



**SELF-REFLECTION PRACTICES OF SCHOOL-MANAGEMENT TEAMS IN THE  
CAPRICORN DISTRICT: TOWARDS A REFLECTIVE MANAGEMENT STRATEGY  
FOR SOUTH AFRICAN SCHOOLS**

**BY**

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## DECLARATION

I, Khashane Stephen Malatji, hereby solemnly declare that the work contained in this dissertation is entirely my own original work with the exception of quotations or references which are attributed to their sources or authors. All the sketches and tables were produced by me except where I acknowledge that they were taken from another source.

This dissertation has not been submitted to, and will not be presented at, any other university for an equivalent or any other degree award.

Signature:   Date: 11 April 2016

## **ABSTRACT**

The study investigated the self-reflection practices of School Management Teams (SMTs) in the Capricorn District. The purpose of the study was to establish self-reflective practices employed by SMT in performing their management functions, and to suggest a reflective model for the enhancement of SMT performance. The study followed the qualitative approach with a case-study research design. The population consisted of SMTs from primary, secondary and special schools. Purposive sampling was utilised to select 8 Head of Departments from less experienced to more experienced in management positions, while 9 principal and 9 deputy principals were randomly selected. Literature reviewed focused on the aims of self-reflection; the functions of SMT; the strengths and weaknesses of self-reflection; self-reflective practices and enhanced performance; models of school management; challenges in school management; and previous studies on SMT and school management. Henderson's Ethical Model of Enquiry on reflective practice was used. The theory discusses what characterises reflective practitioners. Data was collected from questaviews, individual interviews and focus group interviews. The interpretation and understanding were organised in the form of descriptive accounts. Tape-recorded interviews and data from questaviews were transcribed verbatim. After transcribing data a sense of the whole was obtained by reading carefully with understanding, and then summarizing the salient aspects. Themes were identified from the responses and discussed. The study found that SMT members were not fully aware of all of their daily functions and poor reflective practices made it difficult for them to effectively fulfil their management functions. Furthermore, the study revealed that SMT members experienced challenges, such as dealing with unprofessional teachers, poor parental involvement, poor communication, poor infrastructure and lack of resources and these impacted negatively on their performance. The study provided insights into the practice of self-reflection and how SMT members could become reflective practitioners. A new framework was suggested that SMTs should continuously and critically reflect on their management practices and decisions. The study recommends that SMT be trained and oriented about management functions prior to their appointment in the positions. The study further recommends that SMTs consider self-reflection as part of their daily activities.

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## **DEDICATION**

The study is dedicated to my son Podile Tiisetso Alpheus Malatji, whom I sacrificed a lot to have this study completed.

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## ACRONYMS

<b>Acronym</b>	<b>Full Explanation</b>
SMT	School-Management Team
HOD	Head of Department
DOE	Department of Education
SA	South Africa
LDOE	Limpopo Department of Education
DHE	Department of Higher Education
WSE	Whole-School Evaluation
IQMS	Integrated Quality-Management System
CAPS	Curriculum Assessment-Policy Statement
NDE	National Department of Education
PAM	Personnel-Administrative Management
NEP	National Education Policy
SASA	South African School Act
SMT	School-Management Team
HOD	Head of Department
DOE	Department of Education
SA	South Africa
LDOE	Limpopo Department of Education
DHE	Department of Higher Education
IQMS	Integrated Quality-Management System
NDE	National Department of Education
PAM	Personnel-Administrative Management
SASA	South African School Act
SACE	South African Council of Educators
FET	Further Education and Training
NCS	National Curriculum Statement
RNCS	Revised National Curriculum Statement
C2005	Curriculum 2005
ICT	Information-Computer Technology
HR	Human Resource
LTSM	Learner Teacher-Support Material
SDP	School Development Plan
SIP	School Improvement Plan
QA	Quality Assurance
SGB	School-Governing Body
NSNP	National School-Nutrition Policy
WSI	Whole-School Improvement

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# **CHAPTER ONE**

## **INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY**

### **1.1. INTRODUCTION**

The purpose of this chapter was to introduce the study by giving an overview of self-reflection and school management. Furthermore, this chapter aims to outline a statement of the problems with both the main research question and the sub-research questions. The objectives of the study are also presented in this chapter. The researcher has also outlined the rationale of the study. Furthermore, the limitations and delimitation of the study are presented, together with the definitions of the key concepts.

### **1.2. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY**

Self-reflection is a means whereby practitioners can develop a greater level of self-awareness on the nature and impact of their performance. This awareness of one's own performance makes individuals think about and mull over their experiences, management activities; and it subsequently leads to an improved practice (Malatji & Wadesango, 2014). This process (self-reflection) can be seen as a vehicle that allows school managers the ability to explore, contemplate, and analyse their experiences in the schools. Kolb (2009) emphasizes these experiences, as a cyclical process through the following stages: Observing oneself as a manager; thinking about the observed experience, in order to gain understanding and meaning of what is happening, and applying the insights gained to future management experiences.

With regard to professional practice, self-reflection may assist one to improve from their own traditional way of doing things. This study was aimed to establish the self-reflection practices employed by school-management teams (SMTs) in performing their school-management functions and to suggest a suitable self-reflective model for the enhancement of SMTs' performance.

Education is a viable tool for fighting poverty and developing our society. For education to respond to the societal problems, leadership and the management of schools must

become central in ensuring that schools are well managed. In most cases the concept headship, principalship, leadership are used interchangeably, especially in South African schools (Bush, 2008). However, the functions of School Management Teams are viewed and practised differently in different countries, both nationally and internationally.

Internationally (USA), Day and Moore (2006) envisage the aim of SMTs as “embracing, not only individual education and training, individual appraisal and career enhancement, but also the whole or holistic staff development, as part of a dynamic and changing organization”. In other words, the responsibility of SMTs in the USA was to ensure that teachers were supported and trained in those areas where they lack knowledge. Being supported would include providing them with the necessary teaching strategies for their subjects, being advised on how to manage their classrooms/lessons, and any other important information that they might need.

However, such responsibility requires the reflective practice for SMTs to identify those areas where the teachers may need support and training. A school operates as an organization, in which each and every individual member of the staff has some functions to perform. School Management Teams are faced with a lot of work and responsibility in the context of school management (Bradley, 2009). However, without the use of self-reflection, members of SMTs would not know whether they are fulfilling their daily functions. In order for a school to operate effectively, the roles and functions of everyone in the management position should be well outlined and understood. Lack of self-reflective practice can result in the lack of clarity in the SMT's functions; and this may lead to poor performance and inadequate management of the school as a whole.

The School Management Teams in the context of Nigeria represents the school's management structure, which was held responsible for implementing the education policies in their schools (Hauwa, 2012). However, there was a need for members of SMT in this country to reflect on their practice, and to see whether they were fulfilling their functions, which comprised the implementation of education policies, among others. According to Hauwa (2012), SMT members in Nigeria were entrusted with measuring

teaching outcomes in schools to meet national goals; the retraining of staff on Information and Computer Technology (ICT) to meet specific time-based national objectives; and effective the management of underfunded public schools, based on the directions of ambitious political leaders, who proclaim their manifestoes around free education (Saylag, 2012).

In South Africa, one of the key aspects of education management has been to develop leadership and technical management skills, in order to ensure quality teaching and learning in the schools. The Principal, Deputy Principal, and Head of Department constitute the SMT in a school in the South African context (Department of Education, 2012). Therefore, School-Management Teams should have clear functions; and the lines of authority should also be clear, with regular lines of communication. The practice of self-reflection allows School-Management Teams to reflect on their practices. This process of self-reflection affords SMT members the ability to explore, contemplate, and analyse their daily functions.

The primary goal of the Provincial Department of Education is quality teaching and learning in schools; hence, its vision has been to *“equip the people of the Province through the provision of quality, lifelong education and training, with values, knowledge and skills, that would enable them to occupy a productive role in society”* (Northern Province Department of Education, 2008:31). For the department to achieve its vision, schools would have to be properly managed and governed. Moreover, for the school to produce better results and quality education, it requires good School-Management Teams (SMTs) to carry out their leadership and management functions effectively.

Department of Education (2008) emphasise that: one of the key roles of education management is to develop leadership and technical management skills, so as to ensure effective and efficient delivery in educational institutions. In the context of this study, the empirical study was conducted. It discovered that in certain instances some SMT members in selected schools of the Capricorn District were not aware who was responsible for what among them; and this uncertainty delays the operation of the school;

because they end up shifting the blame among themselves. In some situations, the commitment of individual SMT members, who work hard, was interpreted negatively – especially by other teachers and the principal. Bradley (2009) mentions that they accuse such committed team members of being one who are interested in occupying principalship's positions; and this results in a poor morale in such members. It is important for members of the SMT, as school managers, to reflect on their practice, and find out whether they are fulfilling their functions.

According to my own observation, due to an apparent lack of self-reflection, it was difficult for SMT members in Capricorn District to explain and outline their duties and responsibilities as teachers, as they were not clear of theirs; and this results in many problems in the school. One of the main challenges for SMT members in rural provinces, according to Bedenhorst and Scheepers (2008:12), was to “develop leadership as a practice that would encourage all members of the school community to take responsibility for making a difference within the school”. This includes regular reflective practice, and the fulfilment of their functions to improve schools and make them institutions, where the focus was on providing quality teaching and learning. In the context of this study, the researcher observed that SMT members in the schools of Capricorn District appeared not to not reflect on their practice; and this had resulted in poor management of their schools, and the inability to execute their expected functions.

Clarke (2010) suggests that reflection is not about a single event in time; but it occurs over time, as School-Management Teams (SMTs) learn to construct meaning. Reflective practitioners take the responsibility to consider and accept the consequences of their decisions and the changes they make in management style, in the working environment, or in the school culture (Eisenhart, 2011). Furthermore, reflective SMT members are honest; as they severely investigate their own leadership style, and see whether they are adequately fulfilling their functions (Eisenhart, 2011). They take reflection seriously. The present study was conducted in five selected schools in the Dimamo Circuit of the Capricorn District. What motivated the researcher to conduct the study in this area was because the Circuit was considered to be one of the underperforming Circuits in the

District. This study contributes the new knowledge by identifying self-reflection, as a valuable tool to improve and fulfil the functions of SMT. Furthermore, the study would assist members of SMTs to better understand who they are as school managers, and how they could become more effective. It was the goal of this study to assist SMT members to think deeply about their responsibilities and the decisions they make, and about how they impact their management.

Generally, the study contributes towards quality management (including quality teaching and learning) in the schools; and it addresses the challenge of underperformance experienced by some schools, especially in the Capricorn District. Moreover, the study contributed another lens (the use of self-reflection as a vital tool for SMT members to fulfil their functions) that education specialists and departmental officials could use to address the problem of underperformance: both in the district, province, and in the country as a whole. It has been contended that it is important for members of SMTs to understand self-reflection and its importance in the context of their profession.

This study discusses the concept of self-reflection in the context of school management. Researchers have defined self-reflection and the work of reflective practitioners. According to Harris and Brown (2013: 34), "Self-reflection is the integration of theory and practice, a critical process in refining one's artistry or craft in a specific discipline, and bringing to the conscious level those practices that are implicit". Harris and Brown (2013) further describe the reflective practitioner (someone who practises self-reflection) as not just skilful or competent, but as also thoughtful, wise, and contemplative. Two types of reflection facilitate school managers: reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action. Reflection-in-action occurs during the activity; the activity is reshaped while it is in progress. Reflection-on-action occurs either following an activity, or when an activity is interrupted; a retrospective thinking on an experience (Malatji & Wadesango, 2014).

According to Takano and Tanno (2009: 34), "reflection-on-action brings about an understanding of practice (management), and is a way whereby SMT members may learn from their experience". Freddano and Siri (2012) identified three stages or levels of reflection: conscious reflection, criticism, and action. In subsequent research, Atik (2011)

presents four stages of reflection: analyse; interpret the information; prepare an evaluation report; and prepare an action plan.

The four-stage model focuses on the behaviours, ideas, and feelings that comprise experience. Later, Peters (2010: 22) “described a four-step process called DATA: Describe; analyze; theorize; and act. In the first step, the critical aspect of practice is described. The second step includes the identification of assumptions that support practitioners’ current approaches and underlying beliefs, rules, and motives governing schools and teaching and learning”.

In the third step, experts theorize about possible alternative ways to approach the management of schools, considering theory developed from the former step, and creating a new theory. In the last step, the practitioner tests the new theory. The success of this process would occur only via additional thought and reflection.

From the early research, there emerged models of reflective theory. According to Rodgers (2010) the reflective cycle by Rodgers encompassed Dewey’s concept of reflective thought. Rodgers’ (2010) model illustrates reflection as a cyclical process comprising four phases: Presence in experience (learning to see); description of experience (learning to describe and differentiate); analysis of experience (learning to think from multiple perspectives and form multiple explanations); and experimentation (learning to take intelligent action).

According to Rodgers’ model, practitioners move forward and backward through the reflective cycle, especially between description and analysis. In other words there is a need for SMTs to revise their decisions and management strategies.

Rodgers’ model emphasises that School-Management Teams reflect since they want to improve their management experiences and management skills. A number of researchers state the importance of self-reflection. As a result of engaging in a reflective process, individuals acquire knowledge and understanding (James, 2007; Schön, 2007), and learn from their experiences (Kolb, 2009), applying knowledge to practice, while being coached by professionals in the discipline (Schön, 2007); and they explore the assumptions they bring to the workplace (Du Plooy, 2010).

As reflective practitioners, School-Management Teams gain a deeper understanding of their management approaches; and they consider and accept responsibility for the significances of the decisions they make in the school. Authors, such as Meristo and Eisenschmidt (2014); and Harris and Brown (2013) discuss the practice of self-reflection on the basis of self-judgement. In addition to that, Renan (2012) sees the practice of self-reflection, as a process that entails self-introspection. Based on the above-mentioned sources, it could be argued that the main aim of self-reflection is for personal development. Many studies have been conducted on self-reflection; but these were largely limited to self-judgement.

The present study discusses self-reflection beyond the scope of personal judgement; and it has come up with a model to improve one's professional practice, as well as that of others. Furthermore, the present study sees self-reflection as an opportunity to improve on the past mistakes and to be able to improve the functions of SMTs.

When discussing the events that School-Management Teams have experienced, colleagues describe what has happened; and this benefits the manager being observed; and at the same time, they examine their own experiences and check, reframe, and broaden their own theories of practice. Reflection within one's own functions is the first step of the reflective process; but it should not be the final step. When SMTs discuss their experiences with others, the reflective process enhances their own individual practice (Gabriel, 2008).

The present study investigated the practice of self-reflection by School Management Teams of schools from Capricorn district in the Dimamo Circuit. However, there was no formalised template that guided the SMT members on how to apply self-reflection in their practices. Therefore, it was worthwhile for the present study to come up with a framework that would help SMT members to reflect on their practice, so that they would be able to fulfil their functions as school managers.

### **1.3. STATEMENT OF THE RESEARCH PROBLEM**

Reflective practice is a vehicle that allows teachers the ability to explore, contemplate, and analyse experiences in the classroom. Clarke (2006) suggests that reflection is not about a single event in time, but occurs over time as teachers begin to construct meaning for them. Internationally, researchers have defined reflective practice and the work of reflective practitioners. According to Zeichner and Liston (2005), “reflective practice is the integration of theory and practice, a critical process in refining one’s artistry or craft in a specific discipline and bringing to the conscious level those practices that are implicit.” Two types of reflection facilitate teachers’ teaching: reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action (Kottkamp, 2009). Reflection-in-action occurs during the activity; the activity is reshaped while in progress. Reflection-on-action occurs following an activity or when an activity is interrupted; a retrospective thinking about an experience. This shows that reflection-on-action brings about an understanding of practice and is a way practitioners may learn from their experience.

Schools in the Capricorn District operate without guidelines that would enable the School-Management Teams to execute their mandate, and to fulfil their functions as school managers (Department of Education, 2012) because of lack of self-reflection. For schools to be effective, the functions of SMTs should be clearly defined. The central function of SMTs is the effective management of teaching and learning; and in addition, it is also financial management, human-resource management, learner discipline, among others (Christie, 2005). Schools may have SMTs in place; but if they do not reflect on their practice, they may still encounter management problems.

This reflects on the nature and the quality of management practices of SMTs. According to Zeichner and Liston (2005: 22), “reflection is a means by which practitioners can develop a greater level of self-awareness on the nature and impact of their performance”. However, SMTs in the Capricorn District seem to be facing challenges in the execution of their functions, because of the lack of proper self-reflection. Self-reflection is expected of all SMT members; but it can never be enforced. In policy documents, self-reflection is

sometimes stipulated; but there are no formal templates that guide, monitor and evaluate how SMT members should reflect on their own practice.

This has resulted in members of SMTs not reflecting on their work at all; and they have ended up by not fulfilling their functions as school managers. Within SMTs, there are three levels of management team, namely: Principal; Deputy Principal; and the Heads of Departments. Despite the fact that they are all in one team, each manager has necessary procedures, systems and processes to be followed in their day-to-day management of schools, in order to fulfil their functions (Department of Education, 2008). Without clear guidelines on self-reflection, SMTs could never know whether they are fulfilling their functions; and this could result in a poor management system that would result in a high failure rate, or poor education management in the schools.

Consequently, the study has sought to answer the question: How could SMTs in the selected schools in the Capricorn District engage in self-reflection practices when performing their functions?

#### **1.4. RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The main research question that this study sought to address was:

- How do SMTs engage in self-reflection practices when performing their management functions?

In answering the main research question, the study sought to answer the following sub-research questions:

- What are the daily functions of SMTs in the selected schools in Limpopo province?
- What are the challenges that hinder SMTs in performing their functions in these selected schools?
- What self-reflective practices do SMTs employ to reflect on the way in which they perform their functions in schools?

- What measures could be put in place to assist SMTs in enhancing self-reflective practices when performing their functions?

## **1.5. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

### **The study sought to:**

- Explore the daily functions of SMT members in the selected schools of Limpopo Province.
- Explore those challenges that hinder SMT members in performing their daily functions.
- Examine self-reflective practices that SMT members employ to reflect on the way in which they conduct their functions in schools.
- Recommend measures that could be put in place to assist SMT members in enhancing self-reflective practices when performing their functions.

## **1.6. RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY**

The study aimed to contribute to the quality management of schools in the Capricorn District of Limpopo Province – by designing and recommending the best reflective model that would assist members of the School Management Team to fulfil their functions. The study has provided guidelines on the practice of self-reflection that would enable the members of SMT to execute their mandate and to fulfil their functions as school managers.

Teaching and learning can only take place when all the stakeholders do their part. Therefore, the members of SMTs are the driving force to give direction to the attainment of the school goal; and it was through the use of self-reflection that they could look on their management style and see whether they fulfil the daily functions that are allocated to them (Department of Education, 2012).

## **1.7. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

Through the practice of self-reflection, the study has led to quality-management practices in the schools of Capricorn District. The newly designed model on self-reflection would be suitable in the context of school management; and it could assist SMT members to improve their practices and meet their obligations. When different stakeholders comment on the issue of the failure rate in under-performing district schools, they associate such problems with poor educational conditions, the issue of understaffing in the schools, lack of educational resources, and other things. The study brought in another lens that practitioners and other departmental officials can now use in analysing the results in the schools around Capricorn District, and Dimamo Circuit, in particular.

Consequently, the use of self-reflection by SMTs should not be seen as something that is designed to expose them, but rather as a tool that could help them to fulfil their daily functions – and one that could subsequently result in school improvements. If SMT members reflect on their practices, they would be able to understand their responsibilities and their line of operation, as outlined in the Employment of Educators Act 76 of 1998, as amended in 17 March 2007 (Department of Education, 2006).

## **1.8. DELIMITATION OF THE STUDY**

Delimitations are those characteristics that limit the scope and define the boundaries of the study. In this study, delimiting factors were the objectives, the research questions and population sampled. There are many existing problems that are experienced by school management teams in South African schools. South Africa has got nine provinces. However, the study has focused on the self-reflective practices of SMTs in selected schools in one educational circuit in the Capricorn district, Limpopo Province. Only SMT members in schools participated in this study. The limitations of this study were influenced by research approach followed in this study. Qualitative research is the approach usually associated with the social constructivist paradigm which emphasises the socially constructed nature of reality. It is about recording, analysing and attempting to uncover the deeper meaning and significance of human behaviour and experience, including contradictory beliefs, behaviours and emotions. Researcher was interested in gaining a

rich and complex understanding of SMT's experiences on self-reflection and not in obtaining information which can be generalized to other larger groups. Therefore, research question were set in way that proved SMT's deeper understanding of the problem. Furthermore, the research objective were influenced by research question and aim of the study, since they were set in a way that could assist to achieve the aim of the study.

### **1.9. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

Limitations of a dissertation are potential weaknesses in the study that are mostly out of researcher's control. In the context of this study limitations were influenced by departmental policies. In the permission letter to collect data in schools, Department of Basic Education has stated that the study can not be conducted during examination time. Furthermore, the study should not disturb the normal operation of the school. Therefore, the researcher had limited time to engage SMT members on the topic investigated. Moreover, the amount of time dedicated to complete this study might also had some limitations on the richness of data collected because due to time factor the researcher was unable to re-collect data until saturated phase. The researcher was also aware that the participants were only answering questions to the best of their knowledge; and that they were limited to answering those related to their operational policies. Therefore, some unanswered questions were reserved; and these were subsequently recommended for further research in this area. Due to the sensitivity of the research problem, the researcher tried to put the questions in such a way that the participants would not feel incompetent from their site; and this might also have affected the richness of the data collected.

### **1.10. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The research approach used in this study was the qualitative approach. The use of the qualitative approach enabled the researcher to gather sufficient information on the day-to-day functions of SMT, in order to explain their reflective practice. A case-study research design was used, together with an interpretive research paradigm. The population comprised Heads of Departments, a Deputy Principal, and Principals from high, primary and special schools in the Capricorn District, Dimamo Circuit. The total SMT population

from these schools were one hundred and fifty-two (152). In the first place, the data were collected via questerviews. Thereafter, two types of interviews were conducted, which were focus-group interviews and individual interviews.

With regard to focus group interviews, two groups were engaged until saturated phase. The focus group consisted of five SMT members from two schools. The total of the two sessions amounted to one group-interview per school. In terms of individual interviews, the researcher asked the following SMT members: one principal, one deputy principal and two HODS, from each of the five schools to participate in the individual interview. The total number of participants for both focus group and individual interviews was twenty six (26).

During the individual interviews, purposeful sampling was used; and the participants were selected on the basis of their experience. Those members of SMTs who had more experience in the management position were asked to participate in individual interviews.

## **1.11. DEFINITIONS OF THE KEY CONCEPTS**

**1.11.1. Self-reflection:** According to Malatji and Wadesango (2014: 14), “*self-reflection is a means whereby practitioners can develop a greater level of self-awareness on the nature and impact of their performance. This awareness of one’s performance makes individuals think about and mull over their experiences, management activities; and this subsequently leads to improved practice. Reflection has many definitions in the context of teacher cognition*”. In the context of this study, self-reflection means looking at what you do as a manager, thinking about why you do it, and thinking about whether it really works – it is a process of self-observation and self-evaluation. By collecting information about our leadership and management style, and by analysing and evaluating this information, we can identify and explore our own practices and underlying beliefs. This may then lead to changes and improvements in our teaching, although this process is not without challenges; and it involves many other issues.

**1.11.2. School-Management Team:** According to Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement (2012), SMTs are staff members who are appointed to manage the schools, and to teach the learners. Schools are managed by teams that consist of a principal, a

deputy principal, and a head of department (HOD). In a situation where the senior position is that of the principal only, through agreement certain members of the staff can be co-opted to the SMT.

**1.11.3. Reflective Practitioner:** According to Zeichner and Liston (2005), a reflective practitioner is someone who, at regular intervals, looks back at the work they do, and the work process, and considers how they might improve. They reflect on the work they have done. A reflective practitioner could also be regarded as someone who always strives to understand themselves, their work, and how their work affects others.

**1.11.4. School Improvement:** According to the Department of Basic Education (2014), school improvement refers to all those activities that contribute to the development of the school. This is a very broad term, but for the purpose of this study, the researcher has focused on management, as well as the administration and leadership of the school by the SMT. School improvement refers to proper management of the school, as a consequence of members of the SMT who are reflecting on their practice, and who fulfil their duties and responsibilities as school managers.

## **1.12. ORGANISATION OF THE STUDY**

The study is made up of six chapters that are presented as follows:

Chapter one introduces the study and discusses the background of the study. The chapter also states the statement of the problem, theoretical framework, research question/s, research objectives, rationale of the study, and the significance of the study, the delimitation of the study and a definition of the key concepts. Chapter two reviews the related literature, in order to establish what other researchers and scholars have said about the problem being studied. Chapter three discusses the research methodological processes and procedures that were utilised in collecting and analysing data. Chapter four presents analyses and interprets the data gathered thematically. Chapter five discusses here the findings of the study and chapter six gives a summary of the findings, a conclusion, and some suggested recommendations. This chapter also discusses the new knowledge contributed by the study. Furthermore, this chapter also introduces the new model and its design.

### **1.13. SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER**

This chapter has presented the background of the study. A statement of the problem has also been presented – with the both main research question and some sub-research questions. The researcher has also presented the rationale of the study in this chapter. The research outline was also presented, whereby the researcher explained what each chapter of the study consisted of. Furthermore, the limitations and the delimitation of the study were presented, together with definitions of the key concepts. The next chapter is based on the literature review and the theoretical framework.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1. INTRODUCTION**

The previous chapter was based on the research proposal – where the researcher introduced the study by giving the background; a statement of the problem; the research questions and objectives; and the purpose of the study. This chapter discusses the theoretical framework underpinning the study; and it also reviews the related and relevant literature. A literature review, according to Tylor (2008) is an account of what has been published on a particular topic by other scholars and researchers. It helps the researcher to have some idea of what other researchers have discovered in the related fields. In the context of this study, literature has been reviewed on the functions of SMT members: both locally and internationally; the strengths and weaknesses of self-reflection practices; self-reflection practices and various models of school management; challenges in schools management; and previous studies on SMT and school management. Additionally, the theoretical framework was discussed in this chapter; and Henderson’s theory on reflective practice was discussed. Other models on school management are also reviewed here – to assist with understanding the problem.

The first section of this chapter presented the theories of self-reflection as well as management theories. With regard to self-reflection theories, the following theories were discussed: Henderson’s Ethical Based Model; and Gibbs’ cycle. The theories were discussed in detail with special reference on how the theories were related to the present study. On the other hand the following management theories were used: the trait theory; the theory based on situation; the theory based on morality; the theory based on power; and the theory based on sharing. Such theories were discussed in line with the present study and how best they could assist SMT members to improve their practice. The second section on this study consisted of the review of national and international literature. In the review of literature, the researcher checked how the studies were conducted, and the gap exist in such literature, that present study filled. Below are theories used in this study.

## **2.2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

Eisenhart (2011: 205) defines a theoretical framework as “a structure that guides research by relying on a formal theory. This is constructed by using an established, coherent explanation of certain phenomena and relationships”. As a researcher, one has to locate the research problem in a body of theory. Thus, the theoretical framework is a collection of the findings and conclusions. In a qualitative study the theoretical framework is very important. According to Swanson (2013), theories are formulated to explain, predict, and understand phenomena – and, in many cases, to challenge and extend the existing knowledge – within the limits of critically binding assumptions. The theoretical framework is the structure that can hold or support a theory of a research study. The theoretical framework introduces and describes the theory that explains why the research problem under study exists.

According to Borgatti (2010: 20): “theoretical frameworks are also important in exploratory studies”. The framework tends to guide what one notices in an organization, and what one fails to notice. A theoretical framework provides for the organization of the study. It guides the researcher in the accurate interpretations of the results. The importance of the theory depends on the degree of research-based evidence and the level of its theoretical development”. According to Swanson (2013), there are four levels of theory development: Factor isolation (this describes the phenomena); factor relating (this explains the phenomena); situation relating (this predicts the relationships between/among the phenomena); and situation producing (this controls the phenomena and the relationships).

### **2.2.1. THEORIES OF SELF-REFLECTIVE PRACTICE**

The management of a school requires a lot of knowledge that is grounded on the theoretical perspective. In the context of this study, this means those theories that assist SMT members to enhance their reflective practice, and ultimately to fulfil their management functions. The following theories are regarded as being important to assist SMT members to become reflective school management teams:

### **2.2.1.1. Henderson's Ethical Based Model**

In this study, Henderson's (1992) Ethically Based Model of Inquiry on Reflective Practice has been used. The theory was based on reflective practice; and it also discusses what characterizes reflective practice. It points out the kind of manager, and what a reflective practitioner is supposed to be. This theory is relevant to the present study, because the researcher has looked at the characteristics of reflective practitioners, in order to explain whether the practice of self-reflection by the School Management Teams of Dimamo Circuit could enable them to fulfil their duties and responsibilities.

Henderson's (1992) model indicates that the reflective practitioner should be a problem solver, have a knowledge base, and should have a love of teaching, and for the management of a school. The theory has assisted the researcher to examine the kinds of managers in the schools of Dimamo Circuit, with the ultimate goal of explaining the nature of reflective practice that took place. According to Henderson (1992), reflective managers are expert teachers who know management styles, and are able to reflect on their work, and fulfil their duties and responsibilities. Henderson further emphasised that: They must be specialists in time management, discipline, psychology, instructional methods, interpersonal communication, and learning theory.

Malatji and Wadesango (2014) further argued that reflective managers willingly embrace their decision-making responsibilities. They regularly reflect on the consequences of their actions. They are receptive to new knowledge; and they regularly and willingly learn from their reflective experiences. Theories of self-reflective practice assist SMT members to understand the kind of practitioners they should look like.

### 2.2.1.2. Gibbs' cycle

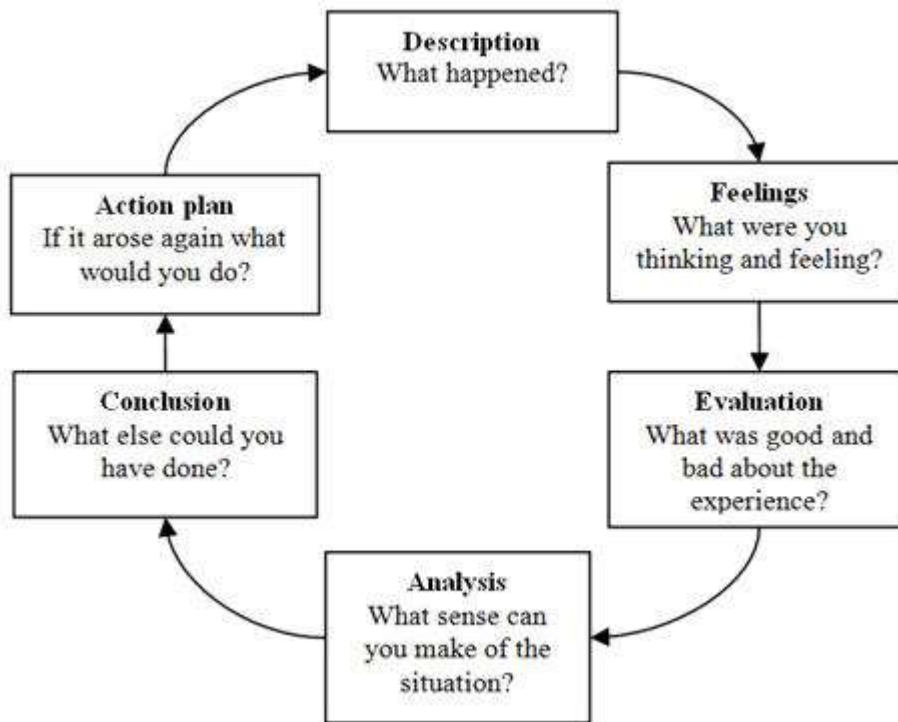


Fig.1. Gibbs' cycle

This model encourages the practitioners to think about the possible different aspects of a given situation or event, to evaluate it, and to establish an action plan for dealing with such a scenario, should it arise again. According to John (2005: 19): "it helps individuals to consider how they think and respond in any given situation; and it provides insight into oneself and one's practice".

### 2.2.1.3. Application of the model to the present study

Gibbs' theory is relevant in the context school management. The following aspects were regarded as important stages that assisted SMT members to reflect on their practice, and to fulfil their management functions:

#### **2.2.1.3.1. Description**

At this stage, the members of the SMT would give a detailed description of the event on which they are trying to reflect: the place where the event took place; and whether it was in the school or outside the school. Reflective members should also describe the participants that were in the event/activity and their role as school managers. Furthermore, members of the SMT also described what other people were doing in the event. As school managers, SMT members would explain what happened in the event, and what their role in such an event was.

Concluding this stage of self-reflection, according to Gibbs (2008), the reflector (the SMT) should also explain what part other people have played; and the result of the event.

#### **2.2.1.3.2. Feeling**

At this stage, members of the SMT would try to recall and explore things that were going on in their minds. They must try to think about their feelings when the event started. This would help them to have a clear picture on how they approached a particular event or incident. In their reflection, they should also try to recall what they were thinking about when the event started. It is also important to reflect on what other people made them feel. This was an important process; because as a school manager, SMT members are working with teachers and learners.

Therefore, being in the management position, one has to think what teachers and learners think about their leadership style. Consequently, it becomes important to have the people you lead in mind in relation to any decision you make. Lastly, SMT members should also think about their feelings on the possible outcomes of the event, and also what they think about it now.

#### **2.2.1.3.3. Evaluation**

This stage, according to Gibbs (2008), is when one evaluates the good and bad things about an experience. In the context of this study, SMT members would make a judgement about what happened, with the aim of identifying their weaknesses and to improve. This stage appeared to be important in assisting members of the SMT to fulfil their functions; since it points out directly what need to be improved. Reflecting on the process of self-reflection as a whole, one would realise that this stage (evaluation) was very important; since it carries the core of the reflective process.

Lastly, in this stage, one has to consider what was good and what was bad about their experience or what did or did not go so well. This was the only stage that assisted practitioners to set their goals for future improvements.

#### **2.2.1.3.4. Analysis**

This was the stage in which the practitioners try and make sense of the situation. According to Gibbs (2008), the practitioner should break the event down into its component parts – so that they can be explored separately. In the context of this study, SMT members thought about what went well in their work and what they did well. Moreover, they also thought of what others did well; since in the school context, there are many activities and committees that are monitored by SMT members.

In a school, the success of teachers or different committees adds up to the success of the school management team. Therefore, it is also part of analysis stage to analyse what went wrong, or did not turn out how it was supposed to be, and how others have contributed to the final product. This was not the stage at which to point fingers at others, but to discuss school activities, and to find out the best ways that they might be handled in the future.

#### **2.2.1.3.5. Conclusion**

In the concluding stage, the members of the SMT explored some alternative ways that could be used to address the problem. According to Gibbs (2008), this differs from the evaluation stage, in the sense that now SMTs have explored the issues from different angles; and they have a lot of information on which to base their judgement. It was this stage where they would probably have developed insight into their own and other people's behaviour – in terms of how they could have contributed to the outcome of the event. It was important to remember that the purpose of reflection is to learn from an experience.

Without the detailed analysis and honest exploration that occurred during all the previous stages, it was unlikely that all aspects of the event would be taken into account; and therefore valuable opportunities for learning might be missed. During this stage, SMTs should ask themselves what they should have done differently. In the context of this study, members of the SMT would gather information throughout the term, and be able to check what went well and what did not go so well.

#### **2.2.1.3.6. Action plan**

According to Gibbs (2008), during this stage, as a reflective practitioner, one should project oneself forward into encountering the event again, and to plan what one would do when encountering the same problem or situation. Here, the cycle was tentatively completed; and should the event occur again, it would be the focus of another reflective cycle. In the context of this study, the SMT members should, therefore, look at their management style, and try to act on their failures – so that they do not repeat the same mistakes in the future.

### **2.3. MODELS OF SCHOOL MANAGEMENT**

According to Simkins (2009), most theories of education leadership and management possess three major characteristics:

Simkins (2009:11) argues that: “theories of education leadership and management tend to be normative in that they reflect beliefs about the nature of educational institutions, and the behaviour of individuals in them”. Kleinheksel (2014) further stresses the importance of distinguishing between the descriptive and the normative uses of theory. This was a distinction, which was often not clearly made. The former are those, which attempt to describe the nature of organisation and how they work, and sometimes, to explain why they are as they are. The latter, in contrast, attempted to prescribe how organisations should, or might be managed, to achieve particular outcomes more effectively. In this study, the researcher has discussed how self-reflection could be used to fulfil management functions.

Theories tend to be selective or partial in that they emphasize certain aspects of other elements. According to Simkins (2009), the adoption of one theoretical model leads to the rejection of other approaches. Schools are arguably too complex to be capable of analysis through a single dimension. Theories of pedagogic management are mostly based on observations of preparation in educational institutions. English (2009) argues that observation may be used in different ways. Firstly, observation may be followed by the development of concepts, which then become theoretical frames. Such a perspective, according to English, is based on data from systemic observation (English, 2009). Thus, this is sometimes called Grounded theory.

### **2.3.1. DIFFERENT MODELS THAT CHARACTERIZE SCHOOL MANAGERS**

According to Swanson (2013), school managers use different theories that inform their leadership approach. However, such approaches are sometimes influenced by the environment or the school context. The following theories are associated with the leadership approaches used by SMT members in this study:

#### **2.3.1.1. *The trait theory***

Trait theory is based on character; and it emphasises the truth that leaders are born, rather than made. According to Okumbe (2009), in this theory, character or the quality of

school managers translates into how good the leader is. This kind of school manager is the one who is well qualified. Such individuals should be intelligent, and have a good personality that always makes good decisions. Furthermore, such leaders should have status a sense of responsibility, and a desire to do well. In other words, they should be willing to take risks. These leaders should have energy and the necessary drive to lead (Loliwe, 2005). Lastly, leaders, according to the trait theory, should have the capacity to organise their work, as well as that of others.

### ***2.3.1.2. Application of the theory to the study***

In the context of this study, Trait theory could be helpful to members of SMTs in the Capricorn District. The theory encourages SMT to take responsibility, and to do their work well (Lindle, 2009). Taking responsibility requires one to reflect on their practice as the management of the school, and to fulfil their functions as school managers. The theory further explains that the school manager is someone who is intelligent, and with a good personality (Okumbe, 2009). Being intelligent in the context of school management requires one to use self-reflection. Thus, members of SMTs should analyse their decisions and management styles, in order to take intelligent decisions.

The Traits theory also believes that the school manager should have status. However, it also maintains that this status should be earned, rather than demanded. The use of self-reflection assists SMT members to improve their performance, and to always make the right decisions (Malatji & Wadesango, 2014). Therefore, if members of SMT are doing their job well (fulfilling their daily functions) they would earn status, and be respected by their teachers and learners.

### ***2.3.1.3. Criticism of Trait's theory***

The argument of Gummesson (2006) emphasise that it does not make sense to explain leadership in terms of personal qualities. The danger that exists in this theory was to consider a leader as superman, a hero, a saviour and a saint. In reality, most SMT members, who lead schools, are just ordinary people. Therefore, we should not expect

them to do miracles and to achieve impossible things. Research shows that people who are a leader in one situation may not be a leader in any other situation. Gabriel (2008) argues that people often think of masculine strengths and characteristics when thinking about the leadership; and feminine qualities are frequently ignored. If one agrees with the Trait's theory, then that means that SMTs cannot learn to be good leaders, that they must be born leaders; and that is not necessarily true (Swanson, 2013).

### **2.3.2. The theory based on situation**

According to this theory, a good leader is someone who knows how to do things the right way. Hillson (2013) argues that different situations and different people require styles of leadership. In other words, leaders should reflect on their institutions and the people they manage, in order to come up with a suitable leadership strategy. The theory further emphasises that a good leader in a particular situation would not necessarily be a good one in another institution (Okumbe, 2009). This shows that leadership depends on situations, rather than on leaders' abilities.

#### **2.3.2.1. *Application of the theory to the study***

Limpopo is a province in which most of the schools are in rural areas. The theory based on situation was relevant in the context of Capricorn District; because members of the SMT would consider the context in which they are working, in order to plan their management function. Consequently, the practice of self-reflection becomes helpful to assist school managers to discern the nature of the schools that they manage, as well as the kind of people with whom they are working. In this theory, school managers cannot be transferred from one institution to another on the basis of experience; they should rather be considered in the light of their skills in reading the school environment, and designing their own model of school management on the basis of their context.

However, it is through self-reflection that SMTs might reflect on their work, and consider the best way to manage their own schools. The theory could assist SMTs to improve the nature and the level of education in the district; since whatever management strategies

they apply would need to be relevant to their context. Furthermore, their functions as school managers are fulfilled only when they know what would work best for their schools, and be able to prioritise the functions.

### **2.3.2.2. *Criticism of the theory***

The danger that exists in this theory is when a leader has to act correctly in a particular situation, and be willing to change, so as to act correctly. Good leaders should not only do the right thing; their job involves moral values, which must be taken into account. Leaders who are grounded in moral values would be more likely to succeed in their management. They would probably respect others; they would respect the school funds, and use them for the benefit of the learners. As a result of these moral values, they would probably be respected by their subordinates, and work as team to achieve the goals stipulated.

### **2.3.3. Theory based on morality**

According to this theory, leadership stresses moral values. This means that leadership always involves certain moral values, and leads others towards positive values (Okumbe, 2009). Thus, the leader should lead by example, and demonstrate the behaviour they want their subordinates to follow. In the context of school management, it is impossible to discipline staff members for absenteeism, if as a leader, one is frequently absent (Hart, 2008). A leader in this theory should want to influence others to do what they think is the right thing to do.

#### **2.3.3.1. *Application of the theory to the study***

In most schools in the Capricorn District, SMTs apply the theory on the basis of morality in their management styles. The theory can be good for leaders who lead by example; since they can lead the school in the direction of better achievements. However, it can become a challenge for those leaders who want their subordinates to perform certain duties, which they are unable to perform. For example, if the principal wants his staff

members to teach over the weekend, he should also be there to monitor them. Most SMT members they fail to apply this theory; because they are unable to apply some of the important aspects of the theory. The theory can be applicable to improve the quality of education in the province, because whatever school managers (SMT) want their teachers to do, they would also reflect on that and make sure that they are leading by example. However, it takes a good leader with passion to lead by example.

#### **2.3.3.2. *Criticism of the theory***

SMT members as school managers work with different people with different characters. We have to tolerate differences and accept others' moral values. It becomes difficult for leaders to manage different people; because they have the tendency to manipulate others to adopt their own values. It is important for leaders to have as much information as possible to weigh up different options, and to act wisely. Lack of information on the leaders could also result in attacking teachers individually, or personalising issues that lead to divisions in the school.

#### **2.3.4. Theory based on power**

According to this theory, leadership always involves power. Okumbe (2009), in this theory stresses that to understand leadership you need to understand power relationships in society. In other words, for leaders to be successful in their leadership, they need to understand the extent of the power they hold in their community, and to be able to act wisely (Fife, 2005). They should be able to link with different stakeholders with power in their communities in a way that would promote quality education.

##### **2.3.4.1. *Application of the theory to the study***

In the context of Capricorn, the quality of education is poor; because the responsibility of teaching and managing the schools is centred on those who are within the school precincts. One of the basic elements of this theory is that for leaders (of SMTs) to understand leadership, they need to understand the power relationships in society.

Therefore, it becomes important for SMTs to identify the important stakeholders in their community, and to regard them as partners in education. For example, involving police as partners in education could assist the school in managing issues around safety and security and any crime-related issues that are taking place in schools, such as drugs. However, such functions are not clearly stated in the job description of an SMT. It is through the use of self-reflection that members of SMTs could reflect on their practice, and be able to cover such issues in their schools. Furthermore, self-reflection assists SMTs to identify the important stakeholders in their community.

#### **2.3.4.2. *Criticism of the theory***

Leaders may use their power negatively. Power is an important aspect of leadership; but managers should not forget other aspects of leadership. For managers to use their power negatively is misconduct in the context of school management.

#### **2.3.5. Theory based on sharing**

Hargreaves (2009) argues that leadership often exists through a group of people working closely together. This means that leaders make sure that the group with which they are working sets goals and visions collaboratively. This theory emphasises that leaders do not take all decisions themselves; but they must ensure that the necessary decisions are taken by the entire team. One of the important aspects of group leadership is the delegation of certain powers to other staff members (teams). Delegated members have a clear understanding of what is expected of them (Okumbe, 2009).

##### **2.3.5.1. *Application of the theory to the study***

School management teams consist of the principal, the deputy principal, and the heads of departments. Such members are responsible for carrying out the management functions in their school. The theory based on sharing enables the SMT to have a smooth management of their respective schools. This theory allows members of SMTs to delegate management duties among themselves, and to be able to discern who is

responsible for what. In the context of Limpopo Province, SMT members appear to have some difficulty in discerning their functions in the school management teams. Therefore, the use of self-reflection might assist SMTs to apply the theory by clearly fulfilling their functions as school managers. Setting out their roles clearly would enable each member of an SMT to fulfil his/her functions as school managers, and to promote the quality of education in the province.

### **2.3.5.2. Criticism of the theory**

A group also needs leadership, failing which nothing would be done, and no decision would be taken. Working together is not always easy; team building requires a particular mindset; and it calls for a reflective change of attitude.

Each theory presented above has different aspects of leadership; and each has both positive and negative elements. The following is advice for school leaders on the basis of the positive aspects of leadership theory that might assist SMTs in Capricorn District (Hargreaves, 2009):

Know your qualities, weaknesses and strengths: In the context of Capricorn District, SMTs could use self-reflection, in order to identify their qualities, weaknesses and their strengths.

Know your school's strengths and weaknesses: it is only through whole-school evaluation that the SMTs could identify the strengths and weaknesses of their schools. In order to have whole-school evaluation done, members of the SMT could reflect on the different management aspects of their school, and consolidate a full and complete school-evaluation report.

The vision and mission of the school needs to be based on agreed-upon and equitable values by the whole school's community members. The community of the school should set objectives and ensure their implementation: Reflective SMTs

would regard members of the community as partners in education. Hence, President Jacob Zuma once said education is now a societal issue.

Use the authority entrusted to you in the interest of your school community: Reflective SMTs are in a position to identify those authorities that have contributed useful information that builds and contributes to the quality of education in the schools.

Encourage team a spirit, so that others can participate in the smooth running of the school. SMTs need to be transparent, open, just, accountable and equitable: Good reflective managers encourage team spirit because they have some goals to achieve in their schools. A team spirit leads to reflective practices that lead to the delegation of power in achieving a common goal.

The section below discusses the review of literature from both nation and international. In this review related literatures were reviewed to check how the studies were conducted, and also the gap exist in such studies.

## **2.4. THE REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

### **2.4.1. REFLECTIVE PRACTICE AND SMTS' FUNCTIONS**

The way SMT members conduct their reflective practice has an impact on the fulfilment of their management functions. The following sub-topics were identified as being important for reflective school managers:

#### **2.4.1.1. The ethics of caring**

According to Samier (2010: 22) “to care as a teacher is to be ethically bound to understand students”. The teacher probes gently for clarification, interpretation and contribution from what students say, whether it is right or wrong. Farrel (2008) in her study argues that the ethics of caring can be practised through confirmation, which

stresses that teachers must take time to listen and to help students; dialogue, where teachers and students engage in an honest and open communication as an appropriate and integral tool of learning; and co-operative practice, which stresses that practical personal confirmation and honest dialogue with students can be practised only by working co-operatively with the students. For example, teachers acting as advisors and counsellors in their subject field should not just be imparters of knowledge (Samier, 2008).

In the context of this study, the ethics of caring was referred to SMT caring for teachers and learners of the school they manage. SMT members in this regard would have to listen to their teachers and try to respect their inputs. As school managers, they should open lines of communication at school to develop trust between the SMT and the teachers (Malatji & Wadesango, 2014). An SMT should act as an advisor and supporter of teachers, and not just as a monitor. SMTs should see themselves as reflective practitioners. Teachers should also be encouraged to use self-reflection to fulfil their function. Leading by example from SMTs, would be a best tool for managing their schools.

#### **2.4.1.2. The constructivist approach to teaching**

Yulk (2012) mentioned that in addition to basic skills and academic content, reflective teachers should consider the relationship between what they were trying to teach and students' past experiences (backgrounds) and a personal purpose (needs and interests). Students are considered to be active participants, rather than passive recipients during the learning process. Thus, in a constructivist perspective, learning is a complex interaction between student's past experiences, personal purposes, and the subject matter requirements (Collins, 2010).

In the context of this study, an SMT should have a constructivist approach to school management. Being constructivist means reflecting on one's work and making sure that one understands one's school and the best approach that would work for the school. Reflective managers should look at the previous management of the school and identify areas that can be improved.

#### **2.4.2. Artistic problem-solving**

Henderson (1992:23) argued that: “reflective teachers seek to continuously adapt the curriculum to students' backgrounds, interests and needs; they seek new ways to get their students involved; and they constantly exercise good judgement, imagination and flexibility to produce quality education”. Reflective teaching can be enhanced by an enquiring attitude towards education. This involves taking a questioning, pondering, democratic perspective on the personal and public values of teaching and learning.

“Teachers should look for opportunities to enter into a dialogue with their students, colleague, and society” (Henderson, 1992: 10).

In the context of this study, being creative when solving problems, means SMTs should reflect on their work and try to understand the cause of the problem, so that it can be resolved. Teachers need to be given a chance to discuss the problems they encounter in their classrooms. SMTs should consider the practice of self-reflection as an ongoing activity, so that they are able to identify school problems, as they materialise. The practice of self-reflection should assist SMT members to fulfil their management functions.

#### **2.5. SELF-REFLECTION AND FULFILMENT OF MANAGEMENT FUNCTIONS**

Reflective practitioners share the same characteristics. “They are deliberative, open-minded, responsible, and sincere; they have a spirit of enquiry” (Eisenhart, 2011:11). Reflection helps school managers to make rational decisions on the management of their schools; and it also provides them with the opportunity to improve their practice and fulfil their daily functions. In other words, the school managers need to be critical when making choices during reflective processes. Reflective practitioners are open-minded (Eisenhart, 2011). They are willing to question their own views, as well as the reactions to their management style and the school culture. Khothari (2007) also hold a view that reflective practitioners should view situations from multiple perspectives; they search for alternative explanations from multiple perspectives; they seek out alternative explanations for

management and school events; and they use the evidence to support or to evaluate a decision or position.

The idea emphasised in Eisenhart characteristics was “open-minded and responsible”. These characteristics are very relevant to the present study. During the reflective process, school managers need to be open-minded and responsible for their practice or management. It takes a responsible manager to reflect on their practice; and during the process of reflection, they (the SMT) need to open their minds in a way that they are not biased for successful reflective practice. Reflective practitioners take responsibility (Eisenhart, 2011).

Eisenhart further argues that these practitioners consider and accept the consequences of their decisions and the changes they make in their management style, in the learning environment, or in the school culture. Furthermore, reflective members of SMT are sincere; as they closely investigate their management (Eisenhart, 2011). They take reflection seriously. Their reflection is purposeful and exciting; because it helps them better understand who they are as school managers, and how they could be more effective. Eisenhart’s study helped the researcher in the present study; because reflection would assist SMTs to understand themselves better and to take reflection seriously.

Eisenhart’s thoughts on teaching and management further identified seven key characteristics of the meaning of reflective practice: Reflective practice implies an active concern with [the] aims and consequences, as well [with the] means and technical efficiency. SMTs are not only responsible for their own school management; but they should be active participants in providing a critical feedback on the educational policy of a State. Self-reflection was applied in a cyclical or spiralling process, in which SMTs monitor, evaluate and revise their own practice continuously (Kleinheksel, 2014). An SMT member should take responsibility for working on his/her development; and the need for a change in his/her practice should emerge from his/her own self-reflection. However, there are some challenges that limit SMT members to perform their management functions.

## **2.6. CHALLENGES IN SMTS' PERFORMANCE OF MANAGEMENT FUNCTIONS**

One of the objectives of this study was to explore challenges that hinder SMT members in performing their daily functions. However, SMTs' challenges differ from school to school, depending on the context of the school. Some of the literature reviewed on SMT members challenges can be summarised as follows:

### **2.6.1. Teaching load of school management teams**

In the South African context, members of SMTs are senior teachers that have been promoted to management positions. However, such promotion does not necessarily relieve them from the responsibility of teaching (Davidoff & Lazarus, 2008). SMT members find themselves with a pile of work; and they frequently do not have time to do their management work. However, it takes a committed manager who despite the heavy work-load, takes the time to reflect on his/her practice and fulfil what is expected of one. Loliwe (2005) conducted a study on the work load of SMT members in North West Province. Loliwe's study showed that SMTs are faced with heavy teaching loads; and that affects their management functions.

The gap in the Loliwe study demonstrated that the study did not check whether SMT members were aware of their management functions. The present study would close this gap by discussing the functions of SMT, as stipulated in the PAM document. In the present study, it was found that SMTs in the Capricorn District were not aware who was responsible for what, within the SMT; and that lack of awareness affected their practice.

### **2.6.2. Poor reflective practices**

Self-reflection allows members of SMTs to reflect on their management functions, and to be able to fulfil them. It becomes a challenge; because SMT members were never trained in the practice of self-reflection; and that lack affects their management functions (Clarke, 2010). Another challenge of self-reflection in the context of education is that, self-reflection is expected in schools; but there is no formalised template to guide and assist

members of SMT and the entire staff on how to reflect on their work. Furthermore, Cruikshank (2007) advanced another argument that there is a challenge that exists in self-reflection, whereby the department allocates notional hours for each and every subject that is taught in schools; but there is no allocated time for self-reflection. This results in members of SMTs not taking self-reflection seriously. Hence, the present study strives for reflective management in South Africa, with specific attention being given to the Capricorn District of Limpopo Province, as one of the underperforming provinces in the country.

### **2.6.3. Lack of knowledge of management theories**

According to Borgatti (2010), a good management practice is grounded on a management theory. Theories assist members of SMTs to know the best practices of school management. In the same line of argument, Bush (2013) further emphasised that management of schools can be both complex and confusing unless STM members base their leadership approach on a theory. The present study has presented different theories on school management. These could assist members of SMTs to fulfil their management functions. Furthermore, the present study has designed a new framework that is suitable for members of SMTs, that is to reflect on the practice, and be able to carry out their functions more effectively. The practice of self-reflection can be done in many ways.

## **2.7. THE PRACTICE OF SELF-REFLECTION**

According to Cunningham (2007:21), “in self-reflection practitioners engage in a continuous cycle of self-observation and self-evaluation, in order to better understand their own actions, and the reactions they prompt in others”. Self-reflection has many definitions in the context of school manager’s cognition. In the context of this study, self-reflection means looking at what you do as a school manager, thinking about why you do it, and thinking about whether works – a process of self-observation, self-evaluation, and fulfilment of one’s daily functions. By collecting information about what goes on in our schools, and by analysing and evaluating this information, we can identify and explore our own practices and underlying beliefs (Boud, 2010).

This reflection could then lead to changes and improvements in school management. However, this process goes with challenges that this chapter intends to discuss – and to suggest some possible solutions.

Reflection can also be defined as a vehicle that permits a school manager to explore, contemplate, and analyse some of the experiences in the school. Reflecting on experiences helps individuals to improve their actions and their professional practice. These authors maintain that reflective practice is a means by which practitioners can develop a greater level of self-awareness about the nature and impact of their performance (Vandevelde et al., 2013). This awareness of one's performance makes individuals think about and mull over their experiences, school activities, and their management style, leading to improved practice.

According to Dewey (2008: 89), reflection involves "a state of doubt, hesitation, perplexity, or mental difficulty, in which thinking originates". This uncertainty can be followed by the act of searching to find materials that would resolve this doubt and settle the perplexity. Reflection, however, entails more than just thinking hard about what one does (Bullough & Gitlin, 2005). Reflective practitioners give careful attention to their experiences and how meaning can be made and justified. They analyse the influence of the context and how it can shape human behaviour. School managers need to reflect on their practice in a very critical way, and also to make sure that whatever they do is the right thing. There are different types of reflection that SMT members may use to fulfil their functions.

## **2.8. TYPES OF REFLECTION**

Reflection cannot be regarded as a single event; but it should rather be seen as an ongoing process that involves different approaches. Harris and Brown (2013) have outlined two types of reflection, which are important in teacher cognition and the management of a school.

### **2.8.1. Dialogical reflection**

According to Harris and Brown (2013: 16), "dialogical reflection refers to a less intensive approach that involves discourse with the self, in order to explore a given event or

incident”. It involves considering the decisions and judgements made and possible reasons for these. An example of dialogical reflection is the basic model proposed by Brockbank and McGill (2007). According to this model, individuals think about what they do in their practice, about the information they would like to convey, the methods they intend to use, as well as the level of engagement in their practice.

In the context of the research problem in this study, a dialogical model could assist the members of a School Management Team (SMT) to think about their practice as school managers, and the method they would like to use in their management style, in addition to the goal they would like to achieve at the end of the day. The dialogical approach is couched in constructivism (Moon, 2006). It requires the individual to re-evaluate his/her own personal view of education, school management, teaching and learning. While this is an important first step of reflection, it may lead to increased confidence, or even a sense of pride (Cantrell, 2008).

### **2.8.2. Critical reflection**

Harris and Brown (2013) describe critical reflection as comprising efforts to account for the broader historical, cultural, and political values when framing practical problems to arrive at a solution. This process has been described by Atik (2011: 77) as: “...the core difference between whether a person repeats the same experience several times, thereby becoming highly proficient in one behavioural [style], or learns from experience in such a way that he or she is cognitively or effectively changed”. Critical reflection facilitates transformational learning that can happen either gradually, or from a sudden or critical incident, and thereby alter the way people see themselves and their world (Baumgartner, 2009).

In the context of this study, this kind of reflection gave members of SMT a chance to study the schools they manage, the people they work with, the resources, and to come up with a reflective management strategy that sharpens their practice. In this case critical reflection becomes very important. However, there are some activities that are regarded as central to critical reflection.

## **2.9. ACTIVITIES CENTRAL TO CRITICAL REFLECTION**

### **2.9.1. Assumption analysis**

This is the first step in the critical reflection process. It involves thinking in such a manner that it challenges our beliefs, values, cultural practices, and social structures, in order to assess their impact on our daily proceedings. Assumptions are our way of seeing reality; and they aid us in describing the order of relationships (Liston & Zeichner, 2005). Realising that our assumptions are socially and personally created in a specific historical and cultural context (Boud, 2010). Imagining alternative ways of thinking about phenomena, in order to provide an opportunity to challenge our prevailing ways of knowing and acting.

### **2.9.2. Reflective scepticism**

This involves the questioning of universal truths, or unexamined patterns of interaction through the following three prior activities: Assumption analysis; contextual awareness; and imaginative speculation. It is the ability to think about a subject, so that the available evidence from that subject's field is suspended or temporarily rejected, in order to establish the truth or viability of a proposition or action (Brookfield, 2008).

According to Borgatti (2010) critical reflection goes beyond the technical aspects of an experience – right through to the personal, ethical, and political dimensions of management. Reflection is about social justice, equity, and change. Reflection involves an inquiry into pedagogy and the curriculum, the underlying assumptions and consequences of these actions, and the moral implications of these actions in the context of schooling (Liston & Zeichner, 2005). The present study would motivate members of a school management team to regard self-reflection as a vital tool to assist them to fulfil their daily functions. Reflection requires the ability to analyse and prioritize issues, to use tacit and resource-based knowledge, and to develop a feasible plan of action. Clarke (2010) suggests that reflection is not about a single event in time; but it occurs over time, as school managers begin to construct meaning for themselves.

According to Schön (2007), the main aim of self-reflection is for professional growth; therefore, self-reflection rectifies the mistakes that have already happened during the management process. As a result, this has motivated the researcher to carry out the present study (to investigate the practice of SMT's self-reflection), in order to find ways of helping them to fulfil their functions. Schön further describes the reflective practitioner as one who is not just skilful or competent, but thoughtful, wise, and contemplative.

As a school manager, one might be skilful or competent; but that does not make one a successful self-reflective practitioner. As a reflective practitioner, school managers need to be thoughtful about their daily functions without taking sides, but being fair to all their learners and fellow-teachers; as a result, they would be able to grow professionally.

Two types of reflection facilitate professionals' learning: "reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action" (Schön, 2007: 22). Reflection-in-action occurs during the activity; the activity was reshaped while in progress. Reflection-on-action occurs, either following an activity, or when an activity is interrupted: a retrospective thought about an experience. According to Kottkamp (2009: 21), "reflection-on-action takes place after an activity; and it entails an analysis, together with the potential assistance of others".

Reflection-on-action brings about an understanding of practice; and it is a way whereby practitioners can learn from their experiences (Clarke, James & Kelly, 2006). School Management Teams should familiarise themselves with different stages and levels of reflection. The present study could assist SMTs by suggesting better ways and designing suitable models of reflecting on their practice; by looking at different stages and levels of self-reflection, and then coming up with the best model for their practice.

Schön (2007) identifies three stages or levels of reflection: conscious reflection; criticism; and action. Atik (2011) has presented a four-stage model of reflection: analyse; interpret the information; prepare an evaluation report; and finally, prepare an action plan. The four-stage reflective model of Boud et al. is particularly relevant to the present study. These authors maintain that during reflection, SMTs need to analyse, interpret, evaluate their practice, and prepare an action plan after the reflective process.

The four-stage model focuses on the behaviours, ideas, and feelings that comprise experience. Atkins and Murphy (2011) conducted a literature review of educational theorists who had analysed the processes of reflection. Based on the commonalities of the authors cited, Atkins and Murphy developed three-stages of the reflective process that included awareness, critical analysis, and reflection. Based on Atkins and Murphy's literature, the present study has identified "critical analysis" as a theme from Atkins and Murphy's literature.

In the context of this study, members of SMTs need to use critical analysis when reflecting on their practice; and they should regard self-reflection as a process that they should go through as school managers, rather than merely an activity.

Malatji and Wadesango (2014) describe a four-step process called DATA: Describe, analyse, theorize, and act. In the first step, the critical aspect of practice is described. As school managers, SMT members need to describe the environment in which they are operating, and be able to outline the implications thereof. The second step includes the identification of those assumptions, which have supported the practitioners' current approaches and underlying beliefs, rules, and motives governing teaching and learning.

In the third step, the practitioners theorise about alternative ways to approach learning, taking theory developed from the previous step, and creating a new theory. In the fourth step, the practitioner tests the new theory. The success of this process would occur only through additional thought and reflection. Looking at all these stages, one should realise that for SMT members to reflect on their practice they have to pass through these processes. Malatji and Wadesango's four-steps of reflection proved helpful to the present study; because the researcher looked at the process and found the best framework that members of SMTs might use in their self-reflection, in order to help them fulfil their functions.

### **2.9.3. Action research**

Self-reflection can be more formally encouraged and directed in the form of action research (Weckbacher & Okamoto, 2014). Action research involves systematically changing in one's management style, on the basis of the ground evidence, which

suggests that the changes one makes are in the right direction, and can enhance students' learning process (Biggs & Tang, 2007). In the context of this study, action research is very important, in order for members of SMTs to look closely at their practice: the management of the school, and the use of the evidence, such as whole school evaluation to see whether they are leading the school in the right direction. The target of action research is the SMT members, not the change that's being implemented. In action research, the term reflection is considered to be misleading. Transformative reflection (Brockbank & McGill, 2010) suggests that school management is being altered – as a result of the reflection – and can now be deemed more accurate. Engaging in action research to improve school management, however, involves a more explicit management theory (Biggs & Tang, 2007).

#### **2.9.4. Guided reflection**

To help reflection from the dialogical to the critical stage, Saylag (2012:14) “developed the concept of guided reflection. This involves engaging with a series of questions that help members of SMTs to explore and consider their motivation or the rationale for their actions”. These can be designed by a third party, or by the individual themselves; and they can serve as a guide via the reflective process (Boud, 2010). To apply guided reflection in the present study, SMT members would have to think of what they are trying to achieve as school managers, why they took certain actions, and also to reflect on the consequences of their actions. Guided reflection can give members of SMTs the ability to think about the importance of their idea: How can it be explained (e.g. theory)? How is it similar to and different from other issues? What have they learned from the incident? And what does it mean for their future situation?

The section below discusses the impact of SMTs' self-reflection in whole school evaluation.

### **2.10. THE IMPACT OF SMTS' SELF-REFLECTION IN WHOLE SCHOOL EVALUATION**

According to Bush (2013), whole school evaluation is a school-based evaluation method carried out by principals, School Management Teams (SMT), SGBs and the community

at large. The approach was designed to help a school measure to what extent it was fulfilling its responsibilities, and improving its performance. The findings of these procedures could be used by schools, and be supportive of the district support services – in their endeavours to improve the quality of their teaching, and to raise the standard of learning of their learners. The whole-school evaluation process focuses on the following areas:

### **2.10.1. The basic functionality of the school**

According to the National Policy on Whole-School Evaluation in the Department of Education (2011), a basic functionality refers to all those activities that are taking place in a school that result in school improvement. The principal aims of this policy are also integral to the supporting documents, the guidelines and the criteria (National Policy on Whole-School Evaluation, in Department of Education, 2008).

They are to: Moderate externally, on a sampling basis, the results of the self-evaluation carried out by the school; to evaluate the effectiveness of a school in terms of the national goals, using national criteria; to increase the level of accountability in the education system; to strengthen the support given to schools by the district professional support services; to provide feedback to all the stakeholders as a means of achieving continuous school improvement; to identify any aspects of excellence in the school system, which could serve as models of good practice; to identify those aspects of effective schools; and to improve the general understanding of what factors create effective schools (Catalano et al., 2014).

This aspect of whole-school evaluation was important; because it gives a chance for one to evaluate the extent that the school is functioning. There is a close relationship between the practice of individual self-reflection and whole-school evaluation. The two share the common goal of promoting the quality of education in schools. According to Clarke (2010), a reflective practitioner considers and accepts the consequences of his/her decisions, and the changes they make in management style, as well as the learning environment

and the school culture. Similar to Clarke's study, Schon (2007) conducted a study and argued that reflective practice is the integration of theory and practice, a critical process in refining one's artistry or craft in a specific discipline, and bringing to the conscious level all those practices that are explicit.

During this aspect of whole-school evaluation, the members of an SMT need to look on the process of peer evaluation of teachers during Integrated Quality Management System (IQMS).

### **2.10.2. Approach**

The approach is a tool used by the Department of Basic Education to measure the extent the school is performing. According to the National Policy on Whole-School Evaluation in the Department of Education (2008: 22), "the approach was designed to help schools to measure to what extent they are fulfilling their responsibilities and improving their performance". This can be achieved through: School-based self-evaluation; external evaluation by the supervisory unit (comprising personnel trained and accredited to evaluate schools); adequate and regular district support leading to professional development programmes. Bryant and Charmaz (2007) further argue that approach provide assistance and advice to individual staff members and schools as they seek to improve their performance; an agreed set of national criteria to ensure a coherent and consistent, but flexible approach to evaluate performance in the education system; published written reports on the performance of individual schools; and annual reports published by provinces and the Ministry on the state of education in schools.

In the context of this study, this approach could be used to measure the nature of reflective practice by SMT members, and the extent that it has affected their management functions. In other words, the tool might be used to measure the correlation between the self-reflective practices of SMTs and the fulfilment of their management functions.

### **2.10.3. Leadership, management and communication**

In the South African school context, the leadership of Heads of Departments (HODs), the Deputy Principal and the Principal comprise the School Management Team. Beinstan (2010) conducted a study focusing on the roles played by individual SMT members in the whole-school evaluation process. Semilar argument was advanced by Bush (2013) as he claims that in self-reflection, school managers collect the data on their leadership, examine their attitudes, beliefs, assumptions, and management styles, and use the information obtained, as a basis for critical reflection on the management of schools.

Furthermore, members of SMT should also reflect on the kind of communication that is used in the school. In the context of whole-school evaluation, communication starts with the school Principal, down to the Deputy Principal, HODs, teachers, and then learners. The success of a school depends on good leadership, management and communication skills. School managers should facilitate and open channels of communication within and outside the schools. To strengthen communication in schools, should reflect on the kind of communication they have with different stakeholders for successful management.

According to the National Policy on Whole-School Evaluation in the Department of Education (2008), the executive authority for the professional management of schools is vested in the school management teams supported by the school governing body (SGB). The SMT may delegate to an appointee or nominee from the staff certain functions, including quality management matters, whenever the need arises (Bedenhorst & Scheepers, 2008). Against this background, members of SMTs would be held responsible for: Carrying out an internal evaluation of the school in line with the requirements of the National Policy and Guideline on Whole-school Evaluation; identifying an evaluation team, especially by providing interviews at appropriate times; identifying an evaluation co-ordinator with whom to liaise in the evaluation team during a whole-school evaluation exercise.

According to Atik (2011) the co-ordinators would participate in the evaluation process by attending the evaluation process, when attending evaluation-team meetings, in order to

help the team interpret the evidence and clarify any uncertainties. The co-ordinator would not be part of the decision-making forum when the evaluation of the school's performance is done; there must be full access to school records, policies, reports and other documents that might be needed; sending the improvement plan to the District Head for approval and working with professional support-service members assigned (Bell, 2007). In order to implement it; implementing the improvement plan within the stipulated timeframes; informing parents and other stakeholders, such as SGBs about the intended evaluation, and distributing a written summary of the main conclusions and recommendations of the recent evaluation within one week of its arrival at the school.

Where appropriate, members of SMTs should follow this by disseminating information in other ways within two weeks of receiving a report (Bush, 2013). In the context of this study, self-reflection becomes central, in order for members of SMT to have a successful evaluation process. Self-reflection assists in the reviewing of school records, policies, reports and other important documents. The use self-reflection would give members of SMTs a clear picture on what their school looked like.

#### **2.10.4. Governance and relationships**

The primary responsibility of school governance in the South African context is to create different policies and rules in schools. This means that they also take decisions on how schools should be run (Loliwe, 2005). The School-Governing Body is responsible for ensuring that school governance is functional. Government has structured school governance with community participation and decision-making in mind. However, the responsibility of deciding how schools should be run falls within the jurisdiction of the SGBs powers (Bradley, 2009). Nevertheless, SGBs decide the operational obligations of the school; while the provincial and district departments provide resources and support to the schools.

In the context of this study, SMT members had a responsibility of equipping SGB members with the necessary skills to carry out their duties of school governance. It was also important for SMT members to review different policies in the schools, and to advise

SGB members on how such policies could best be improved. It is through self-reflection practices, that SMT members could reflect on the school operation, and identify any barriers that might prevent the school from moving forward (Clarke, 2010). Moreover, SMT members would also conduct self-observation on their impact or contribution in the management of the school.

According to Farrel (2008), self-observation allows school managers to make a record of leadership and management, which could be used for various purposes to provide an objective account of one's leadership.

#### **2.10.5. Quality of teaching and learning, and educator development**

The quality of teaching and learning would depend on the quality of teachers available in schools (Malatji & Wadesango, 2014). In the evaluation of the whole school, the quality of teaching and learning is also among the aspects that are evaluated, together with educator development. Educator development in the context of whole-school evaluation refers to the in-service training of teachers, workshops and other seminars aimed at equipping educators with the necessary knowledge to carry out their duties effectively.

This aspect of whole-school evaluation is related to the current research problem in the sense that if members of SMT would fulfil their functions, that would result in quality teaching and education in the school (Boud, 2010). It is through self-reflection that members of the SMT could review the quality of teaching in the school, and also the number of educators that might need support or development. According to the Employment of Educators Act 76 of 1998 in DoE (1998), it is the responsibility of the school principal to make sure that educators attend available in-service trainings and workshops that contribute to their professional development.

#### **2.10.6. Curriculum provision and resources**

Curriculum provision and resources is another aspect of whole-school evaluation. There is the evaluation team, which reviews the level of facilitation in the management of the curriculum (Borgatti, 2010). The facilitation includes making sure that different subjects are allocated time per week, and making sure that the correct number of subjects are

given for each subject. It is through self-reflection that SMT members could attain such facilitation. There is no way to speak about curriculum provision without resources. In the context of whole-school evaluation, the evaluation team would look at how the curriculum is being managed in the school – and the availability of resources to implement the curriculum (CAPS, 2010). It is also the responsibility of the SMT members to reflect on the resources available in the school, and see whether they would enable all the members of the staff to achieve the school's goal. For SMT to be successful in reflection practice, they need to understand what constitute self-reflection.

### **2.11. WHAT CONSTITUTES SELF-REFLECTION?**

According to more recent work by Leitch and Day (2011: 10), “being an effective reflective practitioner demands more than just improving one's practice, and developing additional competence”. Most definitions of reflective teaching in the literature is based on Dewey's concepts (Martin & Wedman, 2008). The rise of the reflective practice has coincided with the popularity of qualitative research, based on ethnography. The present study has made it aware to SMT members that self-reflection requires self-motivated, passionate, responsibility and hard work from the school managers; rather than just improving on their practice.

Numerous authors have put the proposition that critical reflection is a viable tool to help school managers cope with problems that occur in the classroom settings (Bailey & Shaw, 2009). There has been a promising research that suggests that novice school managers could use critical reflection as a problem-solving tool, and for evidence of their own practice (Bailey & Shaw, 2009). In other words, critical reflection is very important in the present study; because it helps novice school managers to solve and cope with problems and challenges they face from day to day in their management practices.

Kleinheksel (2014) also conducted a research based on the power of reflection. Although his project began with a review of the literature on reflection in teacher education, in particular with a focus on those studies, which claimed to investigate the actual development in students, the researchers found that this material provided only broad

guidelines for beginning to specify more sharply the criteria against which evidence of reflection might be evaluated (Christie, 2005). From the ongoing argument and discussion, based on the reading and rereading of written reports, there has emerged an operational framework, through a process which illustrates the essential dynamic relationship between data and theory that is characteristic of research dealing with phenomena such as reflection (Pfeifer & Jankowski, 2015). The result of this process is the identification of four types of writing, which can be characterised as: descriptive writing, descriptive reflection, dialogical reflection and critical reflection.

In essence, the first was not reflective at all, but merely reports events or the literature. The second, descriptive, does attempt to provide reasons based often on personal judgment or on students' reading of the literature (Clarke, 2010). The third form, the dialogical, was a form of discourse with oneself, an exploration of possible reasons. The fourth, critical, was defined as involving reason given for decisions or events, which take into account the broader historical, social and/or political contexts. The results of this study have been useful to the present study; since the four types of writing, as presented in Smith and Hope (2010), were applied to the present study as follows: SMTs would become involved in descriptive writing to mention all the challenges and any success in their management functions.

Secondly, they would provide reasons why certain things were done the way they were done. Thirdly, they would engage in a dialogue with other SMT members, to explore possible solutions; and fourthly, they would critically discuss the way forward on how to improve their management functions (Davidoff & Lazarus, 2008). Thus, the present study further strengthened the importance of self-reflection in the fulfilment of management functions. There is a need for SMT members to know some strengths of self-reflection if they want to succeed.

## **2.12. STRENGTHS OF SELF-REFLECTION**

Scholars have suggested that a number of personal and institutional benefits of self-reflection might be realised from teachers' participation in the school management. These include improvement in school management, teachers' morale, collegiality and learners'

learning. Most articles in the literature trace the origins of reflective practice to Dewey (2006) and his influential book “How we think: a re-statement of the relation of reflective thinking to the educational process”, and to Schon (2007). Dewey brought to the fore the discussion of treating professional actions as experimental, and reflecting on actions and the consequences. However, his work was inspired by much earlier Eastern and Western philosophers and educators, including Buddha, Plato, and Lao-tzu.

Reflection may sound like a lot of work; but it preserves teachers and school managers’ reports that they value; and they benefit from reflecting on the teaching and management of schools (Richert, 2010). Reflection holds both immediate and long-term benefits for SMTs as reflective practitioners. Reflection could enhance SMT’s learning about school management; and it could increase their ability to analyse school events. Later, when they are managing, reflective thinking can improve their schools’ life, enabling them to monitor themselves, and to stimulate their personal and professional growth.

Perhaps the most important benefit of reflection is that it enhances the learning about school management. According to learning psychologists, reflectivity plays a central role in school management – from the training as school managers – to the practical management activities (Haris & Brown, 2013). In the context of this study, self-reflection is important from the first day that members of SMTs are appointed. In other words, they would reflect on the job description and find a way how to fulfil such functions as outlined those outlined in the job description.

Reflection enables school management teams to examine and analyse school events rather than simply to observe them (Clarke, 2010). Reflective managers are better able to ask themselves basic questions on the teaching and management of their schools. They are more analytical and less judgemental when they consider their management styles and that of others. Reflection leads members of SMTs to consider the underlying assumptions of, beliefs about, and implications of the practices they are using; and how these practices would affect teachers as they teach, and learners as they learn (Cruickshank, 2007).

In short, reflective managers understand what the management of schools (teaching and learning) are all about. The purpose of the present study has been to establish the self-reflection practices employed by school management teams (SMT) in performing their school management functions, and to suggest a suitable self-reflective framework for the enhancement of SMTs' performance. However, the practice of self-reflection is not one smooth way, it also has its implications.

### **2.13. SELF-REFLECTION AND ITS IMPLICATIONS**

Four key issues with regard to reflection emerge from Dewey's original work and its subsequent interpretation. The first is whether reflection is limited to thought processes about action, or whether it is inextricably bound up with action (Kori, Maeots & Padaste, 2014). The second relates to the timeframes within which reflection takes place, and whether it is relatively immediate and short term, or possibly more extended and systematic, as Dewey seems to imply (Atik, 2011). The third has to do with whether reflection is by its very nature problem-centred, or not (Vandeyar, 2008).

The present study would answer Vandeyar's question by investigating the practice of self-reflection, and being able to answer questions and challenges that emanate from self-reflection. Finally, the fourth is concerned with how consciously the one reflecting takes account of wider historical, cultural and political values or beliefs in framing and reframing practical problems to which solutions are being sought, a process which has been identified as critical reflection (Grosemans, Boon & Verclairen, 2015). Critical reflection has to do with deeper thinking and actions.

In relation to reflective thinking versus reflective action, there seems to be wide agreement that reflection is a special form of thought (Catalano, Purucchini & Vecchio, 2014). But Dewey himself also spoke of reflective action – presumably addressing the implementation of solutions – once problems have been thought through; and it was clear that most writers are concerned with the complete cycle of professional doing coupled with reflection, which then leads to modified action (Amy, Erickson, Noonan & Zheng, 2015).

According to Malatji and Wadesango (2014), it may be useful to contrast this cyclical idea with routine action, which derives from impulse, tradition or authority. Reflective action is bound up with persistent and careful consideration of practice in the light of knowledge and beliefs, showing attitudes of open-mindedness, responsibility, and wholeheartedness (Harris & Brown, 2013). SMT members need to think about their practice time and again; and they should also act on it. By so doing, they would be reflecting on their practice. In the context of this study, members of SMTs could also realise that the more they reflect, the more changes and improvements would take place in their school management. There was a need for SMT members to differentiate between leadership and management for the success of their role as SMT.

#### **2.14. LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

Schools need good leadership and good management. Some people believe that leadership and management are the same thing. Others believe that they are two different things. Others believe that they go together. Leadership and management, according to Bush (2008), are often separated as follows:

Table 1: The difference between leadership and management

<b>Leadership</b>	<b>Management</b>
Leadership defines the vision of their schools.	Managers make sure that the common vision is decided upon and adopted.
Leaders guide the development of strategic plan for their schools.	Managers design and oversee the way plans are carried out, and implementations are carried out.
Leaders give examples and stimulate members of their organisations.	Managers use their influence and authorities to get members of the organisation to work productively.
Leaders guide the development of new activities.	Managers ensure that all goals set are achieved, as planned.

There are many studies that were conducted previously on SMT and school management. The next section discussed such studies critically.

## **2.15. PREVIOUS STUDIES ON SMT AND SCHOOL MANAGEMENT**

The management of institutions in the context of an education system is formed by the team (the School Management Team), in which their main function is to manage the schools. However, in the SMT each member has his own functions to fulfil on a daily basis. According to Walter (2013), the SMT members are responsible for the effective management of the schools; and this consists of planning, leading and controlling. In order to make sure that schools are functional, SMT members would need to make sure that these three aspects (planning, leading and controlling) are carried out effectively. The principal of the school should always bear in mind that s/he is the chairperson of the SMT; and that they are the first to give an account when anything goes wrong. However, this does not mean that they should be dictators and undermine other people's decisions.

In the context of this study, the principal's role in the SMT members is to give directions, and to make sure that the members of the team respect each other. Furthermore, the principal also has the role of encouraging staff members to reflect on their practice, and to fulfil their functions as school managers.

### **2.15.1. Planning or organising**

The first step of successful management is the planning and organisation of their school activities. Planning goes along with self-reflection; because it is through self-reflection that SMT members monitor whether whatever they planned goes according to the plan. South African Democratic Teachers Union (2008) claims that planning is a job that SMT members do, in order to control the future. This statement translates the close relationship between planning and action. According to Schon (2007), reflection on action is described as a cognitive post mortem, which includes reflection on actions, whereby the practitioner reflects on his or her lived experiences after an event – to further explore its meaning – and to guide future practice.

Both planning and self-reflection have one important aspect in common; since practitioners want to improve their future practice (Loliwe, 20015). The Department of Education shares a common understanding of planning. They understand it to be a way of maintaining the activities in a school, and of setting new ways for development and growth. In the context of this study, the aspect of planning is very central in the process of self-reflection. SMT members would plan their management practice, and how self-reflection is to be done. In other words, during the planning phase of SMT, self-reflection could also be part of their management functions.

On the other hand, Freddano and Siri (2012) share a different view. They understand planning to be a process rather than an activity. These researchers believe that during the process of planning, management teams change the shared mental model of their company, their market and their competitors. According to the Department of Education's Task Team on Education Management Development in the Department of Education (2008: 15), "planning ensures that people with the right skills and abilities are in the right place at the right time".

The present study has investigated how SMT members in Capricorn District engage in self-reflection practices when performing their management functions. However, it was argued that it was through self-reflection that members of SMTs could identify their strengths and weaknesses – with the intention of improving and fulfilling their management functions.

### **2.15.2. Leading**

Within the roles of an educator, there is the role of Leader, Administrator and Manager. This means SMTs as leaders of schools should ensure that they fulfil this role. Reflective practice enables them as school managers to see that they are indeed fulfilling this role. According to Walter (2013: 01), "Leaders, through their position in a school, are obliged to be effective". Being effective means one becomes a reflective practitioner; and one makes sure that one fulfils the daily functions that are assigned to one as a school manager.

Walter further argues that the effectiveness of SMTs depends largely on the sensitivity, approachability and management styles of the school leaders. It is the responsibility of SMT members to make sure that the vision and the mission of the school are actualised; and this can only be done if school managers are reflective enough to give other staff members a clear direction in leading them towards achieving their goal.

According to the National Department of Education (2010), “leadership is about guiding and inspiring. This means that members of SMTs are instructional leaders; and they are responsible for taking the lead in putting their curriculum into practice and improving it. A reflective school management team makes sure that at all times they ensure that there is a culture of learning and teaching in their school. A good reflective instructional leadership shows the path to good learning and teaching”.

In the context of this study, members of SMTs are encouraged to be reflective instructional leadership, in order to prioritise the core business of the school, which is teaching and learning. However, reflective practice needs to become central to ensure that all the management functions are carried out effectively.

### **2.15.3. Controlling and directing**

Controlling in the context of schooling can be a tricky exercise for SMTs because it involves controlling both learners and teachers. According to Loliwe (2005: 15), “control used to be a tool, which was used by the principal to check progress, in so far as [the] covering of the syllabus by the educators in each in each subject”. On the other hand, Walter (2013: 56) argues that control in the school management is “the process by which SMT members ensure that the actual activities conform to the planned activities, and that the objectives are accomplished”. One of the common mechanisms for controlling educators’ work is the checking and moderating of tests and examinations – to ensure that good standards are maintained – and that teachers are planning examination papers, which encourage their pupils to use their thinking skills (DoE, 2012).

Furthermore, Walter claims that SMT members, as figures of authority can control people simply by the force of their personality. This means that if SMT members lead by example, it would become simple for their subordinated staff members (teachers) to follow in their

footsteps. This means that a reflective school management should result in reflective school teachers or staff members (Du Plooy, 2010). In the context of this study, the practice of self-reflection should enable the SMT members to have a smooth control of the school, resulting in constructive decision-making.

Moreover, if SMT members are reflective enough, they would be able to rectify their mistakes, and be able to fulfil their functions. The present study has aimed to achieve this goal.

According to the National Department of Education (2008), the school management team is responsible for controlling any issues related to the whole school curriculum. The heads of departments must manage specific issues relating to their particular learning areas. The formal duties and responsibilities of the SMT members are in the PAM document, the Personnel Administration Measures, in Government Gazette 222 of 1999. The actual job definitions of members of SMT would come from the PAM document, but would also depend on other factors in their particular school, and their other formal duties and obligations as school managers. However, it appears that most of the schools in the Capricorn District operate without the PAM document; and this has resulted in members of the SMTs not being clear about their daily functions. The present study has closed the gap, by ensuring that SMT members in Capricorn District reflect on their practices and fulfil their management functions, as stipulated in the Personnel Administrative Management document.

#### **2.15.4. Decision-making**

According to Bell (2007), decision-making means choosing from at least two possible courses of action. Bell argues that decision-making is one of the central skills of management; because so much time is spent on making choices. The SMT members are in charge of making the crucial decisions about the operation or the functionality of the schools. The present study is making a call for reflective management, whereby the decisions of the schools would be taken on the basis of the matters being reflected before the decision is made.

A reflective management would make a wise decision; because a reflective practice is based on how the matter has been handled in the past, and how best it should be handled presently (Farrel, 2008). The gap in Bell's argument is that SMT members are expected to make crucial decisions in a school. However, members of SMT are not trained in decision-making; and they are not provided with any framework or approach to use when taking decisions. The present study has put forth self-reflection as central, when taking decisions. In other words, SMT members should reflect on their practice, how they handled matters in the past, and be able to come up with the correct decisions for the future in the schools. SMT members has different styles of managing their schools.

## **2.16. MANAGEMENT STYLES**

According to Loliwe (2005) the way SMT members manage their schools differs. Some of the SMT members have attended some management courses on school management; while others manage their schools on the basis of their teachers' experience. Therefore, such managers understand the role of school management differently. The following are regarded as important aspects that might influence their management values:

### **2.16.1. Management based on traditional values**

These managers try to minimize uncertainty and change by explaining to others that the status quo is extremely important. They try to retain too much control; and they do not like to delegate responsibility (Fife, 2005). In other words, they want their staff to conform to certain ways – including the way they dress. In the case of new staff, they want them to adopt the same style and the same code of conduct. Persons who are difficult are not tolerated; and the hierarchy in different job positions is to be respected in this regard. These managers expect total loyalty from their staff. Their loyalty to the organisation brings order and stability. If they are no longer 'heads', they would like to carry on without any supervision.

If they have to be supervised, the supervisor should preferably be an older person – and certainly not very young (Office of the standard in education, in Department of Education

(2008). In the context of this study, the use of self-reflection in this kind of management style enables the SMT members to reflect on their practice and to fulfil their functions without being supervised. As a result, the role of management functions enables the SMT members to do their work and succeed in their management. The present study becomes very important for members of SMT who follow management on the basis of traditional values. Such managers do not take advice from their subordinates; they expect people to listen and follow them (Hart, 2008). Therefore, the present study becomes relevant; because such managers would be able to reflect of their practice, and be able to rectify their mistakes; since they do not take advice from others.

### **2.16.2. Management by training and persuading**

These managers are more flexible than the traditional type. They welcome change in all forms, such as in status, or role and job content, provided that this change does not upset the existing situation (Hellen, 2007). Such managers try extremely hard to create and maintain good working relationships. They welcome new-comers and expect them to play a full part in the group. If any member of the group threatens its stability, pressure would be applied to change his opinion. Any member who thinks differently from the majority of the teachers would not be accepted, and would face difficulties while working in the same school (Office of the standard in education, in Department of Education, 2009).

The gap in this theory is that the management operates in a rigid and structured environment. In other words, management in this kind of theory relies on traditional ways of doing things. Things change with time; and education in South Africa has changed several times since 1994. The present study has introduced the concept of self-reflection; and this allows members of SMTs to reflect on their practices and come up with changes. In other words, SMT members should be flexible enough to allow educational changes in the schools that would result in quality teaching and learning.

### **2.16.3. Management by being the superior**

It is often difficult to work with such leaders. Their consideration, drive and energy are largely devoted to developing and maintaining power (Okumbe, 2009). Their approach is often one of ensuring that their status is unharmed, and at the same time enhancing it at the expense of others. They usually act in a way which suits them. They consider the school to be an evolutionary system in which any change is a slow process – never dramatic or sudden. However, Loliwe (2015) argues that these managers value loyalty and hard work. Lastly, such managers would never work with anyone who aspires to be “another boss”; since they see such a person as being a threat to their own position. The gap in this theory is that such managers operate in a way that suits them, without considering others. The present study maintains that one of the aims of self-reflection is identifying how one’s functions could contribute to the total success of the school, and how one management affect others within the school. Therefore, it is very important to consider people around one when managing organisations, such as a school; since the success of the schools depends on a team-work rather than the sum of individual efforts.

### **2.16.4. Management by creating a vision**

According to the Office of the standards in education in the Department of Education (2009), these leaders are hard to find. They are dynamic, creative, innovative, and they like to introduce changes. They are motivated, persuasive, and have great drive and energy. Like the ‘boss’, they have a realistic vision of their school; but they demand less loyalty. They tend to make changes by consultation, dialogue and consensus. Decisions are taken together and are usually well planned (James, 2007). They need new ideas, and they start new projects, otherwise they become bored. They like fresh challenges and frequent changes in their job. Managers who operate by creating a vision are good in nature. However, the problem with this theory is that it tends to focus more on the future, and new ideas for the success of their management.

The gap in this context is that schools and managers who neglect the past when shaping their management approach experience some challenges. In the present study, the new

model that was introduced affirmed previous experience as being the first pillar for self-reflection of school management. In other words, it is important to consider how things were done in the past, as well as the impact they would have in the current situation. For that matter, SMT might come with necessary measures for success of their schools.

## **2.17. MEASURES NECESSARY FOR SUCCESSFUL SCHOOLS**

In order to understand why schools succeed or fail, one has to analyse them as a learning organisation. Researchers found the following six main features in schools which have managed to succeed, in spite of difficult circumstances. These schools were not free of problems, and often struggled to keep going; but they have ways of dealing with problems whenever they arise (Samier, 2008).

### **2.17.1. Teaching and learning in schools**

For members of SMTs to manage their school successfully, the focus should be on teaching and learning as the goals of the school. This means that time and again members of SMTs should reflect on their practice, and ensure that they improve on any mistakes done in the past. Meeting this goal gives the staff and learners a sense of purpose and motivation. All such schools would have well-organised programmes of teaching and learning (Lindle, 2009).

Teachers and learners spend most of their working time inside a classroom. The study of Lindle (2009) was related to the present study. However, the gap that exists in Lindle's study is that the focus for school success was only given as teaching and learning, without any consideration of the practice of self-reflection and the fulfilment of management functions. SMT members should lead by example – by making sure that they fulfil their roles as school managers; and as a result, they would be able to motivate teachers and learners. It is through self-reflection that SMT members could see whether they are doing their work properly, or fulfilling their functions as school managers.

### **2.17.2. Clarity of roles and responsibilities**

According to Yukl (2012), in all of the coping schools, there are clear roles and responsibilities. The lines of authority are clear – from the head of the school down to the educators. Gephart (2011) further argue that communication in such schools becomes central and is regular. Through such communication, teachers and learners are aware of what is expected of them. Each SMT member is able to reflect on his/her practice and fulfil their functions; because their roles and responsibilities are clear and these are communicated on a regular basis. Lateness and absenteeism are not tolerated in such schools; and attendance by both teachers and learners has to be satisfactory. Based on Yukl's argument, the central success for school management is based on communication within and outside the school. However, there is a need to reflect on the nature of communication and check whether it contributes to the success of the school.

The present study has addressed this issue by centralising self-reflection in all the management activities in a school.

### **2.17.3. Culture of concern and support**

All successful schools have a culture of concern and support. The support has to start in the SMT members themselves; and it must move down to their subordinates. In order for SMT members to provide support to their staff members, they need to reflect and identify those areas that need support. Educators and learners should feel responsible and show mutual respect. The school managers listen to staff members and take into consideration their point of view. Furthermore, such SMTs would also attend to the issues of safety and security inside the school. Many of such schools have fences and gates; and the community helps the school to stay safe (Dresser, 2007).

However, the present study has brought up the idea that the SMT members should reflect on safety, and the previous cases that are related to school safety, in order to come up with tight security in the schools.

#### **2.17.4. Active leadership**

In all successful schools, the SMT plays an active role in leading the school towards success. In some schools, the principal as the head of SMT, is respected by the members as a strong visionary leader. Hargreaves (2009) argues that being a strong visionary leader means that such a manager would regularly reflect on his leadership, and make it improve for the benefit of the learners. But in some schools, the principal works together with the SMT members. In all these schools, consultation, dialogue and communication occupy a key place.

Different ways and means of communication are functional. The gap in the work of Hargreaves was that he emphasised and regarded a strong visionary leader as someone who reflects on his practices. In other words, SMT members should reflect and see whether their management functions are being fulfilled, as expected.

#### **2.17.5. Sense of responsibility**

According to Keough and Tobin (2011), successful schools show a great sense of responsibility and try to solve their problems through concerted efforts and dialogue. They do not expect the Minister of basic education to provide solutions to all their problems (James, 2007). Therefore, the present study has introduced the use of self-reflection; since this enables SMT members to think of ways to improve their services and solve their problems. As a result, the use of self-reflection enables members of SMTs to fulfil their functions as school manager, and to improve the quality of education in their schools.

### **2.18. TOP-DOWN MANAGEMENT AND PARTICIPATORY MANAGEMENT**

The top-down approach in the context of school management is when instructions in the operation come from the team of school management, and trickle down to the teachers. The following aspects were regarded as being the key for shifting from a top-down style to one of participatory management:

### **2.18.1. School managers' emphasis on support**

A school manager should give his support, rather than instruction to his SMT members, in order to have a successful team. The use of self-reflection is always helpful for managers to know whether the kind of support they are giving is adequate or not. In order for school managers (SMT) to succeed in participatory management, they must lead and support teachers and learners to achieve the desired objectives (Dimmock & Walker, 2008). They should analyse instruction together before implementing the orders.

The present study argues that the first step in any analysis is self-reflection. Therefore, within the analytical process, self-reflection would be an important aspect. The present study has shown this to be a tool for quality management. In other words, it could be concluded that SMT members who reflect on their practices succeed in their management functions.

### **2.18.2. Horizontal/hierarchical and shared responsibility**

According to Handy (2013), in the past, decisions in schools were taken by the boss, and then passed down to the subordinates to be implemented. In such a leadership, the power is centred on the principal, and not on the SMT members. In South Africa after 1994, the management of schools has been shifted from the principal to the entire SMT membership. Participatory management allows for a better information flow and dialogue; and it creates decision-making, as well as a sense of ownership and responsibility. Handy (2013)'s work on participatory management leaves out the self-reflection process in the school management.

The present study emphasises that during participatory management, SMT members should meet together and reflect on the activities that took place in school, and then jointly shape their future management approach.

### **2.18.3. Placing emphasis on staff development**

School managers, according to Bush (2013), stimulate teachers to develop their own capacities. They support their teachers in updating their knowledge and professional skills. They encourage the development of professional skills and the involvement of key partners in the training of teachers. However, Bush's work did not mention how members of SMT are identifying the needs of teachers, or the area in which they need development. In the present study, it is argued that school managers should practise self-reflection and identify those areas that they feel need to be developed.

Such development would benefit the entire school, because they would be able to pass on the knowledge to the other teachers.

### **2.18.4. Creating a culture of learning**

By giving more support, school managers motivate and stimulate teachers and learners. Motivated teachers often value advice that stimulates learners' interest in learning (Moon, 2006). The present study has emphasised that the support and motivation of teachers should be centred on self-reflection. If members of SMTs are reflective practitioners, they are likely to pass on their self-reflective skills to other teachers, and to encourage them to fulfil their functions. However, such activity have some challenges that might temper with school management.

## **2.19. CHALLENGES IN SCHOOL MANAGEMENT**

Even though the SMT members are faced with the task of ensuring that schools become effective centres of learning, they still face various challenges (Loliwe, 2005). It is the intention of this study that school managers should become reflective practitioners; where they would then be in a position to identify and overcome any challenges they come across, and be able to solve them for future improvements. According to the Department of Education (2008), in order to improve the quality of teaching and learning, education management (SMT) must be more supportive of their teachers than directive in the change process. The gap in the Department of Basic Education is that they expect SMT

members to support the teachers; but they do not train them on how to support them, and how to overcome the challenges they face. The present study has revealed that it takes a reflective management who regularly reflect on the practice to be able to identify those areas that need support from their teachers. The challenges facing SMT members are:

### **2.19.1. Lack of clarity on roles and responsibility**

The lack of clarity with regard to roles and responsibilities is one of the major challenges that affect members of SMT to be effective. To start with, in some instances, even SMT members are not clear about who is responsibility for what in the management team (Loliwe, 2005). According to my own observation, when members of SMTs are hired in a school, they are not taken through their detailed roles and responsibilities. The lack of clarity in this regard results in many problems, in which you find one SMT member tampering with another member's responsibility (Hillson, 2013). In the context of SMT members in the Capricorn District, it was revealed that some SMT members were not aware of some of their management functions. To close this gap, the present study has discussed all the functions of SMT members, starting with the principal, the deputy principal and the head of department. A reflective management team is able to draw a line operation in their management team, and this would enable each of the members of the management team to fulfil his or her functions.

### **2.19.2. Underqualified educators in high schools**

Teaching in school is completely different from other professions; since it requires skills and specialised knowledge to teach the various subjects. However, the minimum requirements for high schools, special schools and primary schools' teachers are the same. According to Loliwe (2005), some of the qualifications of these teachers do not meet the needs of the new curriculum. The gap in the work of Loliwe (2005) was that the problem of underqualified educators is presented without any solutions being proposed. In addressing this problem, the present study has argued that a reflective school management team would always reflect on the level of the qualifications of the school teachers, and be able to advise them to further their studies. This would include the

capacitating workshops that assist teachers to improve in their practice. Furthermore, reflective management does not only wait for the Department of Education to provide them with workshops, they arrange workshops if there is a need to do so (Gabriel, 2008). This means that SMT members have the responsibility to communicate and liaise with the relevant stakeholders (e.g. institutions of higher learning) that could assist with such capacitating workshops.

### **2.19.3. Low morale among educators**

According to Martin and Wedman (2008), low morale among teachers is mostly found where there is a passive school management team. It is the responsibility of SMT members to support educators and to motivate them to do their work with passion. A reflective school management team should treat its staff members and listen to them during staff meetings. If teachers feel that they are part of the decision-making in school, they tend to love their work and to become passionate about it (Yukl, 2012). Leading by example is another aspect that motivates members of the staff to see that the school leadership does not only mandate them to do certain tasks. They also assist in the doing thereof. For example, if the members of the SMT want the members of the staff to teach during holidays, or to give Saturday classes, they should be the first to be part of such activities; then the staff would follow their example. Reflective management would time and again reflect on the achievements and the positive activities done by their staff members, and be able to praise them.

Teachers feel motivated when they are recognised for their good work; and it is through reflective practices that SMT members could identify such good work. Therefore, the present study assists SMT members to reflect on the work done by educators, and be able to comment and praise the work that the teachers have done.

### **2.19.4. Lack of discipline**

According to Galloway et al., (2015) the lack of discipline in the school context could be on the side of the learners, or on that of the educator. According to the empirical study

conducted, the negative attitude of teachers and learners has a negative impact on school management. The most common mistake made by SMTs is to undermine their teachers, so that they cannot contribute any valuable ideas in the schools. Organised SMT members result in disciplined staff members. This means that if SMT members respect and value their staff, this kind of relationship would lead to good discipline in the school. Dadey and Harbers (2009), argues that teachers' misbehaviour can be defined as: lateness, absenteeism, alcoholism and the sexual harassment of their female learners. However, such behaviour can be discouraged by reflective management, who really know their daily functions as school managers. The present study emphasises that SMT members, as the leadership of schools, should be guided by self-reflection, and be able to fulfil their management functions. In this regard, the fact that SMT members should lead by example becomes important. Teachers would be disciplined and do their work, if only the members of the SMT were doing their work and reflecting on their practice.

## **2.20. POSSIBLE WAYS OF ADDRESSING SMTS' CHALLENGES**

Despite the fact that SMT members experience challenges when it comes to the management of schools, they should also explore some possible ways of solving the challenges they experience. Some of the reviewed ways of addressing SMTs' challenges are as follows:

### **2.20.1. Motivation**

According to Walter (2013), motivation is one of the best monitoring tools in the context of school management. Self-motivated members of SMTs result in motivated staff members. In this study, the members of the SMT were motivated to reflect on their practice; and that should make things easier for them. Reflective SMT members always find some ways of boosting the morale of teachers; and that would translate into motivation of the entire staff.

The present study has further emphasised that through self-reflection, the SMT should be able to motivate teachers to fulfil their work. With regard to the practice of self-

reflection, the present study has emphasised that members of SMTs should be the first to reflect on their practice; and later motivate teachers to do likewise.

### **2.20.2. Development of SMT members**

Loliwe (2005) argued that effective performance is the product of ability, training and motivation. Loliwe continued to maintain that one of the keys, then, to motivation appears to be empowerment. To be specific, members of SMTs should further their studies in the school management; and they could be supported and developed by being given bursaries to do so. Furthermore, there should be regular workshops that clarify management issues and challenges. This would include their expected functions as school managers. The gap in Loliwe's work was that he does not talk about developing teachers and SMTs in self-reflective practices.

### **2.20.3. Financial management**

According to James (2007) most of the school managers (SMTs) are trained as teachers, and later promoted as school managers. This means that their functions shift from those of being a teacher to those of a school manager. Part of the functions of school managers is to ensure that the funds of the school are well utilised to the benefit of the pupils. Therefore, there is a need for members of SMTs to be trained and equipped in this field, in order to facilitate the smooth running of the school. According to Davidoff and Lazarus (2008), accessing and managing the financial resources needed to reach one's goal are essential prerequisites for successful achievement.

The problem that exists in the financial management of schools is that SMT members are not trained adequately on how to manage the school funds; and this has resulted in the mismanagement of school funds. However, the present study has introduced the self-reflection practices as a way of solving this problem. The present study further emphasised that members of SMTs should not neglect their past experiences, if they want to succeed in their management functions. In other ways, SMT members should

reflect on how the school funds have been spent in the past. They could then see whether that had any impact on the financial situation of the school.

#### **2.20.4. Changing leadership approach**

The biggest challenge in a school was to develop leadership as an art that would encourage all members of the school community to take the responsibility for making a difference in the school (Sterling & Davidoff, 2012). Sterling and Davidoff further argue that the leader's role is to encourage transformation within the school – by inspiring and motivating teachers and learners to realise their potential. For teachers and learners to realise their potential, they should be encouraged to practice self-reflection, whereby they would be able to identify both their strengths and weaknesses. Leadership means making inspirational differences in one's own life, the lives of others, and the life of the school (Sterling & Davidoff, 2012).

This statement implies that if SMT members would reflect on their practices, they would be able to rectify their mistakes and improve as school managers. However, the general product of individual SMT members' of self-reflection would result in school improvement, as well as quality teaching and learning. Therefore, the present study becomes very important if one has to change the leadership approach. It has been discussed in the current study that the main aim of self-reflection is to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the members of an SMT. It could be argued that the final product of self-reflection in the context of school management was to change the style of leadership approach and to make some improvements. That would assist SMT to fulfil their daily functions as school managers.

#### **2.21. DAILY FUNCTIONS OF SCHOOL-MANAGEMENT TEAMS**

SMT members have the overall responsibility for the school, its staff, its pupils and the education that the learners receive (Department of Education, 2012). The principal has obligations to fulfil as an agent of change, and to encourage his/her SMT members to share the same vision. These obligations include the following: The principal's obligation to the Head of Department; principals as instructional leaders; the principal's obligation

to comply with the existing legislation; and the principal's role in the SGB. This section, therefore, discusses the guidelines that would enable the principal and the SMT members to execute their mandate, and to fulfil their functions as school managers.

### **2.21.1. Daily functions of school principal**

School principals, in the context of South African schools, are regarded as the chairpersons of school management teams. However, their roles move from that of the overseer of the school to other more specific roles. The following roles are reviewed as specified in the Personnel Administrative Management document of 1999 in Department of Education (1999):

#### **2.21.1.1. *Leading the learning school***

The principal, as a member of the School-Management Team (SMT) is obligated to carry out his/her duties in such a way that teaching and learning take place in the school. The use of self-reflection could assist school principals to check the kind of work they do; and also to ascertain whether they are succeeding when it comes to leading the school. Hillson (2013) conducted a study in the Eastern region of Japan on the Principal as a key role-player in the school. The study investigated the role played by the principal in a school. The results of Hillson's study revealed that the results and quality of education in a school depend on the effectiveness of the principal as a school manager.

Hillson's study is related to the present study because being effective as a school principal requires the ability to reflect on one's work, and to see whether it is fulfilling one's duties and responsibility. However, the gap in Hillson's study was that the study only focused on the relationship between the effective school principal and the school results. The present study has sought to identify self-reflection as a vital tool to assist the school principal to fulfil his/her duties and responsibilities.

#### **2.21.1.2. *Curriculum management***

Curriculum management can be very complicated in the school context for one to understand. In the context of the principal as the curriculum manager, this means the

principal should be monitoring all the curriculum activities, and should see to it that all members of the staff (teachers) adhere to the curriculum policies (Department of Education, 2012). A principal as the head of the school should also make sure that teachers are trained or informed on new issues introduced to the curriculum.

According to the General and Further Education and Training Act 58 of 2001 in the Department of Education (2008), a school principal should ensure the smooth running of the school by executing his/her management qualities. Through self-reflection, the principal can compare his/her results for the current year with those of the previous year, in order to determine whether they are managing their curriculum well. Furthermore, the principal should ensure that meetings are held regularly, and that any issues related to curriculum delivery are outstanding agenda items from the meetings of the staff, the SGB and the SMT members.

Johnson (2008) conducted a study in Ghana on school managers as curriculum leaders in school. The study investigated the impact of principals on curriculum management; and the results of the study have shown that principals play a very crucial role, when it comes to curriculum development and management. Despite the similarities between Johnson's study and the present study, the gap in Johnson's study was that he only discussed the impact of principals on curriculum management. Principals have to know and understand what is expected of them in terms of the management of school curricula; therefore, the present study has discussed the duties and responsibilities of school principals in the context of curriculum management.

Moreover, the present study has further identified self-reflection as tool to assist principals to judge their own work, and be able to improve their work and that of others.

#### **2.21.1.3. *Distributing educators' work: keeping files of educators***

Principals, as school managers, are working with quite a number of educators. Sometimes it becomes difficult for the principal to know the profile of each individual teacher in the school (Loliwe, 2005). Therefore, it becomes important for principals to keep the profile of all educators to undertake the distribution of work and duties. According to Hellen (2007), it is the responsibility of the school principal to make sure that there is

an equal work distribution among all the staff members (educators) in a school. This means that the principal should monitor the process of class allocation at the beginning of the year, and also ensure that all the educators participate equally in the other school activities and school committees.

A good principal has the responsibility to encourage the spirit of working together and supporting one another as colleagues. If the principal is clear about their various roles and responsibilities, then it would be easy to distribute the work load equably to all the teachers in the school.

According to the Employment of Educators Act 76 of 1998 in the Department of Education (1998), the principal has the duty to make sure that each and every educator in a school fulfils his/her duties and responsibilities, which comprise teaching and learning. In accomplishing this, the present study has, therefore, identified self-reflection as a vital tool that would assist all members of SMT to fulfil their duties and responsibilities before they monitor that of teachers. The Act further outlines that it is the responsibility of the school principal to delegate the duties accordingly, in order to ensure the smooth running of the school. It is the significance of the present study to ensure that each member of the SMT understands his/her duties and responsibilities – to ensure that there is a smooth running of the school.

Furthermore the present study has discussed and outlined all the duties and functions of school principals – to ensure that each function is known and fulfilled by the principals.

#### **2.21.1.4. *Monitoring subjects committees***

A good leader always delegates duties to the members of the staff. Therefore, the principal, as a school leader, should also make sure that the different subject and learning committees are formed and functional in the school (Department of Education, 2012). Senior and experienced teachers can be delegated to lead their respective subject committees. Ronald (2009) conducted a study on the effect of delegation in an organisation. The study was conducted in Botswana from one of the rural schools of the Eastern region. Ronald used a case study in his study; and the results of Ronald's study have revealed that most of the performing schools in the region use delegation as tool

when managing their school. Ronald's study would be helpful to the present study, because it would assist SMT members to understand that for the principals to fulfil their duties and responsibilities, it takes one reflective practitioner who delegates some duties to his/her colleagues for the success of the school.

The present study has further emphasised that through self-reflection, the principal would be able to find out whether the delegated members are able to carry out their mandate and achieve the desired goal. In filling the gap that exists in Ronald's work, delegation itself does not determine success in school, but self-reflection on the delegated activities could determine whether the members are achieving the goal, or not. Therefore, the present study has suggested self-reflection as a monitoring tool for delegation.

#### **2.21.1.5. *Managing assessment issues of all subjects***

The Principal, as the head of the school and the team leader in the SMT has a responsibility to make sure that teachers prepare their lesson, and that their presented lessons meet the learning outcomes and assessment standards of all the subjects taught (Dresser, 2007). However, according to the protocol, the principal cannot directly approach or monitor an educator's work; but they have to make sure that the Heads of Departments (HODs) of different subjects do their work, which is monitoring the teacher's work.

Peter (2007) conducted a study on the use protocol to address school matters in rural Nigerian schools of region one. The results of Peter's study revealed that most of the rural schools in Nigeria do not follow the protocol in addressing school matters; and this result in poor management of the school. Peter's study is relevant to the present study; although these studies are conducted in a different context. The gap in Peter's study was that his study investigated the use protocol to address school matters, without checking whether the School Management Team was aware of its duties and responsibility.

The use of protocol could be ineffective when members of the SMT are not sure of their area of operations. Therefore, the present study has discussed the importance of self-

reflection in fulfilling management functions. When SMT members are reflective on their management practices they would ultimately realise the need to follow the protocol.

According to the Skill Development Act 97 of 1998, as amended by the Department of Education (1998), the principal has a responsibility to ensure that educators are allocated subjects that they have the requisite skill to teach. Moreover, the principal should ensure that educators receive regular training and workshops on the subjects they teach. Peter (2007) describes four step process called DATA: Describe; analyse; theorise; and finally, act. The first step describes the critical aspect of reflective practice. To apply Peter's steps process (DATA) in the present study, a principal has the responsibility to analyse the critical aspects of the school. This could be a way of identifying the area or subjects that need attention for improvement.

The second step includes the identification of assumptions that support the practitioners' current approaches and underlying beliefs. According to Peter, the principal should identify the assumption that causes the identified problems. In the third step, the practitioners theorize alternative ways to approach the learning theory developed from the previous step, in order to create new theory. In this step, the principal should use the collected information and problems that his/her school has experienced to come up with a new theory that would address the problems of the school directly.

In the last step of Peter's process, the practitioner tests the success and process of the new theory – through additional thought and reflection. This means that the principal would test the theory that they had designed and fill in the gaps that might exist in the theory to suit the school context. However, Peter's study did not design a suitable model that was relevant to school management. The present study came in to close the gap in Peter's study – by designing suitable self-reflection models for the improvement of school management and the fulfilment of management functions.

#### **2.21.1.6. *SMT members' regular class visits***

Teaching in South Africa can be difficult at times, especially as a result of the new changes in the education system. Since 1994, many changes have been implemented; for example: the introduction of Curriculum 2005 (C 2005), the Revised National

Curriculum Statement (RNCS), the National Curriculum Statement (NCS), and now the Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS). Reflecting on the number of experienced teachers in schools, one should realise that the majority of them were trained in the old system of education. As a result, there is a need for continuous support for such teachers. Applying Peters' thinking, there should be a constant protocol in schools – with the understanding of one's own functions in the school management. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the school principal to make sure that the members of SMT who are responsible for class visits, do so regularly, and that the relevant support is provided to educators in need (Peter, 2007).

However, Peter's work did not address the necessity that an analysis should be conducted to identify the needs of educators. The present study has emphasised that the practice of self-reflection enables SMTs to identify the needs of teachers and be able to provide support, where this is necessary.

#### ***2.21.1.7. Providing feedback after class visits and prioritize development priorities***

The principal has the responsibility to provide feedback to the staff after class visits. The HOD would then visit the classes and report back to the principal on the educator's performance, and the areas that call for further development (Skills Development Levies Act 9 of 1999 in Department of Education, 1999). The principal would then call up a staff meeting to report the feedback to the entire staff members. According to the Department of Education (2010), fifty per cent (50%) of the money for norms and standards should be spent on teaching and learning. Therefore, the principal has the responsibility of prioritising issues in the school; and at the same time to make sure that educators receive training in those areas where they struggle (teacher-development) as part of teaching and learning improvements.

Moreover, the principal should ensure that all the structures that support teaching and learning are fully functional. According to the Promotion of Access to Information Act 2 of 2000 in Department of Education (2000), the principal can also liaise with institutions of higher learning, private companies and community structures – in an effort to lift the

quality of education. Looking at the geographical context in which the study was conducted, principals could liaise with the University of Limpopo, the University of Venda, the University of South Africa and the Tshwane University of Technology – as the nearest institutions of higher learning – to assist with measures for quality teaching and learning. As part of community engagement projects, universities would gladly assist the nearby schools. It was also the responsibility of the school principal to check programmes that are related to teacher-development and to encourage educators to participate in such a programme (Yukl, 2012). With regard to prioritizing issues that need development, the present study has introduced self-reflection as a tool to measure those aspects and areas that need attention.

The present study has further emphasised that through the use of self-reflection, SMT members and teachers are able to assess themselves, and identify those areas that call for further development. In other words, self-reflection assists the school to know the kind of help they need before they approach nearby institutions of higher learning for help.

#### **2.21.1.8. *Managing time-tabling issues***

In a school context, the principal serves as the departmental representative (Employment of Educators Act 76 of 1998 in Department of Education, 1998). Therefore, it becomes the responsibility of the school principal to ensure that a general timetable accommodates all subjects, and that all the subjects have a correct time allocation (National Policy on Assessment, Grade R-12 in Department of Education, 2012). This means that principals should familiarise themselves with policy documents that outline the time allocation for different subjects. Bedenhorst and Scheepers (2008) also share the same sentiment as they argued that it is also important that principals distribute equal work-loads for all educators, regardless of age or experience. Furthermore, the principal should ensure that both learners and teachers honour their classes; and also to make sure that the correct number of educators are allocated for their schools.

It is also the responsibility of the school principal to count the number of learners (head-count) in the school, according to the departmental learner ratio of 1/34, and to apply for a new post, if there is a need to do so (Employment of Educators Act 76 of 1998 in

Department of Education, 1998). Bush (2008) in his study also emphasised that the principal should also ensure that the correct statistics of learner enrolment are kept; and that these statistics are updated regularly. To fulfil this role, the present study could assist the principals to reflect on the current subject policies and ensure that the policies are implemented correctly, with the correct time allocation for each subject.

#### **2.21.1.9. *Assessing and evaluating learner performance***

It is the responsibility of school principals to make sure that learners are assessed on a daily basis. Teachers should also be monitored to make sure that they give assessments, according to the number of prescribed assessments for each learning area/subject (Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement, 2012 in Department of Basic Education, 2012). The Principal should ensure that after the learner assessment has taken place, learner performances are analysed and intervention strategies are developed, implemented and monitored. Educators should also ensure that opportunities are provided for learners to acquire knowledge, skills and values. In the same line of argument, Brookfield (2008) argued that it is also the principal's responsibility to ensure that HODs provide regular feedback on learner performance, and that parents are provided with feedback on learner performance. Learner performance should be summarised and submitted to the district office, on a quarterly basis; and it is the principal role to make sure that all the submissions are done at the right and stipulated time and date.

In order to fulfil this role, the present study would enable the principals to reflect on learner performance for each quarter in preparation for the current and future learner performance. The present study has further introduced a reflective model that emphasises that history never repeats itself. In other words, reflecting on the results of the previous quarter would give an opportunity for one to improve the current and future results of the school.

#### **2.21.1.10. *Promoting Information Computer Technology (ICT) in learning***

Since the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, education has changed in South Africa; and it is now more centred on technology. The principals play a critical role in promoting ICT in

their schools. As a head of the school, s/he should ensure that teachers receive training in the use of ICTs. Furthermore, the principal should encourage teachers to use ICT to enhance the quality of teaching and learning. Bradley (2009) in his study emphasise that the principal should also ensure that ICT promotes recording and record keeping of the school. All this can be achieved if the principal engages with his staff, and with teachers' development programmes, such as ICT training, workshops and competitions that help them improve their practice through the use of ICT. According to Public Finance Management Act 1 of 1999 in Department of Education (1999), the schools can use the funds allocated to them to develop their staff and other teaching and learning programmes. It is therefore, the responsibility of the principal to make sure that school funds are well utilised for the benefit of the learners. To fulfil this function, the present study has discussed the functions of principals that could be met through the use of self-reflection. Therefore, the present study has emphasised that it is the responsibility of school principal to reflect on the nature of ICT level in their schools and come up with an intervention strategy that would fill in the gap.

#### **2.21.1.11. *Human Resource support and management***

The Principal, as a school manager, must bear in mind that in the school context, they are dealing with human beings – as the capital of human resources (Dadey & Harbers, 2009). Therefore, they have the responsibility to support each individual staff member in the school, and to treat members of the staff equally. Understanding different human behaviour could assist principals to fulfil this responsibility. The principal should understand and respect the rights of each individual staff member in the school (Labour Relations Act 66 of 1995 in Department of Labour, 1995). To emphasise this act, Clarke (2010) in his study argue that it is the responsibility of principals to manage educators' leave, and monitor learners and educators attendance in a school. Moreover, principals should maintain discipline in the school and provide support for vulnerable learners in the school.

Farrel (2008) further emphasise that it is the responsibility of the principal to oversee learner and educator counselling, and to refer them to the specialist if there is a need. In other words, a principal has the duty to act as a counsellor, and also to be able to treat

confidential information with care. To advance this argument, Harris and Brown (2013) argued that the principals should also regard different stakeholders as partners in education, by providing opportunities for the involvement of parents and other members of the community in the affairs of the school. Furthermore, the Principal should also fulfil the role of shaping the direction and development of the school, and ensuring that the rule of law is upheld at all levels in the school.

To achieve this s/he should provide all educators and learners with the necessary Learner Teacher Support Material (LTSM), and ensure the proper record-keeping thereof. The problem is that principals do not have the requisite knowledge on how to deal with human-resource issue (Martin & Wedman, 2008). However, the present study has introduced the suggestion that the practice of self-reflection can address all human-resource matters in a school. The present study has further highlighted the fact that principals should always reflect and understand how their management strategy affects other people surrounding them.

#### **2.21.1.12. *School development /improvement planning***

In high schools, the performance of the school is assessed by the matric results. Therefore, the results of the school are determined by the school-development plan. Hart (2008) in her study emphasised that the principal has the responsibility to ensure that the School Development Plan (SDP) and the School Improvement Plan (SIP) are developed, implemented and monitored. It is important that the principal should provide an opportunity for the entire school community to develop the vision and mission statement; and ensure that in the event of the school being classified as underperforming, an environment is created for all the stakeholders to develop (the Academic Performance Improvement Plan, Department of Education, 2012).

To advance this argument Loliwe (2005) argued that the principal should act as an overseer on the development, implementation and monitoring of all policies and plans. He should also ensure that the staff and SGB, on a monthly basis, are provided with reports on the implementation of all plans, including APIP and policies. Where necessary, s/he should seek out and invite the support of a range of people with expertise who could

assist with the development of the school. Because of a lack of knowledge, principals are unable to fulfil this role; and this affects their management practice. However, the present study, in addressing this challenge, has emphasised that principals should use self-reflection to scrutinise all policies and development plans in a school. Furthermore, the practice of self-reflection enables principals to identify policies that are dysfunctional, and be able to revise them for the improvement and development of the schools.

#### **2.21.1.13. *Quality assurance of the learning environment***

In order to ensure quality assurance, principals should make sure that all classes are allocated class teachers; and they should monitor the attendance of both teachers and learners, and take appropriate action where necessary (South African School's Act 84 of 1996, in Department of Education, 1996). They should keep the asset register to register all assets of the school, and always have a policy for school property/assets. Mark (2006) in his study argued that principals should ensure that all the classrooms are kept clean, safe and accessible to all learners. When the school has a hostel, the principal should monitor the hostel and all activities related to it. To fulfil this role, the present study has indicated that the practice of self-reflection allows principals to reflect on the nature of the school environment, and to ensure that it is conducive to teaching and learning.

#### **2.21.1.14. *Developing and empowering self and others***

Principals should also ensure that they develop and empower themselves and other teachers in the schools. Some of the areas reviewed as areas of development are as follows:

#### **2.21.1.15. *Staff development***

According to the Employment of Educators Act 76 of 1998 in DoE (1998), the principal should ensure that newly appointed teachers are inducted and oriented in their duties and responsibilities. They should also ensure the planning and implementation of high quality staff-training programmes. This role can be fulfilled by co-operating with institutions of higher learning in relation to Continued Professional Development and management

development. Educators should be assisted in developing and achieving these objectives, in accordance with the needs of the learners and the school (Martin & Wedman, 2008).

Therefore, the principal oversees the mentoring, coaching and support of all educators in general, and those that are underperforming in particular (Maxwell, 2008). To ensure complete fulfilment of this role, the present study has revealed that it is the responsibility of the school principal to provide a conducive environment for reflective practices and the sharing of expertise among educators. Moreover, the principal oversees the effective implementation and management of the Integrated Quality Management System (IQMS), in order to monitor school and staff development. In other words, he should delegate some members of the staff to deal with IQMS matters effectively. The IQMS and the present study share the common objective, which is identifying weaknesses in order to address them. However, the present study goes beyond identifying weaknesses, by ensuring that each school principal fulfils his/her management functions, as stipulated in the PAM document, and as discussed in this study.

#### **2.21.1.16. *School community development***

The principal should apply the principles of ubuntu when dealing with the community. In order to create opportunities for growth and development (Okumbe, 2009). This can be done by making sure that team spirit prevails among the staff and other structures in the school. Maristo and Eisenschmidt (2014) in their study argued that the Principal, as a manager, should manage all correspondence and ensure that all information reaches and is clarified for all the intended recipients. Furthermore, the principal should participate in professional and departmental committees, seminars and courses, in order to update all professional knowledge and skills. Moreover, s/he should also encourage leadership development among the learners and teachers by encouraging initiative, responsibility and commitment.

Therefore, the present study becomes important to fulfil this function; because the practice of self-reflection becomes important for a school principal to reflect on the level of participation of the community, in order to come up with strategies to enable the maximum participation of the community. As a result, such participation results in the

development of the school, and would cause an improvement in the results and quality of education.

#### **2.21.1.17. *Managing the school as an organization***

Managing school as an organisation involves being active and knowledgeable about activities that results in the smooth running and management of the school. Some of the issues reviewed serve as keys for managing school as an organisation:

#### **2.21.1.18. *Financial management***

According to the Department of Education (2000), the principal is responsible for managing the school's finances, and should apply the necessary control to maximize the efficient use of the funds available. Consequently, they should support the School Governing Body (SGB) in developing the annual budget by providing them with learner enrolment, fee exemption and collection levels. Malatji and Wadsango (2014) further argued that the principal should be in a position to account for all spending of the school; thus, he should utilize the funds for the benefit of all the learners in consultation with the SMT, staff, parents and representative council of learners (RCLs). Therefore, the present study becomes important to fulfil this function because it is through self-reflection that the principal discerns whether the funds of the school are being utilized in the correct manner.

The principal should further support all school fund-raising efforts and also make sure that all the financial records are kept and updated regularly. Furthermore, the SGB should audit all the school's accounts annually, as prescribed by law. It is also the responsibility of the school principal to make sure that learners and teachers work in a secure and safe environment. A school log book or incident book should be kept, containing a record of all the school events (Lindle, 2009). Lastly, the principal should manage all external projects and visits, to ensure that they address the school's needs. Therefore, the practice of self-reflection becomes central in ensuring that the school operates smoothly, and that the finances are spent in a correct manner.

The present study further emphasises that the principal should reflect regularly on school expenses and account for every cent spent.

#### **2.21.1.19. *Managing information***

According to Department of Education (2000), the principal has a role to manage relations with the media in the context of the promotion of Access to Information Act and provincial guidelines. To advance this argument, Swanson (2013) mentioned that principal should also manage all sensitive information, particularly learner and educator personnel files. Therefore, s/he should ensure that sensitive learner and teacher information is properly maintained, stored and accessible to those authorised to view it. In some instances, educators and learners share the sensitive material with the school principal; and as a result, such information should be managed with confidentiality. To fulfil this role, the present study stresses that the use of self-reflection allows the principal to reflect on the previous incidents related to the leaking of sensitive information in the school, and make sure that people who have access to such information treat it with confidentiality.

#### **2.21.1.20. *Networking and representing the school***

The principal serves on recruitment, promotion, advisory and other committees, as required (Department of Education, 2008). This means that they liaise with different sections of the department concerning administration, personnel, finance, and any other section for service delivery. Vanderyar (2008) also argued in his study that it is the responsibility of the school principal to ensure that the school has a functional SGB. The present study is very important because it is through self-reflection that the school principal identifies the functionality of SGB. In order to fulfil this responsibility, the principal should make sure that the SGB attend the workshops organised by the department; and the school can also organise their own internal workshop, if they perceive a need to do so. The present study has further emphasised that the principal should reflect and see whether the SGB members are benefiting or learning anything by attending such workshops.

#### **2.21.1.21. *Working with and for the community***

To ensure that this role is fulfilled, the principal should serve on the School Governing Body (SGB). He should also render all necessary assistance to the SGB in the performance of its functions in terms of SASA, as amended (Department of Education,

2010). Moreover, the principal should co-operate with staff members and SGBs in maintaining an efficient and smooth-running school. Semilar argument was presented by by Yukl (2012) that the principal should give strategic advice to the SGBs and ensure that all the SGB records are kept and updated regularly. To fulfil this role, the present study has stated that the use of self-reflection allows the principal to review on the SGB records and check whether they are being done in the right way. In other words, the practice of self-reflection enables the SMT members to judge the work done by the SGB and to provide support if needs be.

#### **2.21.1.22. *Community networking partnerships***

The principal should be in a position to understand socio-economic and political issues impacting on teaching and learning in the school, and adapt accordingly. Thomas (2009) advanced that it is also the responsibility of the school principal to set up community-school partnerships to support teaching and learning. Semilar sentiment was presented by Uwe (2009) that the principal should participate in community activities in connection with educational matters, and regularly reflect on such participation to ensure community development. The principal should support all fund-raising structures and initiatives; and s/he should liaise with the relevant departments, as well as with sports, cultural, community and social organizations as required (Promotion of Access to Information Act 2 of 2000 in Department of Education, 2000).

In the present study, the practice of self-reflection enables SMTs to reflect on the nature of the community in which their schools are located, and be able to come up with a management strategy that would regard the community as a partner in education.

#### **2.21.1.23. *School improvement plan***

The School Improvement Plan (SIP) is a management tool used to give a school the operational direction on an annual basis (Department of Education, 2009). The SIP is linked to the SDP by translating the SDP into a set of activities for implementation in any given year. Smith and Hope (2010) advanced this argument that SIP is informed by the School Funding Norms annual budget. The SIP is developed by the school, under the guidance of the principal. The School Improvement Plan is a plan to implement the SDP.

Sterling (2012) in her study argued that the SIP is a one-year plan that should include all the activities that have been planned for any particular year. However, the principal might find it difficult to determine whether the school improvement plan is adequate – without the regular practice of self-reflection.

Consequently, the present study insists that through the practice of self-reflection, principals would be able to reflect on the previous school improvement plan, and be able to position their current improvement. The present study further introduces the model that outlines the importance of past experience when practising self-reflection. Therefore, it may be argued in the light of the present study that it is important for principals to come up with a functional school-improvement plan; since it places self-reflection as central.

#### **2.21.1.24. Other functions of the principal include:**

Ensuring that the policies are developed, implemented, monitored and evaluated. Furthermore, the principal should ensure that the Staff Development Team is constituted and fully functional. According to the Department of Education (2006), the principal has the responsibility to make sure that the monthly report is tabled for the SGB and the staff meeting. Willis (2008) further presented similar argument that principals should keep updated records of educators' leave and inform educators of available days, when they apply for leave. Moreover, the principal should submit leave forms to the Circuit Office in good time.

In terms of policy development by the SGB, the principal has a role to play in the development, implementation and monitoring of policies and plans at school level. In terms of policies that are to be developed by the SGB, the principal should provide guidance and support, as they are developed, and should monitor their implementation and report to the SGB monthly (Department of Education, 2000). There are also policies that should be developed by the school. These are the policies that enhance teaching and learning. Walter (2013) in his study emphasised that all policies and plans that are developed at school level should be communicated to the SGB and the staff, and be endorsed by both the SGB and the staff.

At school level, there are policies developed by the SGB and those that are developed by the staff to enhance teaching and learning (Willis, 2008). Therefore, the present study becomes important for the principal to fulfil this role. The practice of self-reflection enables the principals to reflect on the nature of teaching and learning in their schools, and be able to come up with teaching and learning policies that strengthen the quality of teaching and learning in schools.

#### **2.21.1.25. *Learner absenteeism***

The principals, working with the SMT and the SGB, are responsible for developing a culture of punctual and regular attendance at a school. Furthermore, the principals are responsible for fostering a caring school environment, in which the SMT and educators take an interest in each learner's wellbeing, and are alert to problems that might affect a learner's attendance (Department of Education, 2009). Subject to section 16A of SASA and section 4 of the Personnel Administrative Measures (PAM), the principal may allocate a duty or responsibility envisaged in this policy to a member of staff. The principal must develop a school policy on learner attendance after consultation with the school staff, the RCL (where applicable) and the SGB. Moreover, Simkins (2009) argue that the principal should ensure that staff members who are allocated responsibility for school attendance matters understand the importance of accurate records and careful monitoring, and carry out their responsibilities competently. The present study emphasises the aspect of self-reflection that was left out by the department of basic education. The present study has emphasised that through the use of reflection, principals are able to monitor the work done by teachers and assess whether they fulfil their roles, as expected.

As indicated in the PAM document (in Department of Education, 1998), with regard to the class register, the principal is responsible for ensuring that class registers and period registers are compiled, marked and monitored properly, and are stored safely in terms of the Policy on Learner Attendance. At schools with electronic administration systems, the principal is responsible for ensuring that electronically generated registers are properly maintained and backed up, and that hard copies are made, in accordance with the Policy on Learner Attendance (Sterling, 2012). In the context of this study, the principal should

reflect and check whether all the school registers are managed properly, and ensure that they are safely stored.

#### **2.21.1.26. *Management of school records***

Record management involves the recording, correct storage, retrieval and use of information (Department of Education, 1999). A record is a documented proof of a transaction or activity that is routinely done. All activities at a school should be carefully recorded and kept. Records are an important means of accountability; because they provide proof of actions taken and decisions made by either the school management team or the school governing body. Uwe (2009) advanced this argument that it is important to keep records in schools, because they provide schools with a clear indication of what was available and what was required, as well as providing schools with the ability to pass on information for planning and policy decisions. Records must be archived and kept for three years after a pupil has left the school. All other records may only be disposed of, according to the provincial regulations.

There are governance records, which are administered by the school governing body, and management records, which have to be administered by the school management team. Simkins (2009) argue that management records include the instructional leadership and administrative records utilized by the SMT members for the effective functioning of the school's core activities. To fulfil this role, the present study enables members of SMTs to reflect on the nature of management of school records, and be able to determine whether such recording needs to be improved.

#### **2.21.1.27. *Management of meetings***

A meeting can be defined as a gathering/ assembly of two or more people to discuss matters of mutual / common interest and taking any necessary decisions relating to these matters. According to Moon (2006), the purpose of meetings is to discuss subjects that entail the meeting of minds, and require a collaborative effort. Meetings therefore, provide for interaction that is not provided for by memos and e-mails. Therefore, every time a meeting is held, there must be a purpose that goes beyond just interacting. Some

meetings are mandatory and stipulated by law; while others are called, in order to discuss issues related to service delivery.

However, the challenge in this role is that SMT members are not trained on how to manage meetings in schools (Uwe, 2009). Consequently, it is difficult for them to manage such meetings. The present study enables the SMT members to reflect on the manner that meetings were managed in the past, the challenges encountered, and be able to come up with effective ways of managing such meetings.

## **2.22. TYPES OF MEETINGS THAT COULD BE HELD IN SCHOOLS**

Communication in the context of school management is very important. It is through meetings that members of SMT are able to communicate with one another. Some of the meetings that are important are:

### **2.22.1. SMTS' meetings**

These are SMT meetings that are convened by the principal of a school. The members of the team comprise the Principal, the Deputy Principal, and the Heads of Departments. According Department of Education (2009), such meetings are supposed to address the following issues: Policy formulation; planning; delegating; supervising; control; discussing goals; feedback from various departments on developments, meetings, seminars and workshops; strategies to improve teaching and learning; and management; systems and procedures. The present study is very important in the management of SMT meetings. It is only through the use of self-reflection that SMT members would reflect on the nature of their management approach, and be able to discuss challenges that they experience in their management positions.

### **2.22.2. Staff meetings**

These are meetings for all staff members in a school; and they are convened by the principal. Takano and Tanno (2009) argue that staff meetings serve to create a bond between staff and management. It is at these meetings where the following matters could be discussed: systems and procedures; planning, organizing and delegating; curriculum implementation; motivation of staff members; acknowledging good performance and

practices; implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and plans; strategies to improve teaching and learning; learner discipline; feedback from various departments on developments, meetings, seminars and workshops (Department of Education, 2010).

In the context of the present study, staff meetings give an opportunity for the entire staff to reflect on the general approach of the school, and be able to discuss the way forward, and how to strengthen quality teaching and learning in the schools.

### **2.22.3.        *Departmental meetings***

These are meetings that are convened by heads of departments; however, the principal is the overseer of all the meetings in the school (Walter, 2008). The following are some of the issues that could be discussed in such meetings: distribution of learning areas/ subjects; constitution of learning areas/subject committees; feedback on developments, meetings, seminars and workshops attended; strategies on improving learner and teacher performance.

In the context of the present study, departmental meetings are normally conducted by HODs to discuss challenges experienced by schools at departmental level. The practice of self-reflection becomes critical here; because such reflection is discipline-specific; and the members that attend the meeting are disciplinary specialists.

### **2.22.4.        *Special/emergency meetings***

These are situations that sometimes call for emergency meetings on issues that cannot wait until scheduled meetings are held. These meetings could be called by a principal, or by any of the SMT members. This type of meeting is called for a special purpose; and the meeting deals with that particular item only (Department of Education, 1999). In the present study, special meetings are conducted after the practice of self-reflection has taken place. This means that the principal reflects on certain issues; and is consequently able to arrange the meeting, and address the matter immediately.

### **2.22.5. SGB meetings**

The following is the role of the principal in SGB meetings: Co-ordinate the meetings; provide administrative staff; ensure that proper logistical arrangements have been made; and provide the necessary support to the chairperson of the SGB (Sterling & Davidoff, 2012). In the present study, the principal reflects on the nature of SGB members in the school, and then determines the kind of support they need to carry out their functions effectively.

### **2.23. THE DEPUTY PRINCIPAL'S DAILY FUNCTIONS**

The deputy principal plays a major role in managing the school, particularly in the absence of the school principal (Department of Education, 2012). The Deputy Principal can take some school decisions, especially in the absence of the principal (Schon, 2007). Some principals share their responsibilities with the deputy principal; but above all, the deputy principal should know his/her exact duties and responsibilities; and in the context of this study, self-reflection is selected as a tool for these members of SMT to carry out their daily functions effectively. The use of self-reflection is very vital for deputy principals, in order to ensure that the decisions they take, in the absence of the principal, are the correct ones.

The functions of deputy principal are very similar to those of the school principal. One of the common roles of the Deputy Principal is that of acting as a principal in the absence of the school principal. However, Deputy Principals have some specific duties to which they must attend in the SMT. Functions of the deputy principal are reviewed, as stipulated in the PAM document, as follows:

#### **2.23.1. Leading the Learning School**

According to Tylor (2008), deputy Principals should do regular class visits to provide support and advice; and they should also monitor the progress of the teachers. It is the responsibility of deputy principals to ensure that staff development programmes are informed by evidence, as obtained from class visit reports (Department of Education, 2011). In other words, they should collect the data and information that would improve

the teaching and learning activities in school, and also to ensure that during the SMT and staff meetings, feedback is provided, as well as reports on learner performance and other professional matters.

In order for Deputy Principals to provide feedback on learner performance, they should be engaged in self-reflection, in order to discern the impact of their class visits (Richert, 2010). The present study becomes important for that matter; since it would enable deputy principals to reflect on the management strategies, and see if they are leading the school in the right direction.

### **2.23.2. *Timetabling issues***

Deputy Principals should ensure that time-tables for different activities are developed, implemented and monitored. They should also ensure that admission and placement of learners is done smoothly and in good time. According to Department of Education (2006), the Deputy Principal, as the assistant of the principal, should oversee mentoring, coaching and general support of all teachers – with special reference to underperforming teachers. Furthermore, Deputy Principals should assist the principal in ensuring that workloads are equitably distributed among the staff; and also to engage in class teaching, in accordance with the workloads of the relevant post, and the needs of the school (Samier, 2008).

When it comes to assessment, deputy principals should reflect, assess and record the attainment of learners and manage their progression. Peter (2010) further argued that deputy principals should liaise with the relevant structures on school curricula/co-curricular activities and curriculum development, and ensure educator and learner involvement (Department of Education, 2006). The present study would enable deputy principals to reflect on the different subject policies, and make sure that each subject is allocated sufficient time.

### **2.23.3. *Promoting ICT in learning and Human Resource Support***

Deputy Principal should co-ordinate the use of ICT in supporting curriculum delivery and in recording learner progress. When it comes to human-resource management, they

should facilitate learner and staff in counselling and guidance, careers, discipline, compulsory attendance and the general welfare of all learners (Department of Education, 2009). Furthermore, they should ensure that vulnerable learners have access to the appropriate learning experiences, and are adequately supported (Ronald, 2009). It is also their responsibility to make sure that they establish learner disciplinary mechanisms that are in line with the law and good practice.

The Department of Education (2009) further emphasises that Deputy Principals should oversee learners and educators' counselling; and they should involve parents and other community members as resources and partners in the learning process. Consequently, the present study becomes important for Deputy Principals; because it enables them to reflect on their practice and strengthen their contribution in this regard. Furthermore, it is also important for members of SMT to reflect on the nature of the support they provide teachers, when it comes to ICT, and be able to develop them accordingly.

#### **2.23.4. *Managing quality and securing accountability***

Deputy Principals should be able to guarantee the quality of the learning environment, by consolidating class visit reports from Heads of Departments and following up on concerns through targeted class visits in support of the teacher, in order to improve teaching and learning in the school. In the same line of argument, Rodgers (2010) mentioned that deputy principals should also co-ordinate the effective use and safekeeping of all moveable and immovable assets in the school. It is also the responsibility of the deputy principal to support the principal in ensuring that discipline is being maintained (Okumbe, 2009). They should also review and reflect on Learning and Teaching Support Materials (LTSM) and ensure that they are being used effectively. Where the school has a hostel, they should monitor the hostel, and all activities related to it.

The Deputy Principal should also establish staff-development structures, such as Staff Development Teams (SDT) and Development Support Groups; and s/he should organise staff development and intervention programmes (Department of Basic Education, 2012). Managing quality in school becomes a challenge for Deputy Principals; because they do not have the criteria to measure quality in the context of schooling. However, the present

study becomes important because it enables Deputy Principals to reflect on the nature of education in the district, and to determine the quality thereof.

#### **2.23.5.        *Staff development and School community development.***

According to Peter (2007), it is the responsibility of the Deputy-Principal to assist the principal in the orientation and induction of new and inexperienced teachers in developing and achieving the educational objectives, in accordance with the needs of the school. They should co-ordinate external project intervention and visits, so that they are articulated with the needs and timeframes of the school (Department of Education, 2009). Furthermore, they should mentor, coach and provide general support for novice and underperforming teachers.

In order to fulfil this role, they should conduct opportunities for growth and development of staff and the school community in the spirit of 'ubuntu'. It also in their power or responsibility to establish retrieval and storage systems, and to make sure that departmental circulars and other information relevant to all staff members are accessible to all of them (Saylag, 2012). Lastly, the deputy principal should participate in professional and departmental committees, seminars and courses, in order to contribute to and/or update professional knowledge and skills, as required (Department of Education, 2012).

The present study becomes important for Deputy Principals to fulfil this function; because it is through self-reflection that they can reflect on the challenges experienced by their schools and be able to make constructive contributions to committees.

#### **2.23.6.        *General Institutional Management***

According to the Department of Education (2000), the Deputy Principal should provide strategic leadership in the absence of the principal. To support this idea, Samier (2008) argued that Deputy Principal should make sure that the school environment is safe and secure for all learners and staff members. It is their responsibility to assist the principal in ensuring that the school has the required school accounts and records; and also to implement transparent decision-making structures, and solve problems in a creative fashion. As part of their management duties, they should assist in ensuring that a School Log Book or Incident Book (containing a record of all important school events) is

maintained. Lastly, they should assist in managing all external project interventions and visits, to ensure that they benefit the school, and are cognisant of all the school's needs.

In order to fulfil this role, the present study emphasises that Deputy Principals should reflect on their practice and that of the School Principal, in order to determine the management approach used by the Principal, and be able to align their management approach with that of the School Principal (Department of Education, 2009).

### ***2.23.7. Information management and networking***

Deputy Principals should manage sensitive information, particularly learner and educator personnel files; and also to ensure that sensitive learner and teacher information is properly maintained, stored and accessible to those authorised to view it (Department of Education, 2008). They should serve on recruitment, promotion, advisory and other committees, as required. This role should be fulfilled by liaisons with different sections of the department concerning administration, personnel, finance, research, and the updating of statistics, the purchase of equipment, and any other section for service delivery.

Ronald (2009) further argued that it is also the responsibility of Deputy Principal to assist in ensuring that the school has a functional School Governing Body (SGB). They should co-operate with the other members of staff and the SGB in maintaining an efficient and smooth-running school, by making sure that they support and render strategic advice to the SGB. In order to open lines of communication, they should meet parents concerning learners' progress and conduct, as required by the principal (Samier, 2008). Furthermore, they should supervise and advise the RCL, and act as a link between the RCL and the SMT. In terms of community-networking partnerships, they should participate in community activities in connection with educational matters and community developments (Department of Education, 2009).

For Deputy Principals to strengthen their networking role; as their responsibility, they should also liaise with the relevant departments, as well as with sports, cultural, community, and social organizations, as required (Department of Education, 2010). To advance this argument, Renan (2012) mentioned that Deputy Principals should understand socio-economic and political issues impacting on teaching and learning in the school, and

adapt accordingly. Furthermore, they should assist in setting up community-school partnerships to support teaching and learning programmes. Lastly, they should support fund-raising structures and initiatives in the school, as instructed by the principal (Myers, 2008). However, the challenge that Deputy Principals experience in this regard is that they do not have the necessary skills to manage information; since most of the workshop and training sessions are attended by the Principals (Department of Education, 2009). Therefore, it becomes a challenge when they have to act in the absence of the Principal. To address such challenges, the present study has emphasised that Deputy Principals should reflect on their practice, and how they manage information in the school. Reflecting on the previous experience enables them to acquire as much information as possible that would enable them to fulfil this function.

## **2.24. DAILY FUNCTIONS OF HEAD OF DEPARTMENT**

Heads of departments (HODs) in a school operate at a departmental level. In other words, their management is limited to the department to which they are assigned. However, in schools with small numbers of learner enrolment, HODs might be requested to operate across all subjects. In this study, the following functions were reviewed, as stipulated in the PAM document:

### **2.24.1. *Teaching***

Among the other responsibilities of Heads of Departments (HODs), there is teaching. Even though, they teach in accordance with the workload of the relevant post level, and the needs of the school. Where the school is understaffed s/he might be a class teacher, if required. As part of teaching, they should also assess and record the attainment of the learners being taught (Moon, 2006). However, their teaching responsibility does not mean they should neglect their functions as HODs (Department of Education, 2009). In the context of this study, it became important for members of HODs in schools to consider self-reflection as part of their daily activities, in order to make sure that they fulfil both their teaching responsibility (if required to) and their HOD functions.

### **2.24.2.        *Extra and co-curricular***

HODs should be in charge of a subject, learning area or phase. They should jointly develop the policy for the department of which they are in charge. It is also their responsibility to co-ordinate evaluation/assessment, homework, written assignments, etc. of all the subjects/learning areas in their department. According to Okumbe, (2009), as Heads of Departments, they should provide and co-ordinate guidance on the latest ideas and approaches to the subject, method, techniques, evaluation, aids, etc. in their field, and effectively convey these to the staff members concerned. More importantly, they should also provide guidance on Learning Programmes/Subject Frameworks, Work Schedules, lesson preparations, homework, practical work, remedial work, etc. (Department of Education, 2000).

Where the school has newly appointed educators, it is in their area of responsibility to provide guidance to inexperienced staff members. They should also provide guidance on the educational welfare of learners in the department (Moon, 2006). HOD members should guide and monitor the work of educators and learners in the department; and also to make sure that they submit reports on learner performance to the principal, as required (Department of Education, 2009). Furthermore, it is also their responsibility to control and moderate mark-sheets, tests and examination papers, as well as memoranda.

Moreover, HODs control the administrative responsibilities of staff members; and they also share in the responsibilities of organizing and conducting extra- and co-curricular activities (Lindle, 2009). In order to fulfil this role, the practice of self-reflection becomes very important. This means that the present study should enable HOD members to reflect on the nature of support with which they provide teachers, the kind of guidance on educational welfare, and other teaching and learning-related matters. In other words, self-reflection acts as tool with which HODs can assess the level of support they give to both newly appointed teachers and existing teachers in their departments (Department of Education, 2000).

### **2.24.3. Personnel and General/administration**

According to Moon (2006), HODs advise the principal on the division of work among the staff in the departments they lead. They also monitor and evaluate the performance of educators. Moreover, they participate in agreed school/educator appraisal processes, in order to regularly review their professional practice with the aim of improving teaching, learning and management. They also assist with the planning and management of school stock, textbooks and equipment for the department (Martin & Wedman, 2008). Because they are in charge of their departments, they should also assist with the planning and management of the budget for the department; and also with the planning and management of subject-work schemes.

According to Loliwe (2005) it is also the responsibility of HODs to assist as a secretary in a general staff meeting and/or others. This role is related to the present study; because it emphasises the fact that HODs should review their professional practice and improve their practice (Department of Education, 2009). However, the gap in this role is that it does not bring the element of self-reflection into the process of professional review. Therefore, the present study enables HOD members to practise self-reflection, and discover their own leadership styles – and how this affects their professional growth. In other words, self-reflection goes beyond professional growth; and it addresses issues that affect one's growth as a professional.

Among other duties, HODs are also responsible to: perform or assist in the fire-drill and first aid; to assist in timetabling; to collect or assist in the collection of fees and other monies; to assist in any manner required for the welfare of the staff; and to assist in dealing with accidents (Khotari, 2007).

The HOD can also act on behalf of the principal during his/her absence from school, if the school does not qualify for a deputy principal, or in the event both of them being absent (Maxwell, 2008). Therefore, the present study becomes important for HODs to reflect on the manner with which they manage their departments and judge themselves. Such a leadership approach would be transferred to the entire school, if it were found to work.

#### **2.24.4.        *Communication***

According to Martin and Wedman (2008), when it comes to communication, the HOD has a critical role and responsibility to fulfil in a school. They should co-operate with their colleagues, in order to maintain a good teaching standard and progress among learners, and to foster administrative efficiency in the department and in the school. Furthermore, it is their responsibility to collaborate with educators of other schools in developing the department and conducting extracurricular activities.

As Heads of Departments, they should also meet parents and discuss with them the progress and conduct of their children. As members of the School Management Team, they should also participate in departmental and professional committees, seminars and courses, in order to contribute to and/or update their professional views/standards. It is also their responsibility to co-operate with higher education institutions in relation to learners' records and performance and career opportunities. Lastly, they should maintain contact with sporting, social, cultural and community organizations. In order to fulfil this role, the present study becomes very important (Department of Education, 2008). The present study enables HOD members to reflect on the nature of communication in the schools, and be able to strengthen the smooth channels of communication. There are function that are not specific to one SMT member, but shared.

#### **2.25.    SHARED FUNCTIONS OF SMTS**

In a school, there are functions that are specific to SMT members, as well as those that can be shared by members of SMT. The principal, as the head of SMTs, may decide to allocate such functions to specific SMT members, or request a number of SMT members to share such responsibilities. In the context of this study, the following functions are seen as responsibilities that can be shared by SMT members:

##### **2.25.1.        *Management of scholars' transport***

This section provides guidelines on the management of scholars' transport. These guidelines outline the roles and responsibilities of various stakeholders. It is the

responsibility of the principal to ensure that scholars' transport is provided for needy learners, to enable them to reach their public schools. To fulfil this role, members of SMTs should reflect on the nature of the scholars' transport, and ensure that it is well managed (Department of Education, 1999).

### **2.25.2.        *Needs assessment***

According to the Department of Education (2009), the principal has a responsibility to identify learners coming to the school, who are walking a distance of more than 5km on a daily basis. These identified needs shall be processed by the principal; and they should be submitted to the Circuit Manager for verification. The Circuit Manager should ensure that the list of needs is forwarded to the district for the preparation and submission of specifications to Head Office (John, 2005). The present study assists SMT members to reflect on their learner enrolment and learners' residential addresses, and ensure that learners that are travelling 5km and more be provided with transport. The request of scholar transport should be done in Department of Road and Transport through education district offices. The Department of Basic Education is responsible for payment of such transport.

### **2.25.3.        *Eligibility for scholars' transport***

All needy learners walking a distance of five or more kilometres to the nearest school are eligible for scholars' transport. The beneficiaries of such transport should be the learners from Grade R to Grade 12. All learners who attend schools that are nearer to their place(s) of residence need not be covered by scholar-transport programmes (Hillson, 2013). Parents must complete learner transport forms before the learners can be included in the programme (Department of Education, 2011). Learners and parents should abide by the learner transport Code of Conduct in the use of learner transport scheme. The provision of learner transport is finalised by the Department of Education.

The Department of Education, after consultation with the relevant stakeholders, would ensure that the qualifying learners are selected in accordance with the identified criteria

(Gibbs, 2008). The Department of Education acknowledges the fact that the school and the communities possess information on the learners; and therefore, they are best positioned to identify those learners who qualify for scholar-transport assistance. Principals, after consultation with the School Governing Bodies and the school community, must identify scholar-transport beneficiaries in accordance in with the criteria stipulated in the Scholar-Transport policy (Department of Education, 2012). The present study would assist SMT members to reflect on the nature of the relationships they have with communities; since they rely on these communities for information on those learners who are in need of such transport.

#### **2.25.4. *Scholar-transport planning and management***

According to the Department of Education (2009), the Service Provider is required to transport the learners according to the specifications. Loading and off-loading zones must be in places where the learners are not endangered, or might become obstacles to other road users. The principals or delegates at the benefiting schools must keep and complete the Daily Transport Register forms, as well as the Daily Learner Transport Register (Hillson, 2013). The School Management Teams (SMT) of the benefiting schools are to determine the time-table for the learner transportation in consultation with other school(s), if more than one school participates in a route. The Department of Education shall facilitate and acknowledge the contract between itself and the Service Provider. Gabriel (2008) argued in his study that School Management Teams (SMT) of the benefiting school(s) must ensure that the daily documents are completed accordingly, and ensure that the contracted vehicles travel the distance as contracted; and should any changes arise, they are to inform the relevant authorities accordingly.

Furthermore, the School Management Teams (SMT) are to report to the relevant authorities any changes in learner numbers and pick-up sites (Department of Education, 2012). Therefore, it is important for SMT members to reflect on their practice regularly, and to ensure that all the documents related to scholars' transport are correctly completed and submitted to the district office.

### **2.25.5.        *Management of national school nutrition programme***

According to the Department of Education (2000), the National School Nutrition Programme aims to provide nutritious meals to all public primary and secondary school learners in impoverished areas on every school day. The programme is managed by the Department of Education; and it is funded through Conditional Grants. The provision of meals to public schools is the mandate of the Department of Education; and it should be strictly adhered to; as it enhances learning, and promotes access to education (Moon, 2006). The use of self-reflection here would enable members of SMTs to ensure the smooth running of the school nutrition programme.

### **2.25.6.        *Target group and SMTS' role during NSNP***

Learners in all quintiles 1 to 3 of primary schools; learners in all quintiles 1 to 3 of secondary (as from 2009 to 2011) comprise the target group. The responsibility of the principal in relation to NSNP is to be an accounting officer and the overall manager of the programme at school level (Department of Education, 2011). Furthermore, the principal identifies, nominates, or delegates the educator/s responsible for the daily management of the programme, which includes operational responsibility, day-to-day supervision activities, receiving and recording of stock (Gibbs, 2008). They should conduct a Snap Survey linked to the statistical data of the school. This should ensure that learners are fed on time, in accordance with the conditional grant framework.

It is the responsibility of SMTs to make sure that an NSNP file is opened, and that all related records are kept. SMT members should ensure and monitor the fact that food is stored, prepared and provided in a clean environment. Furthermore, Hart (2008) argued that members of SMTs should ensure that the quality and quantity of food delivered is in agreement with the menu specifications and the Service Level Agreement; and that claims and supporting documents are checked, signed, stamped and forwarded to the Circuit Office within seven (7) days of their submission. With regard to food preparation, SMT members should ensure that the food is prepared correctly and served to learners on time; and that educators supervise the learners during feeding time.

A daily feeding register should be completed by the educators; and it is the responsibility of SMT members to ensure that the stock register is completed on a daily basis (Department of Education, 1999). Consequently, the present study becomes important in assisting SMT members to use self-reflection as a monitoring tool that facilitates the smooth operation and management of the NSNP.

## **2.26. SUMMARY**

This chapter has reviewed what researchers and scholars have to say about the practice of self-reflection and school management. The literature from both national and international scholars has been reviewed. School managers' share similar functions in different countries; and because of the similarities in their management functions, they also share similar challenges. The next chapter is based on the research methodology, in which the research paradigm, the research approach, and the research design are discussed. Furthermore, the chapter addresses issues of population and sampling, data-collection instruments and ethical issues.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1. INTRODUCTION**

In the previous chapter, the theoretical framework and the literature review were discussed. Different sources were reviewed, with the aim of building a broader understanding of the nature and the meaning of the problem. These were done by discussing and distinguishing what has been done from what still needs to be done; discovering important variables relevant to the topic; synthesising and gaining a new perspective; identifying relationships between ideas and practice; and lastly, by establishing the context of the topic or the problem. This chapter is on the research methodology.

In this chapter, the research approach, the research paradigm, and the research design are discussed. Furthermore, in this chapter the population and the sampling method are clarified. The chapter also discusses the data-collection instruments; how the data were analysed; and how to deal with the issues of data trustworthiness. Lastly, the chapter discusses how the researcher dealt with the issues relating to ethical consideration.

#### **3.2. RESEARCH PARADIGM**

The study has followed an interpretivist paradigm; since it comprises people (SMTs) and their subjective experiences as members of School Management Teams. Interpretive research is fundamentally concerned with meaning; and it seeks to understand social members' definition of a specific situation (Schwartz, 2009). The study has explored the actual practice of SMTs' self-reflection. Furthermore, the study has examined SMTs' daily functions – in an attempt to understand the problem from the people assigned to the schools.

Interpretive research does not predefine dependent and independent variables; but it focuses on the full complexity of human sense-making, as the situation emerges (Kaplan & Maxwell, 2007). Walsham (2010) argues that in the interpretive tradition there are no correct or incorrect theories. Instead, they should be judged, according to how interesting

they are to the researcher, as well as those involved in the same area. They attempt to derive their constructs from the field by an in-depth examination of the phenomena of interest. Gephart (2011) argues that interpretivists assume that knowledge and meaning are acts of interpretation; hence, there is no objective knowledge, which is independent of thinking, reasoning humans.

In the context of this study, the participants consisted of SMT members. Consequently, the information gathered through the interviews should be treated equally, and categorised according to its relevancy and similarities. According to De Vos (2013), interpretivism is based on the assumption that the subject matter of the social sciences is fundamentally different from that of the natural sciences. In this paradigm, the researchers also assume that reality consists of people's subjective experience of the external world. In the context of this study, this refers to the management of schools.

According to Willis (2008), interpretivists are anti-foundationalist; since they believe that there is no single correct route or particular method of acquiring knowledge. Walsham (2010) argues that in the interpretive tradition, there are no correct or incorrect theories. Instead, theories are judged according to how interesting they are to the researcher and to those involved in the same area. In the context of this study, theories on self-reflection and school management were reviewed, without being assessed, but rather according to how they benefit the study by drawing out the similarities and differences among the theories. The use of different theories assisted the researcher to come up with a framework that is relevant to the context of the study.

### **3.2.1. Characteristics of interpretivism**

Interpretivism is "associated with the philosophical position of idealism, and is used to group together diverse approaches, including social constructionism, phenomenology and hermeneutics; approaches that reject the objectivist view that meaning resides within the world independently of consciousness" (Collins, 2010: 38). Moreover, interpretivist studies usually focus on meaning; and they may employ multiple methods, in order to reflect different aspects of the issue. Interpretivism requires researchers to interpret the elements of the study. Thus, interpretivism integrates human interest into a study.

Accordingly, “interpretive researchers assume that access to reality (given or socially constructed) is only through social constructions, such as language, consciousness, shared meanings, and instruments” (Myers, 2008: 38). In the context of this study, the SMT members were asked questions based on their actual practice of self-reflection and school management. In the context of this study, their reality was constructed as follows:

#### **3.2.1.1. *Ontology***

In interpretive the paradigm, there are multiple realities. In the context of this study, the practice of self-reflection by school management teams differs from school to school. The reality in this regard was that schools would never have similar approach on the practice of self-reflection. In this paradigm, the reality can be explored and constructed through human interactions. In this study, reality was explored by interviewing members of SMTs about the issues related to self-reflection and school management. Researchers following the interpretive paradigm, discover how people make sense of their social worlds in a natural setting by means of daily routines, conversations and writing, while interacting with others (Cantrell, 2008).

The use of questaviews was used in this study to enable SMT members to respond to the questions asked in an open-ended way by both written and verbal means. Lastly, in interpretivism, many social realities exist due to the variety of human experience, including people’s knowledge, views, interpretations and experience. In this study, SMT members were asked questions about their daily experiences; and they were also given a chance to explain their knowledge of the practice of self-reflection, and how this affects their daily functions.

#### **3.2.1.2. *Epistemology***

In the interpretive paradigm, events are understood through the mental processes of interpretation. These are influenced by interaction with the social context. In this study, the interaction was between SMTs (among themselves), teachers, SGBs, learners, parents and other important stakeholders that contributed to education in the district. This kind of communication exposes the nature and the quality of SMTs, and the impact of their reflective practice on their daily functions as school managers. In this paradigm,

those who are active in the research process construct knowledge socially by experiencing real life in a natural setting (Cantrell, 2008). In the context of this study, real situations in school management were investigated; and these resulted in the construction of new knowledge in the field of school management. Lastly, in the interpretive paradigm, there is a more personal, interactive mode of data analysis. The personal experiences of the school management team were accessed and interpreted via interviews.

The participants were given enough time to explain in detail their personal experiences of self-reflection, and how it has affected their daily functions.

### **3.3. RESEARCH APPROACH**

The research approach used in this study was the qualitative approach. The study was based on the day-to-day practice of self-reflection by school management teams. Therefore, the use of the qualitative approach enabled the researcher to gather sufficient information about the day-to-day functions of SMT members, in order to explain their reflective practice. The purpose of qualitative research is to develop an understanding of individuals and events in their natural state, taking into account the relevant context (Neuman, 2011). In the context of this study, the members of SMTs were interviewed, in order to access their insights on the practice of self-reflection.

Qualitative research is predicated on the assumption that each individual, each culture and each setting is unique. In qualitative research, the interpretation of data is done by means of unpacking each of the theme identified to determine an amount of quality to the understanding of findings (Flick, 2006). Therefore, this study is categorised as qualitative research. It can be characterised as qualitative because:

The study was conducted in a natural setting, in which the School Management Teams were interviewed; and questerviews were used to gather and answer the questions based on self-reflection and school management. The information gathered in this context assisted the researcher to discuss the problem, and come up with recommendations. An important concern of qualitative researchers is the meaning of human behaviour and experience. In this study, the researcher was interested in the practice of self-reflection

and the fulfilment of the functions of School Management Teams (SMTs). Furthermore, the data collected were forthcoming from interviews; and they did not follow any numerical or statistical procedures. Thus, the focus of this proposed study was on understanding and meaning via verbal narratives, rather than through numbers. Furthermore, the questerviews did not involve statistical responses, but only narrative responses that enabled the respondents to express their views on the problem under consideration.

The data were gathered and analysed by qualitative methods; small groups are normally investigated in qualitative research (Kumar, 2011). In this particular study, the participants consisted of Heads of Departments, a Deputy Principal and a Principal; and this was considered to be a small group. The researcher used the qualitative methodology because he required in-depth information, in order to explain managers' practices on self-reflection and the fulfilment of their functions. The data gathered were analysed thematically using the qualitative approach.

### **3.4. RESEARCH DESIGN**

The qualitative research design differs inherently from the quantitative one; because it does not usually provide the researcher with a step-by-step plan or a fixed recipe to follow. Qualitative researchers during the research process create the research strategy or design that is best suited to their research (De Vos, 2013). Mouton (2009) provides a popular clarification of qualitative methods of inquiry, which identifies 28 different approaches. Miller and Crabtree (2007) identify 18 types, using a different system of classification; while many other authors merely assess a single tradition (Yin, 2007; Goodley & Moore, 2006; Bryant & Charmaz, 2007).

Creswell (2007) identifies five traditions of qualitative inquiry, selecting those which, according to him, represent different disciplines, have detailed procedures, and most importantly, have proved to be popular and frequently used. These include: narrative research, phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography, and the case study.

The research design used in this study was case study, which, according to Caiderhead (2006), allows for an in-depth examination of events, phenomena, or other observations in a real-time context for purposes of investigations, theory development and testing, or

simply as a tool for learning. Case study often employs documents, artefacts, interviews and observations during the course of research. In the context of this study, both questerviews and interviews were used. Caiderhead (2006) describes case study “types”. These types are factual, interpretive and evaluative. Each case study must outline the purpose; then depending on the type of case study and the actions proposed by the researcher, the researcher could determine the possible outcome of the study.

In contrast to other methodological frameworks, the case-study design is more of a choice of what to study than a methodological one. Since qualitative researchers are primarily interested in the meaning subjects give to their experiences, they have to use some case study to immerse themselves in the activities of a single person, or a small group of people, in order to obtain an intimate familiarity with their social worlds, and to look for patterns in the research participants’ lives, words and actions in the context of the case as a whole (De vos, 2013).

In the context of this study, members of SMTs were interviewed about the practice of self-reflection in the management of their schools, in order to fulfil their daily functions. SMT members in the South African context consist of the principal, the deputy principal and the HODs; and these are considered to be a small group. However, members of the SMT asked questions that involve the actual practice (case study) of self-reflection, and how it affects their day-to-day functions as school managers.

According to Creswell (2007), a case study involves an exploration of a bounded system, or a single or multiple cases, over a period of time through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information. The researcher in this study ensured this by using multiple data-collection tools, comprising the questerview, focused group interviews and one-on-one interview. Babbie (2006) points out that the case-study researcher, in contrast to grounded theorists, seeks to enter the field with some knowledge of the relevant literature – before conducting the field research. The following was the type of case study used in this study, as identified by Babbie (2006):

### **3.4.1. Explanatory case study**

The type of case study used in this study was Explanatory case study. The purpose of this kind of case study is both theory-building and testing. Case studies can be particularly useful for producing theory and new knowledge, which may inform policy development. In the current study, the self-reflective practices of SMTs were closely investigated; and a new theory was developed that is suited to the context of SMT members. A new theory on the reflective pillars of the management model was developed. Since casing involves a detailed investigation of a complex entity or process, it can generate theoretical insights closely grounded in real experience – in contrast to what Kumar (2011) refers to as more speculative theorising. Here, the case study serves the purpose of facilitating the researcher's acquisition of knowledge on the specific social issues. The case study can also be used for theory-testing, or more specifically, the critical testing of a theory's proposition (Yin, 2007). The focus is on furthering the understanding the researchers have of a general phenomenon or condition (Mark, 2006). For example, where the theory, or competing theories, must predict the characteristics and/or the behaviour of a specific person. In this regard, therefore, the study of a single case may be used to support a theory, or to extend (Thomas, 2009).

## **3.5. POPULATION AND SAMPLING**

### **3.5.1. Population**

Neuman (2011) refer to the population as an aggregate or totality of all the objects, subjects or members that conform to a set of specifications. A research population is also known as a well-defined collection of individuals or objects known to have similar characteristics. All individuals or objects within a certain population usually have a common, binding characteristic or trait.

For the purposes of this study, the population used comprised of SMTs of five case study schools. These School Management Teams comprised of the Head of Department, a Deputy Principal and Principals. The study chose this population because the said individuals make up the school leadership. The population was chosen from two High

Schools, two Primary Schools and one Special School. The schools chosen were observed to have done poorly in the national examinations for the past two years. That being the case, the study felt that such schools would be proper representative of a reflective practice. By reflecting on the major causes of their poor performances, they would be actually fulfilling their management functions. It should be pointed out that only one Special School was chosen because there are one or two such schools in the district. The total SMT population from these five schools was one hundred and fifty-two (152).

### **3.5.2. Sampling**

The process of selecting a portion of the population to represent the entire population is known as sampling (Miller & Crabtree, 2007). Purposive sampling was used to select SMT members that were more experienced in their management positions. A sample is, therefore, a group of subjects chosen from the population by using a particular sampling method. Welman, Kruger and Mitchel (2005) refer to sampling as the rigorous procedures involved when selecting individuals from a large population. Researchers such as Rayee (2004) cited by De Vos *et al* (2007) argue that the reason behind sampling theory translate that a small set of observations can give a picture of what to expect in the entire population of the intended study.

In sampling, a small group is selected to represent the entire population and the results are generalised. In other words sampling is a process of selecting a certain number of participants from the entire population. Reflecting on this argument, one may conclude that the main purpose of sampling is to select a number of participants with the view of creating a workable and manageable number. In the context of this study, SMT members with more management experience were sampled out of the entire SMT population. Therefore, it could be argued that the numbers of experienced SMT members in this study were observed to be manageable. The advantage of having a manageable sample is that it enables the research to reach the saturation point leading to a deep understanding of the problem.

Reflecting on the reasons presented above for choosing a sample, De Vos (1998), argued that researchers in most situations are unable to study the whole population because of time constraints and financial difficulties. In the context of this study, purposive sampling was used because only two years were dedicated for this study. Therefore, the researcher had to make a sample of a manageable number in order to complete the study within the stipulated time.

Looking at the reasons for sampling, this process becomes a selection of research participants from the whole population, and it enables the researcher to make decisions about what population to study. Based on this understanding, a sample can be regarded as a small portion that is targeted from the entire population. Baker (2003) in his study understands a sample as a small portion of the entire population from which representatives of the entire group are made. In this regard, the researcher sampled SMT members with more management experience to represent the entire SMT population.

**Table 2: Breakdown of participants:**

<b>Participant Type</b>	<b>Sample Type</b>	<b>Number of Participants</b>
Principals	Purposive sampling	Nine (09)
Deputy Principals	Purposive sampling	Nine (09)
Head of Departments	Purposive sampling	Eight (08)
<b>Total number of participants</b>		<b>Twenty six (26)</b>

### **3.6. DATA-COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS**

To carry out any type of research, the data must be gathered. Many different methods and procedures have been developed to assist in data gathering. These procedures employ distinctive ways of collecting the data. Each is particularly appropriate for certain sources of data (Kothari, 2007). The study used mainly four data collection techniques, namely; i) semi-structured face to face interviews ii) focus group interviews iii) questionnaire and, iv) the survey of secondary source documents.

The study used semi-structured interviews because The questaviews assisted the researcher to adjust the interview schedule for both..... that were used in the focus-group interviews.

**Table 3: Breakdown of the data-collection instruments**

<b>Data collection instrument</b>	<b>Sample Type</b>	<b>Number of Participants</b>
Questaviews	Random sampling	Ten (10)
Individual interviews	Random sampling	Fourteen (14)
Focus-group interviews	Purposive sampling	Two (02)
<b>Total number of participants</b>		<b>Twenty-six (26)</b>

Qualitative data were collected from SMT members by using three methods of data collection, namely: questerviews, individual interviews, and focus-group interviews. Below are keys used for both forms of interviews done during the data collection process. They are given in the order they appear above.

- QV1                      Questerview 1
- QV2                      Questerview 2
- QV3                      Questerview 3
- QV4                      Questerview 4
- QV5                      Questerview 5
- QV6                      Questerview 6
- QV7                      Questerview 7
- QV8                      Questerview 8
- QV9                      Questerview 9
- QV10                    Questerview 10

II1	Individual Interview 1
II2	Individual Interview 2
II3	Individual Interview 3
II4	Individual Interview 4
II5	Individual Interview 5
II6	Individual Interview 6
II7	Individual Interview 7
II8	Individual Interview 8
II9	Individual Interview 9
II10	Individual Interview 10
II11	Individual Interview 11
II12	Individual Interview 12
II13	Individual Interview 13
II14	Individual Interview 14
FG1	Focus Group 1
FG2	Focus Group 2

### **3.7. JUSTIFICATION FOR THE SELECTED DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS**

#### **3.7.1. Questerviews**

Questerview questions required lengthier responses with more depth. According to Flick (2006), questerview questions are also helpful in finding out more about a person or a situation, how management runs a particular school, and even to select relevant candidates to participate during the interviews. In the context of this study, the researcher

used the data from the questerviews to adjust the interview questions, in order to obtain the relevant data that were needed for this study.

There were no right or wrong answers here. The answers to questerviews provided the researcher with insights into what the respondents thought and felt about the practice of self-reflection, and management functions enhanced thereby. Open-ended interview questions are typically used when the same questions are asked of all the interviewees. The participants can answer the questions in whatever way they choose to respond. There are no yes or no, or right or wrong answers. In-depth responses are expected, along with a description or explanation. In most cases, these questions begin with "who," "what," "why," "where," and "when."

In the context of this study, SMTs were asked questions to find how they practised their self-reflection, and how they understood their management functions.

#### ***3.7.1.1. Advantages of using questerviews***

In questerview respondents are tape-recorded as they complete a questionnaire and are asked questions relating to their understanding of the terms in the questionnaire. The data collected from questerviews would be so informative and rich compared to questionnaires alone. Questerviews develop trust, and are perceived as less threatening to the respondents (Kumar, 2011). In the context of this study, the researcher used questerviews to build trust and good relationships with the participants. During the implementation of questerviews, the researcher tried to be as open and as friendly as possible. Questerviews provided rich qualitative data; since they gave the researcher an opportunity to gain insight into all the opinions on the topic. The researcher conducted a questerview, and gave the participants a day or two to respond to the questions in the questerview. The participants got an opportunity to answer the questions to best of their ability.

In the context of this study, the questerviews allowed the respondents to answer in their own words. The researcher gave the participants an opportunity to answer the questions using their own words. Furthermore, the participants even responded to the questions in the language of their choice; and this enabled them to express themselves to the best of

their ability, since they used their first language. During questerviews, the answers were not forced. In some instances, the participants felt uncomfortable in answering certain questions. Therefore, the researcher explained to the participants that the answers were not forced, and that they had a right to leave certain questions unanswered.

Questaviews were helpful for exploring things for which researcher had not yet developed a hypothesis or theory. The questerviews had a section, where the participants were given an oportunity to comment on any aspect that was not catered for in the questerview. This information was used to recommend further studies on related topics. This shows that the study is all about the participants giving their own opinions on the problem – and not the researcher’s opinion on the problem. Furthermore, it provided more "richness" or "depth" in the data (e.g., “May I help you explore ‘why’ in more detail?”). The information from questaviews allowed the researcher to explore the problem, and to understand why SMTs experienced some self-reflection challenges and the manner it affected their management practices. The richness of the data assisted the researcher to discuss the problem in a more detailed or qualitative approach. This data collection helped the researcher to identify possible response options for further quantitative research. Certain responses in this questerviews assisted the researcher to recommend further study in a related problem area.

### **3.7.2. Interviews**

According to Rowley (2012: 261), interviews are “generally used when conducting qualitative research, with the aim of collect facts, or gaining insights into, or to acquire a better understanding of opinions, attitudes, experiences, processes, behaviours, or predictions”. In the context of this study, interviews were used to get first-hand information on the SMTs’ opinions, attitudes, and experiences about the practices of self-reflection and the fulfilment of management practices.

#### **3.7.2.1. Objectives of interview**

During the interviews, the data were collected – both extensively and intensively. Interview sessions also provided the opportunity for exchanging the data, and also the experiences (Rowley, 2012). In the context of this study, extensive information on the

practice of self-reflection and the fulfilment of management functions was solicited. Furthermore, the interview sessions created an opportunity for the exchange of ideas and experiences. The SMT members in Capricorn District shared their experiences and their practices of self-reflection and management function.

The following are the objectives, advantages and disadvantages, piloting, field notes, and techniques and tips obtained from the interviews:

### **3.7.2.2. *Advantages of the interview method***

Interviews are a very good technique for getting the information on the complex, emotionally laden subjects (Mouton, 2009). Interviews can be easily adapted to the ability of the person being interviewed. They also yield a good percentage of returns and a perfect sample of the general population. The data collected by this method are likely to be more correct than those collected by other methods. In the context of this study, the researcher has managed to create a comfortable environment that enabled the members of SMTs being interviewed to be comfortable and honest when they replied to the questions. Furthermore, the researcher sampled a manageable number of SMT members, and gave them enough time to express themselves without any time constraints.

### **3.7.2.3. *Disadvantages of the interview method***

Besides the advantages of the interviews that were presented above, interviews also have some disadvantages. One disadvantage that was picked up in this study was that these sessions were a time-consuming process. At times, the participants took more time discussing various issues that were beyond the scope of this study; and this was regarded as time-consuming. During the interviews sessions, the researcher probed to get more relevant information; and this was also time-consuming. Another disadvantage of interviews is that they involve high costs (Rowley, 2012). In the context of this study, the researcher travelled about 40 km to interview one SMT member; and this was very expensive. Interviews also require highly skilled interviewers; and they require more energy. In the context of this study, the researcher was more experienced; since he had

conducted several interview sessions for his Honours, Master's, in addition to other research interviews for publication.

According to Neuman (2011), interviews are a widely used as a tool to access people's experiences and their inner perceptions, attitudes, and feelings of reality. Based on the degree of structuring, interviews can be divided into different categories: structured interviews, and semi-structured interviews that have a set of predefined questions. These questions would be asked in the same order for all the respondents. In contrast to structured interviews, the unstructured interview technique was developed in the disciplines of anthropology and sociology, as a method to elicit people's social realities.

The definitions of an unstructured interview differ. Welman (2012) defined them as interviews in which neither the question nor the answer categories are predetermined. Instead, they rely on social interaction between the researcher and the participants. In the context of this study, unstructured interviews enabled the participants to share their views in considerable detail on the topic being studied. Mouton (2009) described unstructured interviews as a way to understand the complex behaviour of people – without imposing any *a priori* categorization, which might limit the field of inquiry. Patton (2008) described unstructured interviews as a natural extension of participant observation; because they so often occur as part of ongoing participation in fieldwork. While the definitions are not the same, there was more agreement on the basic characteristics of unstructured interviews.

In unstructured interviews, the researcher comes with no predefined theoretical framework, and thus no hypotheses and questions about the social realities under investigation. In this study, the researcher had conversations during the interviewees' narration. The intention of unstructured interviews is to expose the researcher to unanticipated themes, and to help him or her to develop a better understanding of the interviewees' social realities from the interviewees' perspectives.

Unstructured interviews cannot be started without detailed knowledge and preparation, if one wishes to achieve deep insights into people's lives (Patton, 2008). According to Fife (2005), the researcher in unstructured interviews keeps in mind the study's purpose and

the general scope of the issues, which s/he would like to discuss in the interviews. In the context of this study, the researcher's controlled the conversation; but the researcher encouraged the participants to relate their experiences from their own perspectives that were relevant to the problems of interest to the researcher. The researcher made use of unstructured interviews; since these often hold points of views that assist one to make sense of the participants' world. In an ideal unstructured interview, the interviewer follows the interviewees' narration and generates questions spontaneously, on the basis of his or her reflections in that particular narrative. It is accepted, however, that the structure of the interview can be loosely guided by a list of questions, called an *aide memoire* or agenda (Flick, 2009).

#### **3.7.2.4. *Piloting of interview questions***

De Vos, Strydom, Fouche and Delport (2011), as quoted in Seidman (2012), urge researchers to build a pilot venture into their proposal, in which they try out their interviewing design with small number of participants. In the context of this study, the questions were piloted in the nearby schools from a different district than that in which the study was conducted. Thereafter, the questions were adjusted to collect the data that contributed to answering the research questions.

Seidman further contends that during the piloting of the interview questions, the researchers must come to grips with some of the practical aspects of establishing access, making contact and conducting the interview, as well as becoming alert to their own personal level of interviewing skills. Therefore, the researcher should have a general plan of inquiry and be familiar with the questions being asked; but s/he need not have a set of questions that must be asked with particular words, and in a particular order (Babbie 2006).

#### **3.7.2.5. *Techniques and tips to ensure an effective interview***

The participant must do 90 per cent of the talking. An interview is not a dialogue. The whole point of the interview is for the participant to tell his/her story. In this study, the researcher gave the participants enough opportunity to answer the questions without being interrupted. Probes were only used to get more information and clarity on certain

issues. Another tip of an effective interview is that the questions should be clear and brief. It is important to use words that make sense to the participants. The questions should be easy to understand. In this study all the questions asked were clear to the participants. Pilot-testing assisted the researcher to identify those questions that were not clear prior to the interview sessions. The researcher asked one question at a time (Jarbandhan & Schutter, 2006).

Another technique of interviews was that the researcher should only ask truly open-ended questions. These do not predetermine the answers; and they allow room for the participant to respond in his/her own terms. It is important to ask more questions that require more of an answer than 'yes' and 'no'. In the context of this study, all the questions that were asked required a deep understanding from the SMT members rather than 'yes or no' answers. Furthermore, the researcher should avoid sensitive questions. The participant might feel uneasy and adopt avoidance tactics if the questioning was too deep, and without the necessary rapport. This study was based on the actual practice of self-reflection by school-management team. Therefore, such a topic could be considered as sensitive. The researcher created an environment in which the members of the SMT did not feel uncomfortable or sensitive in a way.

To make the participants comfortable, the researcher started with questions that were not controversial. For instance, the first question that was asked during interview sessions was: *What is your understanding of self-reflection?* Such questions caused the SMTs to settle down. Furthermore, the researcher asked questions to do with experiences, before opinions, or feeling questions. This created an in-depth interview climate in which the SMT members were happy to share their experiences on the topic being studied.

Another technique of interviews is that the researcher should sequence the questions, "funnel" questions from general to specific, from broad to narrow. In this study, the researcher started with general questions on the practice of self-reflection; and later, he asked specific question on how self-reflection had assisted them to improve and fulfil their management functions. Sometimes a very general question can be useful in opening the

dialogue. In this study, when SMT members were asked their understanding of self-reflection, they looked free; and it served as a good ice break. During interview session, the researcher asked questions that were clear; and pauses were also allowed during the sessions. The participants were given an opportunity to think of anything they wanted to add, before the researcher moved to the next question; and they were not rushed or pressurised when responding. The researcher also used creative allusions; for example, a statement, such as: “Some people have told me.....” Or a question, such as: “What do you think?”

Another tip for interviews is that the researcher should conclude interviews with general questions, such as: “Is there anything further that you feel is important?” In the context of this study, SMT members were asked whether they had anyway they wanted to comment on; and such information was used during the recommencement of further questions. Furthermore, when the researcher was broaching an interesting area, minimal probes were all that was required to help the interviewee to respond. In this study, the researcher followed up on what the participants were saying; and probes were used to encourage the participants to say more.

Another technique of interviews is that the researcher should monitor the effect of the interview on the participant, and be sensitive enough to know when to focus, and when to defocus. In this study, some of the issues were emotional; and as result, some participants became slightly disturbed. However, the researcher was able to defocus from such an issue; and this gave them time to take a deep breath – before continuing with the interview session. In some instances, a few of the participants strayed into subjects that were not pertinent – for emotional reasons. However, the researcher was wise enough to pull them back as quickly as possible. The researcher kept the participants focused on the questions asked. During the interviews, the researcher should end the interview at a reasonable time; and be alert that even when the tape-recorder was off, the interviews were not necessarily over. In this study, the researcher ended most of the interview sessions at a reasonable time; since SMT members are always busy in schools.

### **3.7.2.6. *Field notes during interviews***

During the interviews, it was important to take note of the interview sessions. During the interview sessions, a tape-recorder was used to gather the information or the responses from the participants. Despite the use of a tape-recorder, notes were also applied to capture some of the information, such as body language and facial expressions. According to De Vos et al. (as quoted in Babbie, 2006), the researchers should not trust their memories, but take notes of all the interview sessions. It is important to sit down immediately after the interviews, and to jot down all the impressions. These notes assisted the researcher to remember and explore the progress of the interview. Field and Morse (2006) refer to some critical points to follow when writing field-notes, in order to minimise the loss of any data.

These include getting right to the task; not talking about the observation before it was recorded; finding a quiet place to write; setting aside adequate time to complete the notes; sequencing events in the same order as that in which they had occurred; and letting the events and conversation flow from the mind onto the paper. It may be useful to speak observations into the recorder. In this study, field-notes were written as an account of the things the researcher had heard, seen, experienced, and thought about in the course of the interview.

### **3.7.3. Focus group interviews**

A focus group is a group interview that involves a group of participants participating in one session. These kinds of interviews can be used as a means to better understand how people feel or think on a particular issue. The participants were selected; because they had certain characteristics in common that relate to the topic of the focus-group (De Vos, Strydom, Fouche & Delpont, 2011). The group was “focused”; since it involved some kind of collective activity. The researcher created a tolerant environment in the focus-group that encouraged the participants to share their perceptions, their point-of-view, their experiences, wishes and concerns – without pressuring the participants to vote or reach a consensus (Harbour & Kitzinger, 2010). During the focus-group interviews, what the participants said during the discussions constitutes the essential data in the focus-group.

### **3.7.3.1. Reasons for using focus groups**

According to De Vos et al. (2013), the use of focus groups is not appropriate for testing or drawing inferences about larger populations. It is a method that can, however, be used for validating constructs prior to the implementation of more quantitative measures. It may be used for the development of instruments, illustrations, sensitisation, or conceptualisation. Focus groups allowed the researcher to investigate a multitude of perceptions in a defined area of interest (Nyamathi & Shuler, 2009).

In this study, the purpose of the focus groups was to promote self-disclosure among the participants. It was to know what people really think and feel (Krueger & Casey, 2010). Focus-groups are useful when multiple viewpoints or responses are needed on a specific topic. These can be obtained in a shorter period of time than in individual interviews. Focus groups are capable of generating complex information at a low cost in a minimum amount of time (Kroll, Barbour & Harris, 2007). They are fundamentally a way of listening to people and learning from them, and of creating lines of communication. In this study, there was continual communication between the facilitator and the participants, as well as among the participants themselves.

According to De Vos et al. (2013), focus-groups rely on the principle of group process. Just as important, however, is the larger process of communication that connects the world of the researcher and that of the participants. In this study, it was thus important to understand that the actual groups were at the midpoint of a larger, three-part process of communication: The researcher decided that he needed to hear from the participants; the focus group created a conversation among the participants on the topics being studied; and the researcher summarised what he had thus learned from the participants.

Furthermore, the focus group created a process of sharing and comparing among the participants. The researcher created them for a well-defined purpose; and they produced a large amount of concentrated data in a short period of time, although not the richly textured view of life that comes from participant observation. What distinguished the focus group from any other form of interview was the use of group discussions to generate the data. This kind of interview should be seen as a way of bridging the gap between people.

They are powerful means of exposing reality, and of investigating complex behaviour and motivation.

In this study, the interaction among the participants often consisted of their efforts to understand each other, as well as some understanding of the topic under study. Focus groups are especially useful in attempting to understand diversity; since they can help one understand the variety of others' experiences. This data-collection method is also a friendly and respectful one. Focus groups convey a willingness to listen without being defensive, which can be uniquely beneficial in emotionally charged environments (Morgan & Kruger, 2008).

Sensitive research has traditionally relied on the use of individual interviews. However, the focus group has shown that people may be more, rather than less, likely to self-disclose, or to share personal experiences in groups, rather than in a dyadic setting. In this study, most of the rich information was provided during the focus-group interviews; since the participants were free and relaxed enough to interact with their peers on the topic being studied. This was because people feel relatively empowered and supported in a group situation; where they are surrounded by others. They may also be more likely to share their experiences and feelings in the presence of people whom they perceive to be like themselves in some way (Kumar, 2011).

### ***3.7.3.2. Considerations when conducting focus group interviews***

The researcher had to consider that he was looking for a range of ideas or feelings that people have about something (Kumar, 2011). In this study, the researcher was looking for ideas and feelings of SMTs on the practice of self-reflection, and the fulfilment of management functions. The other measure was that the researcher was trying to understand the differences between groups or categories of people. The researcher tried to understand how different groups viewed the practice of self-reflection; and how their perspective on self-reflection affected the fulfilment of their management functions. In this study, the purpose of using a focus group was to uncover those factors that influenced opinions, behaviour or motivation. Thereafter, ideas emerged from the groups; and these

were later converted into themes and sub-themes that are to be discussed in Chapters 4 and 5.

#### **3.7.4. Approaches of focus groups**

De Vos et al. (2013) identified three approaches to focus groups:

##### **3.7.4.1. *Exploratory approach***

Exploratory approach is often used to pilot-test the operational aspects of anticipated qualitative research, or to generate theoretical hypotheses for future research. When using this approach, the focus group is less structured. In this study, any further information that was forthcoming was used to recommend further studies.

##### **3.7.4.2. *Clinical approach***

Clinical approach builds on the assumption that the real causes of behaviour must be understood through the sensitivity and clinical judgement of a trained professional. The traditional in-depth focus-group thus serves as a device for obtaining specific information about the inner experiences of participants, who are then subjected to clinical, scientific treatments. In this study, in-depth information on the practice of self-reflection by SMT members was gathered, interpreted, and then discussed.

##### **3.7.4.3. *Phenomenological approach***

Phenomenological is used to understand the everyday experience of the participant. In the context of this study, the day-by-day practices of SMTs' self-reflection were investigated.

##### **3.7.4.4. *Planning the focus groups***

Careful planning with respect to the participants, the environment, and the questions asked is crucial when conducting effective focus-groups. Krueger (in Nyamathi & Shuler, 2009) emphasises that writing down a plan is absolutely critical for ensuring that logic has been followed, and that any shortcomings have been identified. Sharing the plan with colleagues allows for valuable feedback; and ensured the success of the strategy. Using

a multifaceted approach and well-thought-out questions, which are primarily open-ended, allowed the participants the freedom from a variety of perspectives. Providing a well-focused environment for the participants was necessary, in order to ensure a successful outcome. Each of the four basic steps of focus-groups: planning, recruiting and conducting the group, as well as analysing and reporting –needs its own planning process (Morgan & Krueger, 2008).

In the context of this study, the researcher arranged for an environment that was quiet and open enough to accommodate all the participants. Furthermore, the participants were prepared and briefed before the sessions; and for that matter, all the sessions were smoothly managed.

#### **3.7.4.5. *Basic decisions in the planning phase of focus groups***

It is important to define the purpose and outcomes of the project. In this study, the researcher explained the purpose of the study, and also the outcomes of the project. Furthermore, the researcher obtained permission from the HOD of the Capricorn District at the Department of Basic Education. Permission was also requested from the circuit managers, the principals, and all the participants – by giving them consent forms that were signed and agreed on. The other basic aspect of planning this data-collection tool was to develop the timeline for the project; and also to determine who the participants were to be. In this study, the participants were members of the SMT in Dimamo Circuit of the Capricorn District. The interview guide was prepared prior to the data collection; and the members of the SMT were recruited to participate in the study.

#### **3.7.5. The unstructured individual interviews**

The unstructured individual interviews, also sometimes referred as the in-depth interviews, merely extend and formalise the conversation. The researcher chose to use this kind of data-collection tool; because he wanted to find the in-depth information about how SMTs practise their self-reflection, in order to enhance their performance. This was referred to as a “conversation with a purpose”. The purpose was not to get answers to questions, nor to test hypotheses, neither was it to “evaluate” in the usual sense of the term. At the root of the unstructured interviewing was an interest in understanding the

experiences of other people and the meaning they had made of those experiences. This kind of data-collection tool was focused and discursive; and it allowed the researcher and the participants to explore various issues (Collins, 2010).

According to Collins (2010), unstructured individual interviews are used to determine individuals' perceptions, opinions, facts and forecasts, and their reactions to initial findings and potential solutions. Josselson (in Collins, 2010) mentions that the events recounted and the experiences described are made more substantial, more real, through being recorded and written down. The unstructured interview is often dismissed as lacking "objective data". It is, nevertheless, a type of interview, which the researcher used to elicit information, in order to achieve some understanding of the participants' point-of-view or situation.

Interviews are social interactions, in which meaning is necessarily negotiated between a number of individuals (Collins, 2010). The relationship between the researcher and the participants was fluid and changing; but it was always jointly constructed. In this study, the researcher built a very strong relationship with the participants; and that developed a trust between the two parties (the researcher and respondents). Furthermore, the researcher was neither objective nor detached; but, he was rather engaged. Engagement implies willingness on the part of the researcher to understand the participant's responses to a question in the wider context of the interview as a whole. De Vos, Strydom, Fouche and Delpont (2011) state that the participant's perspectives on the phenomenon of interest should unfold; as the participant views it; not as the researcher views it. The information was analysed as it was, without being changed to the participant's point-of-view. The participants overtly control the information they give out (Goffman, quoted in Collins, 2010). A challenge in interviewing is that it has to do with achieving and maintaining a balance between flexibility and consistency in data collection.

Flexibility is essential for discovery and for eliciting the participant's story. However, some consistency is also essential in the types of question asked, the depth and detail, and the amount of exploration versus confirmation. Thus, an important challenge is to maintain enough flexibility to elicit individual stories; while at the same time gathering information

with enough consistency to allow for comparison between and among the various subjects (Morse, 2011).

### **3.7.5.1. Questions when preparing for unstructured interviews**

Prior to interviewing, the researcher defined the information required. The information supplied by the interviews was clearly related to specific questions that the researcher sought to answer. All the unstructured interviews require a format, and follow a process. The question or questions answered were prepared and reviewed with experts in the field, and even with some of the selected participants. Rubin and Rubin (2007) mention that an interview is built up of three kinds of questions, prior to talking to the participants:

**Main questions:** The researcher prepares a handful of main questions with which to begin and guide conversation. In this study, the researcher had a main question that guided the study in coming up with interview questions.

**Probe:** When the responses lack sufficient details, depth or clarity, the interviewer puts out a probe to complete or clarify the answer, or to request further example or evidence. In this study, the researcher used a probe to get further information in the study.

**Follow-up questions:** These pursue the implications of answers to the main questions. Follow-up questions were used for un-answered questions that were asked. Field and Morse (2006) further mention that it is important to minimise the dross rate, or the amount of irrelevant information in the interview. In the context of this study, the best strategy for minimising the dross rate is to prepare several open-ended questions before the interviews; and follow-up questions were only used, when the participants did not give a clear response.

### **3.7.5.2. Interview setting**

Participants were prepared for unstructured interviews. This was done by arranging the time and place ahead of time, following it up by writing, and confirming it closer to the date. A quiet environment, where no interruptions occur, was arranged. This was done in a more professional environment, or in a setting agreed upon by both parties. The researcher selected a setting that provided privacy, was comfortable, was a non-

threatening environment, and was easily accessible. The researcher also arranged a seating arrangement that encouraged involvement and interaction.

### ***3.7.5.3. Conducting unstructured interview***

The introduction to an interview is something of a signpost to guide the active participants through the open terrain of their experiences. It may also suggest that there are relevant ways of thinking about linking experience, as well as bringing alternative resources to play (Holstein & Gubrium, 2009). In this study, after the researcher had made introductory pleasantries, he confirmed once again the general purpose of the research, the role that interviews play in the research, the approximate time required, and the fact that the information was to be treated confidentially. The researcher also explained the manner whereby he recorded the responses and obtained permission for tape recording. Lastly, the researcher finalised the signing of voluntary consent forms; and he informed the participants that if they wished to withdraw at any time, they were free to do so.

### ***3.7.5.4. Developing rapport during the interviews***

The researcher in this study ensured that he looked professional and presentable to the participants. Furthermore, the researcher built trust by showing an interest in the work of the SMT; and he made it clear that he appreciated their efforts. The researcher started by introducing himself to the participants; he then briefed the participants on the aim of the study, the role of participants; and he also reminded them that they could withdraw from participation at any time if they were uncomfortable. The researcher was sensitive to the needs of the participants, and made sure that the participants felt comfortable during the interviews. The questions asked in these interviews were clear and professional.

According to Michael and Michael (2008), the aim of interviews is to be non-judgemental, and not to lead the respondents to a particular answer. Michael and Michael further argued that the researcher should be interested in the participants' views, not their responses to the researcher's own views. In this study, the researcher showed an interest in the work of the SMT members; and they were given enough time to complete their responses without being channelled into a particular perspective.

### **3.7.6. Common pitfalls during interviews**

Careful planning can reduce problematic interviews. According to Flick (2009), if multiple problems arise during an interview session; then, it is advisable to rather reschedule the interview. Field and Morse (2006) discuss several pitfalls in interviews:

#### **3.7.6.1. *Interruptions***

These can distract the participants; so that thoughts are lost, and time must be spent regaining the level of intimacy established prior to the interruption. In the context of this study, the telephone proved to be the most common interrupter. It was important to switch off the cellphone as a researcher; and to ask the participants to switch off their cellphones during the interview session.

However, in this study, only the researcher's cellphone was switched off; because of an emergency matter that might arise concerning the SMT. It was also important that the interview be conducted in a quiet place without any unnecessary movements; as this might also disturb the interview. It was always helpful to paste a notice that indicated that the interview session was in progress: "Do not disturb". However, some of the schools did not have a place that was quiet enough for interviews to be conducted. Therefore, the interviews were conducted in a place where there were some movements; and that disturbed the interviews.

#### **3.7.6.2. *Competing distractions***

A high-quality interview requires concentrated energy on the part of both the researcher and the participants. It is important not to plan too many interviews for one day, and to ensure the adequate debriefing of the interviewer. In the context of this study, only two interview sessions were scheduled for each day. As a result, this assisted in ensuring that both the researcher and the participants were active. Furthermore, the sessions were mostly conducted in the morning – to ensure that the participants were interviewed before they were tired, and caught up with other school work. However, some of the participants were always busy in the morning. Therefore, the researcher was forced to conduct the

interview in the afternoon; and as a result, they were a too tired to provide rich information, as was hoped.

### **3.7.6.3. Stage fright**

The use of the tape- recorder, as well as the use of questerviews, could make the participant feel vulnerable. It is important to have an informal chat with them just to ease them and make them feel comfortable. In the context of this study, the researcher held some conversations prior to the interview sessions – just to ease their fright – and make them feel relaxed. During the course of the interviews, the researcher ensured the following:

**Awkward questions:** In the course of an interview, many questions are likely to be asked; and some of these are not normally part of polite conversation. Decide whether such questions are absolutely necessary; and if not try to avoid them. In this study, all the awkward questions were avoided; and when the participants did not understand the questions, the researcher rephrased these questions to them.

**Jumping:** Avoid asking questions in an apparently illogical order (De Vos et al., 2013). Apply Bloom’s Taxonomy in asking your question, by starting with simple questions, and then more complex ones. It is also helpful to start with more general questions before you start with specific ones. In this study, general questions about the practice of self-reflection and management functions were asked at the beginning of the interview session. Thereafter, the researcher went down and asked specific questions relevant to the actual practice of school management and self-reflection.

**Teaching and preaching:** The researcher may become trapped in a teaching mode by a question asked by the participants on management theories and models; for example, the participant may be misinformed, which may trap the interviewer inadvertently in a preaching role. Do not fall into the first trap. The second can be handled by correcting misinformation at the end of the interview. In this study, the researcher used probes to channel the participants into this study; and this assisted the researcher to get rich information relevant to the study.

**Counselling:** The premature use of reflecting and summarizing can inhibit the interview (Rowley, 2012). It is easier for the participant to agree with the researcher than to explain how it really was. Analysis too early on invites premature closure of the topic in-depth inquiry. In this study, the researcher gave the participants an opportunity to respond to the questions – without adding to, or confirming their responses.

**Revealing one's own response:** The participant could be testing the researcher by giving information in the third person and observing the researcher's response (Rowley, 2012). In this study, the researcher encouraged the participants to give their views rather than second-hand or third-hand information. The researcher used questions, such as: *What is your opinion about this?* Such questions assisted the researcher to get rich information from the participants, rather than eliciting other people's ideas.

**Superficial interviews:** Frequently, interviews are too shallow; because the researcher moves the participants along too quickly (De Vos et al., 2013). No attention was given to non-verbal cues; and no time was spent getting to know the participant. In this study, the researcher created a conversation prior to the interview session, to try to understand participants, their work, and other important aspects of their profession.

**Confidential information:** A level of trust may develop between the researcher and the participant, to such an extent that the participant passes on information labelled as confidential. The participant may give information, which, ethically, the researcher should act on, such as suicide threats. He should inform the participant that such matters cannot be kept confidential, as a life may be at risk. However, in the present study, the confidentiality of the information was not intended to put any life at risk.

The study comprised the actual practice of SMT members on self-reflection and management functions. Therefore, such information was confidential; because it involved the actual practice of their work. The researcher has treated such information with confidence, with the element of anonymity being prioritised.

**The use of a translator:** This could slow down the process, as the translator first has to translate, or may fail to accurately convey the effective meaning and expression of the participant. In this study, some participants responded to their questions by using their mother tongue; and that then had to be translated into English. Furthermore, some of the participants did not understand the questions asked; and the researcher had to translate the questions into the Sepedi language; and that was very time-consuming.

### **3.7.7. CHALLENGES EXPERIENCED DURING DATA COLLECTION**

The data-collection process requires good planning that involves a lot of thought from the researcher. However, in some instances, the researcher might have good planning, but experience some challenges if participants are not properly organised. In the context of this study, the following challenges were experienced during the data collection processes:

#### ***3.7.7.1. Inability to keep an appointment by SMTS for interviews***

During interviews, a researcher made an effort to make prior arrangements and appointments with SMT members. However, in most cases, the researcher experienced a challenge; since some of the SMT members were not available for their interviews – even though the arrangements had been made in good time. The inability of SMT members to keep their appointments made, prolonged the data-collection processes, and also cost the researcher a considerable amount of money and time. This was not planned for.

#### ***3.7.7.2. Unattended questaviews***

During the questaviews, the researcher issued some open-ended feedback forms, in which he explained each question to the participants. With regard to answering these questions, the participants were given some days to think through their answers and answer at a time convenient to them. Considering the fact that SMTs are always busy, the setting was fair and convenient for them. However, the researcher experienced a challenge, where some of the SMT members had made an agreement with the researcher

about the collection date; but they failed to keep to such promises. This problem has occurred several times in different schools.

Members of SMTs are always saying: “*We do not have time for these things; we are always busy*”. Such excuses make it difficult for researcher to meet the planned target of this project. However, to solve this problem, the researcher used incentives, such as money, to reward those participants who completed their questaviews fully on time. As a result, the researcher got the data as planned; since the participants were motivated by the incentives. The researcher bought lunch for each participant who participated in this study.

### **3.7.7.3. *Inability to express themselves in English***

In all of the schools where the study was conducted, English was a second language for all the SMT members. Therefore, it was difficult for SMT members to express themselves in English, especially the participants from primary schools, where most of the time they speak Sepedi language. To address this challenge, the researcher gave the participants a chance to switch-code (using both English and their mother tongue). However, due to the pride of some of the SMT members, they refused to use English to respond – even though they struggled with it. This was a challenge because, the researcher could see that the members of SMTs had a lot to say; but due to the language constraints, they were unable to express themselves well.

However, the researcher captured their body language, in order to observe their emphasis when answering the questions.

## **3.8. DATA ANALYSIS**

Davidson (2007) stated that the data analysis is the process of making sense out of the data. This involves consolidating, reducing and interpreting what has been said and what the researcher has seen and read. It thus comprises the process of understanding, making sense, as well as meaning of the data. This understanding was compiled in the form of a descriptive account. In the context of this study, the data collected from the questaviews were sorted, organised, and speculated on, in order to develop meaning

from them. The interpretation and understanding were organised in the form of descriptive accounts in Chapter Four.

In this study, the tape-recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim. After transcribing the interviews, a sense of the whole was obtained by reading carefully with understanding, and then summarizing the salient aspects. Themes were identified from the responses and discussed in detail in Chapter Four.

### **3.8.1 General guidelines on the data analysis in the qualitative approach**

Reconsider your initial research questions. Keep in mind that research questions in a qualitative study may change, as the study progress (De Vos et al., 2013). In this study, the main research question was the focus of the study. All sub-research questions and research objectives were designed to answer the main research question.

Another guideline for the data analysis was that the researcher should transcribe the text in sufficient detail. Depending on the research questions and designs, sometimes a verbatim transcription of the recordings was needed; and sometimes summative notes of key aspects of the conversations would suffice (Neuman, 2011). In this study, the responses from the participants were reported verbatim – without rectifying any grammar or spelling errors. It was important to read and re-read the text, play and replay the audio recordings, or to re-examine the non-textual data, in order to become thoroughly familiar therewith. In this study, the data transcription was transcribed by a professional. Therefore, each piece of information was recorded and presented correctly. It was also important for the researcher to critically evaluate the meaning of the words used by the subjects, or the visual material presented. The researcher also interpreted some facial expressions presented by the participants when observing their responses.

First and foremost, the researcher was attentive to the words and phrases in the participants' own vocabularies that captured the meaning of what they do or say. Therefore, the researcher allowed for the discovery of any and all possible meanings. Identify the different topics or themes and code those encountered by means of line-by-line analysis of each interview transcription. Remember that codes must be descriptive

and characteristics of the data incident they present, rather than a mere meaning or labelling (Mouton, 2009). Do not worry if at first you have overlapping codes. In this study, the themes were drawn from the participants' responses; and codes were used to present the data in Chapter Four.

Since a researcher identifies different themes, they should look for underlying similarities between them. It was also important to note that qualitative researchers are, in the assessment of their materials, continually on the look-out for differences or deviations from the norm (Uwe, 2009). If certain activities deviate from the pattern, this was evidence that there is indeed a pattern. Thus, deliberately searching for cases that either confirm or fail to confirm the initially formulated themes would help to increase the credibility of the research outcome.

In conclusion, the secret to data analysis is to analyse the data frequently, according to the regularity and variability of the preliminary findings throughout the research process. Consider an array of plausible interpretations; and avoid taking a hasty stance on possible theoretical conclusions.

### **3.8.2. Basic tasks related to analysis are as follows:**

Estimate the amount of time required for the analysis (Morgan & Krueger, 2008). In this study, the researcher devoted three days to deal with the analysis of the data from each focus-group session. Organise the field notes, the tapes, the transcriber, and the other data. The researcher hired a professional transcriber; and the field notes were also used in the presentation of the data. Study the data to determine the key conclusion. In the context of this study, the researcher studied the data, and came up with themes that were later to be discussed in Chapter Five (5). In other words, the researcher makes sure that during the data analysis, he has analysed what the researcher said, and not what he thought as a researcher.

### **3.9. DATA TRUSTWORTHINESS**

According to Kolb (2009), the validity of the instrument produces accurate results or information. In supporting Kolb's idea, the researcher ensured the validity of the instruments used to collect the data; by using questerviews, focus-group interviews, and individual interviews for the data collection. The researcher used these three data-collecting instruments, in order to ensure the validity of the results; as the data collected from one instrument would corroborate the data from the others. Reliability supports the consistency of the information. The researcher first piloted the instruments, which according to Taylor (2008), was to test whether the instrument would address the problem.

The researcher administered questerview questions to the School Management Teams from another school to confirm the reliability of thereof. Adjustments were made to the questions thereafter. Furthermore, the data collected from the questerviews assisted the researcher to make some adjustments on the interview questions, and to thereby ensure their reliability.

#### **3.9.1. Credibility**

The member checked the multiple sources of the data collection, and the pilot testing of instruments. The researcher has worked in several schools in the circuit; as a result, he was familiar with the culture of these schools. To ensure the credibility of the results, the researcher did some consultations of management-related documents and activities before the actual data-collection sessions. The researcher used random sampling in the questerview data collection, and purposive sampling in the interviews. Triangulation was also applied by using questerviews, focus-group interviews and individual interviews. To ensure honesty and genuine information, the participants were given a chance to refuse to participate in the study; in other words, the participation was voluntary.

The researcher also invited the colleagues, peers and academics to comment and scrutinise the research project – both at the departmental – and at the faculty level.

### **3.9.2. Transferability**

Transferability has to do with the how transferable the results of this study are to another context. To ensure transferability, the researcher ensured thick descriptions through the use of verbatim quotations of the participants and detailed descriptions of the research context. Bloomberg and Volpe (2008: 87) argue that transferability is all about: “How well a study has made it possible for the reader to decide whether similar processes would work in their own settings and communities – by understanding in depth how they occur at the research site”.

Maxwell (2008) noted that generalizability in qualitative studies is not usually based on explicit sampling from a pre-defined target population, but on the development of a theory that can be applied in their context. In the context of this study, policies that govern school management in South Africa are the same. Therefore, it was easy for readers to transfer the results of this study to any school in South Africa; hence, the study was making a call for reflective school management in all South African schools.

The work of Andrew (2006) highlights the importance of researchers conveying to the reader the boundaries of the study. Andrew argued that the following information must be considered, before any attempts at transference are made:

**The number of organisations taking part in the study and where they are based:** In the context of this study, five schools took part in this study; and for the results to be transferable, the researcher has sampled primary, secondary and special schools; so that the results would be relevant to any school in South Africa.

**Any restriction in the type of people who contributed the data:** In the present study, there were no restrictions; and the participants were given an opportunity to participate in this study. Furthermore, the researcher gave the participants enough time to respond to the question. Therefore, there was no restriction on the side of the researcher. However, since the participants are representing the employer, they had a restriction in terms of disclosing some of the information. In order to address some of the unanswered questions, the researcher recommended further study to address such areas.

**The data-collection methods that were employed:** In this study, the researcher used different data-collection methods, in order for the results of the study to be transferable.

The use of questerviews helped in developing rapport between the researcher and the participants. Furthermore, the use of different data-collection tools enabled the researcher to get the richest data possible. Furthermore, the use of different data-collection methods accommodated all the participants; since some of the participants felt free to respond to the questions by writing; while others were comfortable enough to participate in verbal interviews.

**The number and length of the data-collection sessions:** In order to get rich data, the researcher gave the participants enough time to express themselves. However, the sessions were not very long; because sometimes long sessions might be boring. In the context of this study, the researcher ensured that the sessions were of average length, not very long, and not very short. However, the most important thing was to make sure that all the research questions were answered.

**The time period over which the data were collected:** In order to estimate the correct time/period for the data collection, the researcher did pilot-testing, in order to estimate the correct time required for the data collection. This helped to ensure that all the data were captured – without being compromised by the time factor.

### **3.9.3. Dependability**

Andrew (2013) argued that when addressing the issue of reliability, the positivist employs techniques to show that, if the work were repeated, in the same context, with the same participants, similar results would be obtained. Lincoln and Guba (2006), as quoted in Andrew (2013: 23) stress the close ties between credibility and dependability, arguing that the “published descriptions are static and frozen in the ‘ethnographic present”.

Lincoln and Guba stress the close ties between credibility and dependability, arguing that, in practice, a demonstration of the former goes some distance in ensuring the latter. They emphasised that this may be achieved through the use of “overlapping methods”, such as the focus and individual interviews. In the context of this study, the researcher ensured dependability by overlapping the questerviews, focus-groups, and individual interviews. Coding and re-coding of the data and peer examination were also used.

### **3.9.6. Confirmability**

The concept of confirmability was the qualitative investigator's comparable concern to objectivity. According to Andrew (2013), in confirmability, steps must be taken to help ensure as far as possible that the work's findings are the results of the experiences and ideas of the informants, rather than the characteristics and preferences of the researcher. In the context of this study, the researcher ensured confirmability, in order to reduce bias. Furthermore, the researcher did audit trials by showing how the data would eventually lead to the suggestion of recommendations for further research.

### **3.10. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

This concerns the importance of both accurately informing the respondents as to the nature of research and obtaining their written consent to participate (Babbie, 2006). Coercion was not used to force participation; and the respondents were allowed to terminate their involvement in the research at any time. The researcher also got an Ethical Clearance Certificate from the University of Fort Hare research ethics committee (UREC) that indicated that the researcher had been granted the permission to conduct the study. Furthermore, the researcher got written permission from the Head of the Department of Department of Basic Education, Limpopo Province. The participation of the respondents was completely voluntary.

The participants were given some consent forms to fill in that indicated that they agreed to participate in the study freely. The researcher assured the respondents that the information they provided would only be used for research purposes. Furthermore, their names were not disclosed; and the interviews were conducted in a private place with only the respondent and researcher present. Lastly, the researcher had respect for the wellbeing of the participants and their right to self-determination.

### **3.11. SUMMARY**

This chapter has discussed the research methodology, with a justification of the rich design and the data-collection instruments. Challenges experienced during the data collection were also discussed in this chapter. The next chapter is based on the presentation, on the analysis, and on the interpretation of the data.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION**

#### **4. 1. INTRODUCTION**

The study sought to establish how SMT members in the selected schools in the Dimamo Circuit of Capricorn District engaged in self-reflection practices in performing their management functions. The previous chapter was based on the research methodology, in which the research paradigm, the research approach, the research design, population and sampling, the data-collection instruments, and the data analysis were discussed.

In this chapter, the researcher presents, interpret analyzes the data. Before the presentation of the data, the background information on the participants was presented. All the data were presented and analyzed – with the focal point being how each research question was answered, and how it refers to the emerging themes, sub-themes, and how it supports those with verbatim citations. The data were collected from school management teams, namely: The school principals, the deputy principals, and the heads of departments (HODs).

The data attempted to answer how the SMT members in the selected schools in the Capricorn District engage in engage in self-reflection practices when performing their functions.

#### **4.2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON SMT MEMBERS**

The table below illustrates the background information of the participants. The information was important; because it shows how different genders and schools were represented in the study. The participants were sampled from less experienced to highly experienced individuals – to ensure the validity and the reliability of the findings. Since the study was based purely on the qualitative approach, the presented information was then interpreted via a qualitative method.

The background information was categorized as follows: Position in the SMT; nature of the school; experience in school management; and gender. The table further presents a summary of the number of males and females, together with their working experience.

**Table 4: summary of males/females, and their working experience**

Position in the SMT	Nature of School	Experience in SMT	Gender		
SMT1: HOD	High School	10	F		
SMT2: Principal	Primary School	15	M		
SMT3:Vice-Principal	Special School	10	F		
SMT4: Principal	Primary School	09	F		
SMT5: HOD	High School	06	F		
SMT6: HOD	Special School	11	F		
SMT7: HOD	High School	04	M		
SMT8: Principal	Primary School	16	M		
SMT9: Principal	Primary School	13	M		
SMT10:Vice-Principal	High School	08	F		
SMT11: HOD	Special School	09	F		
SMT12: Vice-Principal	High School	04	M		
SMT13: Principal	Primary School	07	M		
SMT14: Principal	Special School	12	M		
Total					
Total SMTs	Primary Schools	High Schools	Special School	Male	Female
14	05	05	04	07	07

**SMT1:** This was the Head of Department from high school; and she had been in the management position for 10 years. The lady was appointed during the time when the government was trying to correct gender imbalances in the management positions in schools. **SMT2** was a principal who worked as a principal for 15 years. He had been in the leadership position as a senior teacher at the same primary school for many years. He was appointed in the position during the old days, when males were regarded as superiors. **SMT3** had been a deputy principal in a special school for the past 10 years. During her teacher training, she was not trained as a special school teacher but as an ordinary teacher. She was appointed to the special school via a teacher transfer. However, through experience, she could now function in the management level at the school.

**SMT4** was a primary school principal who became the principal for 9 years. She was a senior teacher when she was promoted to the position as a principal. However, she has been assisting in the management duties in the past 15 years when she was working as a teacher. Ultimately, she was officially appointed as a school principal. With her experience, she was managing 45 staff members who were currently working under her supervision. On the other hand, **SMT5** was a HOD in high school. She has served in the management of the school for 6 years. This SMT has been trained under the new system of education (Outcomes-Based Education). She sounded very energetic on her management functions. Moreover, she was technologically advanced; and her office was fully equipped with technological equipment.

**SMT6** was also a female from one of the biggest special schools in the province. She was working as an HOD. In the department she was managing, 15 educators were under her supervision. She has been working in this position for 11 years. Prior to her appointment as an HOD, she acted in the position of principal twice before she was permanently appointed as an HOD. Therefore, her experience in the management positions includes that of a school principal as well. **SMT7** was a male HOD from a high school with 4 years' experience in the management position. To supplement his lack of experience in the management position, he enrolled some courses on school management that assisted him to improve his practice. Academically, he had acquired a Master of degree in

education management. Unlike **SMT7**, **SMT8** was a school principal with a lot of experience in the management position. He had been working in the position for 16 years. Furthermore, he worked as an HOD for 3 years. After he served as HOD, he then worked as a Deputy Principal before he was ultimately appointed as a school principal. All his experience in the management are equivalent to 21 years. This participant had experience in all levels of school management. However, his vast experience was largely as a school principal.

**SMT9** was also a male manager with vast experience in the management position. He has been working as a school principal for 13 years. However, his experience involved working in different institutions. In his first experience as a school principal, he worked in one school for a period of 5 years. He started as a high school principal, and then he proceeded to a primary school. His experience as a school manager in high school and primary school was equivalent to 13 years.

**SMT10** was a Deputy Principal from a high school. The lady has been working in the position for 8 years. Prior to her appointment as vice-principal, she also served as a HOD for 3 years. She worked the total of 11 years in the management position. **SMT11** was also a female, who was working as an HOD in a special school. She has been in this position for 9 years now. She assisted in the management duties for 3 years before she was appointed officially as a Deputy Principal. Because of under-staffing in the area of management, she was working as a co-opted HOD before she was appointed officially by the department of education. However, as a co-opted HOD, she was still expected to have same teaching load as other educators. Another vice-principal with less management experience was **SMT12**, who has served in the position for 4 years. This participant was more knowledgeable with management-related issues; since he had obtained several certificates from short-courses that are related to his position. Despite his limited experience in the position, he was also a holder of a Master of Education degree in Education management.

**SMT13** was one of the school teachers who had served as a volunteer in the management position for a long time. This SMT had volunteered as an HOD for 8 years, and he has also acted in the principal's position several time. This was regarded as one of the under-

qualified SMTs in the school. However, the Department of Basic Education had encouraged such SMTs to take some courses, such as Advanced Certificates in Education in the area of school management, in order to capacitate themselves. After his long-term voluntary service, he was officially appointed as a school principal. With regard to experience in the management he has been in this position for 7 years now. Reflecting on his overall experience in the management position, this amounted to a total of 15 years.

On the other hand, **SMT14** was one of the members of SMT who had served for a long time in the education department. He was in his last year of service to the school. This principal had worked as an HOD, a Deputy Principal, and as a Principal. He served for 5 years as an HOD, then 4 years as vice principal, and 12 years as a school principal, and this amounts to a total of 21 years. His vast experience also contributed valuable information in this study.

#### **4.3. THE MAIN FINDINGS**

The participants in this study comprised HODs; Deputy-Principals; and Principals. Despite the positions they occupied in school management; they were well-balanced in terms of gender between males and female. The working experience of the participants is very important – especially when conducting a study like this, which involves the actual practice of self-reflection and school management. In terms of SMTs' experience, the study consisted of participants with 0 to 09 years of experiences; 10 years and more of school-management experiences. With regard to the representation of schools, participants were sampled from the following schools: primary schools, high schools and special schools. Overall, the study captured the views of members of SMTs from less-experienced to most-experienced; both genders (male & female); all school levels (primary, special & high school); and lastly, all ranks of SMT members: HODs, Deputy-Principals, and Principals.

#### **4.4. DATA PRESENTATIONS: QUESTAVIEWS, INDIVIDUAL AND FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW**

In the context of this study, different data-collection tools were used to collect the data. These included questaviews, individual interviews and focus-group interviews. With regard to questaviews, these instrument have been proved to be useful trigger. Respondents presented their responses by narrating stories about their own experiences. The data were captured in an open-ended manner that gave the respondents enough opportunity to share their views. The data collected were presented verbatim. In order to answer the main research question of the study, sub-research questions were formulated; and these were later turned into main-themes that guided the discussion of this study. From the main themes, various sub-themes were drawn to assist in breaking the picture into more specific categories.

#### **4.5. THEME 1: UNDERSTANDING SELF-REFLECTION AND ITS PROCESS**

The process of self-reflection may be understood in different ways. In the context of school management, different views were presented. The table below illustrates some of the understanding of self-reflection by the SMT members. These emanated from the questaview session as issues of concern.

**Table 5: Questerview responses on understanding of self-reflection and its processes**

<b>Sub-themes</b>	<b>Main issues raised</b>
<b>Learning process.</b>	Involves checking, planning, action and success.
<b>Improving from the previous mistakes.</b>	Rectifying mistakes, research about your practice, self-introspection.

##### **4.5.1. The learning process**

The process of learning does not end with formal education. In this study it transpired that through school management, SMT members were able to engage in a process and were able to learn different aspects of the leadership and management of schools.

Furthermore, the learning process has a close relationship with self-reflection. SMT members were able to reflect on their management strategies and to think of the other ways whereby they could use to improve their practice. **QV1** understands self-reflection to be a process that involves checking, planning, action and success.

He stated that:

*Self-reflection means that one checks the outcomes of what one did. The process would start with the planning of what one wants to do. Then follows the implementation of the plan, i.e. action. Lastly, there would be self-reflection, when the plan succeeded or failed.*

In other words, self-reflection is a process that takes place in stages. In the first stages, the members of the SMT check their work and reflect how it was done. In the second stage, they plan how to perform self-reflection. Ultimately they do the actual reflection and measure the success. Based on the above-mentioned response, it can be argued that self-reflection is done to measure the extent of the progress of a particular project. Reflecting on the outcome of the project, determines the progress one has made

Furthermore, it was mentioned that self-reflection assists SMT members to measure the success or failure of their projects. Therefore, based on this argument, it is important for SMT members to set the goal they wish to achieve. In this case, the practice of self-reflection assists them to measure the level of achievement for such a goal, and to plan the approach to be followed for the total achievement of the planned goal.

#### **4.5.2. Improvements from the previous mistakes**

Previous experience is very important if one has to improve on the current practice. Furthermore, previous experiences can assist members of the SMT to rectify their mistakes, and be able to improve. Research is also important for SMT members to investigate and better understand their practice.

In contrast to **QV1**, **QV2** presented a different understanding of the process of self-reflection. **QV2's** understanding of self-reflection is on the basis that whatever one does, one must be able to look back and rectify mistakes.

**QV2** is quoted as believing that:

*Self-reflection is a way of looking back on what you have done and removing the mistakes, imbalances and wrongs, as you continue in the present and the future. It is replicating a working model of development that is researched through introspection. Our minds must always encompass the past, the present, and the future. In this process, we would be able to serve as role-models of best practices through introspection. Self-reflection encompasses self-management qualities.*

In other words, the approach that one takes when practising self-reflection, determines the quality of SMT that one is. The above participant considers the previous experiences as central when practising self-reflection. However, reflection should be done with the purpose of rectifying mistakes that have already happened with the view to prepare for future improvements. For that matter, it could be argued that self-reflection is a process of looking at the previous practices, and being able to improve one's future management practices.

**QV3** agreed with **QV2** that the process of self-reflection involves being able to do self-introspection. **QV3** explained her understanding of self-reflection and its process in five different ways, as follows:

She stated that:

*To portray yourself; to do self-introspection; it's a concept that one believes and holds about oneself; it's a concept of who you are, based on the experiences you have had; it is a picture of the self that the individual chooses to portray or project.*

It is through self-reflection that SMT members may discover who they are as SMTs; and the contribution they have made in the development of the school. In other words, the practice of self-reflection starts within the individual SMT members and how they contribute to the total development of the school. This means that the process of self-reflection gives SMT members an opportunity to look at the objectives of the school. By looking back they are able to introspect themselves on how best they could contribute to the school objectives as individual; and collectively so.

**Table 6: Individual interviewees' responses on the understanding of self-reflection and its processes**

Sub-themes	Main issues raised
<b>Strength and weaknesses</b>	Reflect on daily activities, looking into oneself, and one's successes and failures.
<b>Evaluation of one's duties and responsibilities</b>	Fulfilment of SMT's duties, self-evaluation, anticipating the end results, performance and self-development.

#### **4.5.3. Strengths and weaknesses of self-reflection**

There was a common understanding that the main aim of self-reflection was to identify one's weaknesses and to be able to improve. Self-reflection is a means by which practitioners can develop a greater level of self-awareness on the nature and impact of their performance. This awareness of one's performance makes individuals think about and mull over their experiences, management activities. As a results that's leads in to improved practice. The above mentioned statement was supported by **II4** and **II5** when they emphasized self-reflection as a process that provides one with an opportunity to look back and identify the strengths and weaknesses.

Their responses were quoted as follows:

*It is when you look back at your daily activities and rectify where possible (II4) and looking into oneself, [one's] successes and failures.*

Reflecting on the comments of **II4** and **II5**, the practice of self-reflection should be regarded as part of the daily activities. By reflecting on the daily activities, members of SMTs should be able to address their weaknesses on a daily basis – as they occur. Reflecting on the above-mentioned response, it could be argued that the practice of self-reflection is rooted in one's previous experiences. In other words, the process of self-reflection regards previous experiences as important aspects if one want to succeed.

#### 4.5.4. Evaluation of one's duties and responsibilities

Evaluation of one's duty is regarded as one of the important components of self-reflection in the context of this study. Evaluation takes place when SMT members are reviewing the decisions they have taken, their leadership skills, and any other important issues within their management sphere. Regardless of how often evaluation is carried out, members of SMT should make sure that their evaluation goes with the original purpose – which was the fulfillment of one's duties and responsibilities. The understanding shown by **II6** underscores the point that his self-reflection was in line with his duties and responsibilities.

He was quoted as follows:

*I understand it to be self-evaluation on the duties I perform in my position in the SMT. It is my introspection, in order to find out more about my attitude in rendering my services to my school, to develop myself and the school at large.*

There was common a understanding of self-reflection, based on the presented data. It was understood to be a process rather than an activity. The process involves the introspection of one's intervention in the school progress. In addition to the comments of **II6** and **II7**; they further expressed their view that self-reflection involves a process of evaluating one's duties; and it should anticipate the end-results. Such a process should be followed by self-development, in which SMT members would be able to work on their weaknesses.

**Table 7: Focus-group responses on understanding of self-reflection and its processes**

<b>Sub-themes</b>	<b>Main issues raised</b>
<b>Self-discovery</b>	Understand who you are as a manager, evaluate your feedback; looking back at what you have done with the purpose of improving thereon.
<b>Leadership skills</b>	Daily reflection, striving to improve.

#### **4.5.5. Self-discovery**

One of the best approaches of school management is to allow different inputs from the other staff members, in order to position oneself and to understand who you are as a school manager (self-discovery). The practice of self-reflection becomes imperative in this situation; since it serves as a mirror whereby one can look at oneself and be able to understand who they are school manager.

**FG1** mentioned that:

*Self-reflection means my mirror: how I see my reflection after teaching. It is seen when you do feedback and make tests and evaluation.*

**FG2** further mentioned that:

*Self-reflection is a process of finding out how you can improve your leadership.*

SMT members should bear in mind that even if they do not reflect on their work, the results they achieve in a school translate to a kind of leadership in a school. Therefore, it is important to use self-reflection as a mirror that helps them to strategize how best they could improve their practice. Using self-reflection as a mirror requires one to be fair when judging one's own work. This can be integrated with the response that self-reflection is a process of finding out how to improve one's leadership. Based on the two responses above, it may be argued that the process of self-reflection assists SMT members to look at themselves – in order to find a way of improving their performance their practice.

#### **4.5.6. Leadership skills**

When SMT members were giving their views on how to improve their leadership skills, they frequently raise issues relating to daily reflection. They further mentioned that SMTs should always strive to improve. There is a need for daily reflection if members of the SMT want to improve on their practice. Daily reflection enables one to reflect on one's daily activities, and also assists in handling such activities on a daily basis. This gives one an opportunity to correct one's mistakes, as they happen (ongoing). In addition to that,

**FG1** also share the same sentiment as she believed that self-reflection should be conducted on a daily basis.

She mentioned that:

*Self-reflection is when one is looking back at what you have done with the purpose of improving. It must be a day-to-day thing – i.e. continuous – in order to add at school level – [whether this be] quarterly, half yearly, or also at the end of the [school] year.*

Based on this response, it became quite clear that self-reflection should be done for the purpose of improving. SMT members should always strive to improve their practice. This would motivate them to reflect on their duties and responsibilities and be able to do better. From the quotation above, it may be argued that self-reflection is not a once-off activity, but it should be done in a continuous manner – to allow the SMT members to pick up their weaknesses and to be able to improve on their performance.

#### **4.6. MAIN FINDINGS ON THEME 1**

Theme 1 was based on understanding of self-reflection and its process. The main findings were summarized under the following headings: learning process that involves the planning, action and success; improving from the previous mistakes that involved rectifying mistakes, research on management practices and self-introspection; strengths and weaknesses that involve reflecting on daily activities, looking into oneself, and looking for one's successes and failures; evaluation of one's duties and responsibilities, which involve the fulfillment of SMT's duties, self-valuation, anticipating the end-results, performance and self-development; self-discovery which involves some understanding of SMTs as managers, the evaluation of previous work; and the leadership skills, which involve daily reflection and striving to improve.

These themes are discussed and analyzed in Chapter 5 of this study.

## 4.7. THEME 2: DAILY FUNCTIONS OF SCHOOL-MANAGEMENT TEAMS

In a school, each and every SMT member is expected to perform his/her functions and fulfil them. Within an SMT, there are the HODs, the Deputy Principal, and the Principal. Each member of SMT in a school has his or her functions and roles to fulfil. The table below illustrates some of the functions stated by SMT members, when they were asked to mention their functions.

**Table 8: Questerview responses on the daily functions of School Management Teams**

<b>Sub-themes</b>	<b>Main issues raised</b>
<b>Managing others.</b>	Educators' class attendance, Teaching takes place, Monitoring of learners.

### 4.7.1. Managing others

It has been generally believed that the functions of SMT members in South Africa are supposed to be similar since they are governed by the same policies and job description. However, different SMT members from different schools understood their expected functions differently. The main responsibility of SMT members was that of managing others. The following issues were raised when members of SMTs were pronouncing some of the important aspects when managing others:

#### **4.7.1.1. Educators' class attendance**

The core business in all schools comprises teaching and learning. Therefore, it is the primary responsibility of members of SMT to make sure that teaching and learning in their schools is taking place. Some of the participants mentioned that part of their responsibility is to make sure that educators attend classes, according to the time-table. **QV1** also shared the same sentiment in this regard.

He understood his function as follows:

*To see to it that educators attend lessons and teach.*

Based on the view of **QV1**, the issue of class attendance goes beyond that; since one has to make sure that teaching and learning are actually taking place. Making sure that teaching and learning are taking place in schools is one of the common functions that most SMT members understand to be their functions. However, making sure that teachers attend lessons, and actually teach required one reflective practitioner who would know teachers' period registers, and be able to monitor them effectively.

#### ***4.7.1.2. Teaching and learning must take place***

The concept of teaching and learning can be broad in the education fraternity. In the context of this study, teaching and learning refer to the educators covering the areas, which they are expected to cover; and that they would be able to prepare learners for the next grade. In achieving all these issues, SMT members would need to monitor and make sure that teachers plan their lessons every day, and teach accordingly. **QV5** mentioned that his responsibility was to check whether teachers are providing learners' assessments; and that such assessments were marked and given back to learners on time. **QV4 and QV3** had a similar understanding with regard to their management functions. They both agreed that part of their functions was to make sure that educators are actually in class doing their work. They also believed that it was their responsibility to moderate the question papers – before they were even given to learners for assessments. In order to fulfil this function, it is important that members of SMT discuss with teachers about days or dates of moderations and other important dates and activities that might affect their management functions.

#### ***4.7.1.3. The monitoring of learners***

The monitoring of learners should include making sure that learners are always in class and learning what they are expected to learn. Participants such **QV1** further mentioned that their responsibilities also include:

*That of monitoring that the learners are doing their work and attending classes.*

Based on **QV1**'s response it became clear that SMT members understood this responsibility as that of monitoring both teachers and learners. It can be argued that the responsibility of SMT members is to monitor that learners are in school, attending classes and doing their work. However, such responsibility requires a partnership between SMT members and parents, to ensure that learners attend school and do their homework.

**Table 9: Individual interviewees' response on the daily functions of School Management Teams**

Sub-themes	Main issues raised
Administration and decision-making	Facilitation of all submissions to the circuit office, updating school log book.
	Identify teachers that need to be developed.

#### **4.7.2. Administration and decision-making**

The work of school management involves a lot administrative work and decision-making. The following issues were raised when the members of SMTs outlined how best they could fulfil this function:

##### **4.7.2.1. Facilitation of all submissions to the circuit office**

One of the common communications between South African schools and the Department of Basic Education is through circulars. Time and again, schools receive circulars from the department about what needs to be submitted in the circuit offices. As a result, **II1** mentioned that it was the responsibility of SMT members to facilitate such submissions, and to make sure that their schools submit these figures on time. To support this responsibility, **II4** shared the same understanding; since he also believed that it was his responsibility to check whether there were any circulars from the circuit, and also to check the roll call for educators.

Continuous checking of circulars from the circuit assisted members of SMTs to be up to date and to know the important dates of submissions to the circuit offices.

#### **4.7.2.2. Identification of teachers to be developed**

According to **II3**, the responsibility of SMT members is to ensure that all teachers are capacitated, and are ready to teach in the new syllabus. **II2** further mentioned that in her school, she sent people to the Universities for short courses that improved their teaching practice. With the introduction of the new curriculum and the integration of technology in teaching, there was a need for members of SMTs to identify those teachers who still needed to be developed, and to train them. To support this, **II5** also mentioned that they invited the services of private-service providers who offered computer literacy, as part of an initiative that contributes to staff-development.

Furthermore, **II6** mentioned that:

*The principal should ensure that newly appointed teachers and SMTs are inducted and oriented into their duties and responsibilities. They should also ensure planning and the implementation of high-quality staff training programmes.*

This role can be fulfilled by co-operating with the institutions of higher learning in relation to continuous professional development and management development. In-service training becomes important in this regard – for SMT members to attend some short courses that would improve their practice. It may be argued that the principal as a member of an SMT has the responsibility of developing staff members, by ensuring that they attend the relevant training and workshops that contribute to the total development of their professional teaching careers.

**Table 10: Focus-group responses on daily functions of School Management Teams**

<b>Sub-theme</b>	<b>Main issues raised</b>
<b>Recording and filing</b>	Store and control all registers.
	File all the minutes of the meetings.

### **4.7.3. Recording and filing**

The role of recording and filing in the area of school management is very important. However, SMT members raised the following issues when they responded to the matters of recording and filing:

#### **4.7.3.1. Store and control all registers**

In a school, there are different registers that assist in the smooth running of the school. **FG1** mentioned that it was her responsibility to make sure that all these registers were functional; and that they were always stored in a safe place. To ensure that all the registers are attended to, **FG1** further mentioned that SMT members should monitor and see to it that teachers sign registers every time they come to work; and that they mark the registers concerning learners' attendance.

**FG2** mentioned that:

*As SMT, we agreed with teachers that they should submit their registers every Friday for monitoring.*

It is important for SMT members to monitor such registers on a weekly basis. Moreover, the principal should make sure that they keep class registers for a period of three years thereafter. These should be kept in safe place, from which they could be retrieved at any time, if a need arose. Therefore, it may be argued that SMT members should ensure that there is a safe place in a school where the registers can be stored and retrieved whenever they are needed. In most cases, schools use strong rooms to store important documents, such as registers.

#### **4.7.3.2. Filling of minutes of the meetings**

**FG1** mentioned that members of SMTs have the responsibility to keep records of the minutes and to manage them effectively. On the other hand, **FG2** presented that part of their responsibility was to make sure that all the records be kept that involve the operational duties, and the management of the school. Recording, in the context of schooling, involves the, correct storage, retrieval and use of information. Records are an

important means of accountability; because they provide proof of actions taken and decisions made by either the school-management team or the school-governing body.

**FG2** was further quoted as saying:

*Our responsibility is to make sure that all the circulars from the circuit office, letters, minutes and memorandums are filed and stored for future purposes.*

It is important to keep records in schools because they provide schools with a clear indication of what is available, and what is required, as well as providing schools with the ability to pass on information for planning and policy decisions. It could be argued that SMT members are responsible for ensuring that information from the circuit office reaches the teachers, and that all the minutes of the meetings are filed, and produced when they are needed, especially during the meetings.

#### **4.8. MAIN FINDINGS ON THEME 2**

Theme 2 was based on the daily functions of school-management teams. The main findings were summarized under the following headings: managing others – this involved educators' class attendance, monitoring (teaching & learning), and monitoring of learners; administration and decision-making, which involves the facilitation of all submissions to the circuit office, updating of the school logbook, and identifying those teachers that need to be developed; recording and filing, which involves storing, registering, and the filing of all minutes of the meetings. These themes are discussed and analyzed in Chapter 5 of this study.

#### **4.9. THEME 3: CHALLENGES THAT HINDER SMTS IN PERFORMING THEIR DAILY FUNCTIONS**

In order to achieve the objectives of this study, the study attempted to answer all the research questions. One of the sub-research questions of this study was based on the challenges that hinder SMT members from properly performing their daily functions. Despite the fact that members of SMTs in South African schools are governed by one policy, their challenges differed from school to school.

**Table 11: Questerview responses on challenges that hinder SMTs in performing their daily functions**

Sub-themes	Main issues raised
<b>Orientation of SMTs and job clarification</b>	Management workshops and meetings; outline of management duties.

#### **4.9.1. Orientation of SMTS and job clarification**

The job orientation of new staff member is one of the most important activities that assist employees to settle in quickly in their new jobs. In the context of this study, SMT members are oriented to their management duties, and all operations within their work situation. However, capacitating new staff does not end with orientation; but the following activities should be ongoing:

##### **4.9.1.1. Management workshop and meetings**

**QV1** mentioned that:

*The department of basic education does not organize enough workshops; and this affects the performance of our management functions.*

Workshops are one way that the Department of Basic Education uses to capacitate teachers and SMT members to keep up with the current trends. Management workshops can be internal or external. In terms of internal workshops, the principal has the authority to arrange a workshop and to train his staff members. However, **QV3** has mentioned that even though they have the authority to arrange workshops for staff member, they did not have the necessary funds to run such workshops.

In addition **QV7** mentioned that:

*We arranged workshops time and again; but members of the staff were not willing to attend them; and this affected our performance very severely.*

Reflecting on the above quotation, it is important for the principal, as chairperson of SMTs to ensure that all SMT members in their schools attend such workshops; since they are

meant to update them on their practice (school management). Furthermore, it is important for SMT members to emphasize the importance of capacitating workshops to teachers. Therefore, it would be useful for SMT members to make sure that all teachers attend workshops that are meant for development. As a result, such workshops should be compulsory to all teachers, not just optional.

Meetings are also one of the professional communications that are used in different organizations. In the context of school as an organization, SMT members should meet often to discuss the operational plan of their organization.

**QV4** mentioned that:

*In our school, we use meetings to report back to the SMT in cases where one of the team has represented them in certain activities. Furthermore, in our school, we regard the most useful meetings as those that promote quality of teaching and learning.*

Reflecting on this quotation, one could argue that meetings are important in schools; because they enable SMT members to discuss important issues that affect education and the quality of their management, in particular. Therefore, it becomes relevant for SMT members to meet regularly and also to report to the entire staff on members' issues that were agreed on during the meetings.

Participants, such as **QV1**, were happy that these functions were clarified for them, when they were appointed in their positions.

This participant further mentioned that:

*Yes, they were clarified to me and they are still reinforced through attendance of workshops and meetings, and also reading magazines and newspapers.*

Reflecting on the quoted statement, it may be argued that the functions of SMTs should not be clarified, only when the members of an SMT are appointed; but they should be reinforced time and again. In other words, SMT members should be reminded timeously about their management functions. **QV2** was also in agreement that his duties were clear, when he was appointed in the management position. He further emphasized that his

duties were thoroughly clarified during his orientation; and a list of them was handed to me to serve as his reminder. It was important that immediately after the appointment of an SMT member, a formal meeting was set up, whereby the circuit manager could clarify all the functions; and if possible members of SMTs should have a print-out that listed all their functions, as indicated in the PAM document.

#### **4.9.1.2. Outline of management duties**

Duties of school management teams in South Africa are clarified in the PAM document. Such documents contain a list of each responsibility of the SMT members, starting with the principal, the deputy-principal and the heads of department. It is important that all schools have a copy of the PAM document, so that they can remind one another of their responsibilities. However, it came out that some of the schools operate without the PAM document; and as a result, they are not clear who is responsible for what. **QV3, QV4, QV5 and QV6** presented a different view, when they agreed that they were clarified during their appointments. In contrast to the above-mentioned participants, **QV7** presented a different view – that her duties and functions had not been clarified for her when she was appointed in her position.

She passionately mentioned that:

*No clarification is made through writing. It is clearly outlined in the ELRC document and SACE rules that govern or regulate the behaviour and duties of different ranks in the teaching fraternity.*

Based on the above-quoted statement, newly appointed SMT members are not clear about their functions; but they are referred to documents, such as ELRC and SACE, to find out about their function. For that reason, it may be argued that those SMT members who do not have access to ELRC and SACE documents, are operating without knowing their functions. **QV8** shared a different view with **QV7**; as he mentioned that PAM was shown to him that lists his daily functions. In support of **QV7**, **QV9** was also concerned that her duties were not always very clear to her.

She mentioned that:

*It was just a brief orientation, and the rest of my responsibilities I just learnt through consultation with other colleagues and the circuit manager through consultations.*

**QV10** was quoted on her statement that said: *Yes, I attended and am still attending workshops on SMT, leadership and management. IQMS workshops are conducted once every school year.*

IQMS was one way of encouraging teachers and SMT members to do peer evaluation and self-reflection. However, it became a problem, when it was done once a year; because that means that mistakes can only be rectified, once the damage has already been done. Beside IQMS, it is also important for SMT members to consult with circuit managers to enlighten them further on their functions. It could well be argued that consultation is important for SMT members – to find out exactly what their responsibilities and functions are

**Table 12: Individual interviewees’ response on challenges that hinder SMT members in performing their daily functions**

<b>Sub-themes</b>	<b>Main issues raised</b>
<b>Life-long learner</b>	Ongoing research; keeping up with the current trends, and any new theories of school management.

#### **4.9.2. Lifelong learner**

Some of the roles of educators are those of scholar, researcher and lifelong learner. According to these roles, the educator should achieve ongoing personal, academic, occupational and professional growth through pursuing reflective study and research in their learning area, in broader professional and educational matters, and in other related fields. In the context of this study, SMT members should, therefore, fulfil these roles by participating in the following activities:

#### **4.9.2.1. Ongoing research**

Research in the context of school management is very important.

**II2** mentioned that:

*Our department expects us to be updated on the current issues; but they do not support us in terms of having resources that would assist us to look for the information. In our school, we only have one computer that is old and very slow. Again in the school, we do not have access to the internet; and this makes things difficult for us.*

With the current changes in the South African education system, it becomes imperative that SMT members capacitate themselves through research, so that they can keep up with current changes. If SMT members are not capacitating themselves, they will quickly find their work very challenging. **II3** further mentioned that due to lack of resources in their school, they are unable to access new theories and models of management, in order to improve their management skills. She further stated that their department should have partnerships with universities; so that schools could borrow resources from university libraries.

SMT members in schools are there to manage teachers and learners. Therefore, it becomes a norm that they should provide solutions for problems that are being encountered by the school. Therefore, it is very important that they conduct research on various management practices, and that they should know about all the basic operations in their profession.

#### **4.9.2.2. Keeping up with the current trends**

Curricula in South Africa have changed four times in the past ten years. They have moved away from Curriculum 2005 (C2005), the Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS), the National Curriculum Statement (NCS), and the Curriculum Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS).

**II4** mentioned that:

*It is difficult for us to perform our duties because of the changes of curriculum. Nowadays, it is difficult to master a school curriculum; because before you even master it, they introduce a new curriculum. For that reason, it also becomes difficult for us as SMTs to operate.*

With all these changes, SMT members should update themselves on the current trends and be sure that they are up to date. This can be done through attending workshops and seminars. However, **II3** indicated that the district office does not arrange workshops for them; but they expect them to be updated. He further argued that sometimes they expect schools to pay for the workshops that are arranged by private service providers; hence, their biggest challenge is with the lack of funds.

Furthermore, SMT members should also upgrade themselves by studying qualifications that are in line with management positions. However, there are challenges that are associated with studying. Some of these were raised by SMT members.

#### **4.9.2.3. New theories of school management**

According to **II7**, research on the new theories in the education or school management is one way of finding different approaches in their own practice. These theories assist one in cultivating new thinking on what scholars are saying about their practice.

**II7** further mentioned that:

*The department does not meet us half-way in terms of equipping us with new management theories. We understand that it is stipulated on one of the roles of an educator to be a researcher and a life-long learner. If one is eager to grow, it means you have to use your money to develop yourself. For example, if there is something I want to know about school management, I normally go to the internet café and pay my money to search for the information that would develop my abilities.*

School managers (SMT) have the opportunity to undertake research on the different management theories, and to choose those ones that are suited to their own context.

Furthermore, SMT members may use the existing theories to come up with theories of their own on a management framework. These assist in aligning the theory to meet exactly the needs of a particular school. However, SMT members have raised a concern that they are experiencing financial challenges, ever since the Department of Basic Education no longer assists them financially.

In the Department of Higher Education, the minister has introduced a Teacher-Development Grant (TDG) to develop lecturers that are teaching in Universities. Therefore, it would be helpful if the minister of Basic Education would introduce a funding grant to assist in the development of SMT members in South African schools. A good school management produces a good and quality education.

**Table 13: Focus-group interviewees’ response to the challenges that hinder SMTs from performing their daily functions**

Sub-theme	Main issues raised
Peer evaluation	The quality of IQMS, poor self-reflective practices, poor whole-school evaluation.

#### **4.9.3. Peer evaluation**

Peer-evaluation is a process that allows SMT members to evaluate each other with the intention of improvement. In the context of study, the following issues were raised when it came to peer-evaluation:

##### **4.9.3.1. The quality of IQMS**

The integrated quality-management system (IQMS) was meant to improve the quality of education in schools. Throughout these processes, SMT members are given a chance to judge their own work and that of others. **FG1** stated that IQMS involves a lot of paper work; and they do not have time for such paper work; since they are expected to deal with quite a number of activities. He further argued that if paper work could be reduced during this process, they would then be able to handle it in a proper way – one that would assist

each member to grow. It becomes clear that SMT do IQMS for the sake of submission at the circuit office rather than for self-development.

**FG1** was quoted on her agreeing statement that:

*Yes, I attended and am still attending workshops about SMTs, leadership and management. IQMS workshops are conducted once in every year; but we do not have time to do IQMS because it is just so time-consuming; we have a lot on our plates to deal with.*

Due to poor IQMS practices, SMT members find their work challenging; and consequently, they do not fulfil their functions, as expected and as stated in the PAM document. Reflecting on SMTs' responses above, SMT members currently have an attitude towards IQMS; because even though they are trained on how to do it, they still fail to do things the right way.

#### **4.9.3.2. Poor self-reflective practice**

Self-reflection is a means whereby practitioners can develop a greater level of self-awareness on the nature and impact of their performance. This process (self-reflection) can be seen as a vehicle that gives school managers the ability to explore, contemplate, and analyse the experiences in their schools. **FG1** mentioned that she only knows reflection from the lesson-plan's perspective; since in the lesson plan, there was an opportunity to reflect; but for school management, it came as new music in her ears.

The response of **FG1** indicated that SMT members in this district do not know how to approach this reflective practice. If SMTs are reflecting on their practice in a wrong way, they would be unlikely to improve in their functions (school management).

Furthermore, **FG2** mentioned that:

*The department cannot expect us to do self-reflection; while there is no formal way to introduce this to us. In my department, we just use our discretion to reflect on our work; and we cannot say this approach is correct, that approach is wrong; since there is no formal approach.*

The common stages of self-reflection are: Observing oneself as a manager; thinking about the observed experience to gain understanding and the meaning of what is happening; and applying the insights gained for future management experiences. The practice of self-reflection helps individuals to improve their actions and professional practice.

#### **4.9.3.3. Poor whole school evaluation**

Whole-school evaluation is a broader process that allows SMT members to evaluate the overall operation of the school. **FG1** mentioned that as SMT members they are expected to be a jack-of-all-trades. The issue of whole-school evaluation is a problem; since the kind of training provided for them was not sufficient to enable them to undertake this activity. This then becomes a problem; since the circuit manager ends up thinking that may be – because they just don't want to comply – and hence, they lack skills.

This process was regarded as a broader project that requires SMT members' skills. However, the members of SMTs in this study have declared that they find it difficult to run such a project; as a result, they find such an activity very challenging.

**FG2** further mentioned that:

*The problem with our schools is that the principal normally sends one or two SMT representatives during the whole-school evaluation workshop; and if such people fail to capture something during the workshop, it means the entire school is lost.*

In a good whole-school evaluation, the SMT members reflect on their operational plan and see to it that all activities stated on the plan have been achieved. In other words, it is important that all SMT members are equipped with the necessary knowledge on how to participate in the process (WSE).

### **4.10. MAIN FINDINGS ON THEME 3**

Theme 3 is based on the challenges that hinder SMT members from performing their daily functions. The main findings were summarized under the following headings: orientation of SMT and job clarification, which involves management of workshops and meetings, as

well as an outline of the management duties; life-long learner, which involves ongoing research, keeping up with the current trends and any new theories of school management; peer evaluation, which involves the quality of IQMS, poor self-reflective practice, and poor whole-school evaluation. The challenges summarized above are discussed and analyzed in Chapter 5 of this study.

#### **4.11. THEME 4: PERFORMING MANAGEMENT FUNCTIONS**

The performing of management functions may sound like something very broad. However, each member of SMT should be in a position to know the kind of functions that they should fulfil in their positions. The following issues are raised, when it comes to fulfilment of management functions:

**Table 14: Questerview responses to the performing of management functions**

<b>Sub-theme</b>	<b>Main issues raised</b>
<b>Operational plan</b>	Attend activities as they are planned
	Recording and prioritising.

##### **4.11.1. Operational Plan**

Any school is an organization that is expected to be organized and functional. Therefore, there is a need for each school to have an operational plan that is clear and implementable. Two issues came predominantly to the fore, when the participants were responding to the issues of an operational plan:

##### ***4.11.1.1. Attending activities, as they are planned***

In a school, there are three phases of planning, namely: Daily planning (the lesson plan); annual planning (the work schedule); and phase planning (learning programmes). In the context of school management, SMT members are faced with different activities that demand their attention.

**QV1** mentioned that:

*In my management position, I plan for the entire year; and I list all my activities on the plan that I will follow throughout the whole year. However, there are some issues that may come up as an emergency; and for that reason I can sacrifice some of the activities on the planned programme.*

In supporting the above-quoted statement, **QV2** mentioned that he normally writes issues down and prioritises them every week. For that matter, planning is very important; he plans his work in advance, in order to remove all the loopholes and the imbalances in the cause of service delivery. On the other hand, **QV3** fulfils her functions by following the policy of the school; and she also mentioned that time-tabling was very important; while **QV4** mentioned that he has his weekly plan; and he makes sure that he follows it. Therefore, planning becomes very vital in this regard. It came out in this study that SMT members should follow their activities, as they were planned; if they want to succeed in their management activities.

#### **4.11.1.2. Recording and prioritising**

Recording is one way of keeping all important documents in a safe place, and in a logical manner. **QV5** mentioned that her work involves a lot of recording and prioritising. With the submissions of teachers' work, he records teachers who submitted their work for moderation. Furthermore, he records visitors who come to school; and also that when they submit leave forms for teachers at the circuit office, they also record such work. Documents, such as log books are used to record all the visitors and the reason for visiting.

**QV6** further mentioned that besides recording visitors, all the planned activities have to be recorded in the School Improvement Plan (SIP). The school-improvement plan consists of all activities that contribute to quality education in a school. Therefore, it takes reflective SMT members to prioritise such matters, according to the importance thereof, and the urgency thereof. All the submissions need to be noted and prioritised according to their due dates or submission dates.

**Table 15: Individual interviewees’ responses to the performing of management functions**

Sub-themes	Main issues raised
Policy implementation	Drafting of policies in a school.
	Formation of committees responsible for drafting of policies, review of policies.

#### **4.11.2. Policy implementation**

One of the basic functions of SMTs is to make sure that policies are implemented in school. However, even before the implementation process, they have a duty to make sure that all the policies that are needed by the Department of Basic Education are available. Such policies are operational issues; because the school cannot operate without such policies. To ensure the availability of such policies, members of SMTs should adhere to the following:

##### **4.11.2.1. Drafting of policies in schools**

SMT members should be leading the committees when drafting policies in schools. **II1** mentioned that part of their responsibilities was to make sure that the school has all its operational policies in place. Since such a large number of policies need to be drafted, they delegate members of staff on the basis of their competencies. Delegation in this regard is very important. Some schools use subjects that teachers are teaching in schools, to allocate those policies to them for drafting.

For example, in most schools, teachers who are teaching Life Orientation, are likely to be delegated when drafting an HIV/AIDS policy. This is because what they were offering in terms of the subject is related to that which the policy entails.

**II3** further mentioned that:

*It is my responsibility to send teachers to the workshops and trainings on how to draft policies, and such teachers are expected to share what they got from the workshop with other colleagues.*

Based on the challenge of under-resourcing that the District was facing, it is important to initiate training for the trainer projects. By ‘training the trainer’ we mean one SMT member would attend the workshop, and then come back and train the other SMT members and teachers. This saves money – since in that way, they pay for one person instead of paying for the entire team.

#### **4.11.2.2. Formation of committees responsible for the drafting of policies**

It was discussed in the above paragraph that members of SMT should ensure that all policies are available in schools. **II5** mentioned that in his school, he was responsible for the formation of committees that are assigned to draft certain policies. The criteria he used to form such committees were based on the individual abilities of teachers; and he would have to ensure a balance between the skills and abilities in different committees. Indeed, it is within the powers of SMT members to delegate teachers for the drafting of certain policies. However, such delegation should be done in a professional manner – especially in cases where the teachers lack knowledge on certain aspects; they should then be properly capacitated.

**II7** mentioned that:

*As a school principal, I take the lead by training other SMT members and teachers on how to draft different policies in schools; of course being guided by departmental national policies.*

SMT members may take the responsibility to train teachers on how to draft different policies on the basis of their experiences. If need be, an external facilitator may be invited to come and train teachers. However, it is important to appreciate teachers with knowledge and skills, as this encourage them to participate in the drafting of policies; and also to equip other staff members with such knowledge.

#### **4.11.2.3. Review of the policies**

The Government in South Africa, changes after five years. Such changes sometimes result in changes in the education system. The Department of Basic Education also brings in new policies; and these are gazetted whenever this is considered to be necessary.

II7 mentioned that:

*My responsibility as an SMT is to liase with the circuit manager about the policies that need to be reviewed. We do so, in order to align our policies with the current situation. In our school, we agreed that our policies are reviewed every three years.*

The relevancy of policies goes with time; and they change with time. Therefore, it becomes important to review the different policies in schools, in order to deal with current trends. It is the responsibility of SMT members to review all such policies after a certain period, and to make sure they update them with current issues. However, such a review has to be informed by research; because research enables SMT members to acquaint themselves with the current issues in their management fraternity.

**Table 16: Focus-group interviewees' response to the performing of management functions**

<b>Sub-themes</b>	<b>Main issues raised</b>
<b>Overall monitoring</b>	Ensuring that different departments are functional.
	Fulfilment of all daily activities.

#### **4.11.3. Overall monitoring**

The overall monitoring of schools is one of the common functions of SMTs. In order to ensure such monitoring; the following should be attended to:

#### **4.11.3.1. Ensuring that different departments are functional**

It takes a lot of responsibility to ensure that all the departments are functional. **FG2** mentioned that as HODs, their primary responsibilities are to make sure that the departments to which they are attached are functional. They further mentioned that they further have the responsibility to make sure that teachers in their department attend classes, as scheduled on the time-table, and go to their class and teach the learners.

According to **FG2**, in each subject, there are specifications on how many tests or assignments learners should write; how classes work each week, and any other important issues. Consequently, it is their responsibility to ensure that such specifications are adhered to and respected. Furthermore, HODs should also make sure that teachers have the subject policies for the subjects they teach.

SMT members, such as **FG1**, mentioned quite a number of activities that they perform on a daily basis. They mentioned that in order to fulfil their daily functions, they have to monitor educators' workbooks in the department; they monitor the written output of learners, educators attend lessons, there is no late coming, formal tasks and informal tasks are written. Good performance by the learners and educators should meet the target set. This means that SMT members should promote quality teaching and learning. However, much attention has to be given to teachers' monitoring to ensure that they do their work as expected.

Another detailed response was presented by **FG2**, in which he explained how they perform all their expected duties:

*We report on duty in the morning, teach the learners adhering to the daily period register; attend morning briefings, communicating with educators on current issues concerning the school. Provide a list of educators who control the late-coming of learners in the morning and during breaks including afternoon study. We plan together as a team, organise, lead and control. We meet deadlines by submitting in advance what is required of us by our immediate seniors. Implementation of work, according to which we are guided in our circuit workshops, is done. Monitoring through IQMS for all educators is done yearly; monitoring through*

*walking around to make sure that all learners and teachers are in class teaching and learning is done, according to the general time-table. Monthly tests are written after being approved by HODs; the remarking of tests is done by HODs; marks are added or reduced to be fair in marking learner's scripts; the findings – after checking the educators' and learners' work are discussed, together with the teachers and the learners; and corrections are made. Teachers' reflections are accommodated. Their challenges are addressed.*

For SMT members to fulfil these functions, it is important that they delegate committees that would be responsible for certain aspects, such as late-coming and other aspects. Reflecting on this quoted statement, one might argue that SMT members are not aware of their specific functions within SMT. In other words, they lack knowledge about who is responsible for what within the SMT; and that caused confusion and blaming of others.

#### **4.11.3.2. The fulfilment of all daily activities**

If School Management Teams have to fulfil their daily activities, they need to know what their responsibilities in a school are. However, the functions of SMTs are outlined in the PAM document that each school is expected to have. To support this statement, **FG2** mentioned that the only way to fulfil his duties/functions was by following the job description.

This SMT was quoted as follows:

*By following my job description in the PAM document, and setting up some targets that I follow.*

In this study, it was revealed that members of SMT in this District did not know who was responsible for what. Consequently, they ended up blaming one another. Moreover, some schools operated without the PAM document; as a result, they relied on their experience to see if they were doing their work well. Poor reflective practices also came under the spotlight, as one of the reasons why SMT members are not fulfilling their daily functions. **FG1** mentioned the issue of weekly planning, and re-visiting of his plan as a way of making sure that he performs his duties as expected. Planning and re-visiting of the

planned work is one way of self-reflection that permits SMT members to rectify their mistakes, and to improve their plans, as they happen. In addition to planning, four aspects were mentioned by **FG2** as a way of performing her duties.

She mentioned that:

*I keep my diary up to date; I plan/strategise on how to achieve what's in the plan; I co-operate with colleagues; and I do self-introspection.*

Doing self-reflection can also assist SMT members to see whether they are fulfilling their functions as expected. Hence, the main purpose of self-reflection is to identify weaknesses, and to be able to address them for future improvement. Therefore, if SMT members are reflecting on their practice continuously, they should be able to identify those functions left out, and to be able to address them.

#### **4.12. MAIN FINDINGS ON THEME 4**

Theme 4 was based on the performance of management in terms of their management functions. The main findings were summarized under the following headings: An operational plan, which involves attending all activities, as planned, recording and prioritising; policy implementation, which involves the drafting of school policies, the formation of committees and policy review; and overall monitoring, which involves ensuring that different departments are functional, and the fulfilment of all daily activities. All these functions are discussed and analyzed in Chapter 5 of this study.

#### **4.13. THEME 5: REFLECTING ON SMT's DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES.**

Another research question of this study was: *What self-reflective practices do SMTs employ to reflect on the way in which they conduct their functions in schools?* In addressing this research question, SMT members were asked how often they look back on their duties and the decisions they made in the past. When responding to this question, the following sub-themes emerged with main issues that later served as a guideline for further discussion:

**Table 17: Questerview responses on reflecting on SMT’s duties and responsibilities**

Sub-themes	Main issues raised
<b>Striving to improve</b>	Progress reports, reflecting on decisions and mistakes.
	Shape decisions based on previous experiences.

#### **4.13.1. Striving to improve**

There are different measures and approaches that can be taken in schools for improvement. However, the quality of the model chosen depends on the quality of the school-management team. In the context of this study, the following issues relating to school improvement were raised:

##### **4.13.1.1. Progress report**

The reviewing of progress reports was one way that the school can judge the developments and the challenges they faced. Progress reporting was another way of self-reflection in which SMT members are able report all their planned activities, what they have achieved, and also the challenges that they have faced in their schools. **QV1** mentioned that the progress report gives her the opportunity to scrutinise those areas where she did not perform well, and to come up with some intervention strategies to close the gap.

**QV2** further mentioned that:

*On a monthly basis, we, as the school management team, would hold monthly meetings to check on the progress made in our syllabus covered, and to check on the mistakes and decisions that have been made. It assists us in self-reflection and when making decisions and taking corrective measures.*

Progress reporting was another kind of self-reflection that can be rich; since all the activities are recorded and reported in a very detailed manner. Such reports would allow

members of SMTs to measure the kind of progress they have made. However, the practice of self-reflection should be central, when conducting a progress report. There was a close relationship between self-reflection and progress reporting; because they are both based on the past experience. However, the progress report does not put much emphasis on the previous experience; but it rather focuses on future practices.

#### **4.13.1.2. Reflecting on decisions and mistakes.**

It was discussed in Chapter 2 that one of the main purposes of self-reflection is for individual self-introspection and personal improvement. However, the participants responded differently on how they reflect on decisions and the mistakes they make.

**QV4** mentioned that:

*On a daily basis, I reflect back on the kind of decisions I took, and try to check how best that was done, and how best I can improve.*

SMT members in this study apply their reflective practice by reflecting on the decisions they took in the past; and this helps them to identify the mistakes they have made. One advantage of self-reflection is to ensure that the mistakes which happened in the past are not repeated. **QV2** responded that he often looks back through self-reflection to check on the mistakes and imbalances so that these mistakes should not be repeated. He further mentioned that he looks back to correct his mistaken thoughts and actions; and be able learns from them.

In other words, reflection may also be practised on the thoughts and decisions not yet implemented. SMT members should also think of any possible alternative options – before implementing any decisions. The process of brainstorming and thinking of possible solutions comprise part of reflective practice.

#### **4.13.1.3. Shaping decisions based on previous experiences**

In the school management, previous experience was very important. Furthermore, it assists SMT members to shape their current decision-making based on their past experiences. To support the importance of previous experience, **QV5** mentioned that daily

reflection assists her to rectify the mistakes done in the past, and also to prepare for the future.

**QV7** further mentioned that:

*Before I took over as a school principal, I set up a meeting with the outgoing principal, to try to understand how things were done in the past, and also to shape my approach, based on such experience.*

Reflecting on the previous management of school was important; because it enables SMT members to be strategic. It further gives them opportunity to know how to approach and take over the responsibilities in school leadership and management. Reflecting on the previous experience, could also be done in a documentary analysis. The SMT members, for instance, may review documents about finance and try to understand how money was spent in the past – of getting the picture on how to address the current situation.

**Table 18: Individual interviewee’s responses to reflecting on SMT’s duties and responsibilities**

Sub-themes	Main issues raised
<b>Whole-School Improvements (WSI)</b>	Comparing previous results with the current results, strategic plans and strategic objectives.
	Realistic goal setting, collective decision making.

#### **4.13.2. Whole school improvement**

For the school to improve as a whole there are certain activities that need to be fulfilled. The approach that members of SMT took in managing their schools determines the extent of their success. Teachers in Limpopo Province raised the following issues that are linked to school improvements:

#### **4.13.2.1. Comparing previous results with the current results**

In South Africa, the quality of education in schools is judged by the results that the school produce. Therefore, it becomes important for SMT members to compare learners' previous results with their current results. For instance, **II2** mentioned that as members of SMT in their school, they set a percentage target to be achieved; but they always make sure that they create room for improvement each year; and instead, if they had achieved a one hundred per cent pass rate, they would make sure they could sustain such results.

This is one type of self-reflection that allows SMT members to identify some of the factors that might have influenced their results. There are challenges that are controllable; and then there are those that are beyond control. For example, teachers' strikes are some of the factors that are beyond SMT control. However, it was important that SMT members should attend to whatever factors are contributing to the poor results as they emerge. On the other hand, **II6** mentioned that he reflects on his duties and decisions, in order to perform better in the future.

The results of learners are compared with those previous years; so that they might come up with strategic plans and strategic objectives to improve them. Records are kept of the past for reference; new decisions are made collectively to improve the quality of learning and teaching. In the area of school management, previous experience serves as a school foundation. In other words, it is difficult for the school to achieve mission and vision – without knowing the history of the school. Previous experience also assists SMT members to compare the current results with the previous results, and to be able to plan for the future.

#### **4.13.2.2. Strategic plans and strategic objectives**

Reviewing strategic plans is one manner of self-reflection that enables SMT members to see whether the objectives set are actually being met.

**II3** mentioned that:

*During the planning phase of the schools, SMTs together with staff members (teachers) and SGB can set a target for a certain percentage for the pass rate.*

*Such a target could be turned into a strategic plan, whereby each aspect is explained and each goal is clear.*

Having a strategic plan and a strategic objective was one way of working with direction. These assist SMT members to refer on the plan, and to achieve all the strategic goals set. However, each school should draft its own strategic plan, and set its goals, based on the context and what was expected to be achievable. In other words, whatever is set as a target should be achievable.

#### **4.13.2.3. Realistic goal setting**

Most of the schools in Capricorn District experience a lack of resources. Therefore, it was important for SMT members and schools to set goals that are realistic in the light of their own context. To support this statement, **II4** further indicated that whatever that is set as a goal should be realistic.

He further mentioned that:

*Realistic goals are set for learners, for example targeting 85% this year and above. After each test, monthly and quarterly, reports are given by HODs and ways of improving the performance are discussed; for example, morning lessons by all learners, starting at 07h00.*

In order to ensure realistic goal-setting, such agreements should be collective and the objectives should be set clearly for what is to be done, in order to ensure success. In other words, SMT members should work with all staff members to come up with realistic goals for their respective schools. Such an agreement should be collectively taken by all the staff members concerned and not by SMT members only.

#### **4.13.2.4. Collective decision making**

In schools SMT members have a duty to manage the school, and to make sure that all departments are functional. However, when it comes to decision-making that must be agreed on by all staff members in a school. **II7** mentioned that as SMT members, they do not impose things on teacher; instead, they sit down with them and draft the list of all the

annual activities upon which they agree; and each staff member should sign to indicate that they were part of the decision-making process. Collective decisions in a school are very important; since everyone feels that the decision taken was a consensus decision.

SMT members should guide and give direction when discussions are done; but the final decision must be agreed on by all. **II8** further mentioned that through collective decision-making, they are usually able to achieve the goals in their school. Collective decision-making enables schools to come up with a progressive strategic plan that has clear goals and objectives that are understood by everyone in the school.

**Table 19: Focus-group interviewees’ response on reflecting on SMT’s duties and responsibilities**

Sub-themes	Main issues raised
Report presentation	Quarterly and end-of-year reports
	Success and unsuccessful stories

#### **4.13.3. Report presentation**

Reporting was one of the important aspects in an organisation such as a school. There are different ways of reporting that are as follows:

##### ***4.13.3.1. Quarterly and end of year reports***

Quarterly and end-of-year reports provide another lens for the reflective practice that allows the SMT members to monitor the progress they make. In a school, SMT members should report all matters concerning the departments they manage. According to **FG1**, introspection was done quarterly, and at the end of the year. This was done, in order to implement acceleration where necessary. **FG1** shared a similar practice with **FG2**, whereby they practised their reflection at the end of every quarter.

**FG1** further mentioned that:

*I usually write a report about what happened; I also hold a meeting with my colleagues, and check on our quarterly plan for the successful and unsuccessful items. We do this, so as to improve on what has been planned and to make sure that all the planned activities are done; and if not, then they should be carried over to the next quarter.*

Quarterly reports can also be used as a monitoring and tracking tool throughout the year. SMT members may be able to use quarterly reports to trace whether the results are improving or decreasing, when moving from one term to the next.

#### **4.13.3.2. Successful and unsuccessful stories**

Another approach of self-reflective practice that SMT members in Capricorn District used was through sharing successful and unsuccessful stories. **FG1** mentioned that SMTs in different categories and departments plan their work with people they are managing. In order to reflect on their practice, they need to share what they have achieved (successes) and also where they have failed (unsuccessful stories).

**FG2** further indicated that:

*As SMT members in our school, we meet as a team with our teachers; and we have a session in which we discuss the challenges we experience in our respective departments; what we have achieved; and how we managed to achieve whatever we achieved, in order to motivate each other. We also draft an action plan on how to address our challenges during these meetings.*

During this kind of self-reflection, teachers may share with SMT members what they have experienced in their classrooms (the grass-root approach), and be able to discuss with members of SMT how best they could overcome such challenges. Such discussion should be followed by future preparation; so that they do not experience the same challenges every year.

#### 4.14. MAIN FINDINGS ON THEME 5

Theme 5 was based on reflecting on school-management teams' duties and responsibilities. The main findings were summarized under the following headings: striving to improve on the progress report, reflecting on decisions and mistakes, shaping decisions, based on previous experience; whole-school improvement, which is based on comparing results, a strategic plan and a strategic objective, realistic goal-setting and collective decision-making; and report presentation based on quarterly and end-of- year reports, successful and unsuccessful stories. All these findings are discussed and analyzed in Chapter 5 of this study.

#### 4.15. THEME 6: CONDUCTING AN EFFECTUAL REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

Being an effective reflective practitioner involves a lot of things. When SMT members were sharing their understanding of how to become an effectual reflective practitioner, they raised the following issues that are presented in the table below:

**Table 20: Questerview responses to decision-making, based on previous experience**

<b>Sub-themes</b>	<b>Main issues raised</b>
<b>The foundation of an effectual reflective practitioner</b>	Reshaping the decisions taken earlier
	Experience as a mother of successful learners

##### 4.15.1. The foundation of effectual reflective practitioner

Past experiences can always serve as a foundation for an effectual reflective practitioner. In the context of this study, SMT members agreed that their past experiences influenced their decision-making; and they further raised the following issues:

#### ***4.15.1.1. Reshaping the decisions taken previously***

Being in school management team goes with a lot of responsibilities. These include taking wise decisions that contribute to the total development of the school. However, SMT members should consider their experience as a foundation for their own decision-making. SMT members, such as **QV1**, agreed that their past experience have had an influence on their current decision-making. This further mentioned that mentioned that experience helps in further polishing or reshaping decisions taken earlier. It helps in improving on what was decided earlier. **QV2** also agreed that the past should never be ignored, if SMT members need to improve their management functions.

Considering the past can assist members of SMT to check on how the problem was handled previously. For example, if the school has produced a one hundred per cent pass rate for their matric in the past three years; and they have recently dropped to fifty per cent; an approach of considering the past experience could be useful. SMT members have a responsibility to reflect on all the programmes that were in place when the school produced one hundred per cent pass rate. Thereafter, they should try to compare that with the current programmes; and take progressive decision that could lead to school improvement.

#### ***4.15.1.2. Experience as a mother of success***

When SMT members are appointed in a management position, one of the requirements for being appointed in such a position would certainly be the number of years of teaching experience. This indicates that the department of basic education was aware of the importance of teaching experience if SMT members are to succeed in their management activities. SMT members in the Dimamo Circuit of Capricorn District are in agreement on this. According to **QV2**, in order to get a working model/formula, the past was very important. This gives opportunity to remove all the imbalances/mistakes made in the past, for the benefit of the present and the future. Experience is always the mother of success. **QV3** also shared the same insights with **QV1** and **QV2**, whereby she also mentioned that she shapes her own decisions based on the previous experience, to check where she put more effort into the work. Furthermore, **QV4** and **QV5** were also in agreement that their

previous experience influences the way they take decisions currently. They mentioned that their experience helped them to succeed in their management functions. This is true; because most members of an SMT are more experienced in the school management; and they are more likely to produce better results. Experience is definitely the mother of success.

**Table 21: Individual interviewees’ response to decision-making based on previous experience**

Sub-theme	Main issues raised
The effect of consultation for excellent school management	Communication of SMTs with nearby schools
	Communication with different stakeholders

#### **4.15.2. The effect of consultation for excellent management**

Being a manager in a school does not mean that you know it all. Most of the members of SMT are promoted to the management positions through working experience, as opposes to qualifications. Therefore, this means that as newly appointed SMT members there are many things that might yet be unclear to them. So, the issue of consulting with experienced SMT members becomes important in this regard. The following issues were raised when SMT members were talking about the importance of consultation in their practice:

##### **4.15.2.1. Communication of SMT members with nearby schools**

According to **II3**, school management is not something that one can accomplish in isolation. She further mentioned that:

*In our school, we communicate with other colleagues from the nearby schools to check how they do things.*

This kind of communication should be ongoing; because it enables SMT members and schools to share the challenges they encounter in their management functions. **II6** also mentioned that it was important to have communication. He further indicated that as the

principal, he was the chairperson of SMT; and he always makes sure that the channels of communications are open and clear within the school and outside the school. This kind of partnership can be done through collaboration between teaching and projects, such as Saturday lessons and winter schools with neighbouring schools.

Such an approach assists in the exchange of skills among SMT members and the teachers of nearby schools.

**4.15.2.2. Communication with different stakeholders**

Schools are there to serve the community. Therefore, members of SMTs have the obligation to ensure that there is smooth communication between the school and the different stakeholders in the community. **II1** mentioned that as an SMT member, he made sure that there was a partnership between his school and the different stakeholders. He always made sure that all those activities that are taking place in the school are communicated to the entire community. Partnerships between the school and the community are very important.

For example, the issue of the high crime rate in the community can be communicated; since both the school and the community have the responsibility to fight against this evil. Therefore, the school-management team, as a school engine should have open lines of communication with all the different stakeholders; such as business people; different departments, such as the police; social workers; and any other important department.

**Table 22: Focus-group interviewees’ response to decision-making based on previous experience**

Sub-theme	Main issues raised
Re-empowering teachers through self-reflection	Positioning of new staff members in a school
	Growth and development

### **4.15.3. Re-empowering SMT members through self-reflection**

Self-reflection may be used to re-empower both in-service SMT members and newly appointed members of SMTs. The following issues were raised when SMT members alluded to the re-empowering of members of SMT through self-reflection:

#### ***4.15.3.1. Positioning of new staff member in a school***

How the new members of SMT are mentored and positioned would depend on the experiences of the SMT members in the school. **FG2** mentioned that they prepare their newly appointed SMT members in such a way that they would become productive and effective in their practice. He further mentioned that if the new SMT members are joining the working team, they are likely to be hard workers. Therefore, it is important that the Principal should clarify each SMT member in regard to the duties and functions accompanying the appointment in their positions.

**FG1** believes that her previous experience laid a strong foundation for her appointment.

She mentioned that:

*Previous experience in a way acts as a foundation onto which new staff must come and fit perfectly. So, as we learn from our mistakes, we reinforce what we have already achieved.*

It is important for SMT members to reflect on the existing management team, and try to identify the areas where they are lacking as SMT members. This would assist them to know the qualities of the new SMT members that they need in a school, and to position them in a way that would contribute to the achievement of the school vision and its mission.

#### ***4.15.3.2. Growth and development***

Growth and development in the context of school management means professional matured and excellence. The SMT members that are professionally matured are likely to take informed decisions, and their decisions are based on what educational policies are saying. However, **FG2** have a similar view about this matter, and she mentioned that it

was not all the time whereby she relied on her previous experiences to make decisions. She mentioned that in most cases she shapes her decisions based on the present policies and documents. SMT members should be familiar with all educational policies that govern them, and they should always reflect on their work and ensure that their practices are in line with what educational policies requires. SMT members that practice self-reflective regularly are likely to identify their weaknesses and be able to grow.

#### **4.16. MAIN FINDINGS ON THEME 6**

Theme 6 was based on conducting effective reflective practice. The main findings were summarized under the following headings: the foundation of effective reflective practitioner, which involved reshaping the decisions taken earlier and experience as a mother for success; the effect of consultation for excellent school management which involved communication with the nearby schools and communication with stakeholders; and re-enforcing teachers through self-reflection which involved positioning of new staff members in a school, growth and development. All these themes were discussed and analyzed in chapter 5 of this study.

#### **4.17. THEME 7: CHALLENGES THAT CONSTRAIN SMTs FROM PERFORMING BETTER**

In general, members of SMT are responsible for the overall management of their schools, and also to ensure the each every committee member in a school was functional. Hence, their priority was to push the core business of a school which was teaching and learning. Members of SMT experience various challenges in their day-to-day operations; and these challenges limit their performance. The table below illustrates these sub-themes drawn from SMT members' responses, and also the issues of concern.

**Table 23: Questerview responses to the challenges that constrain SMT members from performing better**

<b>Sub-themes</b>	<b>Main issues raised</b>
<b>Lack of commitment</b>	Teachers and learner's absenteeism, Attending of meetings during working hours

#### **4.17.1. Lack of commitment**

Some of the basic functions of SMT members are to manage both teachers and learners. Therefore, if teachers and learners are not committed to their work, it becomes difficult for the members of SMT to manage such schools. When members of SMT talk about a lack of commitment, the following issues are relevant:

##### ***4.17.1.1. Educators and learner's absenteeism***

The main purpose that the schools serve comprise those of teaching and learning. For school to perform, it was the responsibility of SMT members to make sure that teaching and learning take place. **QV2** mentioned that as a school principal, it was his responsibility to make sure that learners are always in class and that the teachers are teaching.

However, if teachers and learners are frequently absent from the school, this becomes a challenge for the members of SMT to manage such schools. **QV1** mentioned that what limits his performance is the absenteeism of teachers for various reasons, and the non-attendance of classes by some lazy teachers. Teachers' absenteeism was another challenge faced by SMT members in the Capricorn District; and this affects the results of the schools in Dimamo Circuit. SADTU's decision to remove all the inspectors has resulted in a slack and happy-go-lucky attitude amongst the teachers. "Why do any work, when you cannot be fired?" Circuit managers should also move around schools to motivate and support them. There is a need to motivate teachers in the District to work hard to commit themselves to their work. Some motivation may be in a form of incentives and awards that would encourage them to work more in a very competitive manner.

##### ***4.17.1.2. Attendance of meetings during working hours***

Schools meetings are meant to discuss and equip educators with relevant teaching skills and aspects. However, it becomes a challenge for SMT members if teachers attend such meeting during working hours because learners end up left unattended. **QV1** has mentioned that the most serious challenge that his school was facing was attendance of

meetings scheduled by the department during working. Furthermore, attendance of meeting could go as far as union meetings and memorial services. There was a confusion of powers between the trade unions and employer (department of Basic Education). Unions call their meetings and gathering of memorial services during working hours and this disturbed the normal programme of the schools and make it difficult for members of SMT to operate in such conditions.

#### **4.17.1.3. Insubordination and lack of support**

In most cases, members of SMT in schools have worked in the schools as teachers before they were promoted into management positions. For that reason, some teachers that are within the departments that they managed looked down upon themselves and defy them. **QV2** also have a challenge with insubordination since he mentioned that it limits his performance.

He mentioned that:

*Insubordination is one of the terrible occurrences in service delivery. Staff members need to be supportive of the working models that leaders are bringing in order to support performance.*

It becomes difficult to work with teachers who do not want to comply. However, SMT members should also be aware that the support of teachers was earned not imposed. They can win teachers' support by involving them in all projects that are taking place in the school. Furthermore, teachers need to be valued; as a result the SMT members should also respect and appreciate their inputs.

**Table 24: Individual interviewees’ response on challenges that constrains SMTs to perform better**

Sub-themes	Main issues raised
Lack of resources	Shortage of classrooms and infrastructure,
	Shortage of textbooks and other teaching aids.
Poor parental involvement	Shared responsibility

#### **4.17.2. Lack of resources**

In a school, the successes of SMT members were based on the availability of resources. The following issues were raised when SMT members were discussing about resources:

##### ***4.17.2.1. Shortage of classrooms and infrastructure***

SMT members have the responsibility to ensure that schools are functional and also to make sure that teaching and learning takes place in the classrooms. However, such responsibility becomes difficult to fulfil if there was shortage of classrooms and infrastructure. In the context of this study, Limpopo Province was one province that experienced a challenge of lack of resources and poor infrastructure in the schools. Therefore, it was very difficult for members of SMT to operate in such condition. **II2** further mentioned that shortage of classrooms and infrastructure as a whole was one problem that hindered her performance. Shortage of classrooms was a problem because it affects the core business of the school which was teaching and learning. Some conditions such as overcrowded classroom make it difficult for teachers to teach, for learners to learn and for managers to manage.

##### ***4.17.2.2. Shortage of textbooks and other teaching aids***

Limpopo Province has been in news about the late delivery of textbooks and shortage of textbooks and other teaching aids in some schools. Therefore, it was always difficult for

SMT members in this province to compete with provinces that are among top achievers such as Gauteng province.

#### **4.17.2.3. Poor parental involvement**

In a school there are other activities such as home-works and projects that require parental involvement. **II1** mentioned that parents also have the responsibility to motivate their children and make sure that they complete their home-works and other related school projects. However, it becomes a challenge for SMT members if parents do not cooperate/involve themselves in the education of their children. The issue of parent's commitment in their children's work came very strong as one of the aspects that are limiting the performance of SMT members. **II5** mentioned that the poor involvement of parents in education of their children makes it difficult for them to achieve their goals. Parents should understand that they also have responsibility to educate their children, working together with teachers. In other words they should be more involved in their children's education.

#### **4.17.2.4. Shared responsibility**

The teacher acts as a representative of the parents immediately the child enters the school's premises (*in loco parentis*). **II4** mentioned that part of her responsibility as an SMT is to communicate with parents on the education of their children, and to explain to them what she expects from parents, in order for the learners to succeed. Therefore, this means that both parents and SMT have the shared responsibility of making sure that the learners are learning. It is important for members of SMTs to involve parents in all those projects that involve the education of their children. It becomes a challenge when the parents do not want to share this responsibility with the SMT members.

**Table 25: Focus-group interviewees’ response to those challenges that constrain SMTs from performing better**

Sub-themes	Main issues raised
Resistance to change	Curriculum changes
	Large number of educators to manage

#### **4.17.3. Resistance to change**

Working with teachers that are resistant to change was one of the challenges that can limit the performance of SMT members. However, SMT members have raised the following issue when it was suggested that many teachers are resistant to change:

##### **4.17.3.1. Curriculum changes**

Since the introduction of Outcome-Based-Education in South Africa, the curricula have been changed several times. When curricula change, it means that teachers and SMT members should also change, and keep up with the current trends.

**FG1** mentioned that:

*We have a challenge in schools because some teachers that trained during the old education system do not want to change to the new education system.*

It becomes a challenge to deal with teachers that are resistant to change. However, for SMT members to found it difficult to change the attitude of teachers that were reluctant to change. **FG2** maintains that they were also limited in their performance by stubborn colleagues. When they try to show a teacher what was right or wrong, teachers become defensive. It was very difficult to work with colleagues that are not co-operative; because when it comes to curriculum changes, teachers have to be flexible and eager to learn. Because of rivalry, some teachers do not want other teachers to see their ignorance; and this has resulted in a defensive attitude.

#### **4.17.3.2. *Managing a large numbers of educators***

The issue of human resources and under-staffing are a challenge that SMT members are facing in South Africa. The department of basic education uses the numbers of teachers to determine the number of SMT members in the school. This rule is in favour of big schools with large numbers of learner enrolment; and this is unfair to small schools with fewer learners. With small schools, SMT members are facing the challenge of managing large numbers of teachers in their respective departments; and this limits their performance.

To support this assertion, **FG1** mentioned that they are constrained from their doing their duties by the following issues: Teachers who resist change; the up-side-down attitude of the curriculum; and the large numbers of educators to work with limited resources (workbooks, learners' books, mark-sheets, etc.). It was difficult to manage large number of teachers; since when it comes to monitoring them, it was not easy to reach each every teacher and to comment on their work. In the past inspectors were moving around the school to monitor teachers' work. The remove of inspectors in schools has ultimately increased work-load on the site SMTs.

#### **4.18. MAIN FINDINGS FROM THEME 7**

Theme 7 was based on those challenges that constrain members of SMTs to perform better. The main findings are summarized under the following headings: lack of commitment, which involves teachers' and learners' absenteeism, attending of meetings during working hours, insubordination and the lack of support; lack of resources, the shortage of classrooms and infrastructure, shortage of textbooks and, other teaching aids; poor parental involvement, shared responsibility; and resistance to change, which involves curriculum change, and the large numbers of educators to manage. All these challenges are discussed and analyzed in detail in Chapter 5 of the study.

#### **4.19. THEME 8: MEASURES TO BE PUT IN PLACE TO OVERCOME SMTS' CHALLENGES**

One of the sub-research questions was based on measures that SMTs could put in place to reduce the challenges they face. SMT members experience different challenges in their practice. Therefore, they have different ways of overcoming such challenges. The table below illustrates some of the issues that were raised by members of SMTs.

**Table 26: Questerview responses to measures to put in place to overcome SMTs' challenges**

<b>Sub-themes</b>	<b>Main issues raised</b>
<b>Supervision of educators</b>	Records of absent educators, communication with educators
	Replacement of absent educators, leaving teachers to do as they please

##### **4.19.1. Supervision of educators**

The functions of SMT members are centred on the supervision of educators. To ensure effective supervision, members of SMT in Capricorn District have raised the following issues:

###### **4.19.1.1. Records of absent educators**

Some teachers in governmental department do not qualify for annual leave; since they have their school holidays when the schools close. However, there are some leaves for which they qualify, such as study leave, family responsibilities, maternity/paternity leave and sick leave.

**QV4** mentioned that:

*In order to overcome the challenges I have, I make sure that all teachers that are not in school are recorded, and have signed leave forms, and also to make temporary arrangements for a day.*

Based on the above-quoted statement, it becomes important for SMT members to have a good record of teachers who are absent from work. Such records should be compiled and summarised for submission to the district office. **QV1** also mentioned that his measures involve the recording of absent educators – and confronting them head-on; he personally takes them from the staffroom to classes; and at times, delegates people to attend on their behalf. If such measure could be attended to, SMT members would as a result have a smooth running of the school because of good record-keeping.

#### ***4.19.1.2. Replacement of absent educators***

The main function of SMT members is to make sure that teaching and learning take place in schools, regardless of whether all teachers are in school, or not. To support this, **QV3** mentioned that it was her responsibility as an SMT member to make sure that teachers who are absent are replaced, and that learners are being taught in class. Such arrangements must be made in the short-term – and in the long-term. Long-term arrangements need to be made when a teacher takes study leave for one year or more.

In such instances, SMT members, and in particular the school principal, have the responsibility to submit a request for a temporary teacher – to replace the one on leave. The same procedure applies for a short-term arrangement, such as when female teachers go for maternity leave (four months). **QV4** further mentioned that apart from the management of teachers, he was also responsible to ensure that he arrange with teachers that are free, to at least keep learners busy when the responsible teacher was not at work.

SMT members should make sure that daily arrangements are done to replace teachers that are absent for a day or more. This may be done by asking teachers who are free to replace the absent teacher, and to keep the learners busy by teaching them.

#### ***4.19.1.3. Leaving educators to do as they please***

Sometimes for managing intellectuals, like teachers, it may be challenging. **QV1** indicated that sometimes it becomes a challenge when you have to convince teachers to believe in you as their leader. **QV1** further emphasized that for SMT members, such as an HOD,

they have a duty to convince teachers about the effect of certain theories. School principals are also facing a challenge of convincing the entire staff to believe in their management styles and approaches.

In contrast to all these efforts, some SMT members, such as **QV3** mentioned that they give teachers the opportunity to do as they please. Teachers sometimes felt free when they were given a space to come up with their own initiatives, rather than imposing on them, and expecting them to conform. However, it is important to encourage teachers to be responsible in their work; and also to consider the consequences of whatever decisions they make.

**Table 27: Individual interviewees’ responses to measures to be put in place to overcome SMTs’ challenges**

Sub-theme	Main issues raised
Leading by example	SMTs’ relations with educators
	Application of SASA

#### **4.19.2. Leading by example**

In an organisation, such as a school, teachers look up to SMT members; and they regard them as role-models. Being a role-model in the context of this study means leading by example. However, to overcome some of the challenges faced by members of SMTs, they raised the following issues:

##### **4.19.2.1. SMTS’ relations with educators**

How SMTs rate themselves with teachers in a school was very important. The kind of management style and the various approaches used to manage a school also have an impact in terms of teacher-SMT relations. **II2** mentioned the following measures in dealing with her challenges, she maintains that she just leads her subordinates by example; and she has a sound relationship with all the stakeholders. A good relationship with teachers helps in instilling responsibility among teachers. In most cases, teachers that are

empowered by an SMT to run the school are likely to have a feeling that the responsibility of managing the school should be shared between the SMT members and the teachers. This can only be sustained when there was a sound and responsible relationship between teachers and SMT members.

**4.19.2.2. Application of the South African Schools Act**

SMT members, such as **II2**, further mentioned that by aligning their work with the SASA document, they make their work easier.

This participant was quoted as saying:

*I always consult to have more information; and always work in line with SASA and be conversant with the contents of legislature.*

Using SASA as a guideline in school management assists schools to have a uniform approach on how schools should be governed. The funding of the school is very critical in this context. However, members of SMTs have the responsibility to familiarise themselves with the SASA document and other policy documents, to ensure the smooth running of the school.

**Table 28: Focus-group interviewees’ response to measures to be put in place to overcome SMTs’ challenges**

Sub-themes	Main issues raised
<b>The role of trade unions in schools</b>	Limitations of unions in schools
	Applying SACE rules

**4.19.3. The role of trade unions in schools**

The responsibility of unions in school is to protect the employment rights of educators’ in schools. It becomes a problem when union leadership does not know the role to play in schools. SMT members have raised the following issues when alluding to the role of unions in schools:

#### **4.19.3.1. *Limitation of unions in schools***

In school it was difficult to differentiate between a union chairperson and the school principal or SMT members. This was because union leadership ends up thinking that they have the authority to run the school just like SMT members. The challenge of unions interfering with the school matter was raised by **FG1**. However, it was difficult for this SMT member to come up with some suggestions to overcome this problem. They mentioned that issue of unions was beyond their control; because every staff member has the right to join a union. This needs to be resolved from the top. Therefore, there is a need to clarify for union leaders their limitations in the running of the school.

#### **4.19.3.2. *Applying South African Council of Educators rules***

One of the measures for simplifying management function was through clarifying teachers on the rights and wrongs of the teaching profession. According to **FG2**, applying SACE rules was one measure whereby members of SMT would be able to clarify for teachers the values of the profession – with the view of teachers being able to manage themselves through self-reflection. If teachers know all the rules of SACE, and what was expected of them, they would be able to fulfil their functions, as expected; and this would make the work of the SMT easier.

**FG1** also mentioned that the SACE rules, as outlined above, assisted them to manage teachers and all the activities related to school management. Consequently, it is important for SMT members to familiarise teachers with the SACE rules, wherever this is possible, and to provide each teacher with the SACE booklet.

#### **4.20. MAIN FINDINGS ON THEME 8**

Theme 8 was based on the requisite measures to be put in place to overcome SMTs' challenges. The main findings were summarized under the following headings: supervision of educators, which involves records of absent educators, communication with educators, replacement of absent educators, and leaving teachers to do as they please; leading by example, which involves SMTs' relations with educators and the application of SASA; and the role that unions in schools play. This involves the limitation

of unions in schools by applying the SACE rules. All these measures are discussed and analyzed in Chapter 5.

#### **4.21. THEME 9: SMTS’ MEETINGS AND THE CHALLENGES THEY EXPERIENCE**

Sometimes it is important for members of SMT in school to come together and discuss what each of the SMT has experienced in the area of their specialisation. It helps to share ideas, and to come up with a common approach by conducting self-reflection. In this study, SMT members were asked if they sometimes meet as SMT members to discuss the challenges they experience in their practice. The tables below illustrate the themes and issues raised by members of SMT, when responding to the challenges they face during their management meetings.

**Table 29: Questerview responses to SMTs’ meetings and the challenges they experience**

<b>Sub-themes</b>	<b>Main issues raised</b>
<b>Regular management meetings</b>	Clarifying issues and challenges within SMT, Progress reporting and implementation
	Delegation and assigning of responsibilities
<b>Curriculum development for special schools</b>	Catering for the needs of learners, aligning curriculum to the level of the learners

##### **4.21.1. Regular management meetings**

For the school to function well there should be regular meetings, in which management issues are discussed. When members of SMT in the Capricorn District were discussing regular management meetings, the following issues were raised:

###### **4.21.1.1. Clarifying issues and challenges within SMT**

During management meetings, SMT members are able to discuss and clarify issues in their school management team. Such gatherings assist them to solve their problems. The management of schools requires a lot of decision-making and workshop attendance. Therefore, it was through meetings that members of SMT can come together and reflect

on their work, and be able to improve. **QV1**, in responding to this question, mentioned that as SMT members they meet regularly to discuss the challenges that face them and the school as a whole. It should be beneficial because there may be different viewpoints that could finally culminate in one common view. **QV2** also responded that in their school they meet constantly to reflect on their own work, and to discuss the challenges that they encounter – in order to develop one another.

**QV6** further mentioned that meeting as SMT members strengthens their relationships, as they communicate together on the challenges that each of them experience, helping each other how to overcome those challenges, moving forward to achieve their goals, involving educators and learners. All these responses show that through meetings, SMT members are able to work as a team, and move their school forward.

#### ***4.21.1.2. Progress reporting and implementation***

Under normal circumstances, a school should have an operational plan; and they call it the school-improvement plan in the context of schooling. **QV4** mentioned that in their school they meet as SMT members and discuss their plans; and they also check whether they are achieving their goal, or not.

**QV3** further mentioned that for their goals to be achieved, there should be plan discussions, and the reviewing of its implementation during the meetings. Furthermore, in the management team, members, such as the principal should always attend meetings and workshops from the district and provincial office. For that reason, SMT members should meet, so that the school representative could report to the team – before the matter is taken for discussion to the entire staff.

#### ***4.21.1.3. Delegation and assigning of responsibilities***

A normal school should operate in an organised way. **QV1** mentioned that as an SMT member, she has the responsibility to ensure that things are planned well in advance for all school activities. This means that they should meet as a team and list all the activities that are to take place in the school.

**QV3** mentioned that:

*As an SMT member, my responsibility is to respond to all the invites by the Department of Basic Education. In case of workshops I delegate members that will attend and also give them the responsibility of reporting back to the entire staff.*

It was through meetings that all these activities could be done well – without compromising. Furthermore, during meetings, staff members may choose and agree about their representation in certain activities. Therefore, it was important for SMT members not to dictate, but rather to meet all the staff members and come to agreement on all the issues raised.

#### **4.21.1.4. Curriculum development for special schools**

SMT members in special schools mentioned that they experience the challenge of designing a curriculum suitable for their schools. This was a very serious challenge; and they raised it in several meetings with the district office. Furthermore, it becomes worse because SMT are not trained as curriculum developers, but rather as teachers or school managers. The following issues were raised when SMT members were debating curriculum issues in special schools:

#### **4.21.1.5. Catering for the needs of learners**

The kind of curriculum that was taught in schools does not cater for the needs of those learners living with disabilities; since this was designed for main-stream schools. Members of SMT in this school raised this as challenge experienced in their management functions. Furthermore, SMT members also faced a challenge of addressing the needs of learners through curriculum delivery. This means that they should reflect on the current curriculum, and collectively decide what learners need to learn. Because of the severity of learners' disabilities, it becomes difficult for SMT members to come up with a curriculum that would cater to the needs of all learners.

According to **QV2**, members of SMTs need to be work-shopped on how to carry out their management functions and responsibilities. **QV3** mentioned that working in a special school was a barrier to her; and because of the kind of learners with whom they are working, this limits their performance. This participant suggested that if the department

were to design curricula suitable for special schools that would make their work easier as SMT members of special schools.

This participant further mentioned that:

*I think first of all there must be something like a curriculum for special schools; specifically because we are just using curriculum from the mainstream, and trying to accommodate our learners, trying to simplify everything, and to bring everything to the lowest level, so that they could understand easily; but there is a curriculum set specifically for special schools. I think that would help a lot, so that it could also boost us to become active again; because you become discouraged when you try doing things on your own. Then, you would have something that would always support you.*

Teachers in special schools need to be supported when it comes to curriculum development. If teachers were to be developed, they might be able to design curricula suitable to all the learners they teach.

#### **4.21.1.6. Aligning the curriculum with the level of the learners**

Since curricula that were used in special schools were not initially designed for special schools, **QV3** mentioned that there is a need for such curricula to be aligned with the level of learners in special schools. **QV2** further mentioned that they experience a challenge to align those curricula used to the level of their learners; since they are not trained in that aspect. This was the challenge that SMT members are facing, because they are not skilled to carry out such activities. Regardless of the lack of skills, the teachers they manage are looking to them to provide solutions for the problems they come across, be they teaching and learning-related issues, or curriculum-related matters. Therefore, it becomes a challenge for SMT members to operate in such schools.

**Table 30: Individual interviewees’ responses to SMTs’ meetings and the challenges they experience**

Sub-theme	Main issues raised
Being a reflective and proactive SMT	Submission dates,
	Protocol

**4.21.2. Being a reflective and proactive SMT member**

SMT members that are reflective and proactive should make sure that they have clear programmes that outline how they are going operate for the entire year. Furthermore, when members of SMT were discussing the issues related to their practice, they raised the following points:

**4.21.2.1. Submission dates**

Among other responsibilities of SMT members, the issue of submission dates was also vital for functional schools. In a school, there are documents that need to be submitted either at the circuit office, or at the district office. **II2** mentioned that part of her responsibility was to make sure that the school does not miss any submission date. It was her duty to table all the submissions, and also to make sure that all issues are done right on time. SMT members should discuss key dates during the meetings, by prioritizing them, according to what must come first. Furthermore, they should also discuss and assign responsibility to certain members, in order to ensure effective and efficient running of the process.

**4.21.2.2. Protocol**

Protocol is a general term that is important in most organizations. In the context of schooling, SMT members should be aware of all the procedures for reporting.

II3 mentioned that:

*It is during SMT meetings that such procedures can be discussed and clarified for all the SMTs. Within the school-management team there is a lot of protocol to*

*which SMTs should adhere. For instance, teachers may not report their work to the circuit manager or to the school principal. They should know where to submit what, and when to submit. Under normal circumstances, teachers report to their HOD; and then the HODs report to the deputy principals; and the deputy principal reports to the school principal.*

The outlined procedures are those that take place in the school setting. It was important for protocol to be known and followed in a school. **II5** mentioned that there are certain submissions that are submitted outside the school. He further mentioned that it was important for SMT members to be familiar with those submissions that are taking place outside the school. For instance, the school principals submit and report to the circuit manager; and then the circuit manager reports to the district manager. Therefore, it was important to ensure that both SMT members and teachers in a school know the procedures – be they for submission – or for the launching of grievances.

**Table 31: Focus-group interviewees’ responses to SMTs’ meetings and the challenges they face**

Sub-theme	Main issues raised
SMTs’ work-load	Reducing paper work for SMTs
	Teaching load of SMTs

#### **4.21.3. SMTS’ work load**

The issue of SMTs’ workload was a very debateable issue in South Africa. Most of the SMT members had worked as teachers before they were promoted to management positions. However, despite the fact that they are currently in management positions, they are still doing some teaching in their own schools, as well as paper work. When responding to the issue of work-load, the issue of the paper work and the teaching load were emphasised as follows:

#### **4.21.3.1. Reducing paper work for SMT members**

The introduction of Outcomes Based Education came with a lot of paper work.

II7 mentioned that:

*It was difficult for us as SMTs to perform because of all the paper work. I think our job should be that of the manager, not like administrators.*

The issue of paperwork has caused an outcry from the teacher's unions and other stakeholders for Department of Basic Education (DBE) to reduce the paper work in schools. Due to the reluctance of the DBE to reduce the paper work, SMT members should find a way of reducing the paper work. Some of the participants, such as **II10** mentioned the use of technology to reduce the paper work. However, SMT members could also experience a challenge if they do not have the requisite skills to use technology.

#### **4.21.3.2. Teaching load of SMT members**

In South Africa, SMT members are also expected to teach in class if the need arises. However, such responsibilities tend to affect management's work; since it also requires time. It is the responsibility of SMT members to discuss such matters during their meetings, and to be able to come up with a solution for the problem. For instance, **FG1** mentioned that in their schools, they had a policy that indicated the maximum number of subjects to be taught by SMT members – depending on the nature of the position they occupied. For instance, school principals were only allowed to teach one subject in the context of their school.

### **4.22. MAIN FINDINGS ON THEME 9**

Theme 9 was based on SMTs' meetings and the challenges they experience. The main findings can be summarized under the following headings: regular management meetings, which involve the clarifying of issues and challenges within SMT; progress reporting and implementation; curriculum development for special schools, which involves catering for the needs of the learners, aligning curricula to the level of the

learners; being a reflective and proactive SMT member, which involves submission dates and protocol; and SMTs' workload, which involves reducing the paperwork for SMT members, and the teaching load for SMT members. The above-mentioned challenges are discussed and analyzed in Chapter 5 of this study.

#### **4.23. THEME 10: THE IMPORTANCE OF SELF-REFLECTION IN IMPROVING SMTS' PRACTICE**

The practice of self-reflection assists SMT members to improve on their work, which is the management of the school. School Management Teams were also asked to respond on how best self-reflection assists them to improve their practice. When members of the SMT responded, the following issues were raised with emerging sub-themes:

**Table 32: Questerview responses on the importance of self-reflection in improving SMTS' practice**

<b>Sub-themes</b>	<b>Main issues raised</b>
<b>Opportunity for self-growth</b>	Addressing the weaknesses
	History will never repeat itself

##### **4.23.1. Opportunity for self-growth**

Self-reflection has the advantage of developing individual School Management Team members. However, such growth goes with individual commitment and efforts. When members of SMT were discussing the issue of self-growth, they raised the following points as being critical for their personal growth:

##### **4.23.1.1. Addressing their weaknesses**

Before SMT members can engage in the process of self-growth, they need to know about the areas that seem to be grey in their practice. The first stage of self-growth is to self-reflect, followed by identification of weaknesses; and then the last one is addressing such weaknesses.

**QV1** mentioned that:

*It was very important after all reflection to check how best I can make an improvement, I mean today I must not be the same as yesterday. I need to keep on improving and one way of improving is know how I have done my part.*

In other words, SMT members need to reflect on their practice, in order to identify just where their performance is not so good. Furthermore, they need to find the best way of dealing with their problems.

#### **4.23.1.2. History will never repeat itself**

The way schools are managed in this 21<sup>st</sup> century, could never be the same as how schools were managed during the 1970s, or during the 1980s. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the SMT members to reflect on the mistakes that were committed in the past, and make sure that history does not repeat itself. **QV3** mentioned that for him not to repeat the same mistakes that were done in the past, he would check the documents on how the school was managed, and also the financial part of it, in order to know how to improve. Part of the past's reflection could comprise consultation with the former SMT members in the school – so that they could explain how things were done previously, in order to avoid repeating similar mistakes.

This was very important for those SMT members who are passionate about their work, and always strive to do the best.

**Table 33: Individual interviewees' response on the importance of self-reflection in improving SMTs' practice**

<b>Sub-theme</b>	<b>Main issues raised</b>
<b>Quality School management Teams</b>	Development of SMT members
	Moving in the right direction
	Reflection as a monitoring tool

#### **4.23.2. Quality school management teams**

The concept of quality can be measured in different ways. In the context of this study, SMTs are measured by the discipline in school, and also by the pass rate of the school. However, when SMT members were commenting on the quality of SMTs, they mentioned the following:

##### ***4.23.2.1. Development of SMT members***

It came across very strongly that the practice of self-reflection results in the development of SMT members. In Chapter 2 of this study it was discussed that the main purpose of self-reflection is personal improvement. **II13** agreed that self-reflection is important for the development of school managers.

He mentioned that:

*Yes, it is necessary, because that's when you look at your footprints – where you have been stepping, you can see the previous mistakes; so that tomorrow you would be able to change.*

Reflecting on **II13**'s responses, it means that whenever SMT members identify any area of weakness, they must also try and find a way of addressing it. It could be argued that the main purpose of self-reflection is to improve oneself and one's work. In the context of this study, the main purpose of self-reflection is to reflect on the management practices – and be able to fulfil their own management functions.

##### ***4.23.2.2. Moving in the right direction***

One of the most important issues that self-reflection addresses, is to determine whether members of SMTs are moving in the right direction, or not. For that reason, SMTs need to reflect on their plans, and to be able to see whether the plan they have in place was taking their school in the right direction. Self-reflection enables one to cultivate a vision on how the future should look. **II3** also agreed that self-reflection is important for the development of the school management team.

She mentioned that:

*Yes, yes, definitely it is very important; because as an educator, you must have this period, so that if you are the one who is not moving in the right direction; and you will quickly divert and go in the correct direction; and some of the people could even outsource and ask for some advice from anyone.*

The process of self-reflection should be followed by action. For instance, if an SMT member realises that he was moving in the wrong direction, there would clearly be a need to change, and move in the right direction. In other words, a reflective practitioner should be flexible enough to allow for changes, if this needs be.

#### **4.23.2.3. Reflection as a monitoring tool**

Being in a School Management Team one was expected to fulfil certain functions and responsibilities. However, it becomes difficult for SMT members to fulfil their functions if they are not guided by any monitoring tool. Therefore, the practice of self-reflection may serve as a monitoring tool; since it always reminds SMT members of their practices; and it also serves to identify those areas where they have done well, and those where they did not do well.

Both **FG1** and **FG2** believe that self-reflection is important for their practice; because this process would assist them to identify their mistakes, and be able to improve. In other words, these participants value this monitoring tool (self-reflection) because it always gives them the opportunity to improve in their own practice.

**Table 34: Focus-group interviewees' response on the importance of self-reflection in improving SMTs' practice**

<b>Sub-themes</b>	<b>Main issues raised</b>
<b>New initiatives in schools</b>	New leadership strategies
<b>Reflection vs a bright future</b>	Bridging the gap between the past and the future

### **4.23.3. New initiatives in schools**

Suggesting new initiatives in one's school is one way of showing the functionality and moving forwards in the school. The practice of self-reflection results in new initiatives that might well assist in school improvement. When SMT members were responding to the issue of coming up with new initiations in schools, they raised the following issues:

#### **4.23.3.1. New leadership strategies**

According to **FG1**, the practice of self-reflection enables SMT members to review their own leadership strategies, and to check whether the strategy would assist the school to reach the goal set. **FG1** further emphasised that if the school has set the goal to achieve a hundred per cent pass rate; then, for example, the leadership and management strategies should also be in line, or contributing to the attainment of such goal. Usually, the kind of leadership strategy that is open would encourage teachers to be free to come up with their own initiatives, and to be able to achieve the goal set.

To support this, **FG2** mentioned that:

*Yes, I think it is very important because it helps you to come up with new strategies, and to say this is the situation: "I was like this today; I am like this; and let me.... Yaa! To keep the ball rolling".*

SMT members that are reflective would always want to know how other people view his leadership style, and be able come up with a strategy that would cater for each and everyone in a school. In other words, self-reflection is associated with good practice and an eagerness to improve.

#### **4.23.3.2. Reflection vs a bright future**

The practice of self-reflection could set up a bright future for the school. This is because what is weak today could be addressed and improved in the future. When SMT members were deliberating on issues of reflection; they mentioned the issue of bridging the gap between the past and the future.

#### **4.23.3.3. Bridging the gap between the past and the future**

Self-reflection was practiced in such a way that one looks at the activity that has already happened with the view to improve in the future. This means that such self-reflection was done, in order to bridge the gap between the past and the future. The way members of SMTs look at the past should serve to complement how they are going to approach their future.

**FG1** stated that self-reflection is very important; because it ought to be part and parcel of human development and empowerment in the future.

**FG2** further mentioned that:

*We think it is very important, after every quarterly examination, after exams, we sit and discuss the performance of the children, why did they fail maths? Why did they fail so much? Such information helps us to have a future plan for our school.*

Reflecting on **FG2**'s view, the purpose of self-reflection was to collect the information that might be used in the future – in order to improve their practice. In other words, whatever weakness was identified could be used to shape the future. Therefore, it may well be argued that self-reflection prepares the way for a bright future; and in the context of this study, self-reflection should result in good management practices that would fulfil all the management functions.

#### **4.24. MAIN FINDINGS ON THEME 10**

Theme 10 was based on the importance of self-reflection for improving SMTs' practice. The main findings were summarized under the following headings: An opportunity to grow, which involves addressing the weaknesses. History would never repeat itself; quality school-management teams, which involve the development of SMTs, moving in the right direction, and reflection as a monitoring tool; new initiatives in schools, which involve new leadership strategies; and reflection vs a bright future, which involves bridging the gap between the past and the future. The discussions and the analyses on these themes are done, and reflected on, in Chapter 5 of this study.

#### 4.25. THEME 11: SMTs' TRAINING IN SELF-REFLECTIVE PRACTICES

The practice of self-reflection requires certain skills if it was to be done in a proper manner. Therefore, there was a need for SMT members to be trained on how to reflect on their practice. The table below illustrates some of the views presented by members of SMTs with various issues of concern.

**Table 35: Questerview responses on SMTs' training in self-reflective practices**

Sub-themes	Main issues raised
A need for SMTs' training in self-reflection	Initial training
	In-service training.

##### 4.25.1. A need for SMTs' training in self-reflection

The process of self-reflection turned out to be new for some of the SMT members. Therefore, there was a need for SMT members to be trained on how to practise self-reflection. When members of SMT were deliberating on this matter, they mentioned the following training areas to be crucial in their context:

###### 4.25.1.1. Initial training

Initial training in the context of this study referred to the kind of training in which SMT members should be trained before they are appointed to the management positions. **QV1** mentioned that she was never trained on how to reflect on her practice when she was appointed in her position. She just used her experience to consult with a nearby school on how to reflect on their practice, especially with whole-school evaluation, which was a very critical component of self-reflection.

In addition **QV3** mentioned that:

*After the interviews, I was told that since I had managed to pass my interview that means I can also run a school. However, there was no official training on how to reflect on one's practice.*

Because of their initial training, SMT members are frequently unable to improve their practice; because they do not know of the correct approach to use to judge their own practice. Initial training on self-reflection should form part of induction of the newly appointed school managers.

**4.25.1.2. In-service training**

In-service training is the kind of training that could be provided to members of SMTs that are already in the practice of school management. Such training should give SMT members the requisite knowledge on how best they could benefit from self-reflection; and most importantly, how best they could practise such reflection. Participants, such as **QV5** further mentioned that he needs training to improve his practice. Reflecting on **QV5**'s sentiment, in-service training may assist SMT members to improve their performance and improve the school results in the schools of Capricorn District.

**Table 36: Individual interviewees' response on SMTs training in self-reflective practices**

Sub-themes	Main issues raised
Support and monitoring	Becoming a daily reflective practitioner
	Meeting the expectation

**4.25.2. Supporting and monitoring**

The practice of self-reflection may be difficult for someone without experience and knowledge on how to do it. Therefore, SMT members need to be supported and monitored all the time. The following issue were raised by the participants during the individual interviews:

**4.25.2.1. Becoming a daily reflective practitioner**

On the national template of the lesson plan, there is a portion that requires teachers to reflect on their practice, which is teaching after each and every lesson. This means that teachers plan their lessons on a daily basis. However, when it comes to members of

SMTs there is no official way of doing their self-reflection. II1 mentioned that they also need training on how to perform their reflective practice; because currently they do not have common approach. They just use their own criteria to reflect on their management activities.

Furthermore, II2 mentioned that:

*Yes, I think as SMT if can be maybe work-shopped; or with more information, we would be able to impart this knowledge to the educators. You know that even in your preparation of lessons that is where you have to reflect. Some of the educators you can see that they don't understand what is the question, maybe if we were able to improve their knowledge.*

For SMT members to become a daily reflective practitioner, it requires voluntary efforts of such SMTs to strive to improve their practice. However, there is a need for SMTs to be provided with documents that would assist them when learning such reflective practices. Furthermore, they should also be trained on self-reflection, especially newly appointed SMT members.

#### **4.25.2.2. Meeting the expectation**

Each and every SMT member in school was expected to meet certain expectations, regardless of the position they occupy in the school-management team.

II11 mentioned that:

*As an HOD, I am expected to make sure that my department is functional. In order to meet my expectations, I make sure that I set expectations for teachers that are working within my department.*

It was important for SMT members to go the extra mile to meet their expectations. In the context of the study, meeting expectations was regarded as fulfilling management functions. However, members of SMT find it difficult to meet these expectations, because of poor reflective practices. If SMT members were supported and monitored in the practice of self-reflection, they would be able to fulfil their functions and expectations.

**Table 37: Focus-group interviewees’ response on SMT training in self-reflective practices**

Sub-theme	Main issues raised
Transfer of knowledge	Train the trainer workshops
	Researching new models of self-reflection

### **4.25.3. Transfer of knowledge**

Transfer of knowledge was one way that professionals, such as teachers, exchange knowledge from one to another. Two main issues were raised when it comes to the transfer of knowledge:

#### **4.25.3.1. Train the trainer workshop**

In a school setting, the principal serve as chairperson of the School-Management Team. Therefore, it was expected that as chairperson of the team (SMT) and head of the school, they would have some knowledge on the practice of self-reflection. **QV1** mentioned that as SMT members, they expect the school principal to arrange workshops to train other members of SMT on the best practice of self-reflection. Such workshops could be facilitated internally by any member with some knowledge and experience of reflective practice.

The knowledge could be transferred to SMT members that would be expected to train teachers (train the trainer). Furthermore, the principal could possibly outsource someone from outside in those cases, if there was no one in the school with such skills. However, what was important was that members of the SMT should be trained so that they can also train others, particularly on the issue of self-reflection.

#### **4.25.3.2. Researching new models of self-reflection**

Research was one way that professionals can find out about the new trends in their discipline, and then be able to improve. In the context of schooling, one of the roles of an

educator is that of the researcher, and a life-long learner. Some participants, mentioned that they did not need training on how to practise self-reflection; but they only needed to do some research on how to practise it.

To support this, **FG1** mentioned that:

*I don't think I need training, but it is necessary for persons to learn each and everyday; because I think there are models and new knowledge on it, so can't say whatever I learnt in 2005 or 2006 is complete and nothing new has come, discoveries are happening, there are researchers, so you always need to learn if you can't be trained yourself on it.*

When it comes to self-reflection, SMT members should do some research on the best practices, and find a way of integrating it into to their management function. However, it was important that SMT members be honest when they research and reflect on their own practices. Therefore, it may be argued that if SMT members are honest about the practice of their self-reflection, they would research and find some new ways of managing their schools.

#### **4.26. MAIN FINDINGS ON THEME 11**

Theme 11 was based on SMTs' training on self-reflective practices. The main findings are summarised under the following headings: There was a need for SMTs' training in self-reflection, which includes initial training and in-service training; support and monitoring, which involves becoming a daily reflective practitioner, meeting the expectation; and transfer of knowledge, which involves training of the trainer workshop, researching new models of self-reflection. The above-mentioned issues will be discussed and analysed in Chapter 5 of this study.

#### **4.27. THEME 12: THE EXTENT TO WHICH SMTS ARE SUPPORTED IN SELF-REFLECTION**

If self-reflection was to be expected of SMT members, we also have to measure the extent of the support they get, when it comes to self-reflection. The table below illustrates some

of the views of SMT members and their issues of concern, when it comes to the support they get for self-reflection.

**Table 38: Questerview responses on the extent to which SMTs are supported in self-reflection**

Sub-theme	Main issues raised
<b>Support related to SMT development</b>	Lack of training for acting SMT members

#### **4.27.1. Support related to SMT development**

The kind of support SMT members get – from the district office determines the kind of success and development for their SMT. However, it was the responsibility of the Department of Basic Education to ensure that the members of SMTs are trained holistically – when it comes to self-reflection and any other management matters. When SMT members were deliberating on matters of self-reflection and the kind of support they get, the following issues were raised:

##### **4.27.1.1. Lack of training for acting SMT members**

All members of the staff that are performing management duties are supposed to be trained in the practice of self-reflection, in order to improve their work. However, members of SMT in the Capricorn District have raised the concern that during the training of new SMT members. They complained that department does not invite SMT members that are on a voluntary basis. This results in poor performance; because they are unable to reflect on their practice and improve.

To support this, participants, such as **QV4** mentioned that he has never been invited for any training.

This participant was quoted verbatim as saying:

*You see I am in an SMT in an acting capacity; and in most cases you know what the department does? Over the period of time they can place an advertisement for*

*the post; and they will employ people permanently in these posts; and after that they will organise in-service training or induction programmes, you see; that's when the people teach them how to do this things, and if the workshop teaches you how to execute your job, then you can be seen, or you would be able to check whether you have done it in a manner that you have been trained. So, I think that I would say they.....but those that are in acting capacity like myself, normally we don't undergo that.*

Reflecting on this response, the Department of Basic Education regards members that are employed on a permanent basis as SMT members; and those only acting in a temporary capacity are neglected; and this affects the quality of education in the province, and also the results. This is a serious concern because most of the schools in the Capricorn District are managed by SMT members that were on a temporary basis. Therefore, the lack of support for such members results in poor practices and management of schools.

**Table 39: Individual interviewees' response on the extent to which SMTs are supported in self-reflection**

<b>Sub-theme</b>	<b>Main issues raised</b>
<b>Support from the district office</b>	The role of curriculum advisors
	School visits by curriculum advisors

#### **4.27.2. Support from the district office**

Schools rely on the district office for support. In other words, the district office should have all basic skills that schools may need in order to survive. When SMT members were asked about the kind of support they get from district office, they raised the following issues:

##### **4.27.2.1. The role of curriculum advisors**

The role of curriculum advisor was that of advising schools on issues of curriculum and other related matters. **II12** mentioned that they find it difficult, as SMT members, because

curriculum advisors visit their schools without knowing their roles; and they end up judging what their teachers are doing instead of supporting them. In most cases, curriculum advisors forget their role when visiting schools; and they criticise teachers' work, instead of providing them with support. Such criticism results into confusion on the side of teachers and SMT members.

#### **4.27.2.2. School visits by curriculum advisors**

School visits by curriculum advisor were revealed to be a challenge in this district. Some SMT members, like **II13**, mentioned that they sometimes spend a year without being visited by any curriculum advisor. The practice of self-reflection requires a lot of support – especially for those SMT members who are not experienced. **II9** further mentioned that due to the understaffing of curriculum advisors in the district; they are frequently unable to reach all the schools in the district.

Some of the participants, like **II7**, also complained about the monitoring tool that was initially used to check their performance, as being that of a failure.

He further mentioned that:

*The monitoring tool still doesn't work. Yes, they guide us; but what do I think if they come to visit us regularly? Maybe it would help us; because if they don't come, we don't know whether we are doing well or not. So, we wish that they came to our school regularly.*

Reflecting on the responses of these participants, it became clear that SMT members are confused; because they were not visited for support; and this result in too many problems, such as poor reflective practice. Therefore, it may be argued that SMT members did not fulfil their functions in this district because of their poor reflective practices. Poor reflective practices result in SMT members being unable to identify those functions that were left out; and this results in poor management practices.

**Table 40: Focus-group interviewees’ response on the extent that SMT members are supported in self-reflection**

Sub-theme	Main issues raised
Poor facilitation skills	Lack of knowledge on self-reflection
	Lack of funds to outsource external facilitators

### **4.27.3. Poor facilitation skills**

Facilitation skills are very important when it comes to the transfer of skills and the support of SMTs for development. There are many reasons for poor facilitation skills. SMT members’ associated poor facilitation was revealed because of the following:

#### **4.27.3.1. Lack of knowledge on self-reflection**

The practice of self-reflection became fairly common after the introduction of Outcomes-Based Education. Therefore, for SMT members that were trained under the old system, this was difficult for such members to practice it. **FG1** mentioned that during their training as school managers they were not trained on how to perform self-reflection. Since ACE programme was a new qualification, he suggested that they should have included such information in the qualification. Based on the criterion that for one to qualify for a management position, one would need to have a certain number of years of teaching experience, the majority of SMT members are old people, who joined the education fraternity a long time ago.

The issue of lack of knowledge escalates from the school context to the district level.

**FG2** mentioned that:

*Most of the candidates who are sent by the department of basic education to train SMT members also lack knowledge, when it comes to self-reflection. As a result, we attend workshop, but still come out of the workshops even more frustrated.*

There was a need for the Department of Basic Education to find suitable people with adequate self-reflective knowledge to assist schools in Capricorn District with training and workshops. In other words, self-reflection specialists in this regard might be sourced out and be able to train SMT members.

#### **4.27.3.2. Lack of funds to outsource external facilitators**

Most of the schools in Limpopo Province experience a challenge of limited resources and they lack funds. This challenge affects the quality of education. **FG1** mentioned that most of the good external self-reflection facilitators are expensive; as a result, their schools are unable to invite them over for their training. It would be helpful for the Department of Basic Education to allocate schools some funds for personal development. Poor support systems in the schools of Capricorn District result in too many problems. According to **FG2**, as SMT members they do not get any support from the circuit (both financially and professionally); since they are co-opted to the management positions.

According to this participant, even though they are doing management duties, officially they are not known as HODs; and this result in poor reflective practice on their side.

#### **4.28. MAIN FINDINGS ON THEME 12**

Theme 12 was based on the extent that SMT members are supported in self-reflection. In order to measure this kind of support, the main findings are summarized under the following headings: Support related to SMT development, which involves a lack of training for acting members of SMT; support from the district office, which involves the role of curriculum advisors, school visits by curriculum advisors; and poor facilitation skills, which involve a lack of knowledge about self-reflection, lack of funds to outsource external facilitators. All these themes are discussed and analysed in Chapter 5 of this study.

#### **4.29. SUMMARY**

This chapter was based on the data presentation, in which the data were presented verbatim, after being transcribed directly from the individual interviews, questerviews and focus-group interviews. In making sense of the information and the responses, themes were identified and used as guidelines for a discussion of the findings. This will be done in the next chapter. The next chapter is based on the analysis of the results, by comparing and confirming what the relevant literature said in Chapter 2.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS**

#### **5.1. INTRODUCTION**

The previous chapter was based on the data presentation and the identification of the emerged themes. In Chapter 4 the background information on school-management teams was also presented as a table that illustrated the representatives of gender, the nature of the school and the experiences of SMT members. Furthermore, the participants were given pseudo names, which the researcher used throughout the study. The next chapter now focuses on the interpretation, a discussion, together with an analysis of the data thematically in line the sub-research questions the study sought to answer.

The purpose of the study was to establish the self-reflection practices employed by SMT members when performing their school-management functions; and it suggests a suitable self-reflective model for the enhancement of SMT performance. The findings of this study are discussed, according to the emerged themes from the sub-research questions that guided the study.

#### **5.2. THE MAIN ISSUES THAT WERE FOUND**

Self-reflective practices; functions and responsibilities of SMTs; challenges which constrain SMTs from performing their functions; and measures to put in place to overcome these challenges.

##### **5.2.1. Self-reflective practices and enhanced performance**

Reflecting on the practice of self-reflection by school-management teams (SMT), the study revealed that there was no common approach on how to practise self-reflection in Capricorn district. This resulted in many problems and considerable confusion. Furthermore, the study found that SMT members understood self-reflection as a process that involves planning, checking, action and success. In other words, during the process of self-reflection, SMT members should be able to plan their work, check if they have planned well, take action to implement whatever was planned, and reflect on the success

of the action taken. Reflecting from this perspective, self-reflection was regarded as a process rather than an activity. It was discussed in Chapter 2, that self-reflection is applied in a cyclical or spiralling process, in which the SMT monitors, evaluates and revises its own practice. Cunningham (2007) holds the same view; as he understands self-reflection to be a continuous cycle of self-observation and self-reflection. Reflecting on the similarities based on Cunningham's views and the present study, self-reflection was regarded as a process rather than an activity.

However, the present study further investigates the process of reflection via the fulfilment of SMTs' functions. This means that SMT members should reflect on their functions and make sure that they fulfil whatever was expected of them. In support of this, Henderson (1992) emphasised in his theory on ethical enquiry that reflective managers are experts who know the management styles, and are able to reflect on their own work and fulfil their duties and responsibilities.

From the study it emerged that self-reflection was grounded on the past experiences. By using their past experiences, SMT members were able to learn from their past to improve their current reflective practices. This concurs with the argument advanced in Chapter 2 by Kolb (2009) – that reflecting on past experiences helps individuals to improve their actions and professional practice. Reflecting on previous experiences also involves examining how matters were previously handled; how decisions were taken; and the extent of the success or failure thereof. It also emerged from this study that SMT members regard reflective practice as a working model of development that can be accessed via introspection. Gabriel (2008) holds the same view that when discussing the events that SMT members have experienced, colleagues describe what happened; and this benefits the manager being observed; while at the same time, they examine their own experiences and come up with their own theories of practice.

This means that it was through self-reflection participants identify those areas in which they lack; and they can improve them.

From the discussion above, it can be inferred that the main aim of self-reflection was for professional growth. Therefore, self-reflection rectifies the mistakes that already

happened during the management process. It was further highlighted that the process of self-reflection provides SMT members with the opportunity to look back and identify their strengths and weaknesses. Therefore, it is very important for members of SMT to be honest when practising their reflection; because it is only through honesty that they can truly introspect themselves and improve their practice.

This concurs with an argument advanced by Harris and Brown (2013) that through self-reflection, practitioners can develop a greater level of self-awareness on the nature and impact of their performance. From the discussion above, it may be argued that a true reflective practitioner was someone one who fulfils his or her functions.

From the study, there was a revelation that when self-reflection was done well, one should be in a position to anticipate the end- results. Furthermore, it was revealed that for SMT members to anticipate the end-results in a school, it requires good planning, weekly planning, monthly planning, and yearly planning – or even more. It was important for SMT members to open their mind and follow their plan.

Reflecting on what the study found, it may even be argued that good reflective SMT members should be experts in the school management. In the theoretical framework, Henderson discussed the kind of manager a reflective practitioner was supposed to be. The theory further emphasised that they should be problem-solvers, have a knowledge base; and they should have a love for teaching and managing of a school.

Another area of interest that the study revealed was daily reflection. A daily reflection assists one in making sure that SMT members are always on the right track. It was discussed in the literature review that reflective practitioners are open-minded; and they are responsible for their own actions (Dewey, 2008). Being responsible means that SMT members should consider and accept the consequences of their decisions and the changes they make in their management style, in the learning environment, or in the school culture.

One of the important things that the study revealed boldly was that self-reflection should go with a purpose. In the context of this study, the purpose of self-reflection was to assist SMT members to fulfil their management functions. Furthermore, it was discussed in the

literature that the purpose of self-reflection was for practitioners thereof to engage in a continuous cycle of self-observation and self-evaluation, in order to understand their own actions and the reactions they prompt in others (Cunningham, 2007).

In line with the above discussion, the study found that through self-reflection, school managers are able to revise decisions already taken. It also emerged from the literature that by collecting information about what goes on in our schools, and by analysing and evaluating the information, SMT members should be able to identify and explore their practices and underlying beliefs. Revising the decisions taken; assisting members of SMTs to check whether their decision does not contradict departmental or educational policies.

According to Eisenhart (2011) members of SMT were not only responsible for their own school management; but should be active participants in providing a critical feedback on the educational policy of the State. Being in a management position involves a lot of decision making on a daily basis. Therefore, the process of self-reflection becomes relevant because it allows SMT members to reflect back on their decisions and be able to improve.

The successful practice of self-reflection should always be followed by action. In the context of this study, it was revealed that after reflective practice, SMT members should be able to come up with new management strategies that would allow them to fulfil their functions, as stipulated in their job description. For that reason, past experiences become important for modelling their management strategy, on the basis of their past experiences. It was discussed in the literature that self-reflection rectifies the mistakes that have already happened during the management process. The same line of thought was advanced by Schon (2007), when he identified the three stages of reflection: conscious reflection, criticism and action.

When members of SMT are designing their new management strategies, they need to be mindful of the kind of school they manage, and be able to evaluate their new strategy to check whether it would fit well, and produce positive results. After designing the new management strategy, it was important for SMT members to pilot to test such strategies

in the nearby schools. Positive criticisms are important; because they help one to grow as professionals. Reflective practitioners should act on the comments or criticisms made by others, in order to improve their own strategies for implementation.

Within the SMT fraternity, there are three levels of leadership: Head of Department, Deputy Principal, and school Principal. Based on the position one occupies, there was a need for one to report to his/her seniors. For instance, a Head of Department may report to the Deputy Principal; the Deputy Principal reports to the school Principal; and the Principal would then report to the Circuit Manager. Therefore, it was very important for each of the SMT members to work on the comments they obtained from their seniors to improve their practice.

It was discussed in the literature that self-reflection comprises the integration of theory and practice, a critical process in refining one's artistry or craft in a specific discipline and bringing to the conscious level those practices that are implicit (Schon, 2007). As a result, it was very important for SMT members to work on the comments that are presented in theory and practice. Consequently, from the discussion above it may be argued that the practice of self-reflection should assist SMT members to judge whether whatever that was suggested by the senior was implementable, or not. In the theoretical framework, Henderson (1992) argued that reflective practitioners are receptive of new knowledge; and they regularly learn from their past reflective experiences.

### **5.2.2. Functions of which Deputy Principals were not aware**

The study found that Deputy-Principals were not aware of the following, as part of their functions/responsibilities: Managing quality and securing accountability; and managing the information network, and representing the school. When it comes to the management of quality and accountability, the study has revealed that SMT members were not aware of any procedure and measures for ensuring quality assurance. It further came out from this study that the members SMT were not even aware that ensuring quality and securing accountability were their responsibility. In this regard, SMT members are in contradiction of what the Department of Basic Education expects from them. It was discussed in Chapter 2 of this study that according to the Department of Basic Education (2012), the

deputy principal should ensure quality assurance of the learning environment by consolidating class visit reports from the Heads of Departments, and following up on concerns through targeted class visits in support of the teacher, and in order to improve teaching and learning in the school. From the discussion above, it may be argued that Deputy-Principals need training on the issues of quality assurance in schools. Furthermore, there was a need for them to lead by example, and to be accountable for their actions.

In schools where the study was conducted, it was found that there was a lot of sensitive information that was not well-managed in the schools. For that reason, the study found that Deputy-Principals did not know how to manage information, or how to network with other schools and represent their school. These discoveries further revealed the confusion of functions and responsibilities between the Principals and the Deputy-Principals. To clear up the confusion between the Principals and Deputy Principals, it was discussed in the literature that the Deputy Principals should manage sensitive information, particularly learners' and teachers' personnel files; and also to ensure that sensitive learners' and teachers' information was properly maintained, stored and accessible to those authorised to view such information.

Reflecting on the discussion above, it may be argued that for Deputy Principals to fulfil this role they should liaise with the different sections of the department concerning administration and management, personal, financial, and other information in a school that might be regarded as sensitive. Therefore, it could be argued that the deputy-principal needs to be trained on all their functions; and they should be allocated a document that lists all their functions in the school management environment.

### **5.2.3. Functions that HODS were not aware**

With regard to the functions of HODs in schools, the study found that most HODs were aware of their functions; since they operated at the departmental level. However, there was one function that was apparently unclear to them. HODs were not aware that they had the responsibility to manage scholars' transport.

In their argument, they referred to the responsibility as being, and as the one that should be handled solely by the school Principal. However, Personnel Administrative Management (1999) document outlines their functions; and this issue was reviewed and discussed in Chapter 2 of this study. One function that was found to be common to most of the HODs was that of promoting teaching and learning in the school.

In most cases, HODs operate within a subject, department or phase assigned to them. Therefore, it could be argued that their only function was to make sure that there was teaching and learning in their department. In order to promote quality teaching in schools, teachers are expected to plan their work on a daily basis (lesson plan); to have their annual planning in their subjects (work schedule); and also to have a phase plan for their subject (learning programme: three-year plan).

Therefore, it was the responsibility of the HOD to make sure that teachers adhere to all these schedules by checking their files on a weekly or monthly basis. It was also discussed in the literature that HODs should provide guidance on learning programmes/subject frameworks, work schedules, lesson preparations, homework, practical works, and remedial work, etc. (Personnel Administrative Management, 1999).

Besides promoting teaching and learning, the members of an SMT have the responsibility to give direction in school, to guide and supervise both educators and learners. This responsibility differs, depending on the position they occupy. For instance, the Principal would give direction to other SMT members and guide them on how they should perform their duties; while the Deputy Principal would meet with the HODs, in order to guide them and supervise them.

In the context of HODs, they meet with the educators in their departments to motivate them, and to guide and supervise their work. As discussed in the literature, SMT members should use a school-improvement plan (SIP), as a management tool to give a school its operational direction on an annual basis (Department of Basic Education, 2012). Giving an operational plan means explaining to the subordinates how the school has planned to operate for the entire year.

Furthermore, HODs should ensure that teachers are informed on when they should submit their preparations, when to submit learners' books, and all other important information they may need to know.

### **5.3. SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS**

#### **5.3.1. Sub-themes used to guide the discussion of the results**

Unprofessional educators; poor parental involvement; poor communication among SMT members; poor infrastructure, and a lack of resources; lack of commitment on the side of teachers and learners; non-support for acting SMT members; and a shortage of curriculum advisors to support the schools and to give them formal guidelines.

##### **5.3.1.1. *Unprofessional educators***

The study revealed that teachers do not always behave themselves professionally; and this affected the leadership proficiency of SMT members. Unprofessional teachers in this regard refers to those educators who do not behave themselves in a co-operative way. It was revealed that this some teachers do not respect their work; and they are likely to come to school late; not to go to their classes; and even leaving the school premises before the normal knock-off time. Therefore, it may be argued that for SMT members, it becomes a challenge to operate in a school where there are such teachers.

Teachers know that their primary responsibility in a school is to teach learners. However, some unprofessional teachers choose to ignore this responsibility; and they expect the members of the SMT to remind them of what to do. It was discussed in the literature that the members of SMTs should carry out their duties in such a way that teaching and learning can take place in the school. However, if the teachers in a school behave in an unprofessional manner, the responsibility may be difficult for SMT members to fulfil.

Dealing with unprofessional teachers is a difficult task for members of SMTs, because of the excessive interference of labour unions in the management activities.

Furthermore, it was found that too much interference of unions in school matters causes teachers to relax and not to find the necessary time to fulfil their duties. According to the

Labour Relation Act 66 of 1995, as amended, each and every employee has the right to have a labour union of his or her choice. However, this right has to include also their responsibilities.

It was discussed in Chapter 2 that all schools should have policies, like those of the South African School's Act; the Labour Relations Act; the Employment of Educators Act, among others, to update teachers on their rights, as well as their responsibilities. The availability of such documents in a school would assist SMT members to read them to the staff members so that they understand their rights and their responsibility thereof.

Reflecting on teachers in this district, it became clear that teachers know their rights; but they do not always seem to know the responsibilities that go with the rights. Therefore, SMT members have the responsibility to make sure that while teachers enjoy their rights in schools, they must also fulfil their chief function, which is that of teaching the learners.

#### ***5.3.1.2. Poor parental involvement***

With regard to parental involvement, the study has revealed that due to poor parental involvement, educators are unable to achieve their set goal; and ultimately this affects the school management team. Educators and parents have a shared responsibility to educate the child. Moreover, SMT members have the responsibility to make sure that learners are taught at school, and they complete all their tasks and homeworks, as required. For members of SMTs to fulfil this function, parents should also assist with the monitoring of the learners; and to make sure that they complete their homework, together with any additional tasks given.

Managing parental involvement means to ensure that there is a smooth and open channel of communication between the school and parents. From the discussion above, it could be argued that communication between parents and the school is important' it promotes the education of the child. If parents are actively involved, they are able to assist with subjects such as Art and Culture, and other related activities. In some instances, retired parents could even assist in offering afternoon and morning lessons.

In the context of this study it transpired that there was a poor relationship between the school and the parents, and this makes the job of SMTs very difficult.

Considering the context in which the study was conducted, it revealed that a high percentage of illiterate parents may be some of the contributing factors to poor participation. However, SMT members also have the responsibility to make sure that parents are respected and their inputs are valued. Parents might well participate more when they feel that their inputs are valued and respected. Therefore, SMT members should find a way of including parents in school programmes, other than just the SGB. According to Personnel Administrative Management (1999), members of SMTs should meet with the parents and discuss with them the progress and the conduct of their children.

#### **5.3.1.3. *Poor communication among SMT members***

When it comes to communication in schools, the study revealed that there is a poor level of communication among SMT members; and this affects their practice as school managers. Good communication practices start with school management. Poor communication and fights amongst the SMT members would delay the development of the school. SMT members as the leadership of the school should lead teachers and learners by example.

It was discussed in the literature that even though SMT members are all in management positions, their responsibilities differ, according to the position occupied. SMT functions and responsibilities are reviewed and discussed in the literature; starting with the school principal, the deputy principal and the Heads of Departments. However, in the context of this study, it transpired that the members of SMT in the Capricorn District do not know who is responsible for what; and this affects the communication among them; because they end up shifting the blame and rejecting any responsibilities.

The main aim of SMT meetings is to discuss certain issues, and agree at the level of management, before such matters are taken to the entire staff. However, in the context of this study, it appears that school principals expect their inputs to be taken seriously

even when they do not have good reasons to convince the entire school-management team.

Reflecting on the above discussion, it may be argued that there is a need to orientate SMT members prior to their appointment in the management positions. During such orientation, the functions of each member should be clearly communicated to them and clarified. It was discussed in the literature that in order for members of SMTs to maintain good communication, they should co-operate with their colleagues, in order to maintain a good teaching standard and progress among the learners; and additionally to foster administrative efficiency in the department of basic education and the school (Personnel Administrative Management, 1999). However, in the context of this study, there is clearly a lack of co-operation between SMT members; because their responsibilities were not clearly defined when they were appointed to their positions; and this created confusion among them.

#### **5.3.1.4. *Poor infrastructure and lack of resources***

The study has revealed that due to the poor infrastructure and the lack of resources in most of the schools in the Capricorn District, SMT members are unable to deliver good results in such conditions. Each school needs a good infrastructure and better resources, in order to maintain good teaching and learning standards. The study has further revealed that it is difficult for SMTs to operate in schools; because of over-crowded classrooms, the lack of furniture, and the lack of funds to buy teaching and learning aids.

The functions of SMTs include those of monitoring the other teachers' work. However, at times SMT members find themselves in a position where teachers are unable to be productive due to the poor infrastructure. In such instances, it is difficult for members of SMTs to manage such situations; because they are beyond both the teacher and the SMTs' control. It was discussed in the literature that SMT members have to ensure that there is safety for both the learners and the teachers in the school. Because of the poor infrastructure, some schools were found without any security fence; and it was difficult for SMT members to ensure the safety of the learners in such an environment.

With regard to resources, SMT members have the responsibility to make sure that resources are available in schools. The study found that due to the lack of funds, it was difficult for members of SMTs to fulfil this function; and this affected the quality of education in the district. Considering the context in which the study was conducted, Capricorn District is one of those districts which has experienced the challenge of a lack of resources. Therefore, it became a challenge for SMT members to operate in an such environment. It was further reviewed in the literature that the Department of Basic Education (Department of Basic Education, 2012) expects the schools to use half of the money allocated for norms and standards on teaching and learning. However, the school may need some human resources to assist with school administrative work. For instance, during activities, such as learner and teacher statistics (SA SAMS), the school might need to hire someone to work as data capturer, who would do all the gathering of learners' and teachers' information. Because of the paucity of funds, teachers were forced to leave the learners in the classroom, and a times tackle the administrative duties.

Some resources that were found to be a challenge in this district comprised the lack of computers, no access to the internet, a shortage of textbooks and storage were found to be common problems in such schools. Reflecting on the discussion above, it may be argued that the Capricorn District performed poorly in the past years - simply because of the lack of resources in the schools.

#### **5.3.1.5. *Educators and learners lack of committment***

When it comes to commitment, the study found that the lack of commitment on the side of teachers and learners made it difficult for SMT members to be productive in this district. Commitment was one of the important aspects that were revealed as being necessary for the success of teaching and learning. It becomes a challenge for members of SMT to manage if teachers and learners are not fully committed to their work. According to Personnel Administrative Management (1999), all educators should be at school during the school hours, except for special reasons and with the prior permission of the principal.

However, due to the lack of commitment from the teachers, it was found that they come to school late, and leave early; and that is a serious challenge for SMT members to

overcome in such situations. It was discussed in the literature that the principal as a chairperson of School Management Team is entitled to carry out his/her duties in ways that teaching and learning take place in the school (Hillson, 2013).

In the context of this study; it transpired that many of the teachers are not committed to their work. Consequently, it may be argued that it is likewise difficult for SMT members to fulfil their duties.

SMT members also have the responsibility to make sure that learners are in class; and that they are learning. It was also revealed that the members of SMT found it difficult to fulfil such a responsibility; because of the lack of commitment on the side of the learners. Learners need to be motivated and they need someone to explain to them the reason why they are learning and what was expected of them for successful teaching and learning. It was also discussed in the literature that one of the challenges experienced by SMTs was to work with under-qualified educators.

According to Loliwe (2005), some of the qualifications of these teachers did not respond to the needs of the new education system. One of the roles of an educator was that of learning mediator. This requires a teacher to be sensitive to the diverse needs of the learners, to construct a conducive learning environment, to demonstrate sound knowledge learning areas or subjects, and to be an inspiration to their learners. By fulfilling this role, the teacher would be able to train learners to be responsible for their own learning and commit themselves to their work. However, in the context of this study, it was because of under-qualified teachers, that they were unable to motivate the learners; and this made it difficult for SMT members to manage the schools effectively and achieve their goal. Because of the lack of commitment on the side of teachers and learners, this resulted in poor teaching and learning in the district. Furthermore, there was poor attendance of learners and this resulted in poor results for the district.

#### **5.3.1.6. *Lack of support for SMT members in an acting capacity***

The study found that the Department of Basic Education does not support SMT members who are there in an acting capacity; and this affects their performance as school managers. The issue of staff orientation and support for new staff in the management

positions is very important. In the literature review, different management theories were discussed. According to the theory based on the situation, a good leader is regarded as someone who knows how to do things the right way (Okumbe, 2009). For new school managers to know how to do things correctly, they need to be trained on how to operate in the management space; and they need to know exactly what their responsibilities and functions are. Furthermore, they also need to be supported on an ongoing basis.

In the context of this study, it was revealed that for SMT members acting in a temporary capacity, they would not receive any workshop, training and support from the Department of Basic Education; since they are not permanently appointed in their positions. Despite the nature of such an appointment, both acting and permanent SMT members are doing the same job. Therefore, due to the approach that the Department of Basic Education has, the acting members of SMTs are unable to know their functions. They end up not knowing the operations in the management field, due to exclusion from workshops and training sessions. This affected the quality of education in the district; because some SMT members operate in an acting capacity for three to five years. Consequently, the school suffers; or it is struggling with poor management for such a period of time.

#### **5.3.1.7. Shortage of curriculum advisors to support the schools**

With regard to curriculum advisors, the study found that there is only a limited number of curriculum advisors operating in the district. Within the SMTs, there are different positions – from school principals to heads of departments. With regard to the heads of departments (HODs), they are departmental and subject-specific. Therefore, for such members to be functional in their subjects or their departments, they need to be supported and advised by departmental officials (curriculum advisors) on how to operate in the field. Because of the shortage, or the understaffing of curriculum advisors, schools do not get adequate support; and this affects all the members of an SMT in fulfilling their functions – since they are not sure what is expected of them (their functions).

## **5.4. MEASURES TO PUT IN PLACE TO OVERCOME THE SMTS' CHALLENGES**

There are different measures that SMT members might well consider, in order to overcome the challenges they encounter in their management functions.

### **5.4.1. Sub-themes used to guide the results of the study**

One-on-one meetings with the educators; taking the responsibility by educators (teachers' accountability); praising educators for their good work; joint responsibility; training in the management functions; a curriculum for special schools; revising the decisions already taken, and the use of a reflective approach; and the SMT as a life-long learner.

#### **5.4.1.1. *One on one meeting with educators***

The study has revealed that having one-on-one meetings with educators assists them to improve their performance. This is true for both the teachers and the SMT members. However, it came out in this study that members of SMT find it difficult to co-operate with another teacher who does not want to do the work; so they are always absent; who come to school late and leave early. Having meetings with teachers to discuss what is expected of them helped in discussing and clarifying these issues.

It was discussed in the literature that SMT members should have occasional meetings with teachers, in order to discuss how they are going to work together throughout the year. This includes the submission dates for teachers' and learners' work; what to submit and how they should communicate. Furthermore, members of SMT might also delegate certain responsibilities to the staff members that are within their respective departments; and it is during such one-on-one meetings that they could explain the responsibilities assigned to teachers, and how to go about fulfilling such responsibilities.

In the context of this study, SMT members called upon the teachers to have a meeting with them on their previous work, and their future intentions. That assisted them to solve those problems that had already occurred (self-reflection), and to be able to focus on the future.

#### **5.4.1.2. *Educators' accountability***

The study revealed two aspects that are relevant to teachers' accountability. Firstly, for members of SMT who taught and encouraged their teachers to be responsible and accountable, they found their school management to be easier. While on the other hand, SMT members who did not encourage accountability from their teachers; it was found that management is very difficult. According to Personnel Administrative Management (1999), the duties and responsibilities of teachers are individual and varied, depending on the approaches and needs of the particular school. However, teachers need to be accountable for whatever actions they take in their job situations.

In the literature, Simkins (2009: 74) argues that a “real leader is someone who is committed to providing his all in the school opportunity – to influence the decisions, and to contribute to the daily activities in the school”. As with the argument of Simkins, Swanson (2013) emphasised the value of empowering educators by giving them more responsibilities on issues, such as curriculum adoption, staff development, and formulation of school policies, work evaluation, and other tasks, calls for proper decision-making. These improvements are a manifestation of the commitment to the full development of each individual.

In the context of this study, teachers are always encouraged to practise self-reflection; and during such activities, integrity becomes a crucial issue. When teachers are always honest about themselves, the work of SMT members becomes easier; and both SMT members and teachers are better able to fulfil their functions. Therefore, the results of this study have confirmed the literature that teacher empowerment is one of the best ways to engage teachers and make them more accountable. However, in this study, the teachers were encouraged by the members of SMTs to be responsible for their work and to account for their actions.

#### **5.4.1.3. *Praising educators for their good work***

The study revealed that one of the ways of encouraging hard work is through praise of good work by teachers. When the good job has been done by teachers, there should be some efforts to appraise and to acknowledge such work. When teachers were appraised

for the work well done, they were likely to keep up the good performance and continue to do good work. It was stated in the literature that good members of SMTs encourage the spirit of working together; and they support one another as colleagues (Hellen, 2007).

According to the Employment of Educator's Act of 1998 as amended, the principal has a duty to make sure that each and every educator in a school fulfils his and her duties and responsibilities; and these are teaching and learning. SMT members in the Capricorn District of Limpopo Province used praises to motivate those educators who have done well in their subjects; and this has assisted them to fulfil their functions – which are to promote quality teaching and learning in the school.

#### **5.4.1.4. *Joint responsibility***

With regard to joint responsibility, the study confirmed the statement that was once made by the president of South Africa, Jacob Zuma, that education has now become a societal issue. For education to be social issue, it can be argued that the responsibility should not only lie with the teachers and the SMT members; but it should be a joint one (the school and the community). One of the core businesses of schools is teaching and learning.

The School Management Team must become central in making schools functional. However, the responsibility to make sure that schools are functional should be shared among SMT members, the teachers and the parents. Through delegation, SMT members are able to assign some of their functions to other teachers and parents; and this assists them to fulfil their functions. It was discussed in the literature that SMT members have the responsibility to manage communication in such a way that there is smooth flow of information from the school to the different stakeholders.

In the context of this study, it came out clearly that encouraging parents and other stakeholders to participate in the education of learners, would in a way encourage shared responsibility between the SMT members and different stakeholders; and as a result, that would make the job of SMT easier to perform.

#### **5.4.1.5. Training on management functions**

The study found that there is a need for SMT members to be trained in the management functions; since they were not aware of some of their functions. In-service training and workshops are ways to keep the members of SMT on track with the current management issues in the district. In the literature review, SMT's responsibilities were reviewed and discussed – starting with the school Principal, the Deputy Principal, and then the Heads of Departments. Reflecting on the literature reviewed, it came out that members of SMT in the Capricorn district were not clear about some of their functions; and this inevitably affected their management functions.

When SMT members were mentioning their management functions, most of the responsibilities were left out; since they were not sure of their functions in detail. However, it was suggested that there was a need for the training of SMTs in their management functions, and how to go about fulfilling such functions. What came out in this study was that SMT members only knew the basic stuff about their management functions. It is the responsibility of the school principal to train and send SMT members to the capacitating workshops, in order to assist them to improve in their practice.

According to the Department of Basic Education (2012) half of the amount allocated to the school should be used for staff development. Therefore, it is important for schools to develop their SMT members – especially in clarifying their functions more clearly.

#### **5.4.1.6. Curriculum for special schools**

The study revealed that lack of a suitable curriculum for special schools was a long-standing problem in South Africa. Special schools for learners with intellectual disabilities operate without any suitable curriculum conducive to the schools. It came out in this study that SMT members find it difficult to operate in special schools. Due to the nature of the learners they are teaching, they were unable to measure their management impact, and the nature of the support they needed to provide. Therefore, it was suggested that if the Department of Basic Education might come up with curriculum suitable for special schools, that would improve their management functions and be able to meet their responsibilities.

#### **5.4.1.7. *Revising decisions taken and the use of reflective approach***

The study revealed that revising the decisions already taken is one way of coming up with sound and informed decisions. Revising decisions already taken is one way of making sure that whatever mistakes were committed in the past, these would not be repeated. In the context of schools, it was through weekly, quarterly or annual management meetings that SMT members could reflect back on their decisions, and be able to improve. What is important is for SMT members to know their management functions, and to be able to reflect back to see whether all their functions were properly fulfilled.

It was discussed in the literature that reflective managers willingly embrace their decision-making responsibilities; and they regularly reflect on the consequences of their actions. In other words, they are receptive to new knowledge; and they regularly learn from their reflected experiences (Henderson, 1992).

The benefits of being a reflective practitioner were confirmed in the results of this study. The results revealed that in order for SMT members to improve their practice, they should revise their decisions. This is a crucial part of the reflective practice.

#### **5.4.1.8. *SMT member as a lifelong learner***

With regard to SMT members as life-long learners, the study revealed a need for members of SMT to research the current school-management related issues, in order to improve their practice. This concurs with one of the the roles of an educator: scholar, researcher and life-long learner. It was discussed in the literature that if members of SMT need to grow in their management functions, they would need to apply such roles in the context of school management. This means they should achieve ongoing personal growth, by attending training courses on school management.

Furthermore, they should acquire academic, occupational and professional growth in the area of school management. For that matter, they should investigate the current literature on their practice, and be able to update themselves on any new operations in their practice. Lastly, SMT members should conduct research that results in improvements in their field. In this regard, action research was regarded as being relevant research

approach, whereby SMTs would be able to identify the problems in their school management, and be prepared to undergo action research cycle, until they find solutions to their problems.

From the discussion above it can be argued that SMT members should be life-long learners, in order to become reflective practitioners that would always be able to fulfil their management functions.

## **5.5. SUMMARY**

This chapter has discussed the findings of the study. The main findings were discussed under the following headings: Self-reflective practices; the functions and responsibilities of an SMT; challenges that hinder SMTs in performing their functions; and measures to put in place to overcome these challenges. The chapter also discussed some of the SMT's functions of which members of SMT were not aware. Challenges that SMT members had experienced in the self-reflection and management practice were also discussed – with measures to put in place to overcome these challenges. The next chapter was based on the summary of the findings, the conclusion, any contributions to new knowledge, and some forthcoming recommendations from the study.

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **6.1. INTRODUCTION**

This chapter make the conclusion of the study by summarising the findings of the study, according to the sub-research questions. Furthermore, the chapter gives recommendations that are line with the research findings. New knowledge contribution is very vital in a PhD study; therefore, such sentiments are also outlined in this chapter, and also the direction and suggestions for further studies that could have been derived from this study. To further the contribution of new knowledge, a newly designed framework on SMT and Self-Reflection is also presented in this chapter.

#### **6.2. REVIEW OF THE RESEARCH PROBLEM**

The study was carried out with the realisation that the schools in Capricorn District operated without guidelines that would enable the School Management Teams to execute their mandate and to fulfil their functions as school managers. In addition to that, it was reported that some SMT members are appointed to their management positions, without being oriented and clarified about their functions. Poor reflective practice was also revealed to be the reason for the members of SMTs not fulfilling their management functions. For schools to be effective, the functions of the SMT should be clearly defined.

The central function of SMT members is to effectively manage the teaching and learning processes; financial management; human-resource management; and learner discipline, among others (Christie, 2005). Schools may have an SMT in place; but if they do not reflect on their practice, they may still encounter management problems. This reflects on the nature and quality of the management practices of SMT members. Given such realities, it was recommended in this study that SMT members should continuously reflect on their practice, and be able to improve their management by fulfilling their daily functions.

Self-reflection was expected of all SMT members; but it was seldom enforced. In policy documents, self-reflection was stipulated; but there were no formalised templates that

could guide, monitor and evaluate how members of SMT should reflect on their own practice. This may result in SMTs not reflecting on their work at all, and end up not fulfilling their functions as school managers. Within SMTs there are three levels of the management team, namely: Principal, Deputy Principal and Heads of Departments.

Despite the fact that they are all within one team, each manager has necessary procedures, systems and processes to be followed in their day-to-day management of schools, in order to fulfil their functions. Therefore, it was revealed that without clear guidelines on self-reflection, SMTs would never know whether they are fulfilling their functions; and this could result in a poor management system that would lead to a high failure rate, or poor management of learning and teaching in the schools.

### **6.3. SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS**

The main findings of this study were summarised in the sub-research question 1, sub-research question 2, sub-research question 3, and sub-research question 4. In this section, the researcher outlines how each of the sub-research questions was answered.

#### **6.3.1. Sub-research question 1**

The study found that SMT members were not aware of all of their daily functions; they only knew the basic functions that appeared to be common knowledge. Furthermore, it was revealed that poor reflective practice made it difficult for members of SMTs to fulfil their functions. SMT members in this district regarded their functions as follows: promoting teaching and learning; giving direction, guidance and supervision; facilitating partnership and programmes; staff development; time-keeping and maintaining discipline; controlling; and the supporting of circulars and extra-curricular matters. It came out that some of the daily functions stipulated in the PAM document, members of SMTs were not aware of; and it became a challenge for them to fulfil such a function if they do not regard that as part of their responsibility.

The detailed daily functions of SMT members were presented in Chapter 2; and when SMT members were asked about their daily functions as school managers, they left out most of these functions. Some of the functions that SMT were not aware of were as

follows (As discussed initially in Chapter 2): keeping profiles of all the educators to inform of the distribution of work and duties; promoting Information Computer Technology (ICT) in learning; human-resource support and management; school development/improvement planning; quality assurance of the learning environment; staff development and financial management; management of information, network and representing the school; management of meetings and scholar transport; and the management of the national school nutrition programme.

Reflecting on the functions that SMT members were not aware of, it was revealed that they did not know much about their responsibilities; and this resulted in dysfunctional schools in the district. There was a need for SMTs (depending on the position they are appointed in) to be oriented prior to their appointment in the management positions. Furthermore, the functions and responsibilities of SMT members should be printed and pasted on their wall, to remind them of what is expected of them.

Having their functions on the wall would enable them to reflect on their practice timetable, and again to be able to fulfil their management functions.

### **6.3.2. Sub-research question 2**

The study found that members of SMTs experienced some challenges that limited their performance as school managers. Challenges, such as unprofessional educators; poor parental involvement; poor communication among the SMT members; poor infrastructure, and a lack of resources; together with the lack of commitment on the part of teachers and learners. These issues were revealed as being problematic. All these challenges mentioned above had a negative impact on SMTs' performance; and they have resulted in a poor management practice in the schools of Capricorn District, and in the Dimamo Circuit, in particular.

### **6.3.3. Sub-research question 3**

The study found that the use of self-reflection practices enabled members of SMTs to correct their mistakes in the management and fulfilment of their functions. It was also revealed that members of SMT used the minutes of the management meetings,

departmental policies and reports, as a way of reflecting on their practice. Furthermore, it also transpired that they also used their previous experience as a way of looking back on how they had approached the different activities in their schools; and how they could improve their practice.

If members of SMT would always strive to do things perfectly, then they would regard self-reflection as a vital part of their daily activities, and be able to fulfil their functions.

#### **6.3.4. Sub-research question 4**

Measures to put in place to assist members of SMTs in enhancing self-reflective practices in performing their functions were also discussed. Some of the measures revealed include one-on-one meetings with educators. During this activity, the members of SMTs were able to reflect on the individual teacher's performance, and be able to reflect on measures that needed attention and could be improved. Issues related to the teacher's accountability also came out, as an area that needed considerable attention.

There is a need for SMT members to train their teachers to be accountable for their work and the actions thereof. For teachers who have done well, it was revealed that members of SMTs needed to recognise their efforts, by praising the good work they had done. Furthermore, it was found that the responsibility of making schools functional should be shared amongst the teachers, the parents and SMT members.

Beside the issue of shared responsibility; it was also concluded that if all of these measures (discussed in Chapters 2 & 5) were attended to, members of SMTs would have an effective reflective practice that would enhance their performance and fulfil their management functions. In the context of this study, for those SMT members who had attended to the four measures mentioned above, it was confirmed that their job then became better and better.

#### **6.4. CONCLUSION**

The study has sought to explore the self-reflection practices employed by school management teams (SMT) in performing their school-management functions, and suggesting a suitable self-reflective framework for the enhancement of SMTs'

performance. The study used the qualitative approach to get a deeper understanding of the practice of self-reflection by school-management teams. The research design used in this study was that of a case study, which, according to Caidrhead (2006), allows for an in-depth examination of past events.

Schools used in this study were primary schools, special schools and high schools, which were selected with the purpose of ensuring that each school level was represented. Purposive sampling was used to select the participants from less-experienced to more-experienced individuals in the management positions. The data were collected via questerviews and in-depth interviews. Two types of interviews were used during the data collection, namely: individual interviews and focus-group interviews. For the purpose of triangulation, the study used questerviews as another data-collection tool. The use of various data-collection techniques allowed the researcher to confirm the findings. The data were presented verbatim – with the use of direct quotations, followed by discussion, analysis and interpretation of the results with a thematic approach.

The study found that SMT members were not fully aware of all of their daily functions; they only knew the basic functions that appeared to be common. This challenge was found to result in poor management and a lack of fulfilment in the management functions. It was further revealed that SMT members, such as principals and deputy-principals confused their responsibilities due to the similarities of their functions. The study concluded that the lack of training and orientation of SMT members prior to their appointment in the management positions resulted in confusion on their side.

Some of the functions that were revealed to be unclear to SMT members included: keeping profiles of all the educators to inform the distribution of work and duties; promoting Information Computer Technology (ICT) in learning; human-resource support and management; school development/improvement planning; quality assurance of the learning environment; staff development and financial management; management of information, networking and representing the school; the management of meetings and scholar transport; and the management of the national school-nutrition programme. The study further concluded that SMT members were in a dire situation, in which they were

unable to differentiate their management functions as HODs, deputy-principals and principals.

Reflecting on the level of support by the Department of Basic Education, it was concluded that members of SMTs were not adequately trained in the management functions.

Furthermore, the study revealed that members of SMTs experience different challenges; and these made their work so difficult. Challenges, such as unprofessional educators; poor parental involvement; poor communication among the SMT members; poor infrastructure and lack of resources; and a serious lack of commitment on the side of teachers and learners were revealed as challenges. These challenges were found to be the reasons for the poor results and quality education in Capricorn District; and that resulted in poor Provincial performance. It was concluded that the management of schools should be shared amongst the teachers, parents and the members of the community.

Moreover, the study found that the use self-reflection practices enables the members of SMTs to correct their mistakes in the management and fulfilment of their functions. The use of the minutes of the previous meetings and the scrutinising of the decisions taken earlier were revealed to be some of the reflective approaches that SMT members in this district might well have used. With regard to those measures to put in place to assist the members of SMTs in enhancing their self-reflection practices in performing their functions, the study revealed several measures.

Some of the measures revealed include one-on-one meetings with the educators. Furthermore, the study found teachers' accountability to be one of the important measures to assist the members of SMTs to improve their reflection practices and those of teachers. It was concluded that there is a need for members of SMTs to train their teachers to be accountable for their work and their actions therein.

## **6.5. THE STUDY'S CONTRIBUTION TO NEW KNOWLEDGE**

As outlined in the limitation of the study, it was mentioned that the study was carried out in Capricorn District, which was regarded as a small scale of Limpopo Province or South Africa. However, the study has revealed challenges that affected members of SMTs to perform their management functions in the entire Province, and with South Africa as a whole. The study provided insights into the practice of self-reflection and how to become effectual reflective practitioners.

This kind of knowledge should assist SMT members to improve their practices and fulfil their expected functions. Furthermore, the study clarified the functions of SMT members, starting with the HODs, deputy-principals and principals. This would help members of SMTs in South Africa to know what was expected of them in their day-to-day practices (school management); since their functions were the same across all the schools in South Africa.

### **6.5.1. Malatji's proposed reflective pillars of the management framework**

The reflective practitioner strives to improve his/her practice all the time. The framework proposed that reflective practitioners should be critical thinkers who strive to know their practice, and how it affects others. The framework introduced four pillars that were regarded as keys when it comes to the self-reflection of managers. The four proposed pillars were as follows: previous experience, correcting previous mistakes, planning for the future, managing an organisation.

#### **6.5.1.1. Previous experience**

The framework introduced previous experience as the first pillar for self-reflection in school management. This pillar was regarded as the most important; because in the educational fraternity, past experience would never be ignored. During this stage of self-reflection, the members of SMTs should be able to reflect on the previous activities that had taken place in the school and how they would affect the current *status quo* of the school. For instance, if the school had produced poor result in the past year, it was during that stage that all the factors leading to poor results are discussed and rectified.

Critical thinking during this stage becomes crucial. Each of the factors should be tackled one by one, in order to enable a sustainable resolution of the problems. Beside factors that contributed to the poor management; past experience also helps one to review how the school was managed, and how the policies were drafted and implemented. Reviewing the management styles used in the past should assist current members of SMTs to re-shape their management styles and to close the gap that existed in the past.

The drafting and implementing of policies is the core concern for the functionality of the school. Past experiences assist SMT members to review the previous policies and close the gaps in those policies. For example, the policy that was drafted in the past five years might not be relevant for schools in the present. Therefore, past experiences enable members of SMT to review such policies and to update them in terms of the current trends.

Not everything that was done in the past needs to be rectified and improved. For example, the school might have done well in the past five years, but only did poorly in the current moment. Therefore, during this pillar of self-reflection, members of SMTs may decide to adopt the approach used to manage the school in the past. However, such decisions should be done with a justification of the current situation. This stage of self-reflection requires members of SMTs to be open-minded about their management. Being open means reflecting on issues without justifications and/or any bias.

#### ***6.5.1.2. Correcting previous mistakes***

This pillar emphasises that the mistakes committed in the past should not be repeated. In the first stage of this framework, it was discussed that past experiences are scrutinised with the purpose of sustaining the good work and correcting the mistakes of the past. This was one stage in which the members of the SMT should open their minds; because changing from one way of doing things to another requires a lot of thinking. During this stage, members of SMTs should be able to explore the possible solutions and commit themselves to such.

The best approach for this reflective stage would be to consult with nearby schools and also to benchmark with other schools, especially those that are doing well; and see how they are doing things. The use of the current policies might also assist SMT members to correct their previous mistakes. In South Africa, the policies are changing very frequently – especially when any new government takes over. Therefore, members of SMTs should ensure that their policies are rectified and updated with those of the current trends.

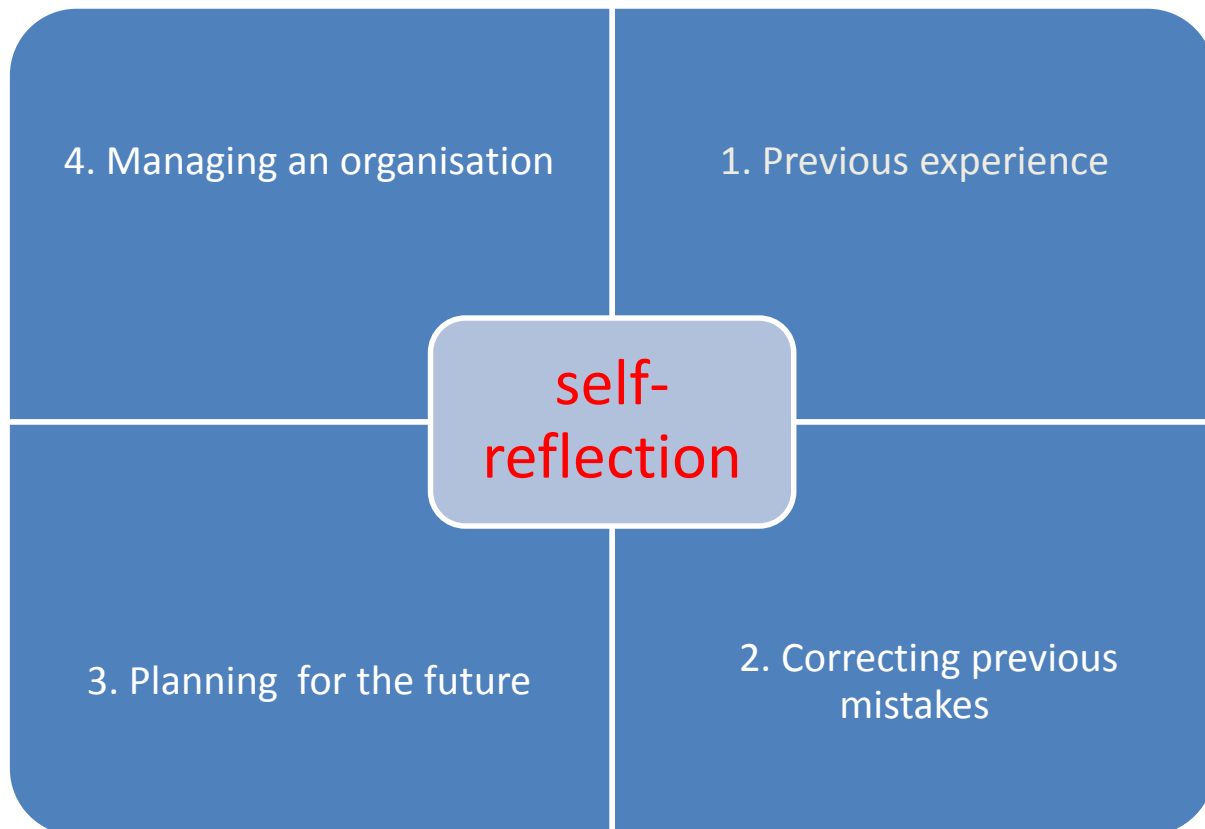
#### ***6.5.1.3. Planning for the future***

This framework proposes that after going through pillar one (previous experience) and pillar two (correcting previous mistakes), SMT members should be in a position to plan for the future. The general purpose of self-reflection is for personal improvement. Therefore, this pillar of the framework emphasises that the personal development of the SMT members should manifest itself in their future management practices. When members of SMTs are rectifying their mistakes, they also come up with some future implementations. SMT members need to fulfil this pillar of self-reflection, if they want to set goals that can be achieved confidently. For instance, if SMT members are setting a one hundred per cent pass rate as their goal; they need to plan on how they are going to achieve that. Schools in South Africa are expected to have a school improvement plan in place. Therefore, fulfilling this pillar or stage of self-reflection would enable SMT member-report their school improvement plan confidently to the district officials. Having activities planned for the future, gives members of SMTs peace of mind; and it also boosts their confidence because their planned activities are informed by their recent experiences.

#### ***6.5.1.4. Managing the organisation***

Managing school as an organisation requires a lot of knowledge and management skills. However, if members of SMTs have gone through all the reflective pillars of self-reflection, it becomes easy for them to manage. SMT members need knowledge about the school if they want to be productive in their work. Going through the reflective pillars would put members of SMTs in a position where they could understand the kind of school they manage, and also to know the kind of people they lead. The reflective pillar of self-

reflection results in the success of school management. This framework concluded that good SMT members are those who reflect on their practice, and strive to improve it. The framework is illustrated diagrammatically below:



**Fig.2: Malatji's proposed reflective pillars of the management framework**

#### **6.6. ADVANTAGES OF USING PROPOSED MODEL**

The use of a newly proposed framework has many advantages when used in the school context. The framework integrates both self-reflection practices and management functions. In other words, when SMT members are using this framework they would no longer regard self-reflection and school management as two different activities, but rather as one smooth activity. The framework serves as a monitoring tool for those activities that are taking place, and the extent to which that are being achieved.

Consequently, if this framework is used correctly in a school, SMT members would be able to measure the impact of their management practices and be able to improve them.

In other words, the theory enables the SMT members to interrogate their management practices, as well as all the other management activities in their school. The use of this framework consolidates all self-reflection practices and management activities into one single framework. In other words, all the insights of good management practices manifest themselves in this framework.

The four pillars presented in this framework allow the members of SMTs to have a clear understanding of where the school is coming from, how previous mistakes can be corrected, planning for the future, and managing the school an organisation. Therefore, the framework could also assist those SMT members that are appointed in the different schools; since the framework gives insights into the history of the school and how to move forward. Such a framework could assist all the SMT members – including all those in an acting capacity; since it was revealed in this study that the Department of Basic Education does not train them in management cativities, until such members are appointed in permanent positions.

## **6.7. RECOMMENDATIONS**

This section presents the recommendations of the study. The recommendations are presented in relation to the research findings and the research questions. Reflecting on the research findings and the research questions, the study recommends that:

School-management teams should be trained and oriented in terms of the school management function prior to their appointment in such management positions. All the functions of members of SMTs should be well-articulated and well-clarified to enable the SMT members to know what is expected of them. Furthermore, it is recommended that all these functions should be in black and white; and they should be separated, depending on the position occupied by the SMT member. Lists of HODs' functions, deputy-principal's functions; and principal's functions, should be distributed among all SMT members; so that they could become clear about the responsibilities of each SMT member.

In-service training is also recommended to enable members of SMTs to know about the current trends in school management. Moreover, it is recommended that SMT members

be provided with copies of their job descriptions prior to their appointment in a management position. It is also recommended that the school, or each SMT member should have a copy of the PAM document; since all the functions and responsibilities of the members of SMTs are outlined in this document.

Apart from their management functions, school-management teams should consider self-reflection, as being a vital part of their daily activities; and the Department of Basic Education should, therefore, come up with a self-reflection policy that would force SMT members to reflect on their practice on a daily basis. This policy would serve as a monitoring tool that checks whether the members of an SMT are fulfilling all the functions assigned to them. The policy-maker should also bear in mind the less- experienced and the more experienced SMT members when coming up with a self-reflection policy.

Furthermore, the policy makers should also come with uniform template of approach to self-reflection in the school management. It is also recommended that the self-reflection policies should be linked to the improvement of management practices; and that self-reflection should be compulsory for all SMT members appointed in the public schools of South Africa.

It is further recommended that the practice self-reflection be strengthened in teachers, in order to equip them with self-reflection knowledge before they are promoted to management positions. Another recommendation was that SMT members should have one-on-one meetings with teachers to assist them with the challenges that they may experience during self-reflection. There was also a need that members of SMTs are visited by district officials – to assist them with issues around self-reflection.

The study further recommends that schools should have self-reflection meetings every month to discuss any issues and challenges, when it comes to self-reflection. The issue of school-university partnership was also recommended for the success of self-reflection. School should have a good partnership with the four Universities in Limpopo Province. As a participant in community-engagement projects, Universities could offer self-

reflection lessons to schools without payment. As a result, the study recommends that schools should utilise such opportunities to the maximum.

### **6.8. IMPLICATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY**

With regard to the limitations of the study, it was pointed earlier that the study was limited to one district of Limpopo Province; therefore, a similar study could be conducted on a wider scale, in order to generalise the results. This study did not have any analogous dimension; therefore, it encourages future researchers to compare the practice of self-reflection by members of SMTs in Limpopo Province with those of the other provinces. Any future study could well be conducted in any province, in order to confirm the challenges experienced by SMT members when it comes to self-reflection and the fulfilment of their management functions. It is generally believed that poor reflective practice results in poor education and bad results in Limpopo Province. Therefore, there is a need for a future researcher to investigate those measures that result in the poor performance of the province. Furthermore, researchers may look at the level of support that the Department of Basic Education is offering to SMT members, when it comes to the practice of self-reflection, and how to fulfil their management functions.

### **6.9. EVALUATION OF THE OBJECTIVES**

The study aimed to achieve the following objectives:

- To explore the daily functions of SMT members in the selected schools of Limpopo Province.
- To explore those challenges that hinder SMT members in performing their daily functions.
- To examine these self-reflective practices which SMT members employ to reflect on how they conduct their functions in schools.
- To recommend measures that could be put in place to assist SMT members in enhancing their self-reflective practices when performing their functions.

Reflecting on the data collected through the questerviews, the individual interviews, and the focus-group interviews, all the intended objectives were achieved. SMTs' views on

the functions of SMT members were employed to establish the challenges they face. In line with Chapter 2 of the study, the functions of SMTs have been discussed and clarified. The study has also explored the practice of self-reflection by members of SMTs; and how this has affected their management functions.

The study has also examined the effectiveness of the current self-reflective practice of SMT members in performing their functions; and it was revealed that the members of SMTs did not have any common reflective approach; and that this affected their performance. Challenges that hinder members of SMT from performing their daily function were also explored – with some possible measures to overcome such challenges.

Finally, the study has suggested a reflective framework that could assist SMT members to improve their practice and fulfil their functions as school managers. Therefore, the study has successfully managed to achieve all the intended objectives.

#### **6.10. CONCLUDING REMARKS**

The study aimed to explore how the current self-reflection practices employed by SMT members would enhance the performance of their school management. It has attempted to reveal the challenges facing SMT members on self-reflection, with the purpose of improving their practice and fulfilling their management functions. The study made a recommendation that school management teams should be trained and oriented in the school-management function prior to their appointment in the management positions.

The study also recommended that policy-makers should also come up with a uniform template for utilising self-reflection in the area of school management. It was also concluded that self-reflection policies should be linked with the improvement of management practices; and that it should be compulsory for all members of SMTs appointed in the public schools of South Africa. The newly proposed framework also outlines some of the important insights of a good management practice.

In conclusion, the practice of self-reflection enables members SMTs to improve their practice. Therefore, it should be taken seriously by all SMT members in the district, in the province, and in South Africa as a whole.

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**APPENDIX A:        QUESTERVIEWS**

*Thank you for taking your time to answer this questerview. Please feel free to answer these questions to the best of your knowledge. The information provided is for research purposes only and will be treated with confidentiality. You have a right to remain anonymous and you are free not to answer any question that you feel uncomfortable about. Remember, honesty is first chapter of the book of wisdom-Thomas Jefferson.*

**POSITION :.....( please indicate your position in the SMT)**

<b>1. How do you understand 'self-reflection' and its process?</b>

<b>2. What are your daily duties that you are expected to perform in your position?</b>

<b>3. Where the duties clarified to you when appointed in this position?</b>

<b>4. How do you make sure that you perform all your duties as expected?</b>

**5. How often do you look back in your duties and decisions you made in the past? And why?**

--

**6. Do you shape your decisions based on the previous experience? How important is that?**

--

**7. What are things that constrain your performance in the position you occupied?**

--

**8. What measures do you put in place to overcome the challenges you have in your position?**

--

**9. During IQMS, do you find the part of self-evaluation useful? Please justify your answer.**

--

**10. Do you sometimes meet as SMT and discuss the challenges each of you experience?  
Please explain the benefits for that, if any.**

--

**APPENDIX B: INTERVIEWS SCHEDULE**

<b>MAIN/CENTRAL QUESTION</b>	<b>GUIDING QUESTIONS</b>	<b>POSSIBLE INTERVIEW QUESTION</b>
<p><i>How do SMTs in the selected schools in the Limpopo Province engage in self-reflection practices in performing their functions?</i></p>	<p>➤ What are the daily functions of SMTs in the selected schools in Limpopo province?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>What are the daily functions for your position as SMT members?</i></li> <li>• <i>Were the functions clarified to you when appointed in this position?</i></li> <li>• <i>Are all the functions clear to you?</i></li> <li>• <i>If not, which part is not clear to you?</i></li> </ul>
	<p>➤ What are the challenges that hinder SMTs in performing their functions in selected schools?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>What are some of the things that constrain your performance as a SMT member?</i></li> <li>• <i>What have you done to try and solve this problem?</i></li> <li>• <i>If you have done something, to what extent have you succeeded?</i></li> <li>• <i>What do you wish should be done to make your job easier?</i></li> </ul>
	<p>➤ <i>What self-reflective practices do SMTs employ to reflect on the way in which they conduct their</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>What is your understanding of the practice of reflecting on one's functions?</i></li> <li>• <i>Do you think is of importance to engage in this reflection? If so, why?</i></li> <li>• <i>How often do you reflect on your practice?</i></li> <li>• <i>How do you reflect on your practice?</i></li> <li>• <i>How do other SMT members in your school reflect on their management functions?</i></li> </ul>

	<p><i>functions in schools?</i></p>	
	<p>➤ <i>What measures could be put in place to assist SMTs in enhancing self-reflective practices in performing their functions.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Do you need any training on how to perform your self-reflection?</i></li> <li>• <i>Do you get any support from any source on the issue of reflecting on your daily function?</i></li> <li>• <i>Do you think there are any materials that can be provided to you to assist you in reflecting on your practice as an SMT member?</i></li> </ul>

*The goal of education is the advancement of knowledge and the dissemination of truth (John Fitzgerald Kennedy). “There are two choices of life: to accept conditions as they exist, or accept the responsibility for changing them”. Thank you for your time, wish you success in your school. God bless you.*

**APPENDIX C:      **CONSENT FORM****

I \_\_\_\_\_ the SMT at \_\_\_\_\_ give a consent that I agree to participate in the research under the title: Self-reflection practices of School Management Teams of Limpopo Province, Capricorn District: Towards a reflective management strategy for South African schools.

- I understand that my participation in this research is not obliged; that I have a right not to answer certain questions, and that I can withdraw from the study/participation any time.
- I understand the purpose of this study and know about the benefits that this research entails.
- I understand that the information provided will be treated with confidentiality.
- I understand that the study involves the actual practice of SMT's functions and self-reflection; therefore with respect to publication, communication, and dissemination of results/performance of SMT my participation will remain anonymous.

I have studied all the above information and understand my participation in this regard.

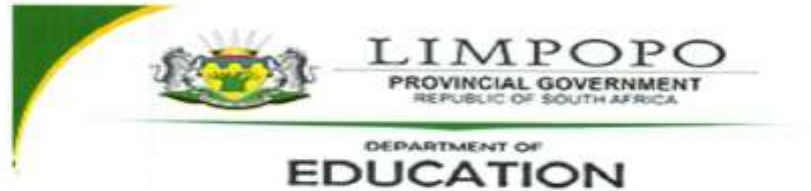
I therefore freely consent and voluntarily agree to participate in this research.

Name (printed): \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

**APPENDIX D: PERMISSION LETTER FROM LIMPOPO DBE**



Enquiries: Dr. Makola MC, Tel No: 015290 9448 Email: [MakolaMC@edu.limpopo.gov.za](mailto:MakolaMC@edu.limpopo.gov.za)

P O BOX 2428

SOVENGA

0727

**MALATJI K.S**

**Re: Request for permission to Conduct Research**

1. The above bears reference.
2. The Department wishes to inform you that your request to conduct a research has been approved-**TOPIC: SELF REFLECTION PRACTICES OF SCHOOL MANAGEMENT TEAMS OF LIMPOPO PROVINCE, CAPRICORN DISTRICT: TOWARDS REFLECTIVE MANAGEMENT STRATEGY FOR SOUTH AFRICAN SCHOOLS.**
3. The following conditions should be considered
  - 3.1. The research should not have any financial implications for Limpopo Department of Education.
  - 3.2. Arrangements should be made with both the Circuit Offices and the schools concerned.
  - 3.3. The conduct of research should not anyhow disrupt the academic programs at the schools.
  - 3.4. The research should not be conducted during the time of Examination especially the forth term.
  - 3.5. During the study, the research ethics should be practiced, in particular the principles of voluntary participation (the people involved should be respected).
  - 3.6. Upon completion of research study, the research shall the final product of the research with the Department.

---

Cnr.113 Biccard & 24 Excelsior Street, POLOKWANE, 0700, Private Bag X9489  
POLOKWANE, 0700  
Tel: 015 290 7600, Fax: 015 297 6920/4220/4494

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4. Furthermore, you are expected to produce this letter at Schools/ Offices where you intend conducting your research as an evidence that you are permitted to conduct the research.
5. The department appreciates the contribution that you wish to make and wishes you success in your investigation.

Best wishes.



Dederen K.O

Acting Head of Department

02/06/2014

Date

**APPENDIX E: ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE**



**University of Fort Hare**  
*Together in Excellence*

**ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE**

**REC-270710-028-RA Level 01**

Certificate Reference Number: MAP031SMAL01  
Project title: **Self-reflection practices of school management  
Teams of Limpopo Province, Capricorn  
District: Towards reflective management  
Strategy for South African Schools**  
Nature of Project: PhD  
Principal Researcher: Khashane Stephen Malatji  
Supervisor: Prof C Maphosa  
Co-supervisor:

On behalf of the University of Fort Hare's Research Ethics Committee (UREC) I hereby give ethical approval in respect of the undertakings contained in the above-mentioned project and research instrument(s). Should any other instruments be used, these require separate authorization. The researcher may therefore commence with the research as from the date of this certificate, using the reference number indicated above.

Please note that UREC must be informed immediately of

- Any material change in the conditions or undertaking mentioned in the document
- Any material breaches of ethical undertakings or events that impact upon the ethical conduct of the research

The Principal Researcher must report to the UREC in the prescribed format, where applicable, annually, and at the end of the project, in respect of ethical compliance.

**Special conditions:** Research that includes children as per the official regulations of the act must take the following into account:

Note: The UREC is aware of the provisions of s71 of the National Health Act 61 of 2003 and that matters pertaining to obtaining the Minister's consent are under discussion and remain unresolved. Nonetheless, as was decided at a meeting between the National Health Research Ethics Committee and stakeholders on 6 June 2013, university ethics committees may continue to grant ethical clearance for research involving children without the Minister's consent, provided that the prescripts of the previous rules have been met. This certificate is granted in terms of this agreement.

The UREC retains the right to

- Withdraw or amend this Ethical Clearance Certificate if
  - Any unethical principal or practices are revealed or suspected
  - Relevant information has been withheld or misrepresented
  - Regulatory changes of whatsoever nature so require
  - The conditions contained in the Certificate have not been adhered to
- Request access to any information or data at any time during the course or after completion of the project.
- In addition to the need to comply with the highest level of ethical conduct principle investigators must report back annually as an evaluation and monitoring mechanism on the progress being made by the research. Such a report must be sent to the Dean of Research's office

The Ethics Committee wished you well in your research.

Yours sincerely

  
**Professor Gideon de Wet**  
Dean of Research

23 September 2014

**APPENDIX F: LANGUAGE EDITING CERTIFICATE**



**Language Quality Assurance Practitioners**

Mrs KA Goldstone

Dr PJS Goldstone

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Summerstrand  
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28 May 2015

**TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN**

We hereby certify that we have language-edited the thesis of Khashane Stephen Malatji entitled: SELF-REFLECTION PRACTICES OF SCHOOL-MANAGEMENT TEAMS IN THE CAPRICORN DISTRICT: TOWARDS A REFLECTIVE-MANAGEMENT STRATEGY FOR SOUTH AFRICAN SCHOOLS.

We are satisfied that, provided the changes we have made are effected to the text, the language is of an acceptable standard, and is fit for publication.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'KA Goldstone'.

**Kate Goldstone**

BA (Rhodes)

SATI No: 1000168

UPE Language Practitioner (1975-2004)

NMMU Language Practitioner (2005)

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'PJS Goldstone'.

**Dr Patrick Goldstone**

BSc (Stell.)

DEd (UPE)