorporating multicultural education.

The National Curriculum Statements have been revised to demonstrate a dedication to maintaining their applicability and harmony with the evolving demands of South African society. A culture of inquiry, creativity, and invention among students and educators is fostered by the updated NCS, which offers a clear and cohesive framework for teaching and learning. Challenges such as teachers’ administrative workloads and a lack of clarity of curriculum and assessment requirements were identified with the RNCS (Hoadley, 2017). In response to these challenges the Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) was introduced.

#### *2.7.3.4 Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS)*

Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) acts as a manual for educators, including comprehensive instructions on all curriculum-related topics, such as content, learning objectives, assessment needs, and time allotments. The goal of CAPS is to guarantee curriculum delivery that is clear and consistent (DBE, 2011). CAPS encourages a uniform approach to curriculum implementation across various schools and areas by giving instructors explicit criteria (Du Plessis, 2013). This uniform approach helps to ensure that students receive a similar educational experience regardless of their location.

The detailed guidelines provided by CAPS offer educators a clear understanding of what needs to be taught, the expected learning outcomes, and how student performance should be assessed (Smith & Harris, 2022). As a result of this clarity, teaching methods and evaluation techniques are more in line, allowing educators to concentrate on the main ideas and abilities crucial for their students' growth. Additionally, CAPS highlights how crucial it is

to match the values of social justice, equity, and inclusivity with the way curriculum is delivered (Johnson, 2023). By incorporating these principles into the curriculum framework, CAPS strives to provide an education that is accessible and relevant to all learners, irrespective of their backgrounds or circumstances.

Although the goal of CAPS is to offer uniformity and clarity, it is crucial to recognise that different schools and classrooms may execute it differently (Brown, 2021). A teacher's autonomy, the materials at their disposal, and how they teach can all impact how CAPS is used and understood in the real world (Pinnock, 2011). Yet, the major objective is still to offer a clear and organised framework for the delivery of content, however, may be hindered because of the educator's autonomy. Hence, systemic monitoring and support from the Department of Education is essential to ensure that CAPS's objective (uniformity and clarity in the curriculum delivery process) is achieved. However, as a result of the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS) being adopted, educators now have comprehensive guidelines for curriculum implementation and assessment (DBE, 2014).

## **2.8 FEE-PAYING SCHOOLS AND NO-FEE-PAYING SCHOOLS**

Since this study focuses on fee-paying schools, providing the schooling structure in this regard is essential. There are public fee-paying schools and public no-fee-paying schools in the South African educational system. The curriculum in both types of schools follows the national guidelines provided by the Department of Basic Education (DBE, 2012).

The National Norms and Standards for School Funding (NNSF) policy offers a quintile rating mechanism to ensure equity in schools, and the South African Schools Act of 1996 mandates that the state fund all public schools (Ndhlovu, 2012). Quintile 1 is the set of schools in each province that serves the 20% of students from the poorest income bracket. Quintile 2 schools serve the next 20% of the poorest schools, and so on. The quintile 5 schools are those that serve the 20% of students who are least impoverished. Quintile 1, 2, and 3 poor schools are designated as no-fee schools and get a larger public support than Quintile 4 and 5 affluent schools.

No-fee schools are public schools that have been declared exempt from charging school fees, and their names are published in a provincial Gazette (Dibete, 2015). To compensate for the costs that would have been levied, the government allocates a higher portion of the national budget to each learner, thereby covering expenses that were previously covered

by fees (Mestry & Ndhlovu, 2014). However, some schools lack specialised equipment and experienced teachers due to a lack of government funding (Mestry, 2016).

In order to raise the standard of education for students, school fees are an essential component of South African public schools. The South African Schools Act (SASA) mandates that all public schools raise additional funds through fundraising activities and collection of school fees in addition to receiving government money. It is crucial to note that registration fees, administrative fees, and other extra costs are not covered by school fees. In accordance with the quintile system, schools with the most resources and parents who make decent salaries are ranked in quintile 5, which is thereafter ranked from 1 to 5 according to the families' material wealth. Parents or guardians must pay fees for their children's education in order for the school to operate. These schools have superior facilities and higher educational standards because they get partial funding from parents and governing bodies (Reddy *et al.*, 2016).

## **2.9 THE ROLE OF PRINCIPALS AND DEPARTMENTAL HEADS: THE SOUTH AFRICAN PERSPECTIVE**

The role of principals and departmental heads as curriculum leaders in the South African context is examined in this section.

### **2.9.1 The responsibility of principals as curriculum leaders**

Meador (2019) asserts that the principal is responsible for multiple roles that guarantee the efficient running of the school. These responsibilities include managing the school budget, ensuring secure funding for the institution, evaluating teachers, creating new policies, and disciplining students. The principal of a school holds a pivotal position as the chief executive officer inside the school. It is imperative that they carry out this responsibility with efficiency and awareness, as it will have an impact on educators, guardians, students, and, ultimately, their academic achievement. Notably, in a 2015 document known as the South African Standard for Principalship (SASP), the Department of Basic Education (DBE) acknowledged the importance of principal leadership in South Africa.

According to the SASP, the primary goal of a South African principal in guaranteeing an enhanced and efficient educational system is "leading, teaching, and learning in school" (DBE, Republic of South Africa [RSA], 2015). The basic goal of a principal in any South African environment is comprised of eight interconnected components, as per the SASP.

These components are as follows: 1) Taking charge of instruction, teaching, and learning in the classroom; 2) Determining the course and growth of the school; 3) Controlling standards and guaranteeing responsibility; 4) Developing oneself and others via empowerment; 5) Taking care of the school as an establishment; 6) Serving the community and working with it; 7) Overseeing the school's human resources, or employees; and 8) Overseeing and promoting extracurricular activities.

Principals play the role of coordinating the implementation of programs and policies from the Department of Education (DoE, 2007). Curriculum leadership entails interacting with various stakeholders in order to keep the curriculum aligned both vertically and horizontally (Huber, 2017). Curriculum is a collection of plans designed to direct learning in schools; these plans are typically reflected in retrievable documents with varying degrees of generality. The actualisation of these plans in the classroom, as witnessed by an observer, occurs in a learning environment that further shapes the knowledge that is acquired (Glatthorn & Boschef, 2014). Curriculum is only that part of the plan and experiences that children have under the guidance of educators and that which directly affects the students (Edward *et al.*, 2013). It is from these definitions that principals assume their role of instituting school level committees that ensure smooth functioning of the school.

Furthermore, principals play an important role in developing a high-quality curriculum that is critical and oriented to the community (DeMatthews, 2014). Naidoo (2019) contends that South African principals have the three roles of managing and controlling people, assets and financial resources. As curriculum leaders, principals are responsible for the vision of the school and for driving organisational development and school improvement. As administrators, they are responsible for the day-to-day running of school matters (Kowalski, 2010). As heads of schools, they undertake duties related to overseeing the curriculum across the school by evaluating learner performance. This they achieve by analysing the results of the internal continuous assessments and school examinations (DeMatthews, 2014). The DBE expects principals to monitor the work of their deputies and departmental heads by scrutinising their work schedules and portfolios (DBE, 2012). Principals are also expected to ensure that departmental heads in turn monitor the work of the subordinate teachers working in their respective departments (Bush, 2018). Finally, principals are also responsible for the creation of a positive school climate by motivating teachers and learners, as well as effectively managing resources to enhance the best instructional practices (Kiat *et al.*, 2017).

### **2.9.2 The responsibility of departmental heads as curriculum leaders**

The Employment of Educators Act 76 of 1998 and the South African Schools Act, Act 84 of 1996, state that the primary duties of departmental heads are customised and diverse, depending on the specific requirements and methods of each school. These roles include but are not restricted to the following broad areas: teaching; extra- and co-curricular; personnel; general/ administrative; communication.

One specific role of departmental heads is to appraise their subordinates on government policy (Bassett & Robson, 2017). Metcalfe (2018) noted that it is imperative for departmental heads to ensure that their subordinates are aware of government policies. One of the vital roles of departmental heads as curriculum leaders is to ensure that their subordinates are aware of policies such as disciplinary policies enacted by the government. This lessens the likelihood that departmental heads may encounter circumstances where educators complain about inadequate communication. The departmental heads also have a specific role to influence and engage educators to ensure that they are fully supported in providing an engaging teaching and learning process to their students (Macleod, 2017). Additionally, departmental heads can engage in various human resource management tasks, such as supervising substitute teachers, mentoring, and parent reporting, to guarantee that the curriculum is not disrupted (Al-Mahdy *et al.*, 2018). However, Macleod (2017) indicates that most recently qualified educators have been found not being able to tackle and cope with subject content knowledge, and as a result, many of them are reluctant to teach content subjects. This calls for the role of departmental heads as curriculum leader to excise a further role of professionally developing educators to meet the expected levels of competency in schools (Macleod, 2017). Adopting practical strategies in executing curriculum leadership roles by the principals and departmental heads is also vital.

The South African Department of Education (DOE) requires departmental heads to adopt the role of curriculum leaders by monitoring the implementation of the curriculum by teachers. Departmental heads in their various subject domains are responsible for formulating and implementing programmes of class visits, which must be followed by meaningful feedback to the respective teachers (DOE, 2007). Departmental heads are also expected to provide support to teachers in following the curriculum by carrying out staff development meetings, managing the teaching support materials (LTSM) and compiling term progress reports for teachers in their subject areas (Mestry, 2017).

## **2.10 STRATEGIES FOR EXECUTING CURRICULUM LEADERSHIP ROLES IN SCHOOLS**

There are several strategies for executing curriculum leadership roles in schools. Leithwood *et al.* (2006), assert that four school practices create an environment that supports effective curriculum leadership. These practices are: setting direction, developing educators, redesigning the school, and managing teaching and learning. These curriculum leadership practices are briefly examined in the next paragraph to better understand how they are strategies for executing curriculum leadership roles in schools.

Setting direction involves activities by principals and departmental heads such as setting visions, framing goals and creating high-performance expectations in schools (Grant, 2010). The development of people relates to the motivation of educators. This is considered an important factor in terms of staff-capacity development for educators in a school (Bush & Glover, 2016). The redesigning of schools emphasises building relationships through collaboration and the ability to transform a culture of isolation into a culture of collaboration (Durfour & Marzano, 2011). The last factor to promote curriculum leadership practices is the management of teaching and learning in a school and this revolves around teaching, establishing standard procedures and monitoring the effectiveness of the school (Christie *et al.*, 2010). These practices are important for the principals and departmental heads as they emphasise the positive conditions that are necessary for leading a successful curriculum (Christie *et al.*, 2010). Kershner and McQuillan (2016) suggest that there is a need for an ever-shifting environment of positions to allow for role dynamics in schools and this has the potential to improve curriculum leadership.

Good management is also another strategy for executing curriculum leadership. In order to flourish, schools need security, stability, and certainty. Principals and departmental heads give firm, transparent, and consistent management to achieve this. Those in positions of principal and departmental head in schools understand that management is not the end in and of itself, but rather the solid foundation upon which curricular leadership and learning can be fostered (Grant, 2010). Curriculum leadership should thus be based on a notion of collaborative processes by progressive principals and departmental heads, teachers, learners, parents, administrators and community leaders who must systematically bring about overlapping educational, school and social reforms (Hawthorne, 2000). Ylimaki (2011) holds that to excel, curriculum leadership must connect well with the curriculum, instruction

practice, assessment and evaluation in an effort to improve the learning and understanding of learners in schools.

As another strategy for executing curriculum leadership, curriculum leadership practices in schools should be able to encompass a range of actions, interactions and processes that are associated with the implementation of a given curriculum policy (Leithwood *et al.*, 2006). The factors that promote good curriculum leadership in secondary schools include defining the school's vision, mission and goals. Curriculum leaders should also be able to undertake periodic teacher supervision and evaluation of practices and should monitor student progress (Clarke, 2007). Effective curriculum leadership therefore requires competent principals and departmental heads with the necessary skills.

## **2.11 CHALLENGES IMPEDING CURRICULUM LEADERSHIP IN SCHOOLS**

Several challenges have been identified that impede curriculum leadership in schools. The following section looks at the different challenges in respect of curriculum leadership in schools.

### **2.11.1 Lack of leadership skills**

One of the challenges is that principals and departmental heads lack the leadership abilities necessary to function effectively in this capacity (Bush & Glover, 2016). Although most organisations routinely promote their best performers into leadership roles, Tulgan (2014) notes that occasionally, the top salesperson does not make the best leader. Many principals and departmental heads in South Africa lack the expertise and abilities needed to lead and manage secondary schools efficiently (Naidoo & Petersen, 2016). According to Taole (2015), this might be the case since principals and departmental heads are frequently not properly qualified and equipped for leadership and school management roles.

There are not many strict requirements for principal appointments in South Africa; nonetheless, candidates must possess a teaching credential or degree and at least seven years of teaching experience (DBE, 2012). This implies that most people who end up as principals and departmental heads may lack the training necessary to become competent curriculum leaders in secondary schools. Some principals and departmental heads, despite being important members of a school, may not have the required skills such as technological skills and appropriate professional skills to lead the school. This disparity can be ascribed

to the absence of clear leadership and management requirements as well as strict standards for the recruitment of principals and departmental heads.

### **2.11.2 Interference by Trade Unions**

Another challenge in respect of curriculum leadership is the strong interference by trade unions in the administration and recruitment of educators by schools and this is impeding curriculum leadership in schools (Milondzo & Seema, 2015). For instance, according to DBE (2012), the Minister of Basic Education previously suggested that candidates for managerial posts in schools should take a competency test before being appointed. However, the teacher unions were so adamantly against this that the minister was forced to postpone the plan. Thus, in order to implement recommendations that improve curriculum leadership, schools and the Department of Basic Education must be cognisant of the trade unions' points of view.

### **2.11.3 Lack of discipline by learners**

Another challenge is the lack of discipline by the majority of learners in South African secondary schools. In addition, the prevalence of bullying and violent behaviour in schools put more pressure on the roles of principals and departmental heads as curriculum leaders (Farrah, 2013). Farrah (2013) indicates that bullying has become one of the barriers to education in many countries globally. Furthermore, lack of discipline among learners leads to low teacher morale, which creates a challenge to principals and departmental heads (Kingwill, 2016). This obviously puts more burdens on the duties of principals and departmental heads, resulting in their performance as curriculum leaders being severely compromised.

### **2.11.4 Poor understanding of curriculum leadership and management**

Principals and departmental heads in most schools in South Africa have little or no understanding of curriculum leadership and management (Piggot-Irvine *et al.*, 2013). This includes the lack of suitable leadership skills, knowledge and understanding regarding how to manage inclusive education in South Africa's public secondary schools (Bush *et al.*, 2011) and dealing with the challenges presented by the current curriculum. Additionally, Macleod (2017) points out that principals and department heads are frequently faced with difficult decisions like choosing between a student-versus-content orientation. Although it is generally agreed that "content is king", how the information is presented to students matters

just as much. This makes creating an orientation curriculum that is “one-size-fits-all” difficult. Consequently, principals and departmental heads have significant obstacles, as the majority of them do not possess the necessary curriculum leadership skills.

#### **2.11.5 Traditional management practices**

According to Bush (2013), curriculum leadership in South African schools during the apartheid era was characterised by bureaucracy, authoritarianism, and hierarchical procedures, with a concentration on racial segregation. The curriculum provided no meaningful principal and departmental head roles, and it excluded other educators from decision-making (Zhao, 2014). Instead of seeing educators as intellectual professionals who should be involved in designing, planning, and evaluating the curriculum, traditional management practices like those used by this system have the effect of portraying educators as though they are intellectual professionals who must carry out the directives of others (Bush, 2013). It is necessary to abandon this conventional approach to management. This adjustment will create an environment where healthy decisions are made to realise the schools’ greatest potential.

#### **2.11.6 Bureaucratic Government Tendencies**

Zhao (2014) observes that one of the challenges in respect of curriculum leadership in schools is the existence of bureaucratic government tendencies that promote a rigid management mode. Along with its poor curriculum evaluation, this bureaucratic management style also involves inadequate instructor interaction, teaching and resource management that is done backwards. Due to their difficulty adjusting to their new roles and communication channels, principals and department heads who are used to this style of management frequently encounter role ambiguity (Mestry, 2017). Such confusion also causes the principals and departmental heads to perform poorly as curriculum leaders.

#### **2.11.7 Contextual factors**

There are contextual factors such as the situated context of the school, the professional cultures that exist in schools and the external context that heavily impact the nature of the curriculum leadership practices in schools (Terhoven & Fataar, 2018). Ball *et al.* (2012) also affirm that contextual factors can take the form of curriculum policies that are enacted by authorities in specific material conditions, which they refer to as “contextual dynamics”. It is

imperative that this study examine the contextual factors as they relate to the curriculum leadership roles of principals and departmental heads.

#### *2.11.7.1 The situated context of the school*

Ball *et al.* (2012) noted the situated context of the school as the first contextual factor. This factor concerns where the school is located, the school's history and its intake criteria. In South Africa, working-class schools are located in townships that are characterised by gangsterism. There is a history of inferior education, which is associated with low socio-economic status, and such schools are labelled as dysfunctional schools (Ball *et al.*, 2012).

Dysfunctional schools are disorderly because they are characterised by a chaotic environment with intermittent interruptions in the schools' daily programmes (Fataar & Paterson, 2002). Myende and Bhengu (2015) stress that while curriculum leadership is critical, it is challenged in South African dysfunctional schools. This context requires curriculum leadership to be equipped with the relevant skills to be able to adapt to such challenges and changes in education. There is a need to think innovatively to improve the current standards of education in such schools. Principals and departmental heads need to be well organised, imaginative, innovative and creative curriculum leaders to manage such schools (Rodrigues, 2015).

The majority of South African schools are regarded as dysfunctional because of the apartheid system of government (Bush & Glover, 2016), with most schools in informal settlements, townships and rural areas experiencing numerous challenges such as under-resourced infrastructure, socio-economic challenges and poverty. Curriculum leadership under these circumstances involves managing disputes between rival groups and coalitions (Fataar & Paterson, 2002). It is important therefore that principals and departmental heads are able to identify the contextual factors that relate to the schools' locations so as to deliver effectively as curriculum leaders.

#### *2.11.7.2 The professional cultures that exist in schools*

According to Ball *et al.* (2012) the second contextual factor concerns the professional cultures that exist in schools. These relate to the values, teacher commitment, the experiences and policy management that are key for principals and departmental heads in determining the curriculum leadership that can be instituted in schools (Terhoven & Fataar, 2018).

There is also material context, which pertains to the staff establishment, the school's budget, its physical facilities, its technological setup, and its infrastructure. The challenges posed by the material context to curriculum leaders concern how they can work effectively and deal with overcrowded classrooms. Such classes accommodate not only normal learners but also those who experience barriers to learning (Khanare, 2012). It is imperative that principals and departmental heads as curriculum leaders should come up with teaching methods that are suitable for overcrowded classes.

#### *2.11.7.3 The external context.*

The external context is the other contextual dynamic factor that affects the nature of curriculum leadership in a school. In addition to the expectations from the larger policy environment, which include school ratings and duties, this context includes the extent and calibre of learning-area support (Ball *et al.*, 2012). Parental and DBE pressures are examples of demands coming from the outside world. The implementation of curriculum leadership is significantly impacted by the intense pressure these institutions frequently put on schools to achieve strong Matric test results in spite of other contextual barriers (Ball, 2003). The more pressure is exerted on them as curriculum leaders, the more the principals and departmental heads are overwhelmed. Brooks (2016) suggests that curriculum leaders should be provided with appropriate professional development aimed at helping them to develop the knowledge and skills useful to support their work on curriculum-related programmes.

## **2.12 SUPPORT MECHANISM TO STRENGTHEN CURRICULUM LEADERSHIP POSITION**

One possible support mechanism to strengthen curriculum leadership positions is formal training of school leaders. Basic leadership and management training is often lacking for working principals and departmental heads, both prior to and during their appointment to management roles (Bush *et al.*, 2011, Heystek, 2016). Today's principals and departmental heads are expected to assume the roles of curriculum leaders in addition to administrative duties (Naidoo & Petersen, 2016). Along the same argument, the primary issue of curriculum leadership, teaching and learning, has replaced administration as the focal point of leadership for principals and department heads (Lin, 2012). Therefore, in order to improve the competence of principals and departmental heads in curriculum leadership, there is a need for a robust training intervention in school leadership and governance. This is so because department heads and principals are essential to the process of improving schools

(Harris, 2013). Thus, formal training can help to equip school leaders with the knowledge of their roles and how they should implement them effectively.

The next section is a discussion of the theoretical framework adopted for this study.

## **2.13 THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY**

According to Seng (1994), theory helps to improve one's understanding of how things work in practice; there is always a synergy between theory, methods and tools that is critical to the human endeavour to build knowledge. When carrying out research, the researcher needs to set out a theoretical framework that will situate the research in a way that will show the origin of the research or act as a way of supporting the theory (Maree, 2017). This section focuses on principles and practices of instructional leadership theory; the value of instructional leadership theory; the limitations of the instructional leadership; and the justification for the selection of instructional leadership theory as proposed by Edmonds (1979) and Hallinger and Murphy (1985) for this study.

### **2.13.1 Principles and practices of Instructional Leadership Theory**

According to DeMatthews (2014), instructional leadership is a leadership function that is associated with teaching and learning and particularly with the duties and responsibilities of principals and departmental heads in their daily work of supporting teachers and students in achieving educational excellence. This leadership function includes the development of a school vision and mission, and the coordination, monitoring and evaluation of the curriculum. It is also the responsibility of principals and departmental heads to ensure that instruction and assessments promote a safe and supportive learning environment for students and that a supportive and collaborative work environment is created for teachers in the school (Pinar, 2012). Instructional leadership is about setting the direction, developing staff members and redesigning the organisation around high-quality curricula and instruction (Leithwood & Mascall, 2022). At the classroom level, principals and departmental heads recognise that assessments, unit plans and daily lessons must be aligned with prescribed standards and they develop monitoring and evaluation systems to increase teacher and student performance (DeMatthews, 2014).

Instructional leadership focuses on advancing innovative teaching practices and policies rather than on the epistemological and ontological dimensions of the curriculum as a complex interaction with academic knowledge, society and self (Pinar 2012). Kaparou and

Bush (2016, p.896) confirm that “instructional leadership has been recently developed in a comprehensive phenomenon in the form of a leadership for learning”. This takes into consideration the shared school-leadership paradigm that is applicable in current school contexts. This is in contrast to previous assumptions that focused predominantly on a single model of instructional leadership in schools (Day & Gurr 2014). In addition, Mestry (2017) indicates that instructional leadership aims at addressing issues related to teacher and learner performance such as teaching and learner performance. For example, it can include teaching methods and approaches, learner assessments and remedial programmes for less-privileged learners and enrichment programmes for gifted learners together with the effective use of available resources. Mestry (2017) further stresses that instructional leaders ought to create partnerships with teachers as colleagues by spending more time in classrooms and engaging teachers in conversations about learning and teaching practices. Hoy and Hoy (2019) confirm that these professional conversations and professional developments should centre on the improvement of instruction, the way learners learn and the use of appropriate teaching strategies for different contexts. In this study, the theoretical lens that guided the exploration of the roles of the principals and departmental heads as curriculum leaders of a school was the instructional leadership theory as proposed by Edmonds (1979) and Hallinger and Murphy (1985).

### **2.13.2 Value of Instructional Leadership Theory in curriculum leadership**

Numerous researchers have highlighted the value of Instructional Leadership Theory in curriculum leadership. For instance, a recent study by Robinson and Timperley (2020) examined the impact of instructional leadership on student achievement. The findings revealed a positive relationship between instructional leadership practices and student outcomes, emphasizing the importance of effective curriculum leadership. This research supports the value of Instructional Leadership Theory in guiding leaders to improve instructional practices and enhance curriculum implementation.

In agreement with the value of Instructional Leadership Theory, a study by Davis *et al.* (2022) examined the impact of instructional leadership on teacher collaboration and professional learning communities. The findings demonstrated that instructional leaders who fostered collaborative environments and supported teacher learning positively influenced curriculum leadership. These results suggest that Instructional Leadership Theory can facilitate the development of professional learning communities that enhance curriculum planning, implementation, and continuous improvement.

Furthermore, instructional leadership has been found to have a significant influence on teacher job satisfaction and retention. A study by Bryk and Schneider (2023) examined the relationship between instructional leadership and teacher job satisfaction. The findings indicated that when instructional leaders create a supportive and empowering environment, teachers experience higher job satisfaction and are more likely to stay in their positions. This supports the value of Instructional Leadership Theory in promoting positive teacher morale and retention, which in turn contributes to the stability and continuity of curriculum leadership.

To sum up, recent studies by Davis *et al.* (2022), Hallinger and Murphy (2022), Robinson and Timperley (2020), and Bryk and Schneider (2023) provides evidence supporting the value of Instructional Leadership Theory in curriculum leadership. The benefits of instructional leadership are emphasized, including how the theory affects student achievement, teacher collaboration, evidence-based practices and teacher job satisfaction. However, controversies exist regarding the balance between instructional and managerial tasks in leadership roles. Finding a middle ground and adopting a balanced approach is crucial to effectively utilize Instructional Leadership Theory and enhance curriculum leadership practices. By incorporating research-based strategies, fostering collaborative environments, and promoting teacher empowerment, leaders can maximize the potential of Instructional Leadership Theory and improve curriculum implementation for the benefit of students and teachers alike.

### **2.13.3 Limitations of Instructional Leadership Theory**

Recent research has shed light on the limitations of Instructional Leadership Theory. One limitation is the potential for oversimplification and reductionism. In a study by Smith and Harris (2022), the authors argue that Instructional Leadership Theory tends to oversimplify the complex nature of educational leadership by focusing primarily on instructional practices. They suggest that a more comprehensive and holistic approach that takes into account other leadership dimensions, such as organizational management and strategic planning, may provide a more nuanced understanding of effective curriculum leadership.

Another area of controversy surrounding Instructional Leadership Theory is the assumption that instructional leaders should possess expertise in the content areas they oversee. Some researchers, such as Leithwood and Mascall (2022), challenge this assumption and argue that instructional leaders should prioritize their role as facilitators and supporters of teachers'

professional growth rather than being content experts themselves. They propose that instructional leaders should focus on creating a collaborative culture and providing resources and support for teachers to develop their expertise in content areas.

A study by Johnson and Donaldson (2023) highlights the challenge of applying Instructional Leadership Theory in diverse educational contexts. The authors argue that the effectiveness of instructional leadership practices may vary across different school settings, cultures, and student populations. They suggest that a more nuanced understanding of contextual factors and a flexible approach to instructional leadership may be necessary to address the unique challenges and needs of diverse schools.

The limitations of Instructional Leadership Theory also point to the need for ongoing research and refinement of the theory. By acknowledging its limitations and engaging in critical discussions, researchers and practitioners can work together to advance the field of instructional leadership. Future studies could explore alternative frameworks that integrate instructional, managerial, and relational dimensions of leadership to provide a more comprehensive understanding of effective curriculum leadership.

Despite the limitations and controversies, there are areas of agreement regarding Instructional Leadership Theory. One area of consensus is the importance of shared leadership and distributed instructional leadership. Researchers such as Spillane *et al.* (2021) argue that instructional leadership should not solely rely on the principal but should involve multiple leaders, including department heads, teacher leaders, and instructional coaches. This distributed approach to leadership allows for a broader range of expertise and perspectives, enhancing the effectiveness of curriculum leadership.

#### **2.13.4 Justification for the selection of Instructional Leadership Theory**

Instructional Leadership Theory, as proposed by Edmonds, Hallinger and Murphy (Edmonds, 1979; Hallinger & Murphy, 1985), emphasises the critical role of instructional leaders in shaping teaching and learning practices. This theory provides a comprehensive framework that emphasises various aspects such as engagement, participation in learning, resource provision, evidence-based practices, and promoting a positive learning culture (Harris, 2013; Spillane *et al.*, 2021). In the context of fee-paying secondary schools in Gauteng Province, this theory becomes highly relevant as these schools often prioritise academic excellence and student achievement. As such the Instructional Leadership Theory

is used as a lens to explore principals and departmental heads in performing their roles as curriculum leaders.

Utilising Instructional Leadership Theory in curriculum leadership has been a topic of interest and research in recent years. A study by Marks and Printy (2020) explored the impact of instructional leadership practices on student achievement. The findings indicated that schools with strong instructional leadership exhibited higher student achievement levels. This supports the value of Instructional Leadership Theory in improving curriculum leadership and its positive impact on student outcomes.

A study by Silins and Mulford (2020) found that instructional leadership positively influences teacher efficacy and job satisfaction. When instructional leaders provide guidance, support, and professional development opportunities, teachers feel more confident and motivated in their roles. This agreement suggests that Instructional Leadership Theory can contribute to a positive school climate and enhance teacher performance, leading to improved curriculum implementation which is an essential need in South African schools.

Moreover, some researchers assert that instructional leaders should prioritise their involvement in curriculum development and instructional practices (Bowers & Dial, 2019). They emphasise the need for leaders to focus on instructional improvement and support teachers in implementing effective teaching strategies. Bowers and Dial (2019) emphasis above is a vital pointer for the relevancy of the Instructional Leadership Theory for this study because fee-paying school's curriculum leaders are expected to find a balance between instructional responsibilities and administrative duties.

Research also supports the notion that utilising Instructional Leadership Theory in curriculum leadership can lead to more effective instructional practices. A study by Leithwood *et al.* (2021) examined the impact of instructional leadership on instructional strategies and found a positive relationship. Schools with strong instructional leaders were more likely to implement research-based instructional strategies and provide ongoing support to teachers. This present study aligns with the principles of Instructional Leadership Theory, emphasising the importance of evidence-based practices and professional development.

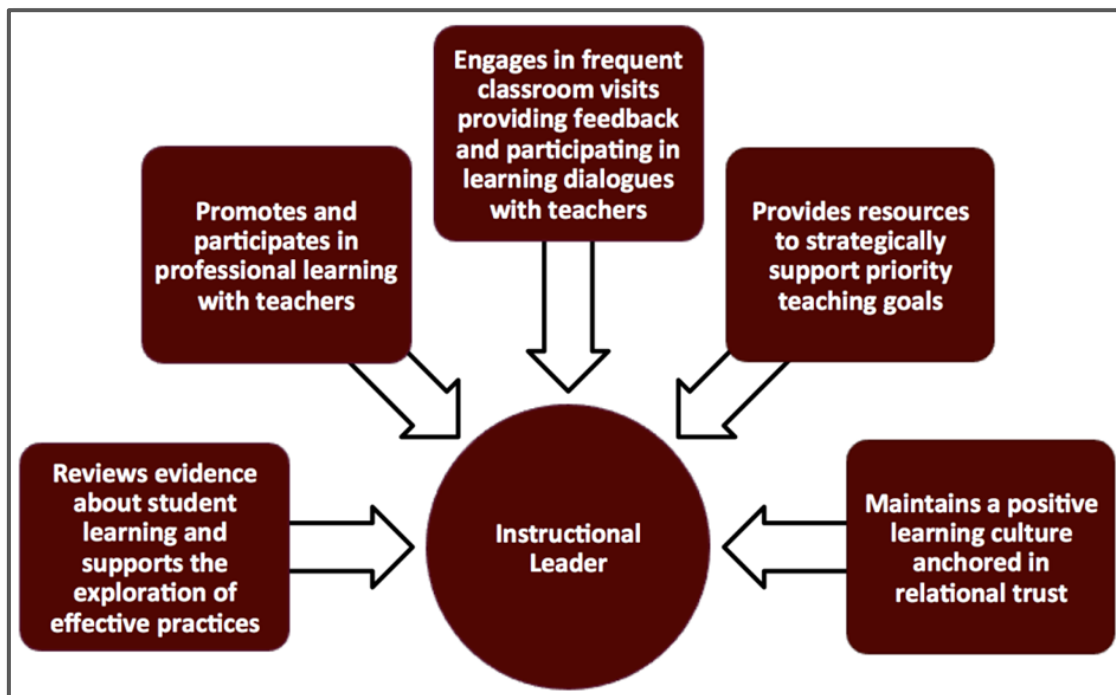
Furthermore, studies have shown that utilising Instructional Leadership Theory can foster a collaborative and supportive school culture (Harris & Jones, 2020). By engaging in instructional leadership practices, leaders can create a culture of shared decision-making,

collaboration, and continuous improvement (Harris & Jones, 2020). This collaborative approach promotes a sense of collective responsibility for curriculum leadership and encourages teachers to actively participate in curriculum development and implementation processes. The research findings highlight the positive impact of Instructional Leadership Theory on promoting a collaborative and supportive school environment.

Figure 2.1 depicts the key tenets of the Instructional Leadership. This section demonstrates how the key tenets of Instructional Leadership Theory link with the present study's key decision points, aligning the theory with the problem, research questions, and methodological approach.

**Figure 2.1**

*Key Tenets of Instructional Leadership Theory*



*Note.* KAMM Solutions (2023)

The tenet of engagement in classroom visits and feedback in Instructional Leadership Theory aligns with the study's focus on selecting schools that provide opportunities for instructional leaders to observe and provide feedback to teachers, allowing for a more accurate understanding of curriculum leadership. Research by Smith and Harris (2022) emphasize the importance of leaders actively engaging with teachers in classroom observations to gain firsthand insights into instructional practices.

The tenet of promoting participatory learning with educators in Instructional Leadership Theory aligns with the study's decision point regarding data collection methods as its guide on the identification of participants (principals and departmental heads) and development of interview schedules. A study conducted by Johnson and Smith (2023) highlights the significance of collaborative approaches to data collection, such as interviews and focus groups, to foster a participatory environment. This supports the study's emphasis on engaging teachers in the research process, ensuring their perspectives and experiences are integrated into the analysis of curriculum leadership.

Providing resources for priority teaching goals, a tenet of Instructional Leadership Theory, correlates with the study's decision point concerning data analysis techniques. Research by Anderson *et al.* (2021) suggests that effective data analysis involves identifying areas of need and allocating resources accordingly. By aligning this tenet with the study's decision point, the research can analyse data to identify priority teaching goals and recommend resource allocation strategies for curriculum leadership.

The tenet of reviewing evidence and exploring effective practices within Instructional Leadership Theory connects with the study's decision point of identifying themes. A study by Thompson and Davis (2022) emphasizes the importance of reviewing existing research and evidence to identify effective instructional practices. This supports the study's aim to examine the evidence and explore themes related to curriculum leadership, allowing for the identification of best practices and areas for improvement.

Maintaining a positive learning culture, a key tenet of Instructional Leadership Theory, aligns with the study's decision point of generating recommendations. Research by Chen *et al.* (2023) highlights the positive impact of a supportive and collaborative learning culture on teacher effectiveness and student outcomes. By integrating this tenet into the decision point, the study can generate recommendations that promote a positive learning culture within the context of curriculum leadership, fostering continuous improvement and growth.

In a nutshell current research provides support for the alignment of the key tenets of Instructional Leadership Theory with the study's decision points in curriculum leadership. The literature highlights the importance of engagement, participation learning, resource provision, evidence-based practices, and a positive learning culture in shaping effective curriculum leadership. By incorporating these tenets into the research process, the study

can ensure a comprehensive and informed approach to data collection, analysis, and the generation of recommendations.

By mapping the theory's key tenets to the study's decision points, the table 2.1 illustrates how Instructional Leadership Theory guides the research process and informs data collection, analysis, and the generation of recommendations.

**Table 2.1**

*Summary Key Tenets of Instructional Leadership Theory Relevancy to the Study*

<b>KEY TENETS OF INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP THEORY</b>	<b>RELEVANCY TO THE STUDY</b>
Engagement in classroom visits and feedback	aligns with the study's focus on selecting schools that provide opportunities for instructional leaders to observe and provide feedback to teachers, allowing for a more accurate understanding of curriculum leadership.
Promoting participatory learning with educators	aligns with the study's decision point regarding data collection methods as its guide on the identification of participants (principals and departmental heads) and development of interview schedules.
Providing resources for priority teaching goals	correlates with the study's decision point concerning data analysis techniques. By aligning this tenet with the study's decision point, the study analysed data to identify priority teaching goals and recommend resource allocation strategies for curriculum leadership.
Reviewing evidence and exploring effective practices	connects with the study's decision point of identifying themes. This supports the study's aim to examine the evidence and explore themes related to curriculum leadership, allowing for the identification of best practices and areas for improvement.
Maintaining a positive learning culture	aligns with the study's decision point of generating recommendations. By integrating this tenet into the decision point, the study can generate recommendations that promote a positive learning

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culture within the context of curriculum leadership, fostering continuous improvement and growth.

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The application of Instructional Leadership Theory in the study of curriculum leadership in fee-paying secondary schools in Gauteng Province, South Africa, offers a valuable framework for understanding leadership practices. Through the use of instructional leadership theory, the study was guided in discovering how the participants carry out their leadership responsibilities and the challenges that the participating school principals and departmental heads face.

## **2.14 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

This chapter has successfully conducted a comprehensive literature review to explore previous research on the study focus. The review aimed to deepen understanding of the existing research in this field, identify any research gaps, and justify the significance of the chosen research topic.

By systematically organising this chapter, the literature review has provided a comprehensive overview of prior research, established a theoretical foundation, and considered the specific contextual factors relevant to understanding the roles of principals and departmental heads as curriculum leaders. The theoretical framework chosen offered a theoretical lens to examine and analyse the roles, strategies, and challenges of principals and departmental heads as curriculum leaders.

The next chapter looks at the research methodology adopted for the study.



## CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

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### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

The study paradigm, approach, and design are presented first in this chapter's overview of the methodology. After that, the population and the sample selection process are discussed, and finally data collection, analysis, and interpretation methods utilised in this study are covered. The chapter ends with a summary of the standards employed to guarantee the study's quality and the ethical issues considered when gathering data.

### 3.2 RESEARCH PARADIGM

A research paradigm is a set of ideas that a researcher has about the environment in which their study is carried out, the people who participate in the study, the methods used to gather data, the researcher's connection to the research world, and the goal of the study (Maree, 2016). This study falls under the interpretive paradigm, which holds that knowledge can be constructed and that multiple realities can be established from any given situation (Cohen *et al.*, 2018). Cohen *et al.* (2018) state that the interpretive paradigm is predicated on an awareness of the subjective realm of human experience. This aligns with the conclusions of Devos *et al.* (2014), who claim that descriptions of people's intentions, beliefs, values, and motivations, along with their capacity to understand the outside world and themselves, constitute the building blocks of knowledge. For this study, the interpretive paradigm was chosen as the most suitable approach for gathering different perspectives and experiences from the participants concerning the curriculum leadership roles of principals and departmental heads. The researcher's goal in using this paradigm was to be able to analyse data from the participants' points of view.

According to Moon and Blackman (2014), ontology is the study of the nature of reality. Since reality is a product of human creation, there can be no one "true" reality, according to the interpretivist ontological postulate (Hennink *et al.*, 2014). There are multiple realities, and reality is "relative" to how individuals experience it at any given time and place (Briggs *et al.*, 2012). The perspectives and experiences of department heads and principals as the curricular leaders in this environment are analysed to better comprehend the facts surrounding the topic under study.

The core tenets of epistemology are the nature of knowledge and how it is understood (Ormston *et al.*, 2014). Hennink *et al.* (2014) define epistemology as the view that reality is expressed in a range of symbol and language systems and is adapted to meet the requirements of humans who give the world meaning and interpret it in a way that makes sense to them. According to Creswell (2014), interpretive epistemology is premised on the idea that there are several realities and points of view rather than a single, authentic reality. The purpose of this study was to ascertain how the participants understood and interpreted the curricular leadership roles of department heads and principals in their secondary schools. Principals and department heads have different perspectives on their knowledge, which was considered while analysing the nature of scientific knowledge in accordance with the interpretive paradigm.

### **3.3 RESEARCH APPROACH**

The study explored the role of principals and departmental heads as curriculum leaders in fee-paying secondary schools. To explore this phenomenon, a qualitative approach was considered best suited for gathering the viewpoints of the participants (Denzin & Lincoln, 2013). According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), the qualitative researcher begins with assumptions, a worldview, and a potential theoretical lens. In order to investigate research problems that probe the interpretations that individuals or groups assign to social or human issues, the investigator gathers data in an environment that is considerate of the subjects and locations being studied (Haradhan, 2018). The researcher employs an inductive data-analysis methodology that identifies themes or patterns. Creswell and Creswell (2018) state that qualitative research that is based on participant perspectives asks open-ended, general questions, gathers data mainly in the form of participant words, describes and examines these words for themes, and conducts the inquiry subjectively. The participant perspectives and the researcher's comments are combined in the final written report to provide a comprehensive explanation and analysis of the problem.

The qualitative research approach has several advantages when exploring the role of principals and departmental heads as curriculum leaders in fee-paying secondary schools. In the first place, by documenting the viewpoints, experiences, and interpretations of the participants, it enables the researcher to comprehend the phenomenon in greater detail and depth (Denzin & Lincoln, 2013). Secondly, it allows the researcher to explore the complexity and diversity of the phenomenon by considering the context, culture, and history of the participants and their schools (Creswell, 2014). Thirdly, it empowers the researcher to

generate new insights and theories that can inform practice and policy by using an inductive and flexible approach to data analysis (Creswell, 2014).

However, the qualitative research approach also has some disadvantages that need to be acknowledged and addressed by the researcher. It may pose challenges for ensuring the trustworthiness and generalisability of the findings, as they are influenced by the researcher's subjectivity, interpretation, and bias (Denzin & Lincoln, 2013). It may also require a lot of time, resources, and skills to collect, manage, and analyse a large amount of data that is often unstructured and complex (Creswell, 2014), and it may raise ethical issues related to the protection of confidentiality, anonymity, and subjective consent for the study.

In this study, several strategies were implemented to address the disadvantages associated with the qualitative research approach discussed above. To ensure trustworthiness and credibility of the findings, rigorous methodological techniques were employed. These include triangulation, member checking, and peer debriefing, allowing for multiple perspectives and cross-verification of the data. Additionally, the researcher maintained reflexivity, acknowledging and documenting their own biases and interpretations, thus enhancing the transparency of the study.

Meticulous planning and resource allocation were carried out in order to address the issues of time, resources, and data complexity. More time was spent on the study and careful inspection of the data allowed for more efficient management and analysis of the large volume of unstructured data. Utilising a targeted sampling approach, it was possible to maximise time and resource use while still obtaining a comprehensive and manageable set of data.

### **3.4 RESEARCH DESIGN**

This study employed a qualitative descriptive case study as its research design. In qualitative research, a descriptive case study, as Yin (2018) defines, aims to provide a comprehensive and detailed description of a phenomenon in its real environment. A descriptive case study is appropriate for exploring a dynamic, multifaceted, and complicated phenomenon that needs information from numerous sources to fully capture its essence (Yin, 2018). A descriptive case study is also appropriate for answering how and why questions that seek to understand the processes, meanings, and perspectives of the phenomenon (Yin, 2018). Creswell and Creswell (2018) define a descriptive case study as

a kind of research methodology that aims to provide a thorough and detailed account of a particular case or event in its natural setting. It entails the methodical gathering and examination of qualitative data from many sources, including observations, papers, artifacts, and interviews. The main goal is to provide a thorough description of the case so that researchers can understand the intricacies involved. Creswell and Creswell (2018) highlight the importance of immersing oneself in the real-life context of the case, which helps researchers gain a deep understanding of how the case operates and is influenced by its surroundings. As per Creswell and Creswell (2018), a descriptive case study generates rich, context-specific insights that contribute to a holistic understanding of the subject.

Twelve (12) participants from six (6) fee-paying public secondary schools in South Africa's Gauteng Province were interviewed for this study using a descriptive case study. This allowed the researcher to accurately describe the many nuances of the participants' real experiences as curriculum leaders in their educational environments. Case studies are grounded in reality and can offer a wealth of comprehensive information (Norander & Brandhorst, 2018). Additionally, the case study enables the researcher to interview participants in their natural environments and conduct the study in educational settings. The main objective is to provide an in-depth description of the case while emphasising important aspects and traits (Saunders & Townsend, 2018)

### **3.5 RESEARCH SITE**

The Gauteng Province of South Africa served as the study's research location. Among South Africa's nine provinces, Gauteng is the smallest in terms of land area. However, it is also the most populous and urbanised province, with about 15 million people living in its major cities, such as Johannesburg and Pretoria (Stats SA, 2020). Gauteng Province is also the economic hub of South Africa and the continent, contributing about 35% of the national GDP (GPG, 2020). Gauteng Province has a diverse and multicultural population, with people from different ethnicities, languages, religions, and backgrounds. Within this context, fee-paying schools emerge to cater to the middle and upper-class population, shaping the educational landscape. These schools, supplemented by government funding, offer enhanced educational opportunities and operate with financial autonomy. The study examines the roles of principals and departmental heads in curriculum leadership, considering the challenges they face and the strategies they employ. This research site is ideal because Gauteng is the economic centre, thus most people who can afford to pay school fees are

from there. Furthermore, Gauteng's broad and varied population means that the study is not limited to students from particular origins attending fee-paying schools.

### **3.6 POPULATION AND SAMPLING TECHNIQUE**

A study population can be considered to be a set of elements that have common predetermined characteristics concerning the research problem being studied (Creswell, 2014). The study's target population consisted of all secondary schools in Gauteng Province that are fee-paying.

Six (6) schools were purposively sampled from this target population to participate in the research. By definition, sampling refers to a process of choosing participants to represent the whole population so that inferences or conclusions about the whole population can be made (Polit & Beck, 2012).

The study employed a non-probability or non-random sampling technique to gather data. The researcher cannot ensure that the sample is representative of the population using this sampling method. This implies that generalisation of study findings from a sample chosen using this kind of methodology is not possible (Johnson & Christensen, 2017). Convenient sampling, purposive sampling, quota sampling, and snowball sampling are examples of non-random sampling techniques (Babbie, 2015).

#### **3.6.1 Sampling technique**

This study adopted the purposive sampling technique to gather qualitative data. Using the purposive sampling technique, participants are selected because they display characteristics relevant to the study's focus (Babbie, 2015). In this case, principals and departmental heads were seen as information-rich participants in terms of curriculum leadership as they had been designated to implement the curriculum in schools. As such, the purposive sampling technique was used to select one principal and one departmental head from each of the six schools.

##### **3.6.1.1 *Criteria for purposive sampling***

The criteria for selecting the schools and the participants were that the schools must be situated in Gauteng Province, Johannesburg East district; the schools must be fee-paying; the principal must have at least four years of experience as a principal; and the departmental heads must have at least two years of experience in this position.

The study employed a systematic approach to select fee-paying secondary schools in Gauteng. Firstly, consultation with relevant educational officials and district offices was conducted to ensure diversity in school size, location, and academic performance, aligning with Creswell's (2014) perspective. Secondly, schools were chosen based on their reputation and historical context to provide rich and relevant data, following the recommendation from Saunders *et al.* (2011) for contextually significant cases. Finally, schools' willingness to participate was considered, collaborating closely with authorities to ensure active involvement and data validity. By employing these criteria, a well-rounded and representative sample was created, enabling a comprehensive understanding of principals' and departmental heads' roles in curriculum leadership in Gauteng's fee-paying secondary schools.

#### 3.6.1.2 *Advantages of purposive sampling*

Purposive sampling is a valuable technique that Creswell and Creswell (2018) acknowledge for enhancing the relevance and depth of qualitative research. Maree (2016) emphasises that one of the key advantages of purposive sampling is the researcher's deliberate selection of cases or participants based on specific criteria related to the research question. This approach ensures that the sample is not randomly chosen but is strategically designed to meet the study's objectives. Creswell and Creswell (2018) note that researchers can tailor the sampling process to focus on specific characteristics, contexts, or experiences, leading to a more concentrated and informative dataset.

One of the main advantages of purposive sampling, according to Saunders and Townsend *et al.* (2018), is the ability to choose examples that are most likely to offer insightful analysis and rich information. Researchers can focus on people or organisations that have distinctive viewpoints or experiences related to the subject of the study.

Maxwell (2013) offers another perspective on the advantages of purposive sampling by emphasising its flexibility. He notes that this sampling technique allows researchers to adapt their selection criteria throughout the research process, making it a dynamic and iterative approach. Maxwell (2013) asserts that this adaptability is advantageous because it enables researchers to refine their sampling strategy as they gain a deeper understanding regarding the research topic. Maxwell (2013) further indicates that purposive sampling is particularly well-suited for qualitative research, where the emphasis is on understanding complex social phenomena from multiple angles.

The purposive sampling technique allows the researcher to select participants who have rich and relevant information about the phenomenon, which can enhance the depth and quality of data (Grosser *et al.*, 2017). The purposive sampling technique also enables the researcher to select participants who are diverse and representative of the phenomenon, which can increase the credibility and transferability of the findings (Creswell, 2014). Finally, the purposive sampling technique allows the researcher to select participants who are accessible and willing to participate in the study, which can facilitate the data collection process (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Following the previously mentioned advantages of purpose sampling, this study carefully chose six (6) fee-paying institutions that are representative of the various traits and standings in Gauteng Province. This approach guarantees that the selected schools will provide a thorough understanding of curriculum leadership techniques in diverse settings. The study will enhance the depth and usefulness of the data collected by focusing on schools with specific attributes related to the research, which aligns with the benefits emphasised by Creswell, Saunders, and Maxwell.

#### *3.6.1.3 Disadvantages of purposive sampling*

While offering advantages in significance and depth, purposive sampling does come with potential disadvantages. One key drawback is the risk of researcher bias, as the selection of cases or participants is based on subjective criteria, which may inadvertently introduce personal preferences or preconceived notions into the sample (Maxwell, 2013). Additionally, limited generalisability is possible, as purposive sampling often targets specific groups or contexts, making it challenging to apply findings to broader populations (Maree, 2016).

Another disadvantage is that purposive sampling may pose challenges for ensuring the validity, reliability, and generalizability of the findings, as they are influenced by the researcher's subjectivity, bias, and judgment (Grosser *et al.*, 2017). Furthermore, purposive sampling may require a lot of time, effort, and skills to identify and select appropriate participants who meet the criteria and who are willing to participate in the study (Creswell, 2014). Purposive sampling may raise ethical issues related to the protection of confidentiality, anonymity, and consent of the participants, as well as the representation and dissemination of their voices (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

In order to reduce the potential for researcher bias, the selection of schools for this study on curriculum leadership in fee-paying secondary schools in Gauteng is conducted using strict and open standards, with the research questions serving as the primary guidance rather than the preferences of the individual researchers. Thus, prejudice was less likely because schools were evaluated systematically and objectively in accordance with preset standards. The study further adopted appropriate strategies to enhance the quality and rigor of the research process and outcomes and also the study adhered to ethical principles and guidelines throughout the research journey

Regarding limited generalisability, the study includes a thorough discussion of the limitations and the specific contexts in which the findings are most relevant, enhancing the transparency and transferability of the research outcomes.

### **3.6.2 Research Participants**

In this study, twelve (12) research participants were chosen using a purposive sampling approach, which allowed the researcher to specifically choose participants with experiences or characteristics related to the research objectives. This approach ensured representation from the six (6) carefully selected fee-paying secondary schools in Gauteng Province (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

The selection process commenced by identifying the primary participants: six (6) principals and six (6) departmental heads (often referred to as heads of departments or subject heads) from each of the six (6) fee-paying secondary schools. This alignment with the schools is consistent with the study's focus on curriculum leadership within these institutions. Principals and departmental heads were targeted due to their pivotal roles in shaping curriculum and educational practices (Day & Gurr, 2014).

The selection criteria included principals and heads of departments with varying levels of experience, encompassing those newer to their roles, as the literature suggests that the duration of leadership experience may influence leadership styles and practices (Al-Mahdy *et al.*, 2018). Additionally, to capture diverse perspectives, gender diversity among the participants was considered, as gender can potentially impact leadership dynamics (Kaiser & Spalding, 2015). The purposive selection of participants ensures that the study encompasses a range of experiences and viewpoints, enhancing the richness and depth of the research findings.

### **3.7 DATA GENERATION TECHNIQUES**

Individual face-to-face interviews were conducted with the principals and departmental heads of the six (6) purposefully selected fee-paying secondary schools in the Gauteng Province in order to gather qualitative data. Document analysis was also employed as a tool to enhance the study's rigour and generate data.

According to Creswell (2014), formulating questions, establishing protocols, and utilising these actions to gather data in the participants' environment are all part of the data collection process in a qualitative study. A significant portion of the qualitative material used in this study came from individual face-to-face interviews and documentation obtained from the six (6) secondary schools that were selected.

#### **3.7.1 Semi-structured interviews**

Semi-structured interviews are a common method of data collection in qualitative research. They involve a flexible and interactive dialogue between the researcher and the participant, guided by a set of open-ended questions or topics (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Semi-structured interviews allow the researcher to explore the participant's views, experiences, and meanings in depth and detail, while also giving the participant the opportunity to express their thoughts and feelings freely and spontaneously (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Twelve (12) semi-structured interviews were conducted with six (6) principals and six (6) departmental heads that were selected from the six (6) fee-paying secondary schools in the Gauteng Province. The interviews were held in the participants' respective offices for privacy. The interview sessions were audio-recorded, and each participant signed a voluntary informed consent form before their interview took place. The researcher compiled an interview guide and asked questions from the guide. Interviews with individuals were used to gather data until data saturation was achieved. Fuchs and Ness (2015) define data saturation as the amount and quality of information in a qualitative research study. It was deemed significant for this study because it permits the researcher to gather crucial data up until a point at which no further information is obtained from the participants; this is also known as data saturation, which is the point at which no additional information can be obtained from the participants (Guest *et al.*, 2010).

### *3.7.1.1 Advantages of interviews*

Interviews were selected as the method of choice for gathering data since they provide a number of important benefits. First of all, they made it possible to quickly and effectively generate a substantial amount of data. Because they are participatory, interviews encourage in-depth discussions that may reveal insightful opinions (Denscombe, 2014). Secondly, the researcher gained an immersive experience from the interviews, which allowed for a deeper comprehension of the participants' lives and experiences (Robson, 2011). This approach adheres to the fundamental tenet of qualitative research, which is to record participants' "lived experiences" (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

The flexibility of semi-structured interviews was a third advantage. This structure made it possible for the researcher to obtain additional information and depth from the interviewees, allowing for a thorough investigation of the research topic (Peters & Halcomb, 2015). Crucial components of the research were carefully evaluated due to the flexibility to modify questions in response to context and answers.

The fourth advantage was that the semi-structured interview format allowed the researcher to probe for more clarity and depth during the interviews. According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), one of the advantages of interviews is that they allow the researcher to probe for more clarity and depth during the interviews. Probing is a technique that involves asking follow-up questions, requesting examples, or seeking elaboration from the participants. Probing can help the researcher to obtain richer and more detailed data, as well as to clarify any ambiguities or inconsistencies in the participants' responses.

The fifth advantage of interviews was that they facilitated the establishment of a rapport and trust between the researcher and the participants, which enhanced the quality and validity of the data. According to Kvale and Brinkmann (2015), interviews are not only a method of data collection, but also a social interaction that involves mutual understanding and respect. By building a positive relationship with the participants, the researcher was able to elicit honest and authentic responses from them.

### *3.7.1.2 Disadvantages of interviews*

Interviews, despite their numerous advantages, are not without their drawbacks. One notable disadvantage is the potential for interviewer bias, wherein the presence and questioning of the researcher can unintentionally influence participants' responses (McIntosh & Morse, 2015). This bias may lead to participants providing socially desirable

answers rather than expressing their genuine thoughts and experiences. Furthermore, response bias occurs when participants give responses they think the researcher wants to hear instead of offering their genuine viewpoints (Denscombe, 2014). Another disadvantage is the time and resource intensiveness of interviews. Conducting interviews, especially with a sizeable number of participants, can be time-consuming and labor-intensive (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). This can pose challenges in terms of scheduling, data management, and the allocation of resources.

To mitigate these disadvantages in this study on curriculum leadership in Gauteng secondary schools, several strategies were employed. Firstly, to address interviewer bias, the researcher engaged in extensive training and reflexivity exercises to minimise the impact of their presence on participants' responses (Creswell, 2014). Participants were encouraged to voice their true opinions by using neutral, open-ended questions (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015). Secondly, response bias was addressed through the establishment of rapport and trust between researchers and participants. The researcher made efforts to create a comfortable and non-judgmental environment, encouraging honest and authentic responses (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Lastly, a well-structured interview protocol was developed to manage the time and resource constraints associated with interviews, ensuring that data collection was focused and efficient. Additionally, rigorous data coding and analysis techniques were applied to handle the large volume of interview data effectively.

### **3.7.2 Document analysis**

A systematic process for examining and assessing documents pertinent to the research topic is known as document analysis, a qualitative research method (Metzler, 2014). Documents are written or electronic texts that can provide useful information about the context, background, content, processes, and discourse of the research topic (Glenn, 2009). Documents can be classified into three types: public records, personal documents, and physical evidence (Bowen, 2009). According to Bowen (2009), document analysis enables the researcher to gain valuable insights by examining policy documents, curriculum materials, reports, and other textual sources. In this study, document analysis enhances the quality of data gathering by providing a complementary perspective to interviews. It enriches the dataset by offering corroborative evidence, contextual background, and a broader understanding of curriculum leadership practices in fee-paying Gauteng secondary schools. Document analysis adds depth and triangulation to the study's findings, contributing to a

more comprehensive and nuanced portrayal of instructional leadership within the site-based management model (Dalglish *et al.*, 2020; Kutsyuruba, 2023)

In this study four official documents related to instructional leadership in the South African curriculum, along with their years of publication were analysed. Table 3.1 below is used to show the analysed documents and how they are related and relevant to this study.

**Table 3.1**

*Selected official documents related to instructional leadership in the South African curriculum*

OFFICIAL DOCUMENT ANALYSED	RELEVANCY OF THE DOCUMENT TO THE STUDY
Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS):	CAPS is the current curriculum framework for basic education in South Africa, introduced in 2011. This document contains a comprehensive framework for curriculum implementation and assessment in South Africa. The document was analysed to understand the roles and strategies of principals and departmental heads on curriculum implementation, assessment, monitoring and evaluation.
Education White Paper 6 (EWP6):	This policy document, published in 2001, provides guidance on school leadership, management, and governance. It offered insights into the roles and expectations of school leaders, including their instructional leadership responsibilities
South African Schools Act (SASA):	Enacted in 1996 and subsequently amended, SASA is the legislative framework governing South African schools. It contains provisions related to school leaders' roles and responsibilities, such as the efficient utilisation of existing resources and carrying out all curriculum activities and instructional programs, which were analysed in the context of instructional leadership.

OFFICIAL DOCUMENT ANALYSED	RELEVANCY OF THE DOCUMENT TO THE STUDY
National Education Policy Act (NEPA):	NEPA, promulgated in 1996, is another critical piece of legislation governing education in South Africa. It contains information relevant to educational policies, which were examined to understand the broader educational context and its impact on instructional leadership.

The official documents indicated in Table 3.1 above provided a rich source of information for document analysis, allowing for a comprehensive exploration of instructional leadership in the South African context.

### 3.8 ANALYSIS OF DATA

A thematic approach was taken in respect of the data analysis. According to Flick (2013), the initial stage of data analysis involves organising and preparing the data to make sure it is acquired in a way that makes it easy to analyse. Hence, a written transcription of all the interviews was made. A coding system was used to categorise all of the interview transcriptions, and the participant responses were arranged in accordance with the interview questions. According to Nieuwenhuis (2016), coding is considered an inductive method of data analysis. It enables the conceptualisation of the connections between the various little bits of information and the inductive analysis of those connections (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014). According to Maree (2016), a coding system entails locating various data sections highlighting connected phenomena and labelling these segments with general grouping names. The researcher grouped the answers to each question and then examined each group independently.

The study coded relevant responses using key terms that were found to be prevalent in the responses. Subsequently, themes were derived from the coded data to simplify the material into digestible segments. According to Lodico *et al.* (2010), themes are “big ideas” that integrate various codes in a way that makes it possible for the researcher to examine the sub-questions that guide the research. As a result of considering the main research questions, the themes in the current study were subsequently established. Thematic analysis was used to examine the data in order to determine how knowledgeable department heads and principals were of their responsibilities as curriculum leaders.

Dahlia *et al.* (2015) recommend the use of thematic data analysis when using case studies. In this type of analysis, the researcher clusters themes that emerge from interview discussions into code families or overarching themes called superordinate themes (Nieuwenhuis, 2016). A thematic approach to the data was also used in the reporting of the findings. In case study research, the data analysis should be approached from the perspective of meanings mediated to a specific environment through language and behavior. In this sense, a methodical and well understood approach to data analysis and presentation was taken.

As the first step of the document analysis, all the documents selected for the research were critically examined to confirm their validity and credibility, following a suggestion by Cohen *et al.* (2018) that researchers consider the credibility of the documents they use in their studies. Document analysis involves ascertaining how the documents consulted are written, how they are read, the people who read them, their purpose in reading them, how often the documents are read and what outcomes result from reading them (Punch, 2009). Cohen *et al.* (2018) also point out that confirming the author, production place, and date are important first steps in determining the legitimacy of documents. In the current study, the following documents were analysed - Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS); Education White Paper 6 (EWP6); South African Schools Act (SASA); and National Education Policy Act (NEPA).

The data from documentary sources on the roles of the principals and departmental heads as curriculum leaders was used to plot graphic data presentations of how the school leaders understood their roles, the strategies they employed and the challenges they faced when performing their roles. Following the advice of Maree (2016), summary tables and excerpts from interviews were used to present data and support the emerging themes.

### **3.9 QUALITY CRITERIA OF THE STUDY**

When conducting qualitative research, the standards for trustworthiness should be followed. The degree of veracity and consistency of the data set with the conclusions are two factors that determine trustworthiness. A study's credibility, reliability, transferability, and confirmability are what determine its trustworthiness, according to Wagner *et al.* (2012). These requirements are covered in the section that follows.

### **3.9.1 Credibility**

According to Maree (2016), credibility is the “fit” between study participants’ opinions and the researcher’s representation of those ideas. Member checking was done to guarantee the credibility of this study. The participants from whom the data was originally received, in this case principals and department heads, had to be consulted in order to confirm data-analysis categories, interpretations, and conclusions (Creswell, 2014). Participants had the opportunity to review the transcripts of the conversations in which they had taken part during member check.

To verify that the study’s participants were genuinely interested in participating, all participants were given the choice to decline participation. This served to ensure that the responses provided by the participants could be taken seriously. Each interview session began with an explanation to participants that there was no right or wrong answer to the questions, and they were urged to be honest and open-minded.

### **3.9.2 Dependability**

Wagner *et al.* (2012) state that the results can be dependable if a study’s methodology is rational, traceable, and recorded. The researcher kept an audit trail of the steps taken in order to ensure dependability in this study. Additionally, an audit trail helps the researcher to guide the field of research from the beginning to the end so that other researchers may assess the trustworthiness of the research findings and comprehend the study’s methodology (Wagner *et al.*, 2012).

### **3.9.3 Transferability**

Transferability, as defined by Cohen *et al.* (2018), is the process by which a researcher demonstrates that findings may be applied to a different, comparable circumstance. This is consistent with Cope (2014), who noted that transferability is the process by which a researcher shows that findings may be applied to a different, comparable circumstance. In order to guarantee transferability, the research included an audit record of steps, a comprehensive contextual overview of the study locations, and participant verbatim citations. The study also emphasised that the findings can only be applied to the schools that were included in the sample due to the small sample size.

### **3.9.4 Confirmability**

Teddlie and Tashakkori (2012) note that confirmability is a way to guarantee objectivity and implies that the results are devoid of prejudice. Conversely, Cohen *et al.* (2018) note that confirmability is established when integrity, transferability, and dependability are all met. To mitigate potential bias, the study ensured that researcher viewpoints did not impact research procedures (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Additionally, the study member-checked raw data and findings to guarantee confirmability (Maree, 2016). To address the confirmability of the analysis, the study kept a journal to reflect on and recorded the ideas and acts that shaped methodological tensions. Furthermore, the frequent discussions during debriefing sessions with peers and supervisors also corroborated the study's findings.

### **3.10 RESEARCH ETHICS**

Ethical principles in research pertain to the guidelines that researchers should follow when interacting with research participants. Researchers must build rapport, trust, and genuine communication patterns with research participants because access and entry are delicate aspects of research studies (Johnson & Christensen, 2017).

According to Seidman (2013), obtaining consent from pertinent stakeholders to conduct research is a crucial aspect of the research process. The University of Pretoria's Ethics Committee in the Faculty of Education granted the researcher ethical authorisation for this study. Permission was also received from the principals and department heads, the education officials of Gauteng Province, and the Department of Basic Education.

It is of utmost importance that the researcher explains the purpose of the research along with the stages and processes to be followed to all participants (Abed, 2015). This the researcher did so, along with guaranteeing participants confidentiality, anonymity and privacy during the course of the research (Johnson & Christensen, 2017). The prevention of psychological injury, humiliation, embarrassment, and other losses that could befall research participants and communities in the event that ethical standards like informed consent and confidentiality were broken was emphasised (Seidman, 2013).

A research study's participants must provide informed consent to participate, and ethical responsibility must be considered to protect their rights, safety, and well-being (Babbie & Mouton, 2002). This means that the aim of the research must be communicated so that no coercion is exerted to obtain data from participants. The purpose of the study was explained

to the principals, who were then requested to sign consent forms granting permission to use their schools. Furthermore, consent letters were provided to all participants, asking for their informed consent to take part in the interviews. The option to resign from the study without facing any repercussions was provided to participants, upholding their fundamental rights and dignity (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014). Anonymity was guaranteed throughout the research process, and feedback on the final research report was provided to the participants (Johnson & Christensen, 2017). The names, ages and qualifications of the principals and departmental heads were treated confidentially, and codes used in place of actual names.

### **3.11 THE ROLE OF THE RESEARCHER IN THE STUDY**

The researcher was both the data collector and data analyst in this study. During data collection, the researcher established a good relationship with the participants to ensure good rapport, trust and cooperation during the interviews. During the interviews, the researcher was responsible for recording the interview discussions between him and the participants of the study. Lastly, the researcher transcribed data after collecting it and then undertook a thematic analysis of the data.

### **3.12 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

This chapter examined the research approach, as well as the methods used for data collecting and analysis, the research design, and the measures in place to guarantee the study's validity and reliability. Ethical considerations that were put in place during data collection were also discussed.

The next chapter, Chapter 4, presents and discusses the collected data. It also discusses the implications of the findings for the theoretical framework and the existing literature.



## **CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

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### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter's central focus is on presenting the findings derived from data collected through interviews and document analysis. The methods and procedures for data analysis detailed in Chapter 3 were used. The findings are presented in the form of categories, sub-themes and themes that emerged from the data analysis. In response to the research questions, the emerging themes are curriculum leadership roles as understood by principals and departmental heads, strategies employed in performing curriculum leadership roles, challenges in exercising curriculum leadership roles and systemic support for effective curriculum leadership. The specifics of the findings from the interpretive analysis of the data gathered, the literature, and the theoretical framework are discussed.

### **4.2 DEMOGRAPHIC DESCRIPTION OF PARTICIPANTS**

In this study, the participating schools hold the status as fee-paying Quintile 5 institutions. To provide a comprehensive overview of the participants, the study considered their highest qualifications, gender, and age, alongside their total years of experience in the field of education and the duration of their current positions. This detailed demographic scrutiny forms the basis for understanding the diverse backgrounds and expertise of the participants involved in the research. Table 4.1 below provides valuable insights into principals' and departmental heads' diverse backgrounds and experiences in selected fee-paying Gauteng secondary schools.

**Table 4.1***Demographic information of participants*

School	Participants pseudo names	Gender	Age	Position	Qualification	Years of experience
A	<b>PSA1-</b> Principal School A, Participant 1	Male	-	Principal	Ph.D.	18 years as principal
	<b>DHSA2 –</b> Department Head School A, Participant 2	Male	40 years	Departmental Head	B.Com. (Hons)	4 years as departmental head
B	<b>PSB3 –</b> Principal School B, Participant 3	Male	42 years	Principal	LL.B.	2 years as principal
	<b>DHSB4 –</b> Departmental Head School B, Participant 4	Female	39 years	Departmental Head	B. Ed.	5 years as departmental head
C	<b>PSC5 –</b> Principal school C, Participant 5	Male	55 years	Principal	Master's degree	21 years as principal
	<b>DHSC6 –</b> Departmental Head School C, Participant 6	Female	45 years	Departmental Head	B. Ed.	4 years as departmental head
D	<b>PSD7 –</b> Principal school D, Participant 7	Male	57 years	Principal	Diploma in Education	10 years as principal
	<b>DHSD8 –</b> Departmental Head School D, Participant 8	Female	47 years	Departmental Head	B. Sc. (Hons)	15 years as departmental head

School	Participants pseudo names	Gender	Age	Position	Qualification	Years of experience
E	<b>PSE9</b> – Principal school E, Participant 9	Male	55 years	Principal	B. A. (HOD)	5 years as principal
	<b>DHSE10</b> – Departmental Head School E, Participant 10	Female	- years	Departmental Head	B. Ed.	2 years as departmental head
F	<b>PSF11</b> – Principal school F, Participant 11	Male	48 years	Principal	B. Ed.	13 years as principal
	<b>DHSF12</b> – Departmental Head School F, Participant 12	Female	56 years	Departmental Head	B. A.	5 years as departmental head

The participants' highest qualifications range from a Ph.D. to a diploma in education, showcasing a spectrum of educational expertise. Although the departmental head, who holds a BCom, and one of the principals, who holds a LLB, have degrees from fields other than education, it seems from their participation that they are more aware of their roles. The majority of participants are male, reflecting a potential gender disparity in these leadership roles. The age range of the participants varies significantly, with some having many years of experience in education. Notably, the years of experience in education and the duration of their current positions demonstrate a wealth of knowledge and expertise among the participants.

The pseudonyms provided, such as PSD7, DHSD8, PSE9, DHSE10, PSF11, and DHSF12, serve as abbreviated identifiers for specific individuals within different educational contexts. These names follow a consistent format, with 'P' representing principals and 'DH' indicating departmental heads from the schools (A, B, C, D, E and F). The numerical suffixes, such as 8, 9, 10, 11, and 12, signify the participant numbers associated with each role, allowing for anonymity while maintaining a clear distinction between the different school representatives in the given study or context.

### 4.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS, THEMES, SUB-THEMES AND CATEGORIES

The sub-research questions are used to address the main research question: How do principals and departmental heads perform their roles as curriculum leaders in fee-paying secondary schools in Gauteng Province, South Africa? Table 4.2 depicts the sub-research questions, themes, sub-themes and the categories.

**Table 4.2**

*Sub-research questions and themes, sub-themes and categories that emerged*

RESEARCH QUESTIONS	THEMES AND SUB-THEMES	CATEGORIES
1. How do principals and departmental heads understand their roles as curriculum leaders in fee-paying secondary schools in Gauteng Province, South Africa?	<b>Theme 1: Curriculum leadership roles as understood by principals and departmental heads</b>	
	Sub-theme 1: Administrative duties and general management.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Administrative oversight</li> <li>❖ Human resources management</li> <li>❖ Financial management and resource allocation</li> </ul>
	Sub-theme 2: Curriculum implementation and educational leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Curriculum oversight and Implementation</li> <li>❖ Educational leadership and student engagement</li> <li>❖ Teachers' professional development</li> </ul>
2. What are the strategies used by principals and departmental heads in performing their roles as curriculum leaders in fee-paying secondary schools in Gauteng Province, South Africa?	<b>Theme 2: Strategies employed in performing curriculum leadership roles</b>	
	Sub-theme 1: Involvement of stakeholders in goal setting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Collaborative visioning sessions</li> <li>❖ Participatory decision-making forums</li> <li>❖ Regular feedback surveys</li> </ul>
	Sub-theme 2: Promotion of a positive school climate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Cultivating a culture of respect and empathy</li> <li>❖ Implementing anti-bullying campaigns and programs</li> </ul>

RESEARCH QUESTIONS	THEMES AND SUB-THEMES	CATEGORIES
		❖ Encouraging student leadership and peer support networks
3. What are the challenges principals and departmental heads encounter in their roles as curriculum leaders in fee-paying secondary schools in Gauteng Province, South Africa?	<b>Theme 3: Challenges in Exercising Curriculum Leadership Roles</b>	
	Sub-theme 1: Disruptions in teaching and learning	❖ Socio-economic disparities among students ❖ Behavioural issues ❖ Student attendance and truancy problems
	Sub-theme 2: School culture and learning gap	❖ Challenges in cultivating a supportive and inclusive school culture ❖ Learning gaps and academic disparities ❖ Limited parental involvement
4. How can the principals and departmental heads as curriculum leaders be supported to enhance the performance of their curriculum leadership roles in Gauteng Province, South Africa?	<b>Theme 4: Systemic support for effective curriculum leadership</b>	
	Sub-theme 1: Leadership and management training	❖ Development and attainment of school strategic plan ❖ Extrinsic motivation School culture development
	Sub-theme 2 - Effective instructional management	❖ Innovative teaching method ❖ Involvement in curriculum development ❖ Cultivating collaborative learning communities
	Sub-theme 3: Community engagement and resources support.	❖ Collaboration with district officers ❖ Collaboration with parents ❖ Collaboration with organisations

## 4.4 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The discussion of the interview and document analysis findings is presented in themes. The documents analysed are the National Education Policy Act (NEPA), Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS), Education White Paper 6 (EWP6) and South African Schools Act (SASA). Following a thorough examination of the data from interviews and the analysed documents, four themes pertaining to the roles of principals and departmental heads as curriculum leaders in fee-paying Gauteng secondary schools emerged. The four themes are discussed in the sections below.

### 4.4.1 Theme 1: Curriculum leadership roles as understood by principals and departmental heads

This theme was generated to answer sub-research Question 1: *How do principals and departmental heads understand their roles as curriculum leaders in Gauteng Province, South Africa fee-paying secondary schools?* The sub-themes that shed further light on this main theme are administrative duties and general management; curriculum implementation and educational leadership.

#### 4.4.1.1 Sub-theme 1: Administrative duties and general management

Principals and departmental heads universally recognise their roles' multi-faceted nature, encompassing administrative functions and general management. The subsequent paragraphs present the three categories of thought that emerged from this sub-theme which are administrative oversight, human resources management, and financial management and resource allocation.

**Category 1: Administrative oversight:** Administrative oversight in the context of this study relates to the principals' and departmental heads' responsibilities which include creating the school's vision and mission, managing the teaching-learning process, planning extra-curricular activities, supervising school activities, determining the needs and demands of the students, keeping track of school records and monitoring and evaluating the school's operations. The findings indicate that principals and departmental heads understand that their role as curriculum leaders is to be administratively overseen. This is evidenced by the principals and departmental heads responses below:

*The principal is responsible for the day to day running of the school by giving support to the staff and learners. The principal is responsible for the proper*

*implementation of curriculum, organising school programs such as assessments and delegation of duties (PSB3).*

*As a departmental head....., my role requires me to lead, manage, administrate, as well as monitor, maintain and develop my department. (DHSB4)*

*My main day-to-day responsibility is for the academic staff. I also oversee the administration of my department. (DHSA2)*

*I see myself responsible for overseeing the administration of the school, creating a positive and inclusive learning environment at my school that promotes the school values and nurtures the growth of my students, my teachers and staff. (PSF11)*

*The entire administrative side of a school is under my control. (PSD7)*

The quotations above suggest that administrative duties and general management are fundamental roles of principals and departmental heads. The findings highlight the connection between administrative responsibilities and curriculum leadership. Additionally, the findings imply that departmental heads are more responsible for monitoring staff activities and conducting assessments such as the moderation of school-based assessments (SBAs). This finding is consistent with literature showing that an administrative role is one of departmental heads' responsibilities when performing their daily activities (Grootenboer, 2018; Thorpe & Bennet-Powell, 2014). In support of this notion, Fullan (2015) notes that departmental heads regularly perform a range of administrative duties. These include, but are not limited to, typing and preparing question papers, organising and signing final schedules and mark sheets, generating timetables, compiling reports, and keeping track of class and summary registers (Fullan, 2015).

**Category 2:** The second category in discussing this sub-theme is human resources management. Human resource management encompasses the processes of hiring, choosing, onboarding, developing, and inspiring staff members (Belle, 2015). It is focused on employees and how they interact with one another within the workplace. Data revealed that school principals and departmental heads play a critical role in human resource management. Some participants indicated that they understood their role as curriculum leaders to be human resources management. The following is how the participants alluded to this:

*My role as principal includes managing human resources in the school. (PSF11)*

*My role as a principal is managing human resources in the school and implementing policies of the SGB and directives of the department of education (PSC5).*

*My role as a departmental head ... I also monitor people in my department in terms of their work, record keeping, filing and learner written work. (DHC6)*

The findings suggest that principals adopt a more holistic approach to human resources, on the other hand, departmental heads concentrate on their specific domains. This aligns with Wanjuri's (2022) observation that principals handle human resources in a more comprehensive way. Furthermore, according to Wanjuri (2022), a principal's human resource management role is crucial and involves implementing efficient procedures including staff welfare programs, competitive hiring, and professional development.

**Category 3: Financial management and resource allocation.** Another explanation provided by the participants on how they understood their role as curriculum leaders was financial management and resource allocation. Financial management entails a set of practices and approaches aimed at the school's financial planning. It involves keeping track of revenue sources and expenditures and finding the most efficient way to allocate available resources and spend in line with the budget that is still available (Samrat *et al.*, 2021). Although schools' primary purpose is to educate students, they are also businesses with many other responsibilities, including accounts payable, bills, taxes, and payroll. Some of the participants indicated the following:

*My roles include efficient financial management and resource allocation aligned with our curriculum goals. (PSD7)*

*Ensuring staff growth and effective curriculum delivery necessitate astute resource management. This ... includes managing finances ... (DHSB10)*

*I manage the finances of the school while ensuring that the resources provided are utilised effectively and efficiently. (PSF11)*

*I am also responsible for the department's financial management which among other things entails creating budgets and resource allocation for my department. (DHSD8)*

It appears from the quotations above that financial management and resource allocation entails strategically making financial and resource allocation decisions in curriculum leadership. The participants' views also emphasise the pivotal role of resource allocation in curriculum leadership. Curriculum leadership necessitates giving careful thought to the fundamentals surrounding the school. This explains why curriculum leadership is important and why it merits much more study.

The above three categories collectively highlight the multi-faceted administrative duties and general management roles of principals and departmental heads (DHs). Principals and departmental heads navigate administrative tasks that highlight the complexities and significance of their positions in the educational landscape. Both principals and DHs recognise the symbiotic relationship between administrative duties, financial management, and curriculum leadership. The finding portrays a shared understanding among these educational leaders, highlighting the complexity of their roles. The findings align with previous studies, particularly the theoretical framework that guides the study, which indicates that integrating administrative tasks with curriculum goals and strategic financial decisions emerges as cornerstones of effective curriculum leadership (Bush, 2013; Hallinger & Heck, 2010). Similarly, the South African Schools Act (SASA, 1996) provides insights, emphasising the holistic approach to curriculum leadership, identifying an interplay between administrative tasks, financial decisions, and curriculum implementation. It is equally crucial that principals and departmental heads work together to ensure the success of their administrative responsibilities and curriculum leadership.

Participants also emphasise curriculum implementation and educational leadership when describing their curriculum leadership role. This is discussed in the sub-theme below.

#### *4.4.1.2 Sub theme 2: Curriculum Implementation and educational leadership*

In this sub-theme, the categories that emerged from the participants' responses were curriculum oversight and implementation, educational leadership and student engagement; and teachers' professional development. These categories are covered in the following section.

**Category 1: Curriculum oversight and implementation.** Curriculum oversight in the context of this study is overseeing the content of the curriculum and making sure it complies with national standards and ensuring that the necessary tools are available to present a curriculum that is both demanding and rich. Curriculum implementation involves managing

assessment, ensuring that teaching is effective and encourages acquiring important knowledge. According to some participants, as curriculum leaders they perform the role of curriculum oversight and implementation. This is indicated by the following comments:

*The principal is responsible for the proper implementation of curriculum, organising school programs such as assessments and delegation of duties.*

**(PSB3)**

*As a department head, I am instrumental in ensuring teachers effectively deliver the curriculum. Supervising teaching and learning activities, conducting assessments, and providing timely feedback are integral parts of this process.*

**(DHSB4)**

*Supervising the curriculum's day-to-day execution ensures that learning objectives are met. This requires continuous monitoring, addressing challenges promptly, and adapting the curriculum to students' evolving needs.* **(PSC5)**

These findings emphasise the hands-on approach needed for effective curriculum implementation. The findings suggest that principals and departmental heads stress curriculum oversight and implementation within their respective spheres. This is in line with the views of Naidoo and Petersen (2016), who note that curriculum leaders who also happen to be principals and departmental heads are expected to play a major role in improving curriculum implementation. While principals are expected to supervise the curriculum's implementation and its effectiveness in schools, however, their effects on the day-to-day activities of teaching and learning are not always readily apparent (Lipscombe *et al.*, 2019). This finding by Lipscombe *et al.* (2019) is contrary to the findings of this present study, because it appears that principals and departmental heads concentrate more on ensuring the availability of resources and providing leadership to ensure the smooth daily running of schooling activities, including curriculum implementation. The difference in findings could be due to different contexts, since this study focuses on fee-paying schools that have access to resources through fees paid by the parents.

According to Grootenboer (2018), the implementation and management of the curriculum in schools are mostly the responsibility of the heads of departments. Departmental heads emphasise the meticulous monitoring of staff activities and the quality of work produced, including assessments and moderation for effective curriculum oversight and implementation which aligns with Grootenboer (2018). In addition, Bush (2013) attests that

departmental heads in schools oversee, moderate, and monitor staff activities and the quality of work produced.

**Category 2: Educational leadership and student engagement.** Educational leadership emphasises positive change and growth and inspires everyone at the school to reach their full potential for the collective benefit of all. In general, student engagement relates to their interest in learning, involvement, and active participation. When exploring how principals and department heads understand their curriculum leadership roles, participants strongly emphasised educational leadership and student engagement. The following excerpts below are verbatim from the participants.

*I inspire all staff members to realise their greatest potential for the good of everyone. (PSA1)*

*As a departmental head I support kind and caring relationships between students and teachers. (DHSE10)*

*One of my roles is to ensure the smooth daily running of schooling activities, including curriculum, assessments, and tests. (DHSF12)*

These viewpoints illustrate the transformative power of leadership in creating an engaging educational environment. When effective educational leadership is in place in a school, educators become more proficient in their roles, students get more value out of their education (Bottery, 2016). This creates a learning environment that includes the students' openness to engage with peers, teachers, and educational resources, enhancing their academic achievement and making learning enjoyable. The participants gave descriptions of how their curriculum leadership roles enhance students' engagement which directly improve students' performance. However, this study did not inquire from the students since it was beyond the scope of the study.

**Category 3: Teachers' professional development.** Some of the participants indicated that as curriculum leaders they are responsible for the professional development of teachers. This is evidenced by the quotations that follow:

*I support and develop teachers in my department with regard to the curriculum, I also inform them about professional development opportunities. (DHSF12)*

*I also mentor new teachers in my department. (DHSB4)*

*I build relationships with agencies that provide professional development for educators and think back on my own experiences in order to impart helpful practices to teachers. (PSD7)*

The findings also indicate the importance of professional development in enhancing curriculum leadership and the need for continuous growth and adaptability in curriculum leadership. Furthermore, the findings reveal that professional development also includes supporting teachers, enabling them to thrive professionally. As expressed by a principal, the role involves

*enabling the staff to thrive and to be effective, removing as many obstacles as possible that will make teaching and learning difficult. (DHSC6)*

A thorough narrative is revealed when the three categories mentioned above are considered. Principals and DHs recognised the pivotal role of curriculum oversight, inspirational leadership, and continuous professional development in effective curriculum implementation. Their shared emphasis on these elements highlights the dynamic nature of curriculum leadership, enriching the educational experience for students. This aligns with the Education White Paper 6 (EWP6, 2001), a document that outlines educational policy. The Education White Paper 6 (EWP6, 2001) strongly focuses on curriculum leadership, ongoing professional development, and inspirational leadership in the classroom. It also offers recommendations for improving students' educational experiences.

#### **4.4.2 Theme 2: Strategies employed in performing curriculum leadership roles**

Theme 2 focuses on the strategies employed by principals and departmental heads in performing curriculum leadership roles in secondary schools. The second sub-research question of this study, "What are the strategies used by principals and departmental heads in performing their roles as curriculum leaders in fee-paying secondary schools in Gauteng Province, South Africa?" is directly addressed by this theme. Theme 2 is further reinforced by two sub-themes - the involvement of stakeholders in goal setting and the promotion of a positive school climate, which are discussed in the subsequent paragraphs.

##### *4.4.2.1 Sub-theme 1: Involvement of stakeholders in goal setting*

This sub-theme presents findings on involvement of stakeholders in goal setting as strategy in performing curriculum leadership role. Based on the data, participants focused significantly on the following categories: collaborative visioning sessions, participatory

decision-making forums, and regular feedback surveys, which form this sub-theme. These categories are discussed below:

**Category 1: Collaborative visioning sessions.** In the context of this study, collaborative vision sessions relate to sessions when stakeholders and colleagues work together to develop and create the vision. The participants in this study indicated collaborative visioning sessions as a strategy in performing their roles as curriculum leaders. Some of the responses from the participants included the following:

*Involving teachers, parents, and students in visioning sessions fosters a shared sense of purpose. It aligns everyone towards common educational goals, ensuring a unified approach to curriculum leadership. (PSA1)*

*Working together with staff and learners creates clear, problem-solving-oriented goals. (DHSB4)*

*I occasionally get together with every teacher in my department to brainstorm solutions for various problems pertaining to the department. (DHSD8)*

*There are times when I select staff members from every level of the school and we work together to solve specific problems or decide on a way forward. (PSE9)*

The findings suggest that principals and departmental heads recognised the significance of collaborative visioning sessions. The participants' perspectives emphasise the collaborative nature of goal setting. In the principals' vision for defining school goals, a strong emphasis lies on collaborative goal setting. By actively involving stakeholders in the goal-setting process, the approach becomes inclusive, incorporating diverse perspectives. This view is indicated by the following response:

*Okay, I involve learners, staff, and the SMT in goal setting and I use GDE and district target to benchmark our goals. (PSA1)*

The above viewpoint also indicates that the participants actively involve key stakeholders, including learners, staff, and the school management team, in the process of goal setting. They ensure alignment with departmental and district guidelines, fostering a collaborative approach to goal definition. This agrees with the view of Saatcioglu *et al.* (2011), who stated that to ensure that there are enough students enrolled, to comply with teacher union policies, and to access resources from the school district and other organisations,

principals and departmental heads must be able to effectively engage with stakeholders, including parents, the school district, and community members. Moreover, principals and departmental heads' capacity to exhibit organisational legitimacy depends on their interactions with key stakeholders (Spillane & Anderson, 2014).

**Category 2: Participatory decision-making forums.** Within the scope of this study, forums for participatory decision-making are those where a variety of stakeholders come to a consensus on a matter or course of action. The forums can be set up in a number of ways, including suggestion boxes and staff committees. Some participants point to participatory decision-making forums as a strategy for performing their curriculum leadership roles. Their views are reflected in the quotations that follow:

*Regular forums where teachers, students, and parents actively participate in decision-making empower them. Their insights shape curriculum strategies, creating a sense of ownership and commitment. (DHSC6)*

*Encourage participatory decision-making processes for all stakeholders. Meetings with educators are held weekly where issues, if any, are discussed. Together solutions are found. (DHSF12)*

*Our school council serves as a forum for students' voices to be heard. (PSE9)*

*We have school open forums where student leaders participate and can share learners' opinions and make suggestions. (PSA1)*

These viewpoints highlight the democratic approach to decision-making and also show the importance of creating an inclusive decision-making process. This participatory method ensures that the goals are not only set collectively but are also informed by a variety of viewpoints, enriching the overall objective-setting process. This is supported by Allen and Blackwell (2021) who noted that in a democratic process, the decision-making process involves a group of people rather than just one person. Consequently, a group, not a single leader, is responsible for democratic decision-making. The findings also indicate that participants focus on encouraging participatory decision-making processes, ensuring active involvement and inclusion of all stakeholders. This approach fosters a sense of ownership and belonging among the school community, creating a supportive and collaborative atmosphere. Despite its apparent simplicity, the participatory decision-making process is somewhat convoluted (Mestry, 2017). It can be difficult to gather individuals and hope that

they will all agree on a particular issue. Both advantages and disadvantages come with participatory decision-making process.

**Category 3: Regular feedback surveys.** Within the context of this study, regular feedback surveys relate to both utilising a process to identify or quantify the experience of stakeholders on a regular basis and providing ongoing, consistent feedback to the various stakeholders. The findings from the interview data also show that regular feedback surveys are a strategy used by participants to perform their curriculum leadership roles. Some of the views of the participants are indicated below:

*Continuous feedback loops involving stakeholders are invaluable. Surveys provide actionable insights, enabling timely adjustments in curriculum strategies, ensuring they resonate with the needs and aspirations of all involved. (PSE9)*

*The strategies I use involve frequent feedback surveys. (PSC5)*

*As the principal of a secondary school I communicate regularly with the SMT, staff and parent community about the progress towards the school goals. (PSF11)*

*I frequently use feedback surveys to keep myself informed about what's going on in my department. (DHSA2)*

These perspectives highlight the importance of ongoing communication, directly relating to the sub-theme and enriching the understanding of the overarching theme.

When analysing the above three strategies collectively, a coherent narrative emerges: principals and departmental heads recognise the power of collaborative visioning sessions, participatory decision-making forums, and regular feedback mechanisms in effective curriculum leadership. Their emphasis on these strategies underscores curriculum leadership's inclusive and communicative nature, enhancing the educational experience for all stakeholders. The basis for sound decision-making is laid by collaborative visioning sessions, according to Allen and Blackwell (2021). These sessions aid in the development of concise statements of fundamental values, mission, and vision. Mestry (2017) asserts that diversified stakeholder involvement is crucial for effective leadership practices when it comes to participatory decision-making. When it comes to carrying out curriculum leadership roles, collaborative visioning, participatory decision-making, and continuous feedback

mechanisms are highlighted in the Education White Paper 6 (EWP6, 2001). This shows how effective curriculum leadership is communicative and inclusive.

#### 4.4.2.2 *Sub-theme 2: Promoting a positive school climate*

In this sub-theme, the study provides the views of principals and departmental heads regarding promoting a positive school climate as a strategy in performing curriculum leadership role. The strategies which principals and departmental heads underlined were used to formulate this sub-theme. Three categories are covered in this discussion: cultivating a culture of respect and empathy, implementing anti-bullying campaign programs, and encouraging student leadership and peer support networks. These categories are covered in the section below.

**Category 1: Cultivating a culture of respect and empathy.** In the context of this study, cultivating a culture of respect and empathy entails fostering an environment where people are considerate of others, treat them with special consideration, accept their differences and opinions even when they conflict with one another, and give consideration to the needs, feelings, and rights of others. The findings show that participants employ a culture of respect and empathy as a strategy in their roles as curriculum leaders. Some principals and departmental heads indicated the following:

*I think a respectful environment enhances learning. Students need to feel valued, and teachers need to model respect. Empathy creates a supportive atmosphere where everyone feels heard and understood. (PSD7)*

*As a departmental head, I foster a positive school climate by promoting respectful behaviour, engaging parents, and supporting student well-being. I also monitor learner conduct, adherence to school rules, and maintain a culture of respect among teachers and students. (DHSA2)*

*As a leader, generally providing a fair and unbiased environment and promoting collaboration among staff members are essential for a positive school climate. (PSB3)*

*I apply DBE educator/learner roles and responsibilities. Yeah, I apply school policies and procedures. (PSA1)*

These direct quotations from the participants emphasise the crucial role of mutual respect and empathy in ensuring an effective curriculum leadership role. The significance of

fostering a positive school climate resonates strongly among the participants and this aligns with the National School Climate Centre in New York which found that learning and development in schools are fostered by a sustained, positive school climate and are essential for young people to have fulfilling lives in democratic societies. The participants vigilantly monitor learner conduct, and adherence to school rules, and maintain a culture of respect, ensuring a conducive environment for learning and personal growth. Creating an atmosphere of respect and empathy is paramount. Adherence to guidelines and policies is paramount in cultivating a culture of respect and empathy. The participants emphasise the application of roles, responsibilities, and policies set by educational bodies. This highlights the importance of ensuring that the school operates within a framework that upholds educational standards and ethical practices.

**Category 2: Implementing anti-bullying campaign programs.** Implementing anti-bullying campaign programs in the context of this study refers to programs that minimise the harm that bullying does to victims, increase student understanding of bullying prevention, and foster a healthy learning environment in schools. The data from the responses of the participants show an emphasis on advancing and implementing anti-bullying campaigns and programs as a strategy in their roles as curriculum leaders. Some of the participants mentioned the following:

*I think addressing bullying head-on is essential. Anti-bullying campaigns create awareness and deterrence, fostering a safe environment where students can thrive academically and emotionally. (DHSF12)*

*Teachers at my school often offer classes on emotions, values, and negative behaviour patterns to help students recognise bullying situations. (PSB3)*

*We conduct anti-bullying programs and teach pupils about bullying at the start of every school term. (PSE9)*

This perspective underscores the proactive approach schools take to counteract negativity. Bullying is the recurrent act of one person or group purposefully inflicting physical or psychological harm on another person or group over time (Gaffney *et al.*, 2019). The anti-bullying programs by principals and departmental heads generally decrease bullying. This is consistent with the views of Gaffney *et al.* (2021) who note that some elements of anti-bullying programs are linked to higher declines in the bullying of others. Gaffney *et al.* (2019)

further emphasise that anti-bullying programs work better when implemented in the nation where they are created.

**Category 3: Student leadership and peer support networks.** In the context of this study, student leadership and peer support networks involve the promotion of student participation in motivating, inspiring, and guiding others toward the achievement of a goal. It also involves people or groups helping one another based on shared experiences and fostering an atmosphere of acceptance and understanding. The data gathered for this study also suggests that principals and departmental heads encourage student leadership and peer support networks as a strategy in their roles as curriculum leaders. This is clarified by the participants' comments below:

*We give students the opportunity to assume several leadership responsibilities. Students can apply for several roles after the conclusion of the first term. The opportunities are announced during assemblies. (PSC5)*

*In my department, teachers encourage their students to cooperate with and assist one another out in the classroom. (DHSE10)*

*At my school, students volunteer to represent the student voice during the academic year and to speak on behalf of their year group in meetings. (PSA1)*

These findings highlight the importance of student involvement in shaping a positive environment. This is consistent with findings by Li and Xue (2023), who pointed out that encouraging student involvement is important for both improving learning outcomes and the learning environment. When all three of the categories as mentioned above are considered collectively, a comprehensive approach to promoting a positive school climate becomes evident. Cultivating respect and empathy, implementing anti-bullying initiatives, and encouraging student leadership and peer support networks are interrelated components of a nurturing educational environment. Principals and departmental heads universally recognise the value of these strategies, indicating a shared commitment to creating a positive atmosphere within their schools. This is consistent with the opinions of Jones and Shindler (2016), who stated that in order to maximize student progress, it is imperative to ascertain how the school principal and departmental heads can intentionally cultivate a positive school atmosphere within the bounds of their positions. In support, Rock *et al.* (2017) assert that principals play a crucial role in fostering a positive school climate through leadership and upholding high standards.

#### 4.4.3 Theme 3: Challenges in Exercising Curriculum Leadership Roles

The study's participants provided an explanation of the challenges they encounter in exercising curriculum leadership roles. "What are the challenges encountered by principals and departmental heads in their roles as curriculum leaders in fee-paying secondary schools in Gauteng Province, South Africa?" is the third sub-research question that this theme addresses. This theme is presented in two sub-themes - disruptions in teaching and learning and school culture and learning gap. These sub-themes are covered in the paragraphs that follow.

##### 4.4.3.1 Sub-theme 1: Disruptions in teaching and learning

The findings in this sub-theme outline the challenges pertaining to disruptions in teaching and learning that the participants encounter as they carry out their curriculum leadership roles. This sub-theme's three categories are student attendance and truancy problems, socio-economic disparities among students, and behavioural issues. In the next paragraphs, these categories are discussed.

**Category 1: Student attendance and truancy problems.** School attendance and absence are worldwide concerns. Around the world, less than 75% of students finish at least a lower secondary school education (UNESCO, 2019). Some principals and departmental heads provide the following explanation in relation to student attendance and truancy problems as a challenge that hinders effective curriculum leadership duties:

*Maintaining consistent attendance is vital for academic progress. Truancy disrupts the learning rhythm and affects overall student performance. (PSA1)*

*Punctuality and absenteeism among both learners and teachers due to various reasons pose a challenge to effective teaching and learning. (DHSB4)*

*We also face a problem with certain students' irregular attendance. It has an impact on the students' learning because every minute spent in class matters and missing days pile up fast. (PSF11)*

The aforementioned data emphasises the significance of student attendance. The above views also indicate that disruptions caused by inconsistent attendance by educators and learners is a challenge to the execution of the participants' roles. According to McNeely *et al.* (2021), punitive measures for absenteeism, such as suspension and expulsion are a common feature of contemporary school and policy responses. On the other hand,

emphasising attendance and restorative techniques strengthens ties to and involvement in the classroom. In order to improve safety, academic progress, mental health, social relationships, family resources, and career development, these activities can be conducted through comprehensive school-family-community collaborations as well as analytical health-based initiatives (Gentle-Genitty *et al.*, 2020).

**Category 2: Socio-economic disparities among students.** According to the American Psychological Association, socioeconomic status is a person's or a group's social position according to their income and educational credentials. It encompasses not only financial resources but also one's degree of education, sense of financial security, and self-perceived social class and status. Despite the need for all students, regardless of status, have equal access to educational resources, there are a number of obstacles in the way of equal access. In this study, some principals and departmental heads indicated socio-economic disparities among students as a challenge in their role as curriculum leaders. The following explanations were provided by the principals and departmental heads:

*Socio-economic differences among students impact their access to educational resources. Financial disparities affect participation levels, hindering the goal of equal educational opportunities. (DHSC6)*

*Students differ in their socioeconomic backgrounds, and this affect how they approach education and how successful they are in school. (PSB3)*

*The disparities in socioeconomic status among the students make it difficult to maintain motivation for every one of them. (DHSA2)*

The findings above indicate that complex socioeconomic disparities among students pose substantial challenges to curriculum leaders and they stress the difficulties faced by schools in addressing these disparities. Principals and departmental heads indicated that some students were from low-income homes. The students from low-income homes may find it challenging to meet the needs of the classroom since their attention is being drawn by events occurring outside of school (Gustafssonab *et al.*, 2018). It follows that in order to accommodate these students and ensure their academic success principals and departmental heads must go above and beyond. In order to make sure that these children progress in accordance with their age cohort, the participants, especially departmental heads, must go above and beyond which presents challenges.

**Category 3: Behavioural Issues.** In addition, findings reveal that behavioural issues are a challenge to principals and departmental heads in the execution of their curriculum leadership roles. Some principals and departmental heads indicated the following:

*Behavioural issues create interruptions, affecting both teachers and students. Addressing classroom disruptions is crucial for maintaining an effective learning atmosphere. (PSA1)*

*Learners' lack of discipline hinders the smooth operation of the school. (PSB3)*

*While behavioural issues are not a very serious situation in my department, it does occur and places added strain on the DH in terms of managing curriculum, managing classes, etc. (DHSD8)*

*Some of the challenges faced as a departmental head is unruly behaviour among students, work load and lack of time. (DHSB4)*

The aforementioned quotations highlight the challenges faced by principals and departmental heads in managing student behavior. These findings also illuminate the intricate issues encountered in day-to-day educational operations.

When examining these challenges collectively, a multi-faceted picture emerges. Student attendance and truancy problems, socio-economic disparities, and behavioural disruptions are interconnected challenges principals and departmental heads face in fee-paying secondary schools. These difficulties impact the overall teaching and learning experience, reflecting the complex realities of modern education as revealed from the data. Principals and DHs unanimously recognise these challenges, indicating a shared awareness of the obstacles hindering curriculum leadership.

In summary, the above findings underline the challenges faced by curriculum leaders in fee-paying secondary schools. The socio-economic disparities and behavioural disruptions discussed by principals and DHs illuminate the multi-faceted nature of disruptions in teaching and learning. These challenges, deeply rooted in the sub-theme, are integral aspects of the broader theme, highlighting the intricate landscape in which curriculum leadership roles are exercised. The findings of Tulgan (2014) and Naidoo and Petersen (2016) corroborate the complicated nature of disruptions in teaching and learning, aligning with socio-economic disparities identified by Mestry (2017). Additionally, Macleod's (2017) work supports the problematic contexts of curriculum leadership roles, emphasising the

complex challenges faced by principals and DHs, while Coleman and Bush (2003) offer further context to the behavioural disruptions discussed, enhancing the understanding of these integral aspects within the broader theme.

#### *4.4.3.2 Sub-theme 2: School culture and learning gap*

The findings of this sub-theme add to the numerous challenges in sub-theme 1 that principals and departmental heads encounter as they conduct their role as curriculum leaders in secondary school. This sub-theme focuses on challenges relating to school culture and the learning gap and is divided into three categories - challenges in cultivating a supportive and inclusive school culture, learning gaps and academic disparities, and limited parental involvement. These categories are covered in the paragraphs that follow.

***Category 1: Challenges in cultivating a supportive and inclusive school culture.*** In the context of this study, cultivating a supportive and inclusive school culture refers to promoting a school where students feel comfortable, and every student is provided support regardless of their unique requirements or obstacles to learning. Furthermore, it promotes a school where students have excellent learning experiences and where they can develop and can see themselves reflected in the curriculum and personnel. Some participants mentioned cultivating a supportive and inclusive school culture as a challenge. The participants indicated the following:

*It's challenging when there's a lack of mutual respect and understanding among students, hindering the learning atmosphere. (PSC5)*

*... building a friendly and inclusive school culture is challenging when there is a lack of support from both teachers and students. (PSF11)*

*The lack of an inclusive culture at our school makes it challenging to create a welcoming and inclusive school environment. (DHSD8)*

The findings reveal the challenges principals and departmental heads encounter in establishing an inclusive environment. Principals and departmental heads play an essential part of establishing inclusive schools. This is consistent with the views of O'Laughlin and Lindle (2015) who noted that in order to create an inclusive learning environment, educators and other staff members must give all students equal access to learning opportunities and chances for achievement. This aligns with the views of Ryan (2010) who pointed out that to create inclusive and supportive learning environments for students, educators and parents

must work together. Unfortunately, the findings from the participating schools show that there is inadequate support and inclusivity at the schools. It is evident that cultivating a supportive and inclusive school culture requires the input of departmental heads and principals and support from educators and parents.

**Category 2: Learning gaps and academic disparity.** A learning gap, to put it simply, is the difference between what a student is expected to know at a given grade level and what they have actually mastered. A student may experience a learning gap in one or more subjects during their academic career. Participants expressed learning gaps and academic disparities as a challenge in their role as curriculum leaders. These principals and departmental heads mentioned the following:

*Learning disparities among students require tailored approaches. Academic gaps, if unaddressed, hinder overall progress. (DHSE10)*

*Learners have significant learning gaps in terms of content and concepts. As a consequence, annual teaching plans are constantly revised and a catch-up programme has been devised by the department to close these gaps. Unfortunately, it is like shooting a moving target. Educators have to catch up on work missed out on over the past three years while trying to teach this year's work. This leaves them frustrated and learners are performing poorly due to the volume of work that must be completed and their inability to consolidate concepts. (PSD7)*

*The challenges I experience in exercising my curriculum leadership roles include but are not limited to student learning gaps. (PSC5)*

The quotations as mentioned above underscore the urgency of targeted interventions. One participant, emphasising learning gaps and educator frustration due to disrupted learning patterns caused by the Covid-19 pandemic indicated that:

*The consequences of Covid-19 remain the greatest challenge to curriculum management at school. The prolonged and unexpected school closures negatively impacted curriculum coverage and learning at our school. (PSD7)*

This challenge underscores schools' complexities in adapting to unprecedented disruptions, requiring innovative approaches to bridge the gaps and maintain educational standards. Teachers are observing larger learning gaps among their students in every grade level. They

are negotiating the hard responsibilities of designing lesson plans that challenge their pupils while addressing narrowing learning gaps. Furthermore, because these learning gaps impede students' growth and future advancement, they must be addressed immediately. This leaves principals and departmental heads challenged with the task of increasing the teachers' knowledge about learning gaps and academic disparities to improve the teachers' ability to close learning gaps.

**Category 3: Limited parental involvement.** Parental school involvement can take many forms. Some of the forms of parental involvement include providing a safe and stable home environment, stimulating the child's mind, having conversations with their children, setting high standards for their personal development and citizenship, sharing information with the schools, attending school functions, and getting involved in school governance. As seen by the following quotations, principals and departmental heads in this study indicated that enhancing parental involvement and support is a challenge in their role as curriculum leaders.

*Engaging parents is crucial. Limited parental involvement affects student motivation and commitment to learning. (PSA1)*

*Engagement with parents is vital but it's difficult without practical support which is the situation in our school. (DHSE10)*

*Lack of parental involvement and support is one huge challenge at the school. (DHSD8)*

Based on these findings, the participants emphasised the lack of practical hands-on involvement from parents. It is surprising that while the parents are willing to pay school fees as required in the context of the schools, the parents are not available to provide academic support to children. This finding is consistent with McKenna and Millen's (2013) observation that the lack of parental involvement in their children's education is a frequent grievance among school leaders. Parent involvement has been linked to increased academic achievement, improved school-community relations and improved emotional development and behavior (Lawson & Alameda-Lawson, 2012). Participating in prescribed activities that the school arrange, attending school events, and reading to one's child are examples considered to be an element of parent involvement.

The challenges discussed in this sub-theme collectively highlight the dynamics of school culture and learning gap issues. Principals and DHs, through their direct quotes, reveal the multi-faceted challenges faced in fostering an inclusive culture, addressing learning disparities, enhancing parental involvement, and navigating external interferences. These insights provide a comprehensive view of the obstacles faced by participating fee-paying secondary schools in Gauteng Province, emphasising the need for strategic interventions and collaborative efforts to overcome these challenges.

The complexities of cultivating an inclusive culture, addressing academic gaps, involving parents, managing external program interference, and tackling resource scarcity and technological needs are vividly depicted as exposed by the participating schools in this study. These findings align with the views of Macleod (2017) and Naidoo and Petersen (2016) who noted the urgent need for comprehensive and context-specific strategies to ensure a supportive, equitable, and enriching educational environment for all students.

#### **4.4.4 Theme 4: Systemic support for effective curriculum leadership**

This theme directly addresses the study's fourth sub-research question: "How can the principals and departmental heads as curriculum leaders be supported in enhancing the performance of their curriculum leadership roles in Gauteng Province, South Africa?" This theme is formulated from three sub-themes that emerged from the participants' frequent responses: leadership and management training, effective instructional management and community engagement and resources support. This theme holds great significance because participants facing challenges with curriculum leadership were able to pinpoint ways in which they can receive support to improve their performance and productivity.

##### *4.4.4.1 Sub-theme 1: Leadership and management training*

Principals and departmental heads need the necessary knowledge, skills, and competencies to fulfil the unique needs of their roles and provide better services to the students, teachers, and communities they oversee. These expectations call for support from leadership and management training programs. This sub-theme covers leadership and management training as echoed by the participants. The three areas of focus for this sub-theme are: development and attainment of the school's strategic plan; extrinsic motivation; and school culture development.

**Category 1: Development and attainment of the school's strategic plan.** Within the framework of this study, the development and attainment of the school's strategic plan denote the development and completion of a road map that directs the school towards accomplishing its aims and objectives. A key component of effective school management is strategic planning, which is essential for schools to effectively address the requirements of their students, staff, and community. Some participants indicated they needed support in the development and attainment of the school's strategic plan in the execution of their roles. They made the following statements:

*I need the support of stakeholders when it comes to strategic planning so that we can establish a common vision for carrying out obligations and responsibilities towards students' academic progress. (PSF11)*

*I require assistance in creating and implementing the strategic plan so that, as a department, we have a shared direction for what has to be done. (DHSD8)*

*While I conduct strategic planning on my own, I need other stakeholders' cooperation in order to properly develop and carry out a common strategic plan. (PSE9)*

The aforementioned quotations underscore the significance of the development and attainment of school strategic plan. This finding is consistent with the perspectives of Antoniou *et al.* (2016) and Myende and Bhengu (2015), who pointed out that strategic planning is an essential planning tool that supports the sustainable development of schools by fostering a collective vision through stakeholder collaboration in the execution of duties and responsibilities towards students' academic achievement. The support needed by the participants in developing and attaining the school's strategic plan depends on their leadership styles. This is supported by Anyieni and Areri (2016), who found that the school leaders' leadership style plays a major role in the development and attainment of a school strategic plan.

**Category 2: Extrinsic motivation.** Snacks, treats, and general expressions of gratitude are valued by all. In the context of this study, extrinsic motivation refers to outside incentives or acknowledgment that impacts good behavior. For instance, prizes or acknowledgement for finishing a job or reaching a target. Some participants expressed that they require extrinsic motivational support to perform their responsibilities effectively. They voiced the following:

*Motivation is key to driving excellence. It's not just about motivating students but also staff, creating a culture of enthusiasm for learning. (DHSB4)*

*I can't ignore the need for increased compensation to stay motivated. (PSF11)*

*My work involves a lot, just as for the rest of the staff and rewards help to keep everyone going. (DHSD8)*

*Extrinsic motivation e.g., bonuses, incentives for extreme targets and time achievement is valuable. (PSA1)*

These results show that motivation stands as a cornerstone for effective leadership and management. The findings from this study indicate that principals and departmental heads are interested in extrinsic motivational support as they make beneficial contributions to education. These findings are consistent with the findings of MacCormack *et al.* (2021) who noted that while a small percentage of workers in a variety of industries, including education, are intrinsically driven for certain aspects of their jobs, most work performed by workers in these industries is extrinsically motivated. However, the findings of this study and the views of MacCormack *et al.* (2021) are contrary to the views of Harris *et al.* (2020) who noted that desirable qualities in school leaders include a desire to make a difference, have a positive influence, and enjoy the challenges that come with the work on both a personal and professional level.

**Category 3: School culture development.** Within the framework of this study, school culture development refers to creating an accepted and understood system of procedures that the entire school community can follow. Some participants expressed that they require support with school culture development to perform their duties effectively. The participants' statements were as follows:

*Developing programs to enhance the school culture is pivotal. It's about creating an environment where learning flourishes and everyone feels valued. (PSD7)*

*Since I am the guardian of the school's culture, I need the help of everyone to develop the school culture. (PSB3)*

*I need support to develop our school culture so that we can establish our common values and standards as a tightly connected group. (PSA1)*

These findings show that principals and departmental heads have a major role to play in developing a school culture. This aligns with the opinions of Westerberg (2016), who pointed out that school leaders have a significant impact on the culture of their schools and that cultivating a healthy culture is essential for creating the framework that both staff and students work within. The assistance required by participants in the formation of school culture aligns with the opinions of Bettini *et al.* (2016), who pointed out that a school's level of staff collaboration plays a significant role in defining its culture, whether it is positive or negative.

Together, the three categories mentioned above show how diverse leadership and management training is. The actual statements from principals and DHs underline the crucial components: setting clear goals and strategic planning, engaging both staff and students, and developing culture-enhancement activities. These observations highlight the necessity of systemic support and effectively illustrate the challenges faced by curriculum leaders in handling many facets of leadership. In the broader context of systemic support for effective curriculum leadership, these categories emphasise the crucial role of leadership and management training. Principals and DHs, through their statements, underscore the need for targeted training programs that encompass goal setting, motivation strategies, and culture development initiatives.

#### *4.4.4.2 Sub-theme 2: Effective instructional management*

The goal of instructional management is to optimise student learning by assisting and mentoring teachers in the most effective utilisation of technology, test data, and teaching methodologies. Effective instructional management helps principals and departmental heads to serve as both a resource and an example of good teaching. Effective instructional management is covered in this sub-theme. This sub-theme's three categories are: innovative teaching method, involvement in curriculum development and cultivating collaborative learning communities. The paragraphs that follow expand these categories.

**Category 1: Innovative teaching method.** Teaching methods that are considered innovative are ones that depart from the conventional approaches to better engage students and cater to their specific requirements. Any grade level and any subject can employ these methods. Participants highlighted innovative teaching method as part of the systematic support needed for effective curriculum leadership roles. The participants stated the following:

*Support for innovative teaching methods is necessary for both the teachers and me as the principal. Innovation in teaching methods is essential. It's about engaging students in creative ways, making learning a dynamic experience.*  
**(PSB3)**

*Innovative teaching strategies are necessary because they raise student achievement and improve the quality of teaching. As the departmental head, I require assistance in this area so that I may assist the teachers in my department as well.* **(DHSC6)**

*Many of our students need support in their learning and by using innovative teaching methods, teachers can create a supportive learning atmosphere.*  
**(PSA1)**

The participants perspectives indicate that innovative teaching methods are a pivotal component of effective instructional management. These findings also suggest the need for progressive teaching approaches that cater to diverse learning styles, directly aligning with the sub-theme. Innovative methods are not just a preference but a necessity for effective instructional management. This aligns with the research of Anderson (2010), which identified four leadership categories, each involving particular activities, that define successful schools. The management of the instructional program, which directly addresses activities that center on teaching and learning, is of interest for the current study. Two of the four essential practices linked to this area, according to Anderson (2010), support teachers' instruction through coordination, supervision, and assessment, as well as keeping an eye on teaching and learning.

**Category 2: Involvement in curriculum development.** Within the scope of this study, curriculum development refers to the process of organising and designing an educational curriculum, which includes selecting pertinent learning objectives, supplementary materials, instructional strategies, methods of assessment, and content. Thus, involvement in curriculum development refers to participation in the process. In this study, some participants expressed a need for support and a desire to be involved in curriculum development. These participants stated the following:

*As a departmental head I should be involved in curriculum development. Being part of curriculum development ensures relevance. It's about aligning classroom teaching with the evolving educational landscape.* **(DHSC6)**

*I think principals are important players in curriculum development because they help teachers in various ways like encouraging teachers to choose lessons that are suitable for each student's requirements. Curriculum development is something I want to be a part of. (PSC5)*

These views expressed by the participants indicate that involvement in curriculum development signifies active participation in shaping educational content. Mayfield (2018) and Zhang and Henderson (2018) noted that principals and departmental heads would be empowered to co-lead the instructional programs at their schools by their collaborative efforts on curricular issues. This would significantly change the principals and departmental heads instructional management practices (Thessin, 2019).

**Category 3: Cultivating collaborative learning communities.** Cultivating collaborative learning communities, as used in this study, refers to creating an environment that prioritises honest communication, fosters teamwork in problem-solving, and offers plenty of chances for individuals to both teach and be taught by others. Some participants highlighted that they need support in cultivating collaborative learning communities for effective curriculum leadership. The participants made the following statements:

*Promoting collaborative learning environments is vital. It fosters a sense of community, where students and educators learn from one another. (PSA1)*

*Building and supporting classroom communities give students the freedom to participate in learning processes and take calculated risks. (DHSA2)*

*We want everyone to collaborate effectively since doing so produces better results and has many positive benefits. (PSD7)*

According to the perspectives of these participants, developing collaborative learning communities is a comprehensive strategy for instructional management. Furthermore, the perspectives of the participants suggest that cooperative communities are not solely a pedagogical strategy, but rather a crucial element of efficient instructional administration and that the participants require this assistance.

These findings from the three categories discussed above collectively reflect the nature of effective instructional management. The direct quotes highlight the significance of innovative teaching methods, active involvement in curriculum development, and the cultivation of collaborative learning communities. These insights vividly portray the complexities

curriculum leaders face in managing diverse aspects of teaching and learning, highlighting the need for systemic support.

In the broader context of systemic support for effective curriculum leadership, these categories illuminate the crucial dimensions of instructional management. Principals and DHs, through their statements, emphasise the need for innovative pedagogy, educator involvement in curriculum shaping, and the nurturing of collaborative learning communities. These elements align with the sub-theme and resonate with the overarching theme, showcasing the systemic support required for enhancing instructional management in the participating schools in Gauteng Province, South Africa. Leithwood and Jantzi (2020) stress the vital dimensions of instructional management within the context of systemic support for effective curriculum leadership, emphasising the need for proactive pedagogy and collaborative learning communities which corroborate the findings of this study. Terhoven (2016) highlights the importance of innovative teaching methods and educator involvement in curriculum design, which also support the expression of the participants of this study.

#### *4.4.4.3 Sub-theme 3: Community engagement and resource support*

Schools are not isolated entities. They are an important part of the network of commercial, charitable, and governmental institutions that support and serve the surrounding community. Schools can maximise their role in securing educational, health, and community advancements by collaborating with community organisations and making the most of their resources. Three categories are covered in this sub-theme: collaboration with district officers, collaboration with parents and collaboration with organisations. These categories are discussed in the ensuing paragraphs.

**Category 1: Collaboration with district officers.** In the context of the study, this refers to principals and departmental heads partnering with district officers in order to ensure they have the tools and support they need. Some participants indicated collaboration with district officers would help them perform their curriculum leadership role. These participants stated the following:

*Working closely with district officers ensures alignment with educational policies and resources. It's about forging partnerships that enhance our school's capabilities. (DHSD8)*

*Collaboration with the Department will help us to secure essential information and resources and this will directly promote student engagement. If one can enjoy more support from the department, it will be of great benefit. (DHSF12)*

*Working closely with district officers enables seamless implementation of policies and directives of department of education. (PSB3)*

The quotations above show that collaboration with district officers is crucial for schools. This implies that collaborating with district officers is not merely a choice but a strategic necessity, displaying the school's commitment to effective curriculum leadership.

**Category 2: Collaboration with parents.** Within the framework of this study, collaboration with parents refers to the schools' and, in particular, principals' and departmental heads' involvement of parents in supporting their children's academic growth and achievement of school goals. Some participants expressed collaboration with parents as part of the support needed to enhance the adequate performance of their curriculum leadership role. These participants indicated the following:

*Parental involvement is key to a student's success. It's about fostering a supportive home-school connection that nurtures the child's learning journey. (DHSE10)*

*Collaborate with the school governing body (SGB) to set academic and infrastructural goals, fostering a shared vision among stakeholders. (PSD7)*

*Get the community involved in the school... work together to give the learners the best chance to succeed. (PSE9).*

*Develop programs that promote community involvement. It creates a sense of belonging in the community. (PSF11)*

The aforementioned views of the participants show that engaging parents is not an isolated effort but an integral part of the school's community engagement strategy, showcasing a holistic approach to curriculum leadership. Moreover, community collaboration is necessary, with principals actively involving the community in the educational process. The findings also show that principals and departmental heads alike engage in partnership with parents. However, principals collaborate with parents on a broader perspective while departmental

heads focus on their specific departmental areas. Despite this minor difference, both positions are indispensable in ensuring the school's smooth collaboration with parents.

**Category 3: Collaboration with organisations.** In the context of this study, collaboration with organisations encompasses several forms of cooperative school functioning with local businesses and organisations. Some participants in the study indicated collaboration with organisations to obtain necessary supports like training, learning materials and resources which can empower them in their curriculum leadership role. The following excerpts are their responses:

*Partnering with organisations brings in valuable resources. It's about tapping into external expertise and support systems that enrich our educational environment.*

**(PSB3)**

*Collaborating with organisations to develop a shared vision for the school and goals that align with that vision.* **(PSF11)**

*Involvement of business leaders in the support of principals and schools.* **(PSE9)**

This view from participants highlights the strategic alliances schools form with external organisations. Collaborating with organisations goes beyond financial support; it encompasses a collaborative effort to enhance the school's overall learning system. Collaboration with organisations signifies the broader network schools build for resource support.

The above findings collectively highlight the multi-faceted nature of community engagement and resource support. The interview responses emphasise the strategic collaboration with district officers, active involvement of parents, and partnerships with external organisations. These insights vividly portray the complexities faced by curriculum leaders in managing community engagement and resource allocation, highlighting the need for systemic support.

These categories illuminate the vital dimensions of community engagement and resource support in the broader context of systemic support for effective curriculum leadership. Principals and DHs, through their statements, emphasise the strategic collaborations with district officers, the active involvement of parents, and the partnerships with external organisations. Within the realm of instructional leadership, various scholars, including Davis *et al.* (2022) and Tschannen-Moran *et al.* (2021), offer distinct insights. Davis *et al.* (2022) and Tschannen-Moran *et al.* (2021) emphasise the importance of collaborative learning

communities and proactive pedagogy, showcasing the different approaches essential for effective curriculum leadership. These elements not only align with the sub-theme but also resonate with the main theme, showcasing the systemic support required for enhancing community engagement and resource allocation in Gauteng Province, South Africa.

Document analysis under the umbrella of systemic support for effective curriculum leadership comprehensively stress on educational quality and standards, whereby principals and DHs are supposed to assume the role of custodians for maintaining high educational standards. The National Education Policy Act (NEPA, 2006) establish these standards and define the quality assurance parameters. In their curriculum leadership roles, principals and DHs are accountable for ensuring that teaching strategies and assessments align with the learning outcomes outlined in the national curriculum. Their responsibility encompasses a holistic approach to managing the instructional program, where quality education is the focal point, grounded in national standards and best practices.

In summary, the above findings shed light on the multifaceted challenges and strategies related to community engagement and resource support and curriculum implementation strategies. These insights provide a nuanced understanding of the diverse components involved in collaborating with external stakeholders and organizations, emphasizing the need for comprehensive, tailored, and systemic support to empower principals and DHs in fulfilling their roles as curriculum leaders in fee-paying secondary schools.

## 4.5 DOCUMENT ANALYSIS REPORT

**Table 4.3**

*Documents analysed*

Document analysed	Evidence from document analysis	Themes/sub-themes
Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS)	Principals and DHs utilise the guidelines provided in the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) to tailor the curriculum according to their school's unique needs. They exercise their authority, aligning content and assessment methods with the	<b>Defining school goals</b> Curriculum design and customisation

Document analysed	Evidence from document analysis	Themes/sub-themes
	<p>distinctive learning requirements of their students, ensuring that the goals set are not only meaningful but also attainable.</p>	
<p>Education White Paper 6 (EWP6)</p>	<p>The principles of stakeholder collaboration and inclusivity underscore the collaborative efforts of principals and DHs. Guided by EWP6 and SASA, they engage with parents, the community, and other stakeholders.</p>	<p><b>Promoting school climate</b></p> <p>Stakeholder collaboration and inclusivity</p>
<p>South African Schools Act (SASA) 1996:</p>	<p>Principals and DHs are endowed with the authority and resources to implement the national educational vision effectively. This empowerment extends to critical areas such as curriculum development, staffing decisions, and resource allocation. The Education White Paper 6 (EWP6) and the South African Schools Act (SASA) validate this autonomy.</p>	<p><b>Promoting school climate</b></p> <p>Empowerment and autonomy</p>
<p>National Education Policy Act (NEPA): NEPA, promulgated in 1996, is another critical piece of legislation governing education in South Africa.</p>	<p>Principals and DHs assume the role of custodians for maintaining high educational standards. The National Education Policy Act (NEPA) establishes these standards and defines the quality assurance parameters.</p>	<p><b>Managing instructional programme</b></p> <p>Educational quality and standards</p>

## **4.6 TRIANGULATION OF INTERVIEW RESULTS AND DOCUMENT ANALYSIS**

Triangulation in qualitative research involves the use of documents analysis in conjunction with other research methods. Triangulation is the process of combining several approaches to analyse the same issue (Maruster & Gijzenberg, 2013), and document analysis is one tool utilised in this process. In the section that follow, the study examined the data collected using these diverse techniques for convergence and corroboration.

### **4.6.1 Theme 1: Defining School Goals**

The documents provide a foundational structure for curriculum design and customisation, emphasizing the roles of principals and DHs in adapting content and assessment methods according to the guidelines set by the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS). This document serves as the framework upon which principals and DHs base their strategic planning and detailed departmental oversight, ensuring that the school goals align with national educational objectives.

### **4.6.2 Theme 2: Managing instructional programme**

Within the educational quality and standards theme, the documents, particularly the CAPS, lay down the benchmarks for educational quality and standards. They outline the expectations for teaching strategies and learning outcomes. Principals and DHs, as curriculum leaders, use these standards as a yardstick for maintaining high teaching standards. The documents empower them to make decisions autonomously, enabling them to innovate their teaching methods and create an environment conducive to effective learning.

### **4.6.3 Theme 3: Promoting school climate**

Under the stakeholder collaboration and inclusivity theme, the documents, including the Education White Paper 6 (EWP6) and the South African Schools Act (SASA), emphasise the importance of collaboration with stakeholders and inclusivity in the educational process. These documents provide the legal and policy framework that supports the inclusive learning environment. Principals and DHs draw on these guidelines to promote respectful behaviour, open communication, and diverse learning support within their schools, fostering an atmosphere of inclusion and cooperation.

In essence, the inputs from the documents serve as the foundation upon which principals and DHs build their strategies. They provide the overarching principles, guidelines, and legal

frameworks that inform the curriculum leadership roles of principals and DHs, ensuring alignment with national standards and policies while allowing for innovative, context-specific implementation within their schools.

#### **4.7 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

In this chapter, a comprehensive exploration of the roles of principals and departmental heads as curriculum leaders in fee-paying Gauteng secondary schools was conducted. Through interviews and document analysis, rich insights emerged. The coded interview responses were categorised into themes and sub-themes, providing depth to understanding the research findings. These findings were then triangulated with the document analysis results, creating a foundation for addressing the primary research questions. By integrating qualitative and document-based data, this chapter has elucidated the multifaceted responsibilities of principals and departmental heads and provided valuable insights into their strategic roles within the educational landscape. The study summarises its findings, draws conclusions, and offers recommendations in the final chapter.



# CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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## 5.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the researcher presents a comprehensive summary of the findings outlined in Chapter 4, aligning them with the established research objectives. The primary focus of the summary evolves around understanding the role of principals and departmental heads as curriculum leaders within fee-paying secondary schools in Gauteng. Through a systematic examination of these findings, insightful conclusions have been drawn, shedding light on the dynamics of curriculum leadership in this specific context. Building upon these conclusions, a set of targeted recommendations has been crafted. These recommendations are geared towards addressing the challenges identified in the realm of curriculum leadership, forming a strategic pathway for improving practices and enhancing the overall educational landscape within fee-paying secondary schools in Gauteng. This chapter includes a reflective summary, summary of the research findings, implementation of instructional leadership theory in curriculum leadership, significance of the study, study limitations and delimitations, suggestions for further research, a conclusion, and recommendations.

## 5.2 REFLECTIVE SUMMARY

Upon reflection on the study's focus, I have discerned that the assumption that students in fee-paying public schools receive a superior education compared to those in no-fee public schools is not entirely accurate. Fee-paying schools may have better facilities, but this does not always translate into a better education for students. In fee-paying schools, principals and departmental heads have challenges carrying out their curriculum leadership roles, which are typically present in no-fee paying schools as well. For example, challenges related to student attendance and truancy as well as low parental involvement. These challenges are not anticipated in fee-paying schools where parents are responsible for paying school fees. Consequently, it can be observed that superior leadership and managerial skills determine how well principals and departmental heads execute their curriculum leadership roles.

My research journey was both challenging and a learning experience. It wasn't an easy journey. While conducting the fieldwork, I encountered numerous missed appointments due to unanticipated events, scheduling restrictions, and principals and department heads forgetting about the scheduled meetings. I found it challenging to pursue my studies while juggling employment and family obligations.

The positive aspect of the journey was that I was strengthened by the Holy Spirit, who never stopped urging and supporting me, even when I thought the task was getting too hard. The fact that my supervisor and co-supervisor, who have been a constant source of motivation saw potential in me when others did not inspired me and was another factor that motivated me. I have been helped on this journey by the expertise, direction, commitment, and support of my supervisors. This journey has taught me to be patient, persistent, and to work hard to acquire and create knowledge. In addition to the knowledge and experience I acquired throughout my studies; I will always be appreciative of the many meaningful relationships I have formed with people along the way.

### **5.3 SUMMARY OF RESEARCH FINDINGS**

In this section, the study summarises the key findings drawn from participants' responses to the research questions. The first chapter of this study presented the secondary research questions, which are the basis for the summary of each key findings. This study aimed to address the main research question: "How do principals and departmental heads perform their roles as curriculum leaders in fee-paying secondary schools in Gauteng Province, South Africa?" The following secondary research questions were posed to fully address the main research question:

- (i) How do principals and departmental heads understand their roles as curriculum leaders in fee-paying secondary schools in Gauteng Province, South Africa?
  - (ii) What are the strategies used by principals and departmental heads to perform their roles as curriculum leaders in fee-paying secondary schools in Gauteng Province, South Africa?
  - (iii) What are the challenges encountered by principals and departmental heads in their roles as curriculum leaders in fee-paying secondary schools in Gauteng Province, South Africa?
- and

(iv) How can the principals and departmental heads as curriculum leaders be supported to enhance the performance of their curriculum leadership roles in Gauteng Province, South Africa?

The findings are summarised and presented below by answering each sub-research question.

### **5.3.1 The role of principals and heads of departments**

In the conducted interviews, the roles of principals and departmental heads were explored, revealing multi-faceted dimensions critical to the success of educational institutions. Comparing their roles, it was evident that both principals and department heads emphasise effective teaching and learning; however, principals adopt a more holistic approach, emphasising multi-faceted roles and dual leadership and management responsibilities, while department heads focus on enhancing teaching and learning within specific domains. This dichotomy highlights the layered nature of educational management (Pratt, 2002).

Both principals and department heads highlighted the significance of leadership and development within their respective spheres. Principals focused on curriculum implementation and resource availability, aligning with Fullan and Quinn's (2016) emphasis on effective curriculum implementation and ongoing monitoring. On the other hand, department heads highlighted the monitoring of staff activities and the quality of work produced, aligning with the concept of formative assessment practices advocated by Shepard *et al.* (2018).

A shared commitment to overseeing various aspects of teaching and learning united principals and department heads. They provided essential support mechanisms to ensure organisational efficiency. While principals concentrated on broader responsibilities such as school climate and community engagement, department heads focused on department-specific tasks and quality control. This collaboration is aligned to the concept of collaborative professionalism, emphasizing collective problem-solving and continuous improvement (Fullan, 2015; Bryk & Schneider, 2023).

Both principals and department heads played integral roles in the daily running of school activities, ensuring active involvement in communication processes and policy implementation. Principals' broader perspective encompassed overall school functionality and community engagement, while department heads concentrated on specific tasks and

meticulous policy adherence. This synergy aligns with the literature highlighting the importance of balanced approaches in policy implementation, emphasising teacher autonomy and contextual factors (Menter, 2019).

In summary, the interviews illuminated the interconnected roles of principals and departmental heads, demonstrating their shared commitment to effective teaching and learning. Principals provided the overarching vision, ensuring a positive school climate and community involvement, while department heads meticulously managed their departments, ensuring high-quality teaching and learning. This collaboration mirrors the diverse yet interconnected facets of effective school management, emphasizing the importance of collaborative efforts in achieving educational excellence (Durfour & Marzano, 2011).

### **5.3.2 How curriculum leadership duties are performed by principals and departmental heads**

In exploring curriculum leadership in South African secondary schools, the interviews with principals and heads of departments provided valuable insights into their roles and practices. One prominent theme that emerged from the interviews was the collaborative process of goal setting, wherein stakeholders' inclusive involvement was considered pivotal. This finding is supported by the work of Naidoo and Petersen (2016), who emphasise the multi-faceted role of principals in developing a high-quality curriculum that aligns with the community's needs. As highlighted by Tak *et al.* (2022), principals are responsible for the school's vision and play a key role in managing resources and driving organizational development. This collaborative goal-setting process underscores the importance of setting a clear direction, a practice advocated by Huber (2017), which is fundamental for effective curriculum leadership.

Another critical aspect illuminated in the interviews is the management of the instructional program. Both principals and heads of departments emphasise the implementation of effective teaching strategies and the maintenance of high teaching standards. This aligns with Leithwood and Jantzi (2020), who stress the significance of developing teachers and managing teaching and learning processes.

In summary, the interviews with principals and heads of departments align closely with existing literature on curriculum leadership (Kershner & McQuillan, 2016; Bottery, 2016; Chan *et al.*, 2022). The collaborative approach to defining school goals, the emphasis on effective teaching strategies and high teaching standards, the promotion of a positive school

climate, and the ideal conditions for curriculum leadership practices all find resonance in the works of scholars such as Naidoo and Petersen (2016). This finding emphasises the interconnectedness of practical experiences and scholarly research, highlighting the need for a holistic understanding of curriculum leadership in South Africa.

### **5.3.3 Challenges experienced in exercising curriculum leadership roles**

The challenges faced in exercising curriculum leadership roles, as identified through interviews with principals and heads of departments, offer crucial insights into the complexities of their positions. One pressing challenge highlighted in the interviews pertains to external influences, with principals facing disruptions due to district and provincial programs.

Human resource management challenges were also highlighted, with principals addressing issues like punctuality and absenteeism among learners and teachers. Heads of departments, in contrast, face staff insubordination and lack of respect within their departments, emphasising problems in the internal departmental culture. These internal dynamics mirror the past's hierarchical practices, as McNeely *et al.* (2021) observed, leading to role ambiguity and mediocre performance in curriculum leadership.

Discipline and respect issues were shared challenges for both principals and heads of departments, reflecting broader cultural and disciplinary problems within schools. The prevalence of bullying and violent behaviour, as noted by Farrah (2013), exacerbates these challenges, requiring curriculum leaders to navigate complex disciplinary issues. Principals and heads of departments, lacking suitable leadership skills, struggle with these challenges, highlighting the need for comprehensive curriculum leadership training, as Macleod (2017) emphasises.

In summary, the challenges faced by curriculum leaders in South African schools, as revealed in the interviews, align with several factors identified in the literature. The lack of leadership skills, bureaucratic management tendencies, resource constraints, and issues related to discipline and respect form a complex web of challenges. Addressing these challenges necessitates addressing external policy influences and internal departmental dynamics and providing adequate leadership training to equip leaders with the skills required for effective curriculum leadership.

### **5.3.4 Facilitation of the performance of curriculum leadership roles**

The strategies employed to define school goals by both principals and departmental heads align with established principles in educational leadership. Principals emphasised the importance of goal setting, a practice substantiated by the literature's emphasis on clear objective setting (Terhoven, 2016). Effective planning and collaborative goal-setting were underscored by both groups, emphasizing the need for engaging stakeholders in the goal-setting process, a practice endorsed by existing research (Leithwood *et al.*, 2008).

In managing the instructional program, the shared strategies of engaged learning and collaborative teaching practices echo established educational theories. Principals stressed active learning methods and peer interaction, aligning with literature advocating for teacher development and cooperative relationships (Leithwood *et al.*, 2008). The departmental heads' focus on staff training and flexible timetables resonates with educational research emphasising the need for teacher capacity development and adaptable teaching practices (Leithwood *et al.*, 2006).

Discipline consistency emerged as a crucial aspect for both principals and departmental heads, linked to broader educational management principles. Principals' challenges related to autonomy echo literature discussing bureaucratic management tendencies leading to role ambiguity (Mestry, 2017; Zhao, 2014). Uniform discipline, emphasised by departmental heads, aligns with established principles, emphasising standardised procedures within schools (Christie *et al.*, 2010).

## **5.4 IMPLEMENTATION OF INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP THEORY IN CURRICULUM LEADERSHIP**

Incorporating the insights gleaned from the interviews with the relevant literature, the implementation of instructional leadership theory in curriculum leadership within South African secondary schools, particularly in Gauteng Province, holds substantial promise. The theoretical framework that guided this study helped provide focus and organisation of the study, with data analysis and coding stage, helped connect the study to existing scholarly terms. Marks and Printy's (2020) study underscores the positive impact of instructional leadership practices on student achievement, emphasizing the need for engaged learning methods and evidence-based strategies, mirroring the approaches highlighted by the interviewees. Additionally, the study by Davis *et al.* (2022) supports the value of collaborative

environments, aligning with the interviews' emphasis on open communication and mentorship programs.

Addressing the challenges associated with curriculum leadership, Instructional Leadership Theory offers a balanced approach, integrating both instructional improvement and managerial tasks (Tschannen-Moran *et al.*, 2021). This balance echoes the need articulated by the interviewees for effective planning and resource allocation. Furthermore, the theory's emphasis on evidence-based practices (Hallinger & Murphy, 2022) aligns with the interview findings, where stakeholders highlighted the importance of tailored strategies based on specific contextual needs, whether related to goal-setting or teaching methods.

Importantly, the research underscores the positive impact of instructional leadership on teacher job satisfaction and retention (Bryk & Schneider, 2023), emphasising the significance of fostering supportive and empowering environments. This aligns with the interviews' emphasis on collaborative decision-making and mentorship programs, indicating the potential of instructional leadership theory in enhancing not only curriculum leadership but also the overall school climate.

In summary, the findings from both the interviews and the relevant literature highlight the potential of instructional leadership theory in addressing challenges associated with curriculum leadership in Gauteng Province secondary schools. By integrating evidence-based practices, fostering collaboration, and balancing instructional and managerial tasks, leaders can navigate complexities and enhance curriculum implementation, thereby ensuring a conducive environment for both students and teachers, ultimately leading to improved educational outcomes.

## **5.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

The study helps to highlight the current understanding of principals and DH on curriculum leadership roles in fee-paying schools, identifies challenges, and describes how the challenges can be addressed as described by the people involved. The study has also brought attention to the valuable contribution that principals and departmental heads provide to the educational landscape in terms of curriculum leadership roles. Principals and departmental heads will have the chance to consider their roles as curriculum leaders as a result of their participation in this study. The study generated data from which the researcher developed policy recommendations that would help strengthen the curriculum leadership roles of principals and department heads.

## **5.6 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

There are always constraints to research, and some of these are covered in the following section. The study's sample size was constrained because it was a case study. The study's sample size suggests what might be observed in comparable environments, but the conclusions cannot be applied universally (Simon & Goes, 2013). Since participant realities are context-bound, similar studies conducted in different schools or situations may confirm or refute the study's conclusions. This is comparable to case studies. It is possible, nevertheless, that the results can be applied to locations with comparable circumstances.

This study may have limitations because it is conceivable that participants may withhold some information about their experiences and opinions during interviews. For the researcher to be able to deliver rich data, the participant must have faith in them. Trust is crucial to producing reliable data. The quality of interviewees' responses is influenced by their degree of trust in the interviewer. It is possible that participants will respond more politely than honestly (Morris, 2015). The study utilised extended interaction to get real data instead of just polite data. Using this approach, the researcher frequently communicated with each participant prior to doing the interviews. The researcher and participants got to know one another and established a strong rapport, which led to the development of trustworthy connections (Anney, 2014).

## **5.7 DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

This section details the choices the researcher made and the researcher's justifications that shaped the parameters and extent of this study. The purpose of the study was to look into how principals and departmental heads perform their roles as curriculum leaders in fee-paying secondary schools in Gauteng Province, South Africa and the nature of the research question was to find out how principals and departmental heads understand their roles as curriculum leaders in fee-paying secondary schools in Gauteng Province, South Africa. Therefore, the researcher did not use a mixed-method approach. Instead, the researcher used a qualitative approach. This method made it possible to elicit more information from the participants.

A further delimitation on the study is that the researcher chose to carry out a case study at six distinct sites: six schools in the Johannesburg East district of Gauteng province. Studies with multiple sites provide more reliable data than those with a single example. With a case

study design, I was able to conduct a thorough analysis of each school's participants (Flyvbjerg, 2011).

In addition, data collection, analysis, and interpretation were tasks solely completed by the researcher for this study. Although the researcher took all the required precautions to guarantee the study's validity, it would still have been better if the researcher had used an impartial decoder or if many researchers or a team of researchers had conducted the same study.

## **5.8 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

The present study explored the roles played by the principals and departmental heads as curriculum leaders of some fee-paying secondary schools in Gauteng Province, South Africa. The following are recommended for future research studies:

- ❖ Exploring the long-term impacts of different leadership models, specifically delving into the effectiveness of the Instructional Leadership Theory in improving student achievement and teacher job satisfaction.
- ❖ Comparative studies between schools implementing various leadership approaches will provide valuable insights, informing the refinement of curriculum leadership practices.
- ❖ Tailored research addressing the unique challenges faced by fee-paying Gauteng secondary schools can pave the way for targeted solutions, fostering continuous improvement at these institutions.
- ❖ Long-term studies evaluating the effectiveness of the recommended strategies will provide valuable data for ongoing enhancements in curriculum leadership practices.

## **5.9 RECOMMENDATIONS**

This section of the study provides practical, policy and theoretical recommendations for possible improvement based on the findings of this study.

### **5.9.1 Practical recommendations**

- ❖ To enhance curriculum leadership roles in fee-paying Gauteng secondary schools, it is crucial to organise regular workshops and training sessions for continuous professional development, equipping teachers with essential skills.

- ❖ Open channels of communication, supported by mentorship programs, should be established, fostering collaboration among staff members.
- ❖ Additionally, ensuring sufficient resources and financial support is essential, as it enables the schools to maintain a conducive learning environment with necessary materials and equipment.

### **5.9.2 Policy recommendations**

- ❖ Policymakers need to emphasise the integration of the Instructional Leadership Theory into official educational policies, guiding leaders towards a balanced approach that combines instructional improvement with effective managerial tasks.
- ❖ Furthermore, standardised disciplinary guidelines should be implemented uniformly across schools, ensuring consistent behaviour management practices.
- ❖ Policies should be structured to support and encourage collaborative decision-making processes and mentorship programs, embedding them into the core of the educational system.
- ❖ The documents identified in the document analysis, including the National Education Policy Act (NEPA), Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS), Education White Paper 6 (EWP6), and South African Schools Act (SASA), should be incorporated into policy frameworks to provide comprehensive guidance.

### **5.9.3 Theoretical recommendations**

- ❖ Theoretical emphasis should be placed on educating school leaders about the principles of the Instructional Leadership Theory, highlighting its practical application in fostering supportive and empowering educational environments.
- ❖ Theoretical frameworks should be developed to integrate collaborative decision-making processes and mentorship programs seamlessly into the existing educational landscape, ensuring a solid foundation for effective implementation.
- ❖ Providing leaders with a thorough theoretical understanding ensures a more effective and sustainable execution of these practices in schools.

## 5.10 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the interviews with principals and departmental heads, literature review, and document analysis shed light on the dynamics of curriculum leadership in the participated schools. While distinct in their focus, both roles converged in their dedication to enhancing teaching and learning experiences. Principals exhibited a holistic approach, emphasising multi-faceted responsibilities and dual leadership functions. In contrast, departmental heads concentrated on specific domains, ensuring meticulous oversight and high-quality teaching practices. This highlighted the layered nature of educational management, highlighting the collaborative efforts essential for effective curriculum leadership.

The challenges curriculum leaders face in fee-paying secondary schools, ranging from external pressures to internal dynamics, indicated the complexities of their roles. Addressing these challenges demands a balanced approach, integrating collaborative professionalism and collective problem-solving. By navigating these intricate landscapes, principals and departmental heads play vital roles in shaping the educational landscape, emphasising the need for multifaceted, contextually responsive, and skill-enhanced approaches to ensure effective teaching and learning in South African secondary schools.

In essence, the multi-faceted roles of principals and departmental heads, create a dynamic, effective, and collaborative educational system. Their dedication to curriculum design, quality assurance, empowerment, collaboration, inclusivity, continuous improvement, and policy adherence not only defines their pivotal roles but also ensures every student's holistic development and success in South African secondary schools.



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# APPENDIX A: PERMISSION LETTER FROM DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



## GAUTENG PROVINCE

Department: Education  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

R/4/4/1/2

### GDE RESEARCH APPROVAL LETTER

Date:	13 April 2023
Validity of Research Approval:	08 February 2023– 30 September 2023 2023/131
Name of Researcher:	Bhila J
Address of Researcher:	3353 Spear Crescent Riverside View Fourways
Telephone Number:	079 141 9564
Email address:	<a href="mailto:pastorbhila@gmail.com">pastorbhila@gmail.com</a>
Research Topic:	The role of Principals and departmental heads as curriculum leaders in Fee-paying Gauteng Secondary Schools
Type of qualification	Masters
Number and type of schools:	6 Secondary Schools
District/s/HO	Johannesburg East

### **Re: Approval in Respect of Request to Conduct Research**

This letter serves to indicate that approval is hereby granted to the above-mentioned researcher to proceed with research in respect of the study indicated above. The onus rests with the researcher to negotiate appropriate and relevant time schedules with the school/s and/or offices involved to conduct the research. A separate copy of this letter must be presented to both the School (both Principal and SGB) and the District/Head Office Senior Manager confirming that permission has been granted for the research to be conducted.

The following conditions apply to GDE research. The researcher may proceed with the above study subject to the conditions listed below are met. Approval may be withdrawn should any of the conditions listed below be flouted:

*Making education a societal priority*

### Office of the Director: Education Research and Knowledge Management

7<sup>th</sup> Floor, 17 Simmonds Street, Johannesburg, 2001

Tel: (011) 355 0488

Email: [Faith.Tshabalala@gauteng.gov.za](mailto:Faith.Tshabalala@gauteng.gov.za)

Website: [www.education.gpg.gov.za](http://www.education.gpg.gov.za)

1. The letter would indicate that the said researcher/s has/have been granted permission from the Gauteng Department of Education to conduct the research study.
2. The District/Head Office Senior Manager/s must be approached separately, and in writing, for permission to involve District/Head Office Officials in the project.
3. **Because of the relaxation of COVID 19 regulations researchers can collect data online, telephonically, physically access schools, or may make arrangements for Zoom with the school Principal. Requests for such arrangements should be submitted to the GDE Education Research and Knowledge Management directorate.**
4. **The Researchers are advised to wear a mask at all times, Social distance at all times, Provide a vaccination certificate or negative COVID-19 test, not older than 72 hours, and Sanitise frequently.**
5. A copy of this letter must be forwarded to the school principal and the chairperson of the School Governing Body (SGB) that would indicate that the researcher/s has been granted permission from the Gauteng Department of Education to conduct the research study.
6. A letter/document that outlines the purpose of the research and the anticipated outcomes of such research must be made available to the principals, SGBs, and District/Head Office Senior Managers of the schools and districts/offices concerned, respectively.
7. The Researcher will make every effort to obtain the goodwill and cooperation of all the GDE officials, principals, and chairpersons of the SGBs, teachers, and learners involved. Persons who offer their cooperation will not receive additional remuneration from the Department while those that opt not to participate will not be penalised in any way.
8. Research may only be conducted after school hours so that the normal school program is not interrupted. The Principal (if at a school) and/or Director (if at a district/head office) must be consulted about an appropriate time when the researcher/s may carry out their research at the sites that they manage.
9. Research may only commence from the second week of February and must be concluded before the beginning of the last quarter of the academic year. If incomplete, an amended Research Approval letter may be requested to conduct research in the following year.
10. Items 6 and 7 will not apply to any research effort being undertaken on behalf of the GDE. Such research will have been commissioned and be paid for by the Gauteng Department of Education.
11. It is the researcher's responsibility to obtain written parental consent of all learners that are expected to participate in the study.
12. The researcher is responsible for supplying and utilising his/her research resources, such as stationery, photocopies, transport, faxes, and telephones, and should not depend on the goodwill of the institutions and/or the offices visited for supplying such resources.
13. The names of the GDE officials, schools, principals, parents, teachers, and learners that participate in the study may not appear in the research report without the written consent of each of these individuals and/or organisations.
14. On completion of the study, the researcher/s must supply the Director: Knowledge Management & Research with one Hard Cover bound and an electronic copy of the research.
15. The researcher may be expected to provide short presentations on the purpose, findings, and recommendations of his/her research to both GDE officials and the schools concerned.
16. Should the researcher have been involved with research at a school and/or a district/head office level, the Director concerned must also be supplied with a summary of the purpose, findings, and recommendations of the research study.

The Gauteng Department of Education wishes you well in this important undertaking and looks forward to examining the findings of your research study.

Kind regards



Dr. G. M. Mukatuni  
Acting CES, Education Research and Knowledge Management

DATE: 13/04/2023

2

*Making education a societal priority*

**Office of the Director: Education Research and Knowledge Management**

7<sup>th</sup> Floor, 17 Simmonds Street, Johannesburg, 2001

Tel: (011) 355 0488

Email: Faith.Tshabalala@gauteng.gov.za

Website: www.education.gpg.gov.za



## APPENDIX B: LETTER TO SCHOOL PRINCIPALS / CONSENT FORM

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UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA  
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA  
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA  
Faculty of Education

Dear Sir/Madam

### REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN YOUR SCHOOL

My name is Johnson Bhila. I am working for Advtech as a teacher, and I am currently a master's full-time student at the University of Pretoria enrolled for MEd Educational Management Law and Policy. My student no is **22681443**. The title of my master's dissertation research is "The role of principals and departmental heads as curriculum leaders in fee-paying Gauteng secondary schools".

I hereby request your consent to conduct research in your school. The purpose of this study is to explore the roles played by the principals and departmental heads as curriculum leaders of some fee-paying secondary schools.

Initially, there will be individual interviews with one principal and one departmental head in each of the six primary schools, particularly. The estimated time for such interviews will be 60 minutes. In this interview session, I will need to audio record the interview. However, this will be upon the participants' agreement. If so, participants are guaranteed anonymity and confidentiality and the data will be only used for research purposes and will be securely kept. Schools and individuals will not be identified in the dissertation. Participation is purely voluntary therefore participants are at liberty to withdraw from the study at any given time and no harm will befall them.

We would like to request your permission to use your data, confidentially and anonymously for further research purposes as the data sets are the intellectual property of the University of Pretoria and, where relevant, project funders. Further research may include secondary data analysis and using the data for teaching purposes. The confidentiality and privacy applicable to this study will be binding on future research studies.

Due to COVID-19 and to minimise the spread of infection, the research may be conducted online or through various other media platforms.

Since your participation in the study is voluntary, please note that no participants will receive any monetary awards or awards in kind.

For further information, don't hesitate to contact me, I have also enclosed the contact of my supervisor.

I trust that my request will be accepted.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Johnson Bhila'.

Johnson Bhila  
Yours Faithfully  
Cell phone numbers: 079 141 9564  
Email: [pastorbhila@gmail.com](mailto:pastorbhila@gmail.com)

Dr Adebunmi Aina  
Supervisor  
Tel: 0124205552  
Email: [ay.aina@up.ac.za](mailto:ay.aina@up.ac.za)

## Consent form for a Principal

If permission is granted to conduct the research in your school, please fill in and sign the form below.

I,

.....

.....( Full Name)

Hereby confirming that I fully understand the contents of document and the nature of the research project. I hereby grant permission for the researcher to conduct the research project within my school in Johannesburg East district. I understand that the principal and departmental head are free to withdraw from the project at any time, should they wish.

Name.....

Signature.....

Date-----/-----/2023



# APPENDIX C: LETTER TO PARTICIPANTS (PRINCIPALS) / CONSENT FORM



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA  
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA  
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA  
Faculty of Education

Mr/ Mrs. \_\_\_\_\_

Dear Sir/ Madam,

## INVITATION OF PRINCIPAL TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH PROJECT

My name is Johnson Bhila. I am working for Advtech as a teacher, and I am currently a master's full-time student at the University of Pretoria enrolled for MEd Educational Management Law and Policy. My student no is: 22681443. The title of my master's dissertation research is "The role of principals and departmental heads as curriculum leaders in fee-paying Gauteng secondary schools".

I hereby request your consent to take part in this research project as a principal. The purpose of this study is to explore the roles played by the principals and departmental heads as curriculum leaders of some fee-paying secondary schools.

Initially, there will be individual interviews with one principal and one departmental head in each of the six primary schools, particularly. The estimated time for such interviews will be 60 minutes. In this interview session, I will need to audio record the interview. However, this will be upon the participants' agreement. If so, participants are guaranteed anonymity and confidentiality and the data will be only used for research purposes and will be securely kept. Schools and individuals will not be identified in the dissertation. Participation is purely voluntary therefore participants are at liberty to withdraw from the study at any given time and no harm will befall them.

We would like to request your permission to use your data, confidentially and anonymously for further research purposes as the data sets are the intellectual property of the University of Pretoria and, where relevant, project funders. Further research may include secondary data analysis and using the data for teaching purposes. The confidentiality and privacy applicable to this study will be binding on future research studies.

Due to COVID-19 and to minimise the spread of infection, the research may be conducted online or through various other media platforms.

Since your participation in the study is voluntary, please note that no participants will receive any monetary awards or awards in kind.

For further information, don't hesitate to contact me, I have also enclosed the contact of my supervisor.

I trust that my request will be accepted.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Johnson Bhila'.

Johnson Bhila

Yours Faithfully

Cell phone numbers: 079 141 9564

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

Dr Adebunmi Aina

Supervisor

Tel: 0124205552

Email: [ay.aina@up.ac.za](mailto:ay.aina@up.ac.za)

## Consent form for a principal

If permission is granted to take part in the research as a principal, please fill in and sign the form below.

I,

.....

.....( Full Name)

Hereby confirming that I fully understand the contents of document and the nature of the research project. I hereby grant permission for the researcher to conduct the research project within my school in Johannesburg East District. I understand that the principal and departmental head are free to withdraw from the project at any time, should they wish.

Name.....

Signature.....

Date-----/-----/2023



## APPENDIX D: LETTER TO PARTICIPANTS (DH) / CONSENT FORM

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UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA  
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA  
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA  
Faculty of Education

Mr/ Mrs. \_\_\_\_\_

Dear Sir/ Madam,

### INVITATION OF DEPARTMENTAL HEAD TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH PROJECT

My name is Johnson Bhila. I am working for Advtech as a teacher, and I am currently a master's full-time student at the University of Pretoria enrolled for MEd Educational Management Law and Policy. My student no is: 22681443. The title of my master's dissertation research is "The role of principals and departmental heads as curriculum leaders in fee-paying Gauteng secondary schools".

I hereby request your consent to take part in this research project as departmental head. The purpose of this study is to explore the roles played by the principals and departmental heads as curriculum leaders of some fee-paying secondary schools.

Initially, there will be individual interviews with one principal and one departmental head in each of the six primary schools, particularly. The estimated time for such interviews will be 60 minutes. In this interview session, I will need to audio record the interview. However, this will be upon the participants' agreement. If so, participants are guaranteed anonymity and confidentiality and the data will be only used for research purposes and will be securely kept. Schools and individuals will not be identified in the dissertation. Participation is purely voluntary therefore participants are at liberty to withdraw from the study at any given time and no harm will befall them.

We would like to request your permission to use your data, confidentially and anonymously for further research purposes as the data sets are the intellectual property of the University of Pretoria and, where relevant, project funders. Further research may include secondary data analysis and using the data for teaching purposes. The confidentiality and privacy applicable to this study will be binding on future research studies.

Due to COVID-19 and to minimise the spread of infection, the research may be conducted online or through various other media platforms.

Since your participation in the study is voluntary, please note that no participants will receive any monetary awards or awards in kind.

For further information, don't hesitate to contact me, I have also enclosed the contact of my supervisor.

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Yours Faithfully  
Cell phone numbers: 079 141 9564  
Email: pastorbhila@gmail.com

Dr Adebunmi Aina  
Supervisor  
Tel: 0124205552  
Email: ay.aina@up.ac.za

## Consent form for a Departmental Head

If permission is granted to take part in the research as departmental head, please fill in and sign the form below.

I,

.....

.....( Full Name)

Hereby confirming that I fully understand the contents of document and the nature of the research project. I hereby grant permission for the researcher to conduct the research project within my school in Johannesburg East District. I understand that the principal and departmental head are free to withdraw from the project at any time, should they wish.

Name.....

Signature.....

Date-----/-----/2023



## APPENDIX E: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

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### SECTION A: General Information

Interview schedule for principals and departmental heads

- A. Your highest qualification.....
- B. Your gender and age: .....
- C. The total number of your working experience in years: .....
- D. The number of years in current position: .....

### SECTION: B Questions relating to the role of principals and departmental heads and their curriculum leadership experience in secondary schools.

- 1. What is your understanding of your role as a principal/departmental head in secondary schools?
- 2. Describe how you perform your curriculum leadership duties?
  - a. In terms of defining school goals.
  - b. In terms of managing instructional programme.
  - c. In terms of promoting school climate.
- 3. Describe the challenges that you experience in exercising your curriculum leadership roles?
- 4. What strategies can be taken to support you in order for you to be able to perform your roles?
  - a. In terms of defining school goals.
  - b. In terms of managing instructional programme.
  - c. In terms of promoting school climate.

